



2024

ANNUAL REPORT

GOLDEN CITY SUPPORT SERVICES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Golden City Support Services (GCSS) pays respect to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country in the communities in which we work throughout Victoria, and recognises their connection to their lands, waterways and communities. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and Custodians of the Land. GCSS is headquartered on traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people and provides its services on Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta, Taungurung and Wurrundjeri Woi Wurrung Country.

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OUR VISION

To create an inclusive community where people are supported to have homes in their local communities, develop their own relationships and enjoy the same access to community resources, opportunity to participate and rights as other members of their community.

OUR VALUES

Each member of the GCSS team, in all aspects of our work, lives the following organisational values.

- Human rights are at the centre of all we do in seeking equal opportunities and outcomes for the people we support and our staff who support them.
- Our practices are evidence-informed and evolve through collaboration and creativity.
- We expect meaningful, respectful and person-centred participation and inclusion.
- We strive for the best possible outcomes for the people we support by respecting their autonomy, building on their strengths, choices and aspirations, and supporting meaningful participation in communities.
- We welcome diversity and difference across our organisation.
- We are accountable for our actions and outcomes.

OUR PURPOSE

GCSS was formed as a charitable organisation to improve the quality of life and to further the human rights of people living with disability and people living with mental health conditions, including psychosocial disability, through the support services we provide.

We do this by:

- providing high-quality, individualised and flexible accommodation, community access, respite support, plan management, support coordination and other support services in Victoria;
- working in partnership with the people we support and, with their consent, their families and other supporters to understand the support services needed;
- working to bring about change so that communities are more inclusive, service systems more effective, and mainstream services more responsive by being a voice, and supporting the voices, of those we support;
- building the capacity of our workforce through strong practice leadership and use of evidence-informed practice frameworks to ensure delivery of high-quality support services; and
- doing all other things incidental or conducive to the achievement of these purposes.



OUR REACH



GCSS is committed to providing high-quality disability support services to communities across Bendigo, Gisborne, and Echuca. As part of its strategic growth, GCSS will continue to explore its footprint to better serve individuals along the corridor from Bendigo through to the northern suburbs of Melbourne. This region represents a significant area of growth and demand for disability services, and GCSS is focused on ensuring that people in these areas have access to the supports they need to live independently, build meaningful lives, and actively participate in their communities.

By strengthening partnerships with local organisations and service providers, GCSS is set to improve its capacity to deliver flexible and tailored support across both regional and semi-urban environments. As the needs of this growing region evolve, GCSS remains committed to responding with innovative solutions that enhance service accessibility and improve outcomes for all clients.

BUSINESS SNAPSHOT

We had **\$185,556** in Contracted Services

We had **\$14,669,671** in Wages

We had **\$12,963,338** in NDIS Services

We had **\$806,827** in Government Grants

Our commitment to empowering individuals through direct support, helping them navigate systems with coordinated guidance, and addressing specialised behavioural needs is a core of our values. The significant number of hours provided highlights the diversity of those we serve, from individuals with direct support to those benefiting from plan management and support coordination. These statistics underscore our role in supporting participants' growth, independence, and connection within their communities.

147,169

Total Direct Support
Hours Provided

6,417

Total Support
Coordination Hours
Provided

390

Total Behaviour Support
Practitioner Hours
Provided

Our 2022-2025 strategic plan is nearing its completion, and we are proud of the progress made over the past three years. As we look ahead, the Board and leadership team are actively working on developing our new strategy for 2025-2030. This forward-looking plan will build on our achievements and focus on ensuring continued growth, innovation, and service excellence, guiding us through the next phase of GCSS' evolution.

OUR BOARD



Dr. Dru Marsh

Chair



Prof. Christine Bigby

Vice Chair



Stacey Bloomfield

Secretary



Prof. Teresa Iacono



Nova Marsh



Julie Evans



Donna Petrusma

LEADERSHIP TEAM



Natasha Williams

Chief Executive
Officer



Shelley Moore

Chief Financial
Officer



Linton Ashley

General Manager
Operations



Neil Sing

General Manager
Resources



Reanna Stanway

Manager People
and Culture



Ash Griffin

Manager Support
Services



Tammy Elliot

Manager Support
Coordination



Adam Patten

IT Team Leader



Robyn Dalton

Deputy Chief
Financial Officer



Shane Mason

Senior Accountant



Beau McKenna

Marketing and
Business Development
Manager



Molly Brady

Leadership
Administrator

CHAIR'S REPORT

This has been a transitional year for GCSS as we change infrastructure, software, and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

In February 2024, Ian McLean retired as the CEO after 27 years. On behalf of the Board and the organisation I would like to recognise Ian for his years of service and note his appointment as a life member of GCSS. The Board also thanks Shelley Moore, our Chief Financial Officer, for acting as CEO throughout the transitional period.



Recognising the significant impact of replacing a leader with 27 years under the belt, the board resolved to invest in the search for the right fit to carry on Ian's legacy and ensure the resilience of GCSS in the face of an increasingly challenging environment.

We were delighted to have secured Natasha Williams as the new CEO from May 2024, with support from Jessica Airs and Kathy Townsend of Recruitment Ready. Natasha's energy, innovation and experience has had an instant impact on GCSS, and we look forward to supporting Natasha's priority to lead continuous improvement, growth and quality services.

For the financial year 2023/24, GCSS reports a deficit. Largely driven by planned capital and software investment. In previous years troubled by COVID we were unable to undertake these changes, so deferred investment until this financial year, utilising reserves accumulated in the meantime to implement strategically important software improvements in finance, rostering and with the implementation of a new client relationship management system. We also invested in much needed capital improvements, including energy efficient lighting and air conditioning at the Mundy Street building as well as updates to our fire protection system.



This year the disability sector has continued to experience the pricing pressures from the National Disability Insurance Scheme and much like other organisations of our size we have felt the impact. The consequence for regional providers is greater and remains a significant challenge for the GCSS Board as we look to chart the options available to remain resilient as a service provider and without compromising our values.

I am pleased to note the Board has supported the establishment of a Participant Advisory Group as an integral part of achieving our vision. This is a commitment to the people we support to have an opportunity to be genuinely involved in the strategy and operational delivery of the services GCSS provides now and into the future.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Board for their ongoing commitment and volunteering their time and effort during this year to continue to support GCSS. I acknowledge and thank all the employees at GCSS for their service and focus on providing best practice for the people we support. I pledge my own commitment to ensure the strategic planning period includes genuine consultation with our employees and the people we support as we look to plan a successful future for GCSS.

Dr Dru Marsh

Chair



CEO'S REPORT



As the incoming CEO, I was privileged to attend the Staff Service Awards as my first official event. This was an opportunity to recognise the service-year milestones of employees at GCSS. It had been several years since this celebration was able to occur and we look forward to being consistent and continuing this tradition.

Given this is the final year of our previous strategic plan (2022-2025), we facilitated strategic thinking workshops in June. This provided us with a sound analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This has given the Leadership Team some clear priorities and direction for the next year in developing the operational plan. This has positioned us well as we move into a new phase of strategic planning for 2025-2030.

GCSS continue to support the longitudinal study with La Trobe University in Person Centred Active Support. GCSS has been an enthusiastic participant in this study since its inception, which has contributed a solid evidence base for practice.

GCSS invests in its Practice Leaders and Practice Coaches to provide feedback, coaching, observations, and review to see best practice for the people we support. This ongoing investment into practice gives GCSS a point of difference when supporting people with disability.

GCSS continue to provide services to people in Bendigo, Echuca, Castlemaine, Gisborne and surrounds.

The supports provided include Supported Independent Living, Short Term Accommodation (respite), in home and community support, and groups including the choirs in Castlemaine and Bendigo.

CreateA is an arts-based group facilitated by GCSS to deliver dramatic arts and visual arts. GCSS also remain a Support Coordination and Plan Management provider with the NDIS.

I have felt extremely welcomed by the people employed and those receiving services with GCSS and the Board of Directors who have provided a diligent introduction and orientation. I look forward to a dynamic and exciting year which will prioritise best practice and quality outcomes for the people we support.

Natasha Williams

Chief Executive Officer

MAKING STRIDES

We recently supported a person with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to attend the Melbourne Show, which was her first major outing since the COVID-19 lockdowns. This was a big step for her, as she finds unpredictable situations, socialising, and making quick decisions challenging.

Throughout the day, staff ensured everything stayed within her control. For example, when ordering gelato, the attendant explained that cups were unavailable, offering the choice of a cone or an empty lemon half. Needing time to decide, she said, "I cannot make a decision like that quickly." Our staff stepped in at this point to suggest stepping to the side to talk about the options and make a decision. After five minutes of discussion, she was able to step back in and order her gelato, in a cone.

This approach demonstrates how our team followed the key principles of the GCSS practice framework. They respected Choice and Control, ensuring decisions were made on her terms. With Active Listening, staff were attuned to her needs and responses, and by maintaining Predictability & Consistency, they provided space to process decisions without pressure. This thoughtful support ensured she felt empowered throughout the experience. For the team, they are ecstatic to see the person achieve her goal of getting out and enjoying social events again.



VISUAL STORIES

This year, GCSS embarked on a unique visual storytelling project to celebrate the individuality and everyday experiences of our participants. Inspired by an employee's passion for photography, we collaborated to create a photo series capturing three participants in their daily lives, sharing authentic snapshots of who they are and what they do. This initiative reflects our commitment to highlighting the diverse and vibrant community we support, providing an intimate, visual representation of each participant. The work will be showcased at the 2024 GCSS Annual General Meeting, and we look forward to sharing it with the world thereafter.

We'd like to thank;

The participants, Leteshia, Phillip and Sue for opening up their homes and their lives for the purposes of this project.

Our Practice Leader and resident photographer Sarp Soyal for having the vision to create something remarkable and truly show the uniqueness of each individual.



Leteshia



Phillip



Sue

STAFF AWARDS

Our staff are the heart of GCSS, and their dedication to enhancing the lives of those we support is truly remarkable. This year, we proudly recognise the outstanding contributions of our long-serving team members.

5 Years

Kay Petschel
Rebecca Templer
Rozita Yaganegi
Mark Bertulfo
Michael Bonavita
Laura Cole
Anita Cooper-Houlahan
Anthony Day
Laura Ellis
Stephanie Gilmore
Sunny Gunasagaram
Mark Hicks
Rebecca Johnson
Jimmy Jose
Margaret Lenaghan
Melissa Pausic
Ebony Sayle
Maddieson Sheahan
Whitney Todd

10 Years

Maddy Niemann
Miriam Kerin
Meredith McDowall

15 Years

Linton Ashley
Ash Griffin
Catherine Doherty
Reanna Stanway
Alex Cotterell

20 Years

Lisa Bergmeier
Loretta Mannix

27 Years

Pam Kendrick

28 Years

Frances Brennan

31 Years

Brendan Aplin

2024
STAFF
SERVICE
AWARDS

PARTICIPANT ADVISORY GROUP (PAG)

The newly established PAG is a key initiative aimed at enhancing our understanding of the needs and experiences of the people we support. This group, comprising participants from a diverse range of backgrounds, provides a direct platform for feedback and input on our services. Each person engaged has been hired as a paid consultant, emphasising our commitment to valuing participant contributions and expertise. By engaging closely with the PAG, we ensure that participant voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes, allowing us to continuously improve our service delivery and better meet the needs of those we support. The insights gained from the PAG will be invaluable in shaping our future strategies and ensuring that our services remain person-centred.

From left to right; Leteshia, Tamara (Facilitator), Owen and Phillip



From left to right; Yvette, Connor, and Sue

SUMMARY

As we reflect on the past year, GCSS has continued to adapt, grow, and strengthen our commitment to delivering high-quality, person-centred support. Despite challenges, we remain steadfast, while launching key initiatives like the PAG. Our focus remains on the people we support, and we have made significant strides in supporting individuals to live more independently and inclusively in their communities.

Looking ahead, we remain optimistic about the future. With the conclusion of our 2022-2025 strategy on the horizon, we are excited to embark on the next chapter of our journey with a renewed focus on growth, innovation, and delivering even greater outcomes for our participants. We understand the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, and we look forward to continuing to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we support.



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