



Social  
Futures



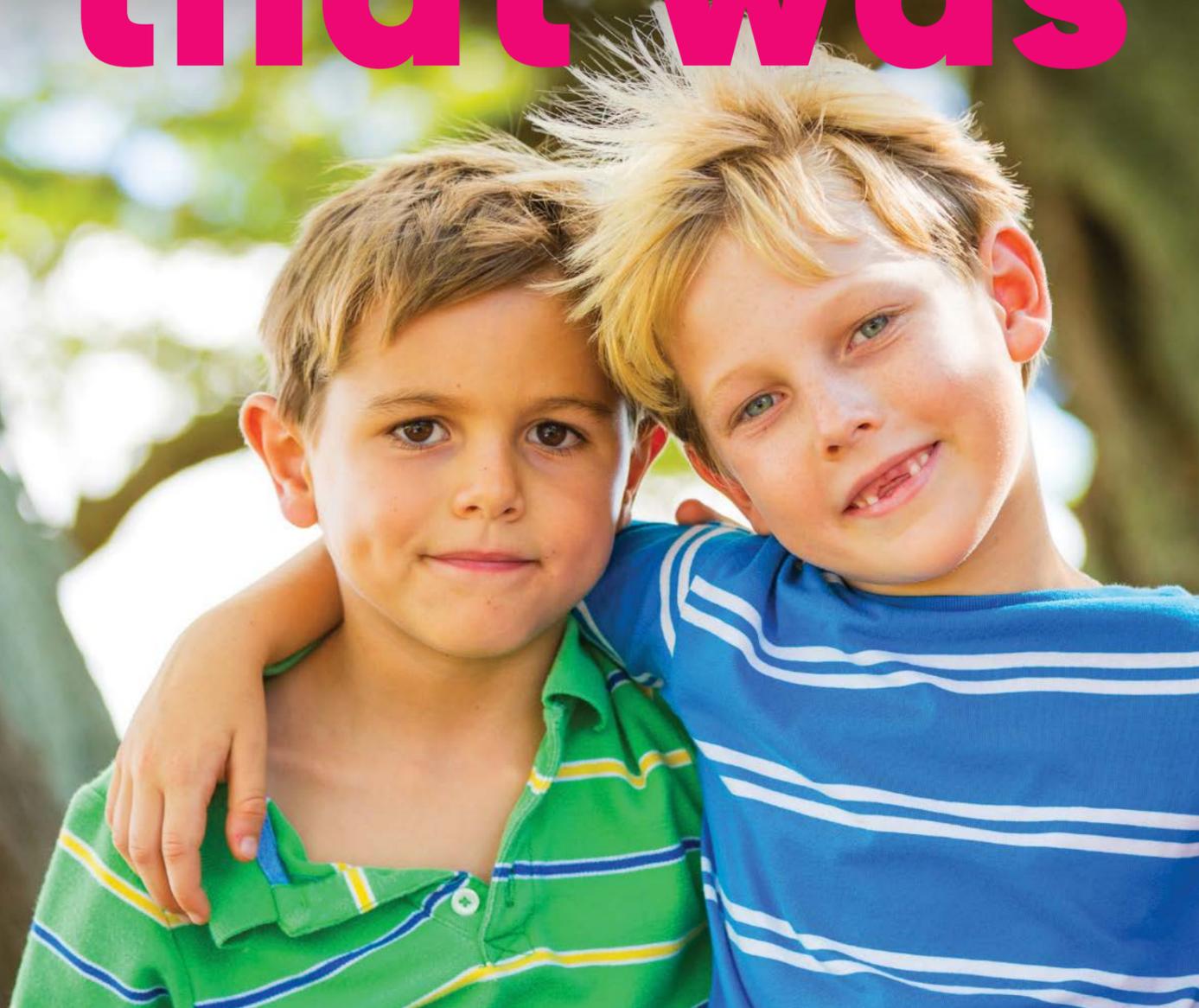
# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021





# The year that was



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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land where we live and work and their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.

# Positive social change



## 2020-21 snapshot

**20,517**

people supported on their journey to inclusion, wellbeing and independence

This was achieved through **23** programs and services  delivered by **315** staff

with **30** funder contracts  over **22** service centre locations

Including **9%**  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and **13%** people with lived experience of disability

**23**  government relationships and other partnerships **5** student placements

**12,682**

participants supported through our disability inclusion programs

**2,533**

participants supported through **4** housing, homelessness and employment programs

**1,543**

children, young people and their families supported through **7** youth, child and family programs

**2,413**

participants supported through **5** health and wellbeing programs

**1,967**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants supported across our footprint

**1,346**

participants at community and sector leadership workshops

**4,332**

community engagement activities

# Message from the Chair and CEO



Chair  
Pat Grier, AM



CEO  
Tony Davies

As always, we find motivation and inspiration in the extraordinary resilience and courage of the participants we work with.

## In a year of intense uncertainty that has been filled with both challenges and opportunities, Social Futures rose to the call and has much to be proud of.

Throughout 2020-21 we had the privilege of working with more than 20,500 Australians to create positive change in their lives. As the COVID crisis continued, we galvanised our commitment to serve our communities and importantly, we kept people safe. While the impact of lockdowns and COVID, especially on vulnerable populations, influenced the number of people accessing services this year, we are pleased to say that all our services remained open and accessible.

## Adaptability: an essential skill for these times

We further refined and adapted our COVID-19 responses. Staff who were able to, transitioned to working from home, and all staff were kept abreast of changing circumstances and new directives. We updated our COVID Safe Operational Model and introduced new processes and systems to ensure safety of participants and staff.

We found creative means to assist and support by taking services straight to community with our MOOV (Mobile Outreach Office) vans, delivering COVID rescue packages to our Family Connect and Support (FCS) and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants, introducing innovative virtual delivery services including telepractice and our LAC (Local Area Coordination) Connection desks.

## Expanding our capacity

Last July we welcomed 51 new colleagues into our two new Central Coast LAC Offices in Gosford and Wyong. We thank the Central Coast and the wider community for welcoming us so warmly.

We were delighted to be successful in our tender to deliver the NSW Government's new Family Connect and Support Program in Northern NSW and to partner with Pathfinders to deliver this service in the Mid North Coast. This new program replaces our long-standing Family Referral Service.

We successfully tendered for Care Connect - Suicide Aftercare Support in Kempsey and Bellingen; and Out of Hospital Care Services in Hunter and Far West NSW; and we welcomed news that we would be delivering StandBy Support After Suicide in an additional four regions - the Hunter New England and Central Coast; Western NSW; Far Western NSW and in the Gold Coast.

The first sods were turned on our innovative affordable housing complex, McKenzie Lofts.

In an innovative pilot program, we collaborated with the Department of Education and the Department of Juvenile Justice to take our youth programs - Clubhouse and Elements - to young people in custody at the Acmena Juvenile Justice Centre, South Grafton. The program provided young people with an opportunity to engage in new activities using tech and music apps, along with group art sessions, helping to increase awareness of their own strengths and interests and use tools to manage their wellbeing.

We were also delighted to be identified as the preferred tenderer to manage the Old Byron Hospital Site following its redevelopment as an exciting and innovative community hub and place of learning for the community.

The creation of a new senior position, our Senior Manager Aboriginal Leadership and Engagement, to support Our Mob and our community as both a service provider and an employer is recognition of the progress we know we need to continue to make in this space and our ongoing commitment to closing the gap.

With the expert guidance of our Board and Executive Staff members, we have re-developed our Strategic Plan to focus on three key pillars - Great Customer Service, Reputation for Excellence, and Sustainable Organisation - ensuring our goal of positive social change remains front and centre in all we do.

## A year of resilience and determination

2020-21 saw a continued strong focus on supporting staff by building and strengthening staff culture. We know that the work we do and the impact we have comes down to the way each and every one of us interacts with someone else - service users, our community or fellow colleagues. Our power is in our people.

Speaking of advocacy, we didn't rest on our laurels this year. Social Futures continued to raise awareness and champion causes close to our heart, including affordable housing and homelessness; joining the successful ACOSS campaign to maintain Federal Government

funding to Specialist Homelessness Services; advocating for a raise in Newstart and ongoing support via JobSeeker and JobKeeper for the unemployed and underemployed; and calling for further funding for youth mental health initiatives.

We would like to finish by thanking the amazing team at Social Futures for their hard work and dedication. Everyone has gone above and beyond to ensure our work has a profound positive impact in our communities. We also want to thank the Board for their guidance over the last year. We particularly want to thank Karen Hazan who stepped down from the Board after years of excellent service to the Board and Social Futures in general, including as Chair and Deputy Chair.

Finally, we want to thank the people that we work for, for the privilege of hearing their stories and allowing us to work with them as they make positive change in their lives.

**We look forward to continuing our work together to create more positive social futures in 2021-2022.**

**“Everyone has gone above and beyond to ensure our work has a profound positive impact in our communities.”**

# [ Who we are

For more than 45 years we have been creating positive social change. As a regionally based community services provider we are experts in tailoring programs to fit our diverse local communities. We are a regional leader and work alongside our partner organisations to strengthen and build capacity and collaboration within the community sector.

## Our vision

Thriving people, strong communities

## Our purpose

We work to achieve positive social change in our communities

## Our values

### Integrity:

do what is right

### Inclusion:

everyone matters

### Learning:

getting better at what we do

## What we offer

Connection is at the heart of everything we do. It is by connecting our participants to their communities, to services and to culture that we support them to thrive.



Our focus on connection is supported by comprehensive wrap-around services and a network of strong referral pathways.

## Our strategic objectives:



### Objective 1

Great customer experience



### Objective 2

Reputation for excellence



### Objective 3

Sustainable organisation

# [ Celebrating our people

The commitment, talent and passion of our people is by far our greatest asset in striving towards our vision and purpose.

**315** staff

**4** volunteers

**5** student placements

**14** private providers

**41** staff with lived experience of disability or carer of someone with disability

**28** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff

## Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to providing a supportive and inclusive workplace where our people can bring their best self to work each day.

Diversity and inclusion in the workplace creates an environment where all people can feel accepted and valued, they have a stronger sense of wellbeing and are more engaged within their community and workplace.

We acknowledge the Traditional Elders as the true Custodians of the lands where we live and work. We are committed to Reconciliation and Closing the Gap.



# Our capabilities and services



We believe that the best outcomes are achieved together. Our work is built on the quality of our people and the relationships they create with others.

Over four and a half decades, we have built a strong and extensive network of partnerships, referral pathways and collaborations with other service providers and sector organisations.

These capabilities, together with our diverse skills base, allow us to deliver a sustainable and person-centred model of support, working in a way that is safe, effective and accountable.

## Our services include:

Disability and inclusion

Mental health and wellbeing

Community and sector development

Families and children

Young people

Homelessness and housing

Employment support

### Gold Coast Bundjalung

- StandBy Support After Suicide
- Standing Strong

### Northern Rivers Bundjalung, Yaegl, Gumbaynggirr

- B-Space Ballina
- Choices Reproductive and Sexual Health Services
- Commonwealth Home Support Program
- Connecting Home (Adult, Complex, Youth, Northern Youth Program)
- Connecting You (HYAP)
- Clubhouse
- Early Intervention Connect
- Elements Youth and Family Relationships Program
- Family Connect and Support
- Getting it Together
- headspace Tweed Heads
- headspace Lismore
- Local Area Coordination for NDIS
- Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind
- Opportunity Pathways
- Reconnect
- StandBy Support After Suicide
- Tweed Assertive Outreach
- Youth on Track

### Hunter New England Kamilaroi, Ngarabai, Anaiwan and Nganyaywana, Geawegal, Wonnaru, Awabakal, Worimi

- StandBy Support After Suicide
- Out of Hospital Care (Hunter region only)

### Mid North Coast Gumbainggirr, Dunghutti, Biripi, Nganyaywana

- StandBy Support After Suicide
- Care Connect
- Youth on Track
- Reconnect

### Central Coast Darkinjung, Darkinyung, Kuring-gai

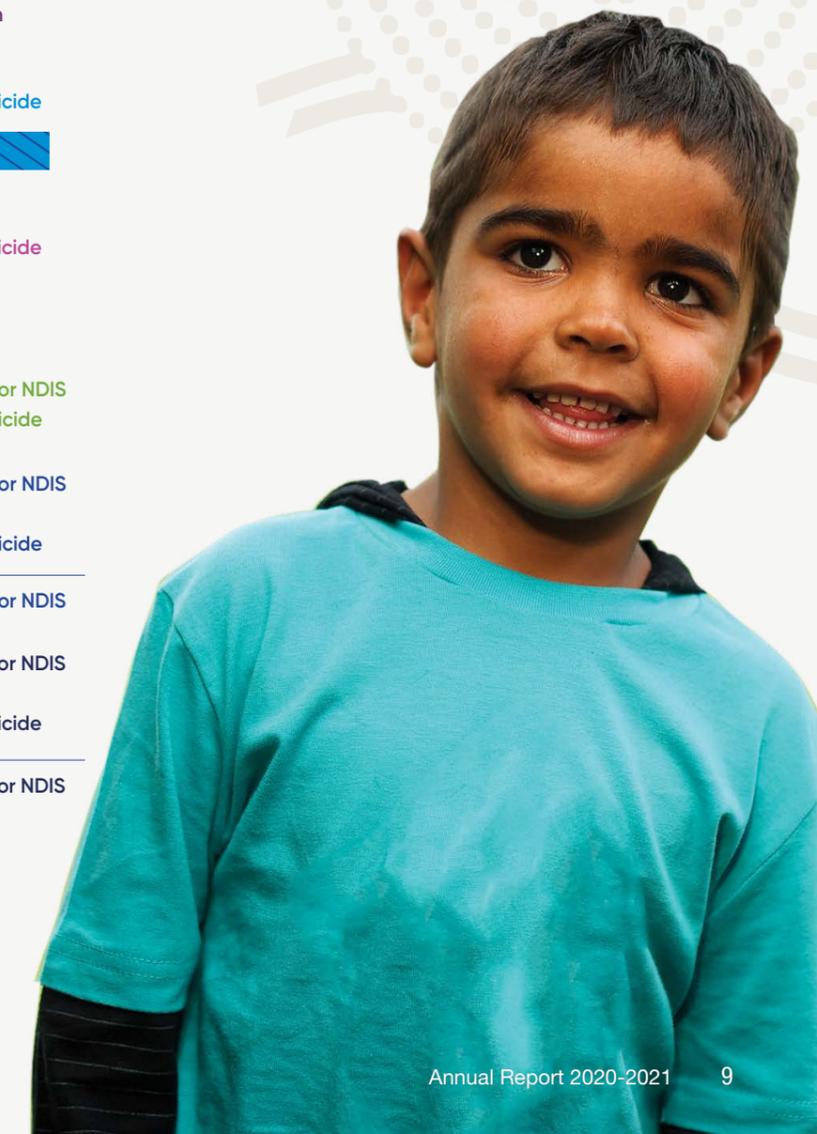
- Local Area Coordination for NDIS
- StandBy Support After Suicide

### Central West Wiradjuri

- Local Area Coordination for NDIS
- Out of Hospital Care
- StandBy Support After Suicide

### Far West Wilyakali

- Local Area Coordination for NDIS
- Out of Hospital Care
- StandBy Support After Suicide



# Reconciliation

## Gudjii Yingu, Giinagay, Jingi Walla, Yamaa, Binbee Karri, Yiradhu Marang

We know that reconciliation is a long process of learning, changing, remedying, and bringing others along with us. It cannot be achieved by rushing. It cannot be achieved without listening. And it requires commitment to those key pillars at the very heart of reconciliation:

Respect – for each other

Relationships – and the integrity and investment needed to make them strong

Opportunities – which are meaningful and address inequality

Targets – to hold us to account.

**9%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff members

**1,967** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants supported

**253** staff members undertook cultural awareness training

**20** programs formed or maintained partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations



# The year in highlights

## Senior Manager Aboriginal Leadership and Engagement

We welcomed Michele Laurie in this newly created senior leadership role designed to drive organisational change, support our growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, guide effective community engagement, and help us to develop skills in culturally appropriate work.

**“ I love that I can contribute to creating a higher level of positive change within our communities, as this role assists in strengthening our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and is a catalyst for tangible change. Supporting Social Futures to meet our organisational commitments, allows me to live out my own value of being the change that I wish to see in our world.”**

*Michele Laurie*

## First Annual Mob Meeting

This year marked our first annual cultural-centered staff conference. Mob members gathered to discuss cultural business, further develop cultural governance and leadership priorities, and provide cultural intelligence, feedback and consultation on best practice for Aboriginal workers and First Nations communities.

## Acknowledgement of Country video

Social Futures offices span many Aboriginal countries, from Wilyakali to Bundjalung, Kombumerri to Kuring-gai. Members of our Mob from across our footprint were involved in the writing and filming of a visually stunning Acknowledgment of Country film clip which was released for NAIDOC Week.

## Making progress: this year we

- completed Banaam cultural training (Board members) and Centre for Cultural Competence Australia (CCCA) Cultural Competency Training via our Learning Management System (staff members)
- supported the creation of the Cultural Conversations Strategy, linked to the development of the Cultural Humility Learning Journey
- educated Leadership Team members on cultural loading and cultural awareness when supervising Aboriginal staff
- identified new opportunities to do business with Aboriginal suppliers
- led key stakeholder engagement activities with services, community groups and individuals
- approved the Terms of Reference for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel with implementation of the Advisory Panel on track for December 2021
- adopted our new First Nations Employment and Retention Strategy.

# [ Using our voice

## Advocating for change

**We must strengthen our communities, empower people to thrive, and work to influence change in policy toward a more equitable future for all.**

Demand for social and affordable housing in regional Australia is at an all-time high with the most vulnerable members of our communities the hardest hit – forced to resort to sleeping in cars, caravan parks and on the street.

We advocated and voiced our concerns about inadequate housing and homelessness this year writing two submissions to NSW and Commonwealth Governments on housing strategy and homelessness.

Social Futures supports aligned campaigns for change. We are a proud partner to the Everybody's Home Campaign and joined more than 180 community organisations this year in a successful ACOSS campaign to maintain funding to Specialist Homelessness Services by reintroducing the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) supplementation.

We led initiatives to improve the sector – bringing together key stakeholders via the Northern Rivers Housing Forum to identify local housing needs, issues and collaborative solutions. We are also taking direct action by developing our own affordable housing site – McKenzie Lofts in Lismore.

## Championing inclusive communities

**For Social Futures, being seen, included, accepted and welcomed for who you are regardless of gender, status, culture or creed, is a human right, and fundamental to our organisational culture. We continue to work to achieve justice and equal access for all:**

- our **Access at a Glance** program audits and provides advice for businesses on increasing their accessibility for people living with disability
- our school inclusion program **Different on the Outside, Same on the Inside** works to tackle bullying head-on and provides a critical avenue for advocacy around disability at a community level
- we've changed our language. Led by our Rainbow Group and in consultation with Our Mob, the inclusion of Sistergirls and Brotherboys in our new **LGBTIQSB** acronym acknowledges culturally specific gender diversity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

**“ It's actually amazing to see Social Futures stepping out of so-called white boundaries to make us Indigenous brotherboys and sistergirls feel wanted too.”**

*Aunty Lil Manton, from the 'What's in a Gender Acronym' film clip.*

- we create opportunities to hear and share diverse voices in our communities: **Girmay Gebremdhin** spoke of his experiences growing up in war-torn Eritrea and his gruelling journey to Australian citizenship during Refugee Week; we also heard from Paralympic swimmer **Karni Liddell**, a passionate role model dedicated to expelling disability stereotypes
- Social Futures is a long-time advocate of the **Raise the Rate for Good** campaign, supporting real action on poverty and inequality in Australia via an increased base rate of the Jobseeker Payment.



# Strengthening communities and sector leadership

**88 workshops, meetings and forums delivered through 3 community sector development programs.**

As a regional leader we work alongside partner organisations to strengthen and build capacity within our sector by providing training, development and advocacy. We recognise the importance of bringing stakeholders together to share information, understand opportunities and challenges, and to reflect on and build our practice.

## Early intervention connect

In a year of great disconnect we continued to help early intervention workers come together through both online and face-to-face Better Chances Forum meetings, and in-person strengthening workshops for Australian First Nations workers.

Our Better Chances Forum, proudly funded by the NSW Government, matched schools with community services through a *Working Together* speed dating event in Tweed in collaboration with NSW Department of Education.

We toured our series of *Trauma Informed Care* and Practice workshops with Dr Derek Chong for early intervention workers across Northern NSW and reinforced these learning opportunities with reflective practice workshops. Our online workshop for executives and board members of early intervention services opened dialogue around organisational responsiveness to trauma and we conducted a needs assessment to inform our work with the sector over the next three years.

## Sector support and community education

Through Social Futures' Community Aged Care Sector Support program, funded under the Commonwealth Home Support Program, we work to foster and develop the home support service system.

Our Northern Rivers Community of Practice Ageing continued online, with local experts providing guidance on how to support older people, their families and carers with decision-making. During Seniors Week we collaborated with the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program to deliver six wellbeing workshops for carers of people with dementia.

Acknowledging the rising pressures that community aged care services are facing during COVID, we designed short online sessions to increase accessible training options for aged care staff. We also piloted a new approach in our signature reflective practice workshops on wellness and reablement to efficiently connect with busy workers.

## Transport development

Transport is integral to connected communities, social equality and inclusion, particularly in regional areas. June 2021 marked the end of our long-standing Transport Development Project, funded by Transport for NSW. The project focused on reducing transport disadvantage and improving access to affordable options in the Northern Rivers. Thanks to all stakeholders who collaborated to share information, understand transport challenges and find solutions. Part of the project legacy is [www.goingplaces.org.au](http://www.goingplaces.org.au), which Social Futures will continue to support in 2021-22 to assist access to transport information in Northern NSW.



# [ Expanding into new areas

## Expanding our services in Queensland and NSW

### StandBy - Support After Suicide

Due to the success of the program in Northern NSW, Social Futures has partnered with StandBy National to expand into four new areas in June 2021: the Hunter New England and Central Coast region, Western NSW and the Gold Coast. This is our first step in moving our services outside of NSW. The expansion of StandBy – an initiative funded by the Australian Government, is part of a funding goal to grow StandBy nationally and follows a study highlighting the program's positive impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of the bereaved, especially for those in remote and rural regions.

### Care Connect - Aftercare Service for Attempted Suicide

This year Social Futures established Care Connect, a suicide prevention service in the Bellingen and Kempsey Local Government Areas (LGAs). Care Connect is an assertive suicide prevention aftercare and case management service for people who have attempted or are at risk of suicide, to reduce the risk of repeated attempts. This Care Connect service is funded by Healthy North Coast through the North Coast PHN program

### Out of Hospital Care – continuing your care at home

From July 2021 Social Futures will provide Out of Hospital Care services on behalf of Community Options Australia across Lower Hunter and Far West NSW. The program organises for short-term, non-clinical in-home care – including personal care, domestic assistance, meals, transport, respite and social support – for eligible people after discharge from a public hospital.

## McKenzie Lofts - pioneering housing solutions

Northern NSW has some of the highest rates of homelessness and lowest rental affordability in Australia, with pressures on the housing market exacerbated by COVID-19 and high regional migration in 2020-21. Social Futures is aware that for our participants living with disadvantage or exclusion, access to appropriate and affordable housing is increasingly challenging, with many flow-on impacts.

We obtained our Tier 3 Community Housing Provider status in 2019, which enables us to deliver bespoke and appropriate affordable housing solutions. Construction of our McKenzie Lofts project began this year and Social Futures will be able to offer 12 self-contained units situated in the heart of Lismore by the close of 2021, to help meet community needs.

The McKenzie Lofts project aims to:

- introduce new housing stock that is affordable, functional, and aesthetically pleasing
- provide a housing option that is appropriate for single-person households including key workers, those who would otherwise have to share accommodation, or people living under temporary arrangements
- create an innovative and efficient housing model that acts as a pilot project to prompt future housing developments and attract investment into regional NSW.



# [ Our focus on excellence

**We invest to ensure our staff can bring their best to work every day: providing up-to-date tools and tech, training and development, strong governance frameworks, and opportunities to share and succeed.**

## Continually improving

Each year we find new and better ways to enable solid governance, effective decision making and ongoing quality improvements. In 2020-21 we implemented a new quality management system, to expertly manage incidents, hazards, feedback and operational risk. The system administers our contracts, holds organisational intellectual property and compliance requirements, and ensures integrity of data, quality reporting and accountability.

We developed a Quality and Clinical Governance Framework to guide the delivery of safe, effective, integrated, quality health systems.

## Focus on customer experience

With our customers at the heart of all we do, this year we:

- improved direct customer feedback channels
- integrated client management systems and phone networks to support the customer journey
- conducted market research to inform our new website development
- improved the look and feel of our offices, making them visible, inclusive and safer for all.

## Digital transformation

This year we successfully migrated multiple programs onto our bespoke client management system. It enables easy reporting through compatibility with government funder databases.

An emergency messaging system was implemented allowing rapid messaging with staff and mobile device management; and we safeguarded participant data, passing external cyber security audits.

## Practice excellence

We contribute to building staff capacity by:

- providing access to online courses and webinars
- launching new eLearning packages including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency, an Introduction to LGBTIQSB inclusive practice, and suicide-prevention courses.

## Learning from each other

Connecting to learn, share and grow our passions is integral to how we operate. Our Communities of Practice (CoP) meet regularly and include In Place and Space – our Community Engagement CoP, and Team Leader Connect CoP.

We learn from participant voices, incorporating lived experience into practice. Multiple staff and community reference groups advise, shape and inform our work, including our headspace YAGs (Youth Advisory Groups); Our Mob; our Disability Inclusion Peer Support Network, and our Disability Community Reference Group.



# Impact measurement

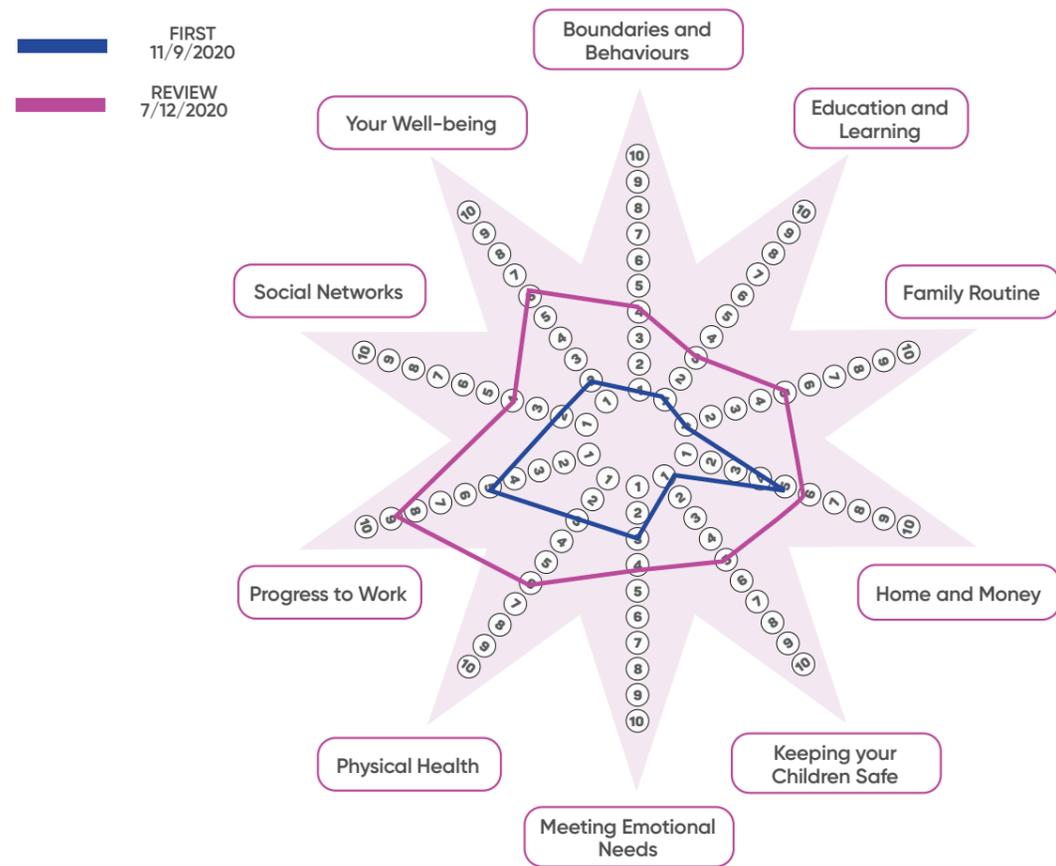
## Calculating our social value

We apply social cost-benefit analysis across all our programs to ensure we consistently deliver the best value for money to our government partners and funders.

## Outcomes Star

The Outcomes Star maps a journey of change for our participants, allowing us to capture the changes taking place in their behaviours, attitudes and lives.

An Outcomes Star from a Reconnect participant showing improvement across all ten categories.



**707** participants have completed Outcomes Stars

**82%** of participants reported improvements in areas important to them

The areas participants demonstrated most improvement were:

- People and Support
- Feelings and Behaviour
- How You Feel
- Health
- Confidence and Self-Esteem



# Resilience through COVID-19

**Social Futures demonstrated its aptitude for adaptability this year, rapidly responding to participants' changing needs and shifting circumstances during the global pandemic. As an essential service, our doors remained open and we continued to deliver our full range of programs.**

We learned to be agile in a new and volatile climate, moving between face-to-face and online environments as required and adapt our processes and systems to prioritise safety.

We found enterprising ways to connect and collaborate, including virtual appointments for participants, online facilitation and group meeting spaces; COVID-Safe Fun Activity Packs for schools and information packs. These approaches ensure participant safety, enable us to continue community engagement, share knowledge and provide updates about local services and resources. We also conducted a Vulnerable Participant project using welfare checks to extend supports to participants needing additional contact and assistance.

In some instances we were able to expand our engagement, such as through our Community Reference Group for Inclusion that could connect with new people across more of NSW due to virtual meetings.

We did not allow COVID to block service access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and prioritised their safety by taking an invitation-based approach responding to community need. For NAIDOC Week, when gathering together was not possible, Our Mob celebrated by creating and releasing a series of video clips on social media, spreading a message of strength, resilience and connection to culture.

We adapted and incorporated our learnings along the way. Whilst many participants embraced our telepractice and virtual services, we discovered that young people were less likely to access mental health support online due to privacy issues at home and found ways to maintain face-to-face options at headspace.



100% of services maintained through COVID-19



68 car cleaning kits distributed



3,140 face masks distributed and 101 refillable hand sanitisers distributed



58 COVID Bulletins produced

## Telepractice – developing high quality solutions

The abrupt transition to telepractice across the sector, left little immediate room for reflecting on the barriers encountered, and improving upon these virtual services. To this end, Social Futures has supported the Parenting Research Centre (PRC) and Karitane's Telepractice Venture, as a funding partner and member of their Community of Practice. The initiative brings together a group of NGOs to ensure that telepractice is an evidence-based, consistent and sustainable addition to in-person services for the families, children and young people we support.

## Supporting our staff

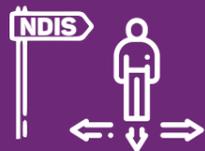
To support our staff, we:

- expanded our Leadership Team to increase support and connections
- provided timely COVID monitoring and updates with key information and resources
- operated a monthly COVID wellbeing survey providing insight into changing staff sentiment and wellbeing indicators, allowing us to bolster resilience where needed
- implemented paid leave to support staff for COVID vaccinations and recovery if needed.



# Disability and Inclusion

Social Futures works with people with disability, their families and carers to:



Help them access and understand the NDIS

Connect with community supports and services



Put their NDIS plans into action

Work towards making communities more inclusive and welcoming of people with disability



**12,682** participants supported through our disability inclusion programs

Disability inclusion staff:

**11.5%** with disability

**8.1%** care for someone with disability



## Local Area Coordination

Our Local Area Coordinators (LACs) assist people with disability to access the NDIS; to discover their goals; prepare individual plans; and to help turn goals into reality.

## Community outreach

Despite disruptions from COVID-19, our community outreach remained strong. Connection desks in a mix of locations allowed us to maintain vital points of contact in the community:

**66** community connection desks held across **24** different locations and **451** people directly supported with access applications, eligibility information and individual planning supports

**87** school connection desks held across **44** schools with **315** parents and carers supported. **61%** of sessions were delivered face-to-face and **39%** virtually

**103** co-located connection desks provided across **27** separate mainstream and community service organisations with **493** individuals supported via this outreach model over **12** months

## 2020-2021 NDIS LAC snapshot



**1,153** first plans implemented



**6,665** plan reviews implemented



**1,291** Information, Linkages and Capability (ILC) customers



**7.95%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants



**964** of wellbeing check calls made to vulnerable participants during COVID-19 pandemic

Social Futures has been delivering LAC services as a Partner in the Community for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).





## Happy in a home of his own

For Ross and Sandy Bailey, the NDIS provided great relief when their 19-year-old son, Chesney had his first plan approved. Chesney, who grew up on his parent's farm 50 kilometres outside of Forbes, has intellectual disability and autism. Ross says life pre-NDIS was difficult.

"We didn't have a lot of funding or support. I used to drive 200 kilometres a day, two days a week, to get Chesney to his after-school work at the biscuit factory."

Then they met Social Futures Local Area Coordinator, Tracey, and life became easier when she included transport funding in Chesney's plan. But Ross and Sandy worried about Chesney's future. He had lived with them all his life, and they knew they wouldn't be around to take care of him forever.

Change came when Ross and Sandy flew to New Zealand for their first holiday alone in 30 years. Chesney received NDIS funding for respite care, staying in an apartment with regular contact from support workers, and he discovered independence.

"He did whatever he wanted for two whole weeks while we were in New Zealand, and he's been badgering me to move out on his own ever since!" says Ross.

**“The knowledge he will have ongoing lifelong support from the NDIS if he needs it, is a great relief.”**

*Chesney's dad, Ross*

This year, Chesney moved into his own home. "He has more choice now over what he wants to do and how he wants to spend his time than he has ever had," Ross says.

Chesney goes to Orange or Dubbo every week with his support group where he visits the library, gym and pool.

"If you saw Chesney two years ago, he was a very different person. He actually says hello to people now. He smiles and has confidence. He has independence now and things to do with his time.

"Nowadays he has support funding for someone to come and visit him every day, to help him write a shopping list and make sure he isn't cooking himself fish and chips every night!"

"Being unwell myself, the knowledge he will have ongoing lifelong support from the NDIS if he needs it, is a great relief," says Ross.



## Fostering inclusion in schools Different on the Outside, Same on the Inside and Sports Ability

Our school inclusion programs – developed and delivered by staff members with lived experience of disability – continue to inspire positive results with significant impacts for both teachers and students.

We began the year delivering a single inclusion initiative – Different on the Outside, Same on the Inside – to schools across Central Western NSW. The program introduces children aged 8-11 to different types of disabilities. It uses activities and games to teach empathy, and provides a space to ask questions and interact directly with a person with disability.

The success of the program led to the creation of Sports Ability – our wheelchair sports program in Northern NSW, followed by a second Different on the Outside, Same on the Inside program for the Central Coast. There are plans to further expand the program to the Dubbo area of Western NSW and to develop a blind cricket program for the Central Coast in 2021-22.

**225 sessions delivered to 3,214 students across 43 schools**

**“Children in my class who have a disability were so happy to hear that being different is okay. It gave them confidence. I am now seeing the other children displaying more empathy.”**

*Teacher*

**“When we are doing the program, everyone is like me, and it makes me very happy.”**

*Year 2 student who uses a wheelchair*



# Shaped by lived experience

We are serious about our commitment to continuously improve participant experiences. One of the ways we do this, is by listening to, and learning from, those with lived experience.

## Community Reference Group

Our LAC Community Reference Group (CRG) comprises people living with disability, their families and carers. The group meets bimonthly to discuss opportunities for inclusion and improving accessibility to work, education, mainstream services and community life. Learnings from this shared space inform our community-based initiatives and LAC practices.

This year our CRG was instrumental in helping to design and develop our Paper Wings web project and the Different on the Outside, Same on the Inside school inclusion program for the Central Coast.

**“It makes me feel that I’m still part of the community. It’s been really good meeting all of the people and understanding everybody else’s needs and opinions and I really look forward to this. I was always a very social, outgoing person and I just thought I had lost not only my independence, but basically, I lost my life. And a small thing like this has really given that back to me”**

*CRG member*



## Flying high on Paper Wings

Our Paper Wings initiative recognises that social connectedness and community are central to thriving wellbeing – and never more so than in times of physical separation and disconnect. Launched this year, the website showcases personal stories of people who have experienced the changes, challenges and triumphs of life with a disability.

**“I hope the people who put their message forward feel that gift of generosity. That by sharing their experiences they can help someone else to understand their own.”**

*Lynda Hope, creator, Paper Wings*



## Look Twice

Scott Age: 52

“When first diagnosed with a visual impairment, my immediate response was to think of all the things I wouldn’t be able to do. This place of negativity was isolating and depressing. It wasn’t until I spoke to others in the same situation that I realised I do have options and opportunities. I know how important it is to hear positive and encouraging stories told by people with a similar disability. Personal stories offer hope and deliver pathways that can help others work towards improving their circumstances and enhancing their life goals.”

Paper Wings Contributor, Scott Jones.

[paperwings.socialfutures.org.au](http://paperwings.socialfutures.org.au)

## Inclusion Peer Network

Social Futures Disability Inclusion Peer Network Group is for staff with lived experience of disability, their family and carers. The group shares skills and knowledge, offers mutual peer support, and provides guidance as to how Social Futures can better celebrate and promote workplace inclusion for people with disability.

Staff members from across our footprint in Northern, Western and Central NSW regularly come together for the Network, strengthening branch connections and improving our practices across the organisation.

## Spreading a message of inclusion

As a diverse employer, inclusion is integral to our cultural fabric. This year, Social Futures created a video to engage and share knowledge with other businesses and organisations about the advantages and realities of inclusive workplaces. Staff with lived experience of disability from across the state contributed to the series, created as a tool to build employers’ understanding of the benefits of inclusion at work.



## Helping others recover their joy

At 19, David Johnson's life took a dramatic turn when a friend pulled up in his dad's new car.

"I told mum I'd be going for a quick ride, I'd be back in five minutes," David, known as DJ recalls. "I came home twelve months later, minus a bit." The 'bit' DJ is referring to is his leg.

Fast forward 31 years and DJ has three World Cups, two Silver World Cups, two Bronze World Cups and an Olympic silver medal after representing Australia in wheelchair tennis around the globe, including the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

It's a massive achievement, but DJ says embracing life as a person with a disability hasn't always been easy. Two weeks before his accident he read an article in the newspaper about a wheelchair tennis player. He remembers leaning over to his friend and saying, "I just don't know what I'd do if I ended up in a wheelchair. How does this guy do it?"

Two weeks to the day came the crash. "And that guy I was reading a news article about, was the guy that used to come to the hospital when I was in the rehab unit, the sports coordinator, David McNaught," DJ says.

18 months after his accident DJ made a call to Sporting Wheelies and found a new sense of purpose. Later, in Sydney he met top-ten tennis player David Hall, and with dreams of making it big, DJ said to him - "Dave, you and me will play doubles in the Olympics one day."

DJ knew what it was going to take and he had fire in his belly. "I was confident. There were no barriers that were going to stop me. I slept at the courts. I'd serve thousands of tennis balls, swim 1.2 km with paddles on my hands because I didn't have use of my legs. I set myself a goal and that was where I was going to go."

The rest is history.

**"It is like winning the lotto. I get up in the morning and look forward to coming to work, to getting out and making a difference. This job has changed my world."**

DJ



DJ with Donna -  
Murwillumbah Tennis Club

Nowadays DJ helps others find that fire. Returning from the Olympics and after years of uninspiring work, DJ landed his dream job working for Social Futures as a Local Area Coordinator (LAC).

DJ's days are spent supporting others to access and understand the NDIS, and to get the most out of their plan. One of those people is 34-year-old mother of three, Donna. A full-time manual wheelchair user, Donna wanted to learn to play a wheelchair sport to improve her mental and physical health.

**"I know the power of sport, and what it did for me following my accident."**

DJ's experience made him a perfect match. He supported Donna and her local tennis coach to develop practice drills, find sports wheelchair hiring options, and to improve accessibility of the local courts. He also made contact with two other participants in the area, both recent wheelchair users, with an interest in sport.

Understanding how therapeutic sport can be, DJ supported the three to come together for a friendly basketball match. They loved it so much, they quickly organised another, and nowadays meet regularly, travelling to the Gold Coast to watch and participate in wheelchair basketball.

"I know the power of sport, and what it did for me following my accident. It's a huge privilege to be able to help others recover their joy and spark through exercise and the social aspects that come along with it."



# Housing, Homelessness and Employment

Social Futures is a leading provider of homelessness and housing support services in Northern NSW. We work with adults, young people and families to provide:

- early intervention
- case management
- referrals
- outreach



• sector leadership, information sharing and capacity-building

- advocacy for better housing outcomes



We also provide employment services for people in social housing, supporting their access to education, training and employment, with the aim of gaining greater housing independence.

**18.5%**  
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants

**2,533**  
participants supported through **4** housing support, homelessness and employment programs



## Homeless in a pandemic

Suitable housing is a fundamental human need and resolving housing issues needs to be a priority.

The combined effects of pandemic, fires and floods exacerbated an already overloaded system this year with participants across the breadth of Social Futures' services impacted by a lack of adequate housing.

Cost-of-living pressures, rising rents, evictions and low vacancy rates, teamed with significant population movements into regional areas increased service demand, and with this, challenges in progressing housing outcomes. Despite this, we continued to house people in private and social housing this year.

Our program workers meet people at different points on the housing continuum – from early intervention for those at risk of becoming homeless, through to addressing long-term rough sleeping. Social Futures' collaborative wrap-around approach and strong networks means we are uniquely placed to meet people where they are, connecting them with timely, appropriate supports.

The programs on this page are proudly funded by the NSW Government.

## Connecting Home

Connecting Home is a program which supports young people, adults and families across the Northern Rivers who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to identify and source sustainable housing.

Longer periods spent homeless correlate with more complex needs. Connecting Home has dedicated resources to assist people with higher support requirements and we work to pave our participants way toward reconnecting with community.

Young people are presenting with increasingly complex needs. Our capacity in this area includes quick response into support systems such as emergency and short-term housing. The Rent Choice Youth subsidies and support provided by the Department of Communities and Justice has offered welcome reinforcement and assisted us in housing 87 young people in the private rental property market in the Tweed, Richmond and Clarence regions.

## 2020-21 Connecting Home snapshot



**2,302** participants supported



**17%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants

## Connecting You

Connecting You (HYAP) is a specialised program that supports young people aged 12-15 years who are having problems at home, or are at risk of becoming homeless, to get connected with family, friends, work, school and the community. Our dedicated team works tirelessly with young people and their families to secure respite placement options, therapeutic support and support in maintaining education.

## 2020-21 Connecting You snapshot



**44** young people supported



**29.6%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

## Support for People Sleeping Rough – the Premier's Priority

The Tweed Assertive Outreach initiative commenced in late 2019 as part of NSW Government's commitment to halve street homelessness across the state by 2025. It has identified and supported over 130 participants into Temporary Accommodation, from which approximately 100 people (75%) have been permanently housed.

## 2020-21 Tweed Assertive Outreach snapshot



**58** rough sleepers supported on their journey to secure stable housing



**27.6%** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

## From the catwalk to her car

Charlene has lived a big life. Born in England, she moved to Tokyo when she was 18 where she worked for 10 years as a catwalk model. There she married a Japanese martial arts expert and at 27 moved to the Gold Coast, where her husband promoted kick-boxing tournaments.

Charlene is now 52 and has spent most of the pandemic living in her car around Tweed Heads. But in February she met a worker from Social Future's Connecting Home program and today she has a home.

After Charlene's marriage ended in 2005, she and her three children rented around the Gold Coast until her children one by one left home.

"Two years ago, it was just me and one of girls. We were living in a small unit and it was sold. My daughter went to live with a friend, but I had nowhere."

"I knew my children were safe so I packed up everything in my car and stayed with a friend for a few nights then I lived in my car near the Gold Coast Arts Centre, thinking, 'What am I going to do?' I wasn't happy on the Gold Coast, so I took off to Murwillumbah and found a job."

Charlene was working in the horse racing industry and had a room to rent, but a back injury saw her hospitalised. Her job ended, and again the place she was renting was sold.

"All my stuff was in my car. Sometimes I rented a room, but the places were pretty feral. At one point I'd been living in my car straight for nine days. That morning the Social Futures mobile homeless support service came – Connecting Home. They found me by the river, and asked 'Are you okay?'"

"I explained that I'd just left another place because I didn't feel safe. I said 'I don't know what to do. I have no money. It's just me and my car.'"

"I had nothing ... all the caravan parks were closing because of COVID. I couldn't even get a campsite."

**"I explained that I'd just left another place because I didn't feel safe. I said 'I don't know what to do. I have no money. It's just me and my car.'"**



Charlene in her new Tweed Heads unit

They put me in a motel room. I was there for four months and then a place came up at Tweed Heads.

"Having a place to live has given me peace of mind that I haven't had for years. I'm not stressing about paying the rent all the time or looking for work. I feel I've had time to heal myself. I can breathe. They even helped me get a new fridge, it was mind-blowing. I kept asking myself, 'Who would do this for people?'"

"I now have a fully furnished unit and amazing people around me who do care about me and my story and what I've been through."

**"I feel I've had time to heal myself. I can breathe. They even helped me get a new fridge, it was mind-blowing. I kept asking myself, 'Who would do this for people?'"**

Once Charlene had her own place, Connecting Home referred her to Social Futures Opportunity Pathways Program, a specialist Employment and Training program and part of Charlene's wrap-around support services.

Charlene has completed the Step into Tomorrow course, and is now keen to enrol in a 20-week business course.

"I want to update my computer skills at the business course so I can re-establish my connections in horse training."

"My goal is to one day work in horse-therapy. People connect with horses at workshops to heal trauma. It has been shown to help survivors of domestic violence, children with autism and others who've faced challenges."

"My children are so happy to see me set up in my unit. I don't think I would have survived without their unconditional love. I still see other homeless people and I tell them not to lose hope, not to give up. Something will happen."



## NSW End Street Sleeping Collaboration

NSW is the world's first state government to sign up to the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH) to end street sleeping. Social Futures worked in partnership with the NSW End Street Sleeping Collaboration, Byron Shire Council and community stakeholders to conduct the first Northern Rivers Connections Week to survey the Shire's rough sleeping population.

72 people were identified as sleeping rough, 20% of whom had been sleeping rough for over 10 years.

This was an important first step toward improving service coordination and collaboration. It will also help to inform the template for the Premier's Priority Initiatives across the region.

## Opportunity Pathways

Opportunity Pathways Program (OPP) is an innovative three-year pilot program proudly funded by the NSW Government to provide coaching, training and employment-focused case management services for people aged 17 or older who are receiving social housing assistance. The program is voluntary and offers flexible, tailored support to participants in the Northern Rivers NSW including access to pre-employment training or retraining, developing interview skills and finding suitable employment.

**“ I will definitely recommend Opportunity Pathways to assist any one with finding employment... other agencies don't help the same way that Social Futures have helped me, they are more personal than other agencies who might tell you to apply for 20 jobs that don't suit you.”**

Participant

## 2020-21 Opportunity Pathways snapshot



129 participants engaged in OPP services



62 participants commenced paid employment



36 participants supported with training and education



42 participants were helped to access support



38% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants



# Families and Children

We support children, young people and their families to reach their full potential with person-centred, strengths-based, and evidence-informed services. Our no-wrong-door approach, outreach in remote areas and collaboration with schools and other organisations means we are able to reach vulnerable young people wherever they live. We provide:

**1,543**

children, young people and their families supported through **4,045** sessions with **7** youth, child and family programs.

- family counselling and mediation
- psychological and mental health services
- alcohol and other drugs (AOD) support
- educational re-engagement
- housing and homelessness
- family skills
- family planning
- early offender intervention
- youth capacity-building
- therapeutic counselling and group work
- early intervention
- case management
- assessment and planning services
- intake and referrals
- inclusion
- community engagement
- outreach
- sector leadership, information sharing and capacity-building



## Family Connect and Support (FCS)

Family Connect and Support launched in January 2021 replacing the longstanding Family Referral Service. Proudly funded by the NSW Government, the program helps children, young people and families to connect with appropriate services at the right time.

All families are different and face unique challenges so FCS provides individualised support, taking into account a family's needs, strengths, resources and networks to build sustainable, positive changes.

We offer practical support, information and advice around financial stress, substance use, family breakdown, housing, mental health, and domestic and family violence, and we stay in contact with families if there is a wait for services.

### 2020-21 Family Connect and Support snapshot

-  **734** families referred over 6 months
-  **24.4%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants
-  **30%** experiencing domestic or family violence
-  **60%** experiencing mental health and wellbeing concerns
-  **6%** of families had a disability
-  **6.5%** experiencing housing/homelessness

Our flexible service delivery model shone in the last year, allowing us to adapt to families' particular needs in volatile times. We are especially proud of our new **Working with Mob** plan, helping us to deliver culturally appropriate support in Aboriginal communities and universal settings.

FCS thinks innovatively about brokerage and ways to respond to unforeseen events. We are active members in local and state leadership forums and co-chaired the NSW Communities of Practice with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

We have influenced program design through rich robust conversations with funder DCJ, and this strong relationship - alongside our Pathfinders partnership - has enabled a consistent approach across the contract footprint of Mid North Coast and Northern NSW.

Since its launch, FCS successfully developed a new reporting platform to capture important data and recruited new team members, whilst ensuring continuity of service.

## Getting it Together

Getting it Together (GIT) helps young people aged 12-25 find opportunities for positive change in relation to their drug and/or alcohol use, building self-esteem and improving their life skills through individual and family-focused interventions, support and group work. Goal directed therapy assists participants, with concrete signposts guiding the treatment process. Culturally informed group work for Aboriginal people, focusing on early intervention and education, continues to be an important component in service delivery. This has been undertaken in Aboriginal communities and local schools, whilst navigating the challenging impact of COVID restrictions.

### 2020-21 Getting it Together snapshot

-  **114** young people supported
-  **11%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants

## Youth on Track

Youth on Track (YOT), funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, is an early intervention service for 10 to 17-year-olds that offers intensive one-on-one support to young people in Coffs Harbour and Grafton local government areas who have had formal contact with the police.

The scheme helps young people to identify behavioural and mental health issues, work on solutions, reduce risky behaviour and make positive life choices. We do this via tailor-made case plans and the use of cognitive behavioural therapy, working closely with young people and their families to identify triggers to offending.

### 2020-21 Youth on Track snapshot

-  **48** young people supported
-  **52%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants
-  **73%** reduced or stabilised formal contact with the police post referral
-  **82%** reduced their risk of re-offending at program completion
-  **60%** of high-risk young people improved their education and employment risk factors
-  **72%** of high-risk young people improved their family and community risk factors

Youth on Track has continued to work proactively to reduce re-offending by the young people and prevent their long-term involvement in the criminal justice system. The YOT team use many innovative interventions and strategies to engage with young people and work towards addressing problematic behaviours.

In this last year, these have included: supporting and linking with key youth week activities including coordination of BMX, scooter and skateboard competitions where YOT provided prizes and staff support; linking and supporting Whoopi Warriors - an early morning fitness program for young people; day events at Aqua Park; surfing; fishing and a Treetops High Ropes course.

We have also established and coordinated sports teams including basketball teams in Coffs and Clarence Valley and other group-based activities such as Yarning Circles and art-based groups. The YOT trailer has been used to provide food and drinks at various events and activities, including an Aboriginal Men's and Boys' Health tour across Clarence Valley.



## Reconnect

Reconnect provides early intervention for young people aged 12-25 years at risk of becoming homeless due to the breakdown of family relationships. We take a broad and holistic perspective as we work to stabilise the young person's living situation. We aim to strengthen relationships within the family as well as establish wider connections in the community to bolster positive change.

Our support and interventions include family therapy and mediation sessions, intensive case support, advocacy for wider community supports and group work on parenting skill development. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, we have continued to provide services across the Northern NSW region in an outreach capacity including Tweed, Lismore, Grafton, Yamba, Ballina, Murwillumbah, and Mullumbimby. The adaptability of the team over the last year has allowed us to maintain supports through online sessions and telehealth and we reflect continuously on our learnings to offer the best possible participant experience.

## 2020-21 Reconnect snapshot



**111** young people and families supported



**5.4%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants

## Clubhouse

The Clubhouse is a safe, creative after-school learning environment for 12 to 18-year-olds to explore their own interests, engage in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)-rich activities, and interact with peers and mentors. The Clubhouse approach to learning leverages technology to empower young people from all backgrounds to become more capable, creative, and confident learners. Proudly funded by the NSW Government, it is a model that exists across the globe, however, with the impacts of COVID our Lismore-based Clubhouse and outreach to Ballina have been among the very few able to operate during what was a challenging and rewarding year.

## 2020-21 Clubhouse snapshot



**138** active members



**235** young people supported

**486** sessions delivered

## Outreach to Acmena Youth Justice Centre

In January, we were invited to deliver components of our Clubhouse and Elements (Youth and Family Relationships Services) programs in Acmena Youth Justice Centre in Grafton, as a joint initiative with the Departments of Justice and Education. Expertise from these Social Futures programs includes extensive experience in working with youth in group facilitation, therapeutic and education and community-based settings.

Social Futures staff delivered two workshops a day over two-weeks of school holidays with male participants aged 12-21 years.

Approximately 10-13 young people engaged in the program each day, completing a range of activities linked to the overarching goals of connection and building self-confidence and awareness through engagement with art, music, technology and targeted, meaningful conversation. The program was well received by participants and we would welcome the opportunity to participate in similar programs in the future.

## 2020-21 Acmena Outreach snapshot



**90%** agreed they'd learnt something new



**100%** felt included and listened to by Social Futures staff



**80%** said they felt more confident expressing issues that are important to them

## Fleeing war and hardship, 'remarkable' Margaret builds a safer life for her seven sons

**"My life," Margaret says lightly while gesturing the sign of a wave, "has been a little bit difficult." In fact, Margaret's story is one of almost unbelievable resilience. By the time she and her husband arrived in Australia in 2008 with four sons in tow, she had already experienced more insecurity, hardship and loss than many do in a lifetime.**

Margaret had fled civil war in Southern Sudan and taken flight from violence in a Ugandan refugee camp. She lived through assault, a serious bus accident, and an attempt to abduct one of her children. After eight years in a Kenyan refugee camp, she and her family were accepted as humanitarian refugees by Australia.

While Margaret was relieved, "I really felt free, finally," she says, the transition was difficult, "... it was hard... I had no English - I could not even ask for water." With her traumatic background, a large family, poor English skills and initial dependence on government welfare, life in Lismore NSW was tough.

Social Futures first met with Margaret in 2016.

"Securing a house wasn't easy," explains Fiona Halligan, Program Manager of Family Connect and Support service. "Even back then, there was a rental shortage. We did a lot of advocating and collaboration with other services to make it happen."

Shortly after moving into their new home, more misfortune struck. A family member suffered an acquired brain injury and one son became seriously ill. Now caring full time and unable to work, money became short and the family was evicted. For Margaret, the stress became almost unmanageable.

"I was ready to take up the carpet and spread it out in the park and go and live with my family there!" she says. Again, Social Futures helped advocate for secure housing for the family.

Finding a safe place to call home is crucial, but it's just the start in many ways. Other, 'wrap around' services are needed. Through Social Futures, Margaret and her boys have accessed multiple services including legal advice, Centrelink social workers, trauma counselling, and other mental health supports.

Her family has been connected to the Family Support Network, health services, YWCA, vacation care, education providers and the Social Futures Opportunity Pathways Program - through which she secured regular employment, now working as an Early Childhood Educator.

Margaret says the new employment is life changing. "To be able to build a life for herself and her boys, so far from her community, and after what she has lived through is just incredible," Fiona Halligan said. "Margaret is a remarkable human being."



# Mental Health and Wellbeing

Social Futures supports mental health and wellbeing across our suite of programs. We also deliver specialised services in the fields of early-intervention mental health services for young people, sexual and reproductive health and suicide prevention and postvention.

## headspace

Social Futures delivers headspace early-intervention mental health services to 12 to 25-year-olds in Lismore and Tweed Heads. Managing the rising demand for services as young people struggled with the impacts of COVID-19 – often presenting with increasingly complex needs – has made the year both challenging and rewarding. We have responded through the provision of flexible options including e-mental health, school workshops and groups, working creatively to ensure that as an essential service we continue to support young people in a safe way, whether through face-to-face or virtual offerings. Our Yarn Safe workers offer culturally informed mental health supports for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and work towards increasing community engagement with headspace services.

Moving forward, our aim is to maximise our capacity to respond to needs that sit outside the traditional referral model by offering diverse service delivery models to assist with early intervention, increased support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people within a cultural framework, and support for those with disabilities.

We are also working to increase young people's awareness of and engagement with e-headspace – including online group chats and professionally led sessions for young people, their family and friends – as a vital form of support during times of COVID-restricted activity and for those awaiting face-to-face services.

**2,413** participants supported through **5** health and wellbeing programs and **8,519** sessions

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health

### 2020-21 headspace snapshot

**1,401** young people supported

**5,771** sessions delivered

**11.35%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants

**18.99%** LGBTIQSB young people

**5.21%** culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people



# Zee flies high with support from headspace

Zee is only 20 years old, but already she has proven that it's possible to reach the highest highs (literally) after struggling with your mental health. Zee is learning to fly and loving life, but only a couple of years ago she was struggling with anxiety and depression. Zee says headspace helped her to build confidence, coping skills – and fly high!

Zee was bullied at school because she was perceived as different. She identifies as gender fluid and pansexual. As a teen she had suicidal thoughts. (An LGBTIQSB young people's charity, Just Like Us, found in a survey that 68% of LGBT+ young people experience suicidal thoughts.)

Zee first visited headspace when she was 14 years old.

"I'd just finished Year 9 and I was having so much trouble with my peers at school. I was being badly bullied and that really affected my mental health and my body image. I never got diagnosed but I think I had anorexia because I was starving myself," she says.

Zee had hit an all-time low and was suffering from depression and anxiety. headspace referred her to an acute mental health service, and Zee began journeying back to health.

After school she worked in childcare and moved in with her partner, but the relationship was at times troubled, and Zee wasn't happy at work.

Her depression and anxiety returned, so at 18 she went back to headspace – and that changed her life.

Zee found the courage to pursue her passion, flying. She is now taking flying lessons. She also quit her full-time job, where she wasn't happy, and began working casually, which she is enjoying.

"headspace helped me identify workplace options and work through relationship issues – we're really good together now. My parents have also been so supportive of me," she said.

"I've just gotten my recreational pilot license and am flying by myself and having a really good time."

Zee's dream is to become a commercial pilot with the Flying Doctors Service and her relationship has also improved.

"headspace also helped me learn how to stay calm, by giving me skills and strategies to deal with challenging situations. I take time to step out, breathe and feel confident."

Zee is thankful she twice used the services of headspace and she is excited about her future – the sky's the limit!



## Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind

Mijung Jarjums (Happy Kids in Bundjalung language) Kids in Mind is an early intervention service designed to support children and young people at risk of mental illness, their families and carers, within Lismore and Richmond Valley local government areas.

We focus on building resilience and emotional wellbeing through flexible, responsive, non-clinical mental health support such as group work, counselling, and long-term case management.

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, our program maintained its presence in schools and preschools this year, strengthening existing connections and developing excellent new relationships, while delivering wellbeing and resilience groups for students and ongoing support for teachers. We adapted our resources, creating and distributing activity packs for use during online sessions to support young people experiencing increased anxiety due to the pandemic. Where possible we continued vital face-to-face offerings, including working with children to create books about their connections to Country at the Kyogle Writers Festival.

### 2020-21 Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind snapshot

 **228** children, young people and parents supported

 **15%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants

## Elements Youth and Family Relationships

Elements is based in Lismore and provides free counselling services for ages 10-24 and their parents via individual and group sessions, to assist in building supportive and positive family relationships. The program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

We aim to improve quality of life by addressing issues such as: managing relationships, alcohol and drug misuse, mental health, anger management, grief and loss and trauma. We also offer family capacity building, support around kinship care, referrals to and group sessions in collaboration with other services, and deliver healthy relationship programs to schools.

The program has continued to operate throughout the year providing flexible options during COVID-19, when we noted an increase in complexity of needs.

Our primary focus has been on reducing the impact of immediate crises, increasing social and emotional wellbeing, and fostering linkages back into community and support networks.

### 2020-21 Elements snapshot

 **59** participants  
**1** sector community engagement

 **9** group sessions  
**263** individual occasions of service

 **175** counselling sessions

 **13.6%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants

 **5.1%** with a disability

## Choices

Choices is a free (bulk billed) reproductive and sexual health clinic for people in Lismore and the surrounding Northern Rivers. The service is funded by Northern NSW Local Health District and specialises in sexual health, gender affirmation, women's health, cervical screening and support around unplanned pregnancy. We are proud to be building on our reputation as an increasingly safe space for our LGBTIQSB community.

This year Choices has grown in response to demand – we have seen more participants and expanded the scope of our services to offer medical terminations of pregnancy and gender affirming hormone management. Both services are fast becoming core offerings at our clinic. We are growing our partnerships with key organisations in the region, strengthening our referral pathways and more efficiently meeting need in the community.

### 2020-21 Choices snapshot

 **509** participants supported  
**35%** were new participants

 **1,732** occasions of service

 **15.9%** of new participants identified as LGBTIQSB

 **2.6%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants

 **9.8%** culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people

## StandBy – Support after Suicide

StandBy Support after Suicide is a postvention service that provides person-centred, trauma informed support, assistance and coordinated response to anyone bereaved or impacted by suicide – including individuals, families, witnesses, first responders, workplaces and schools. From 2013 Standby has operated across Northern NSW from Tweed Heads to Port Macquarie and in 2021, received funding to expand into three new areas in the coming year.

Throughout the year StandBy also contributed to community development, interagency and education initiatives – participating in the Better Chances Forum and research with the Black Dog Institute, and delivering high-quality workshops to Social Futures staff and organisations including Lifeline, Aboriginal Corporations and the Police. In June, we hosted the Deadly Thinking program, which focuses on support strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities impacted by suicide.

In 2020-2021 Standby provided quality care to 216 bereaved and impacted individuals.

### 2020-21 StandBy snapshot

 **198** suicide notifications, resulting in **98** direct support sessions

- **62** face-to-face sessions
- **28** phone sessions
- **8** large group sessions (family or workplace sessions), which included **62** people
- **18** suicide attempt notifications and follow ups
- **16** supports and community events with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- **7** workshops
- More than **50** in-service, community development and education sessions



# Financial snapshot

Social Futures service delivery model changed this year to reduce the delivery of services by subcontractors. Whilst this has contributed to a decrease in overall revenue, it has resulted in an increase of services Social Futures provides, increased employee expenses and lower program costs.

The impact of COVID-19 has also resulted in changed expenditure patterns to ensure our services have been safe and available with lower travel and motor vehicle costs and increased information technology, cleaning and hygiene expenditure.

Our investment in our core processes and applications has continued to serve us well and enabled the impact on service delivery to be minimised. Our variety of staff support systems has kept us together as teams and available for our participants.

The year however did result in under expenditure in some programs, which, depending on funding terms will be returned to the funder or applied to the delivery of more services in the year ahead.

Our accounting result for the year was \$2.125 million and whilst this represents significant growth of our net equity position to \$6.79 million and improves our current ratio of 1.59 this is a direct result of having to recognise grant income received in late 2021 and for which services have yet to be delivered.

Adjusting for this income for the undelivered services, would see the result for the year be \$719 thousand and equity grow to \$5.38 million. This would still see a current ratio of 1.32 which still results in the organisation being comfortably able to meet all commitments.

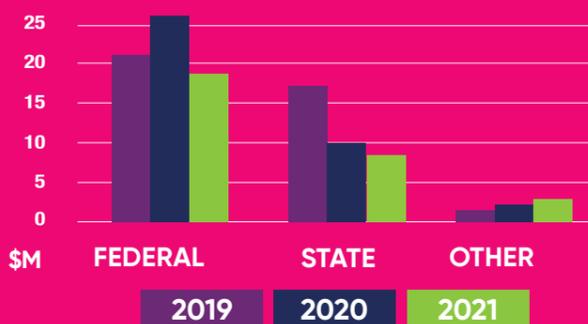
It is important to note that this position will reverse in the 2021-22 year with a significant fall in both the result for the year and equity when the services relating to the \$1.4 million are delivered as required by the respective funding contracts.

We have also purchased a commercial property and begun construction of our McKenzie Lofts residential property, which will indirectly and directly assist us to deliver strong social change.

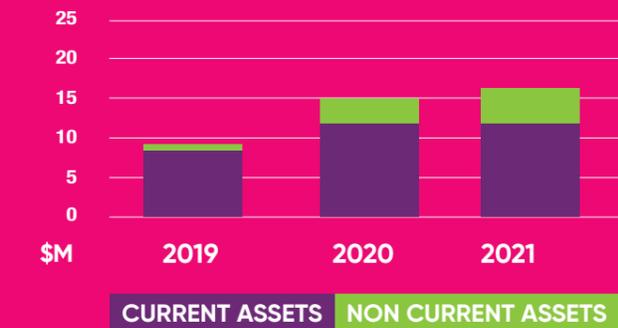
Our main investment continues to be our staff and this has been highlighted by the innovative approaches and resilience of our teams in adjusting to a very different approach to delivering and supporting services for our customers.

Our funders have continued to support us in our delivery of our range of programs and have worked with us in managing circumstances none of us have faced before.

## Funding source



## Assets



Our funders have continued to support us in our delivery of a range of programs and have worked with us in managing circumstances none of us have faced before.

**\$35,778,418**

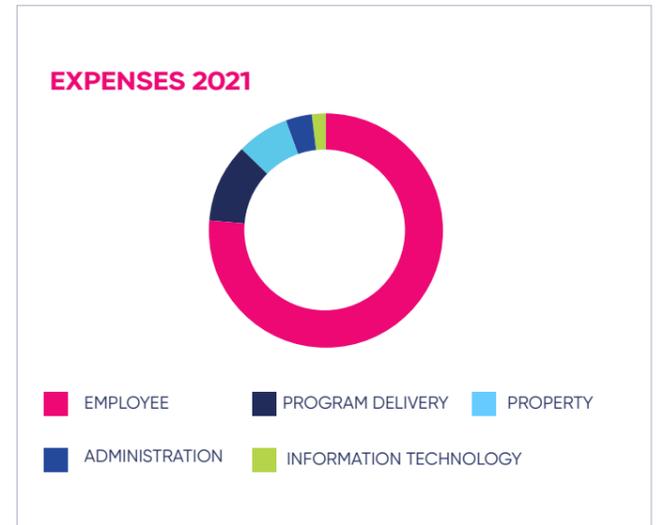
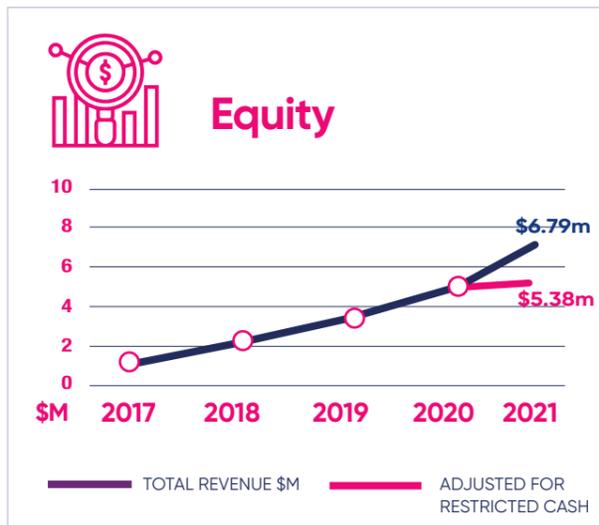
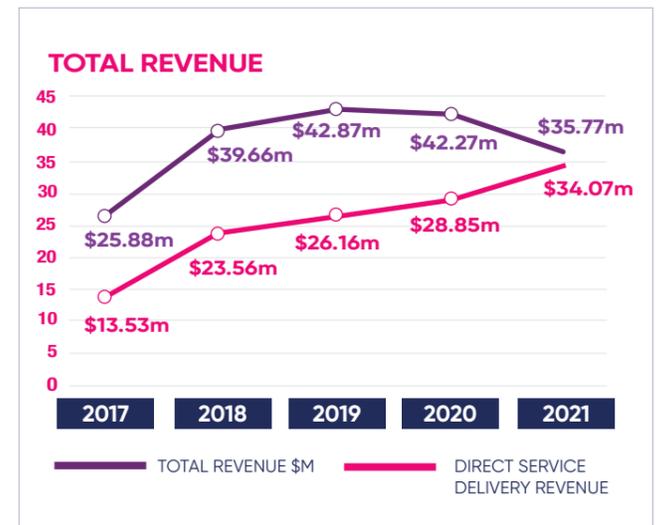
**Total Revenue**

**\$2,125,257**

**Surplus**

**\$6,790,488**

**Net Equity**



# Our Board

**The Board is responsible for Social Futures' strategic direction, including oversight of program and service performance, and contractual and financial management.**



**Pat Grier, AM**  
Chair

Pat Grier has extensive experience in the health care sector as well as sales, marketing and general management. In 20 years as CEO of Ramsay Health Care he grew the organisation to become Australia's largest private hospital operator with more than 100 hospitals internationally, 30,000 staff and a turnover of \$3 billion. He received the Member of the Order of Australia in 2010. Pat has previously served on a number of boards, including 10 years as Chairman of the Private Hospitals Association.



**Keith Sloan**

Keith brings more than 40 years' experience in research, consulting and teaching in finance and economics. He was an Associate Professor in the Business School at Southern Cross University where he worked for over two decades. Keith is committed to working to redress inequalities in Australia and build stronger regional communities. He is currently on the Board of the Australian School of Accounting and President of the Singapore Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management.



**Karen Hazan**  
Deputy Chair to 26/11/20

Karen Hazan is a director of Trenches McKenzie Cox Solicitors of Lismore. She is an accredited family law specialist and has experience in all areas of advocacy including employment law, mental health and criminal law as well as conveyancing, probate, wills and contested estates. She is dedicated to making a contribution to her community and supporting the work of organisations that provide quality services to people who find themselves socially or economically disadvantaged.



**Kirstie McClean**  
Deputy Chair from 26/11/20

Kirstie has more than 20 years' experience in marketing and strategy including strategic marketing, branding, marketing communications, digital and consumer behaviour. She has worked with organisations including Fairfax Media, DDB Australia, Omnicom London, McDonald's Australia, Mercedes Benz UK and Royal Mail UK, as well as not-for-profits and local, state and federal governments. Kirstie is an experienced non-executive director, and has a Master of Commerce from University of NSW, and a Bachelor of Economics from University of Sydney.



**Orit Ben-Harush**

Orit brings extensive experience in research of digital media at Queensland University of Technology, where she completed her PhD, and other universities overseas. She has explored the social impact of communication technologies including the internet, mobile phones and social media. Orit has previous experience in marketing. Most recently she has been working as a data analyst at North Coast Primary Health Network. Orit is an active member in her community where she supports local initiatives for children and youth.



**Penny Cox**

Penny Cox has built a diverse career in sales and business management in the service and IT industries. She is Head of Sales and Account Management at Inlogik, a global leader in expense management solutions. She has provided business support to numerous governments, corporate clients and over 100 not-for-profit organisations. She brings valuable lived experience as a carer for people with mental illness and disability. She is an advocate for social justice and believes everyone deserves a fair chance in life.



**Margarita Escartin**

Margarita brings her experience in engagement and community enrichment with Indigenous and remote communities to our Board. Her deep understanding of the issues they face includes the importance of education, access to services, and sustainable employment as pathways to positive social impact. With a background in law, Margarita has worked in a government-funded legal service; established a successful Indigenous law practice in a national firm; and founded a consulting practice in Australia and internationally. Her pro bono work for Indigenous communities has assisted them maximise economic participation outcomes from projects on their traditional lands.



**Chris Leach**

Chris has 39 years' experience in the disability sector at federal and state levels. He is a former Deputy Secretary for Disability in NSW. He has worked in senior roles in aged care, community care, corporate services, child protection and housing. Chris managed the transfer of NSW disability services to the NDIS and contributed to the development of the landmark Disability Services Act. He was awarded the Public Service Medal in the 2015 Australia Day Honours.



**Leanne Coventry**

Leanne has been in the financial services industry since 2002. She has built strong relationships with a variety of Aboriginal companies, people and communities across Eastern Australia. Leanne is passionate about financial education and having trusted and connected relationships, and has used her professional experience to provide practical support and opportunity to regional, remote and urban Australia through her current role as Manager of Indigenous Business at Westpac. An expert in transactional banking solutions for all industry but in particular the Not-for-Profit sector, she was awarded one of the bank's Bicentennial Service Honours in 2017.



**Trish Oxford**

Trish is a proud Ngemba woman from Bourke NSW, and vision-driven executive leader with expertise in corporate governance, policy development, strategic business planning, diverse stakeholder engagement and Indigenous affairs across the public and private sectors. Trish brings a deep commitment to the values and principles of social justice and inclusion and a passion for the wellbeing and advancement of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples. She has served on several boards from large not-for-profits to local sporting clubs.

# [ Our Executive Team

The Executive Team provides operational management and implements Social Futures' strategic goals.



**Tony Davies**  
Chief Executive Officer

Tony has over 20 years' experience in leadership roles in government, non-government and private enterprise. As a qualified lawyer he has strong advocacy skills. He is a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has served on a number of boards including Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), Yfoundations and as President of the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS). He has served in a number of government advisory roles including NSW Social Innovation Council and the Ministerial Advisory Group on vulnerable children, youth and families.



**Michael Carter**  
Chief Financial Officer; Executive Manager Support Services

With qualifications in accounting, marketing and management, Michael is an experienced Chief Financial Officer with a background in investment management, health, higher education and social services. He is respected for his ability to deliver in highly regulated environments and contribute to the realisation of strategic goals. Michael currently sits on the Northern NSW Local Health District Board, holds graduate membership of the AICD and is continuing studies in Governance.



**Katrina Luckie**  
Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement

Katrina is an experienced regional and community development professional with technical skills spanning project management, governance, business development, statistical analysis, research design, advocacy, sustainability and capacity-building. She is Chair of Summerland Credit Union and has held previous leadership roles with Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers and Northern Rivers Regional Development Board.



**Tanya Miller**  
Executive Manager Organisational Excellence; Community, Family and Youth

An experienced human services Executive Manager, Tanya brings a wealth of knowledge in adaptive leadership, mentoring and coaching and organisational development. She has worked in social services for 30 years across not-for-profit, consultancy and government agencies in Australia and New Zealand. She has extensive experience in frontline, management and governance roles in the fields of mental health, disability, and child and family wellbeing.



**David Thomson**  
Executive Manager Inclusion

David brings more than 30 years' leadership experience in education, retail, aged and community care, as well as extensive multi-site management, business development, and start-up business expertise. He has worked with people living in the South American Andes to Australia's Gold Coast. With a strong desire to see social justice for all, he thrives on providing the best possible customer experience and is privileged to help make Australia a place more inclusive of people with disability.



# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



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Join us on



Ashmore | Ballina | Bathurst | Broken Hill | Byron Bay  
Coffs Harbour | Dubbo | Gosford | Grafton | Kempsey  
Lismore | Maitland | Orange | Tweed Heads | Wyong



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land where we live and work and their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.