



# Northern Rivers Social Development Council 2014-15 Annual Report

*Building community wellbeing*

# Contents

President & CEO's Report	1
Highlights & Achievements	2
Housing & Homelessness	4
Inclusion	6
Young People	10
Families & Children	12
Health & Wellbeing	14
Strengthening Our Region	15
Our Board	20
Financials 2014-15	21

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF  
ABORIGINAL CUSTODIANS**  
NRSDC acknowledges all the tribes within the  
Bundjalung, Yaegl and Gumbainggir nations  
who are the traditional custodians of the land  
which comprises the Northern Rivers.



# President and CEO's Report

In the past year, NRSDC has more than doubled in size, extending the reach and impact of our work in the community.

Our focus on building strong communities underpins all of NRSDC's work. We work with individuals, other organisations and the wider community to build stronger lives. We are proud to work in regional Australia and particularly proud of our base and heritage in the diverse and innovative Northern Rivers of NSW.

The last year has been very busy for NRSDC. We more than doubled in size, establishing new programs and partnerships that have extended both the reach and the impact of our work. In the following pages you will see just some of the extraordinary things that our staff achieved over the year.

A highlight was the completion of our merger with Youth Connections North Coast Inc. This partnership was based on shared values, shared approaches and an understanding that we can achieve more for the community by working collectively. The expertise and enthusiasm of the Youth Connections team has been an asset for our joint organisation.

We also participated in the creation of the North West Alliance, a consortium of like-minded organisations that are committed to quality, and genuinely local, service delivery in regional Australia. Through the Alliance, we

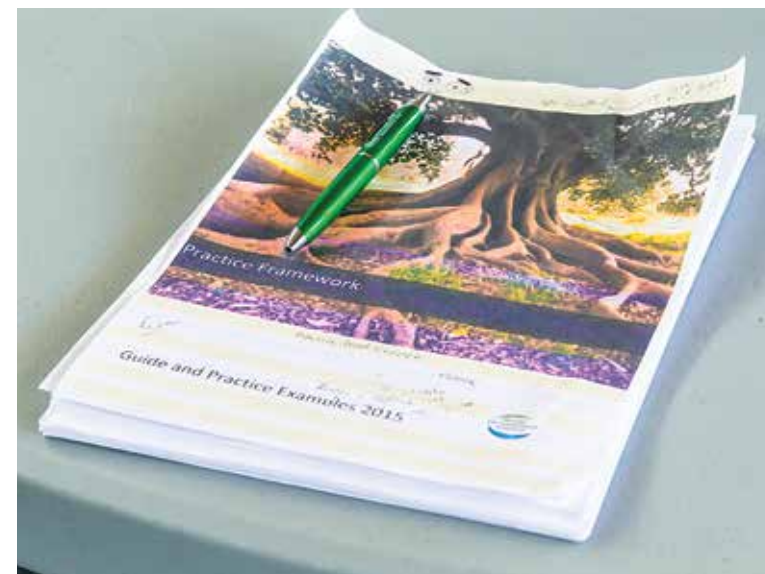
established the Ability Links program across regional NSW. Ability Links promotes the genuine participation of people with disability in community life and helps to place people, rather than services, at the centre of decision making.

Another achievement was the establishment of the Connecting Home service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Connecting Home is delivered in partnership with other agencies and provides vital support across the Northern NSW District.

We also received funding to establish the Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind program to support families who are affected by mental health issues.

Reflecting the value that we place on working with other agencies, sector development continued to be a focus. We established a stewardship group to oversee implementation of the Regional Social Plan. We hosted the fourth Community Sector Ball and Awards night, helped to upskill hundreds of people through our training program and continued our work in the transport, aged and disability sectors.

Organisationally, we invested in systems and support for service users and staff. We opened new offices



and upgraded our information and communications technology. We established a practice framework to guide our work and made significant progress towards completing a new Reconciliation Action Plan.

NRSDC achieved so much over the last year because we have the most extraordinary team. We have been privileged to work with people, staff and Board members, who are skilled, creative, passionate, hard-working and above all, genuinely compassionate and committed to creating positive social change. We would like to thank everyone for their huge contribution.

**– Paul Cruickshank, President**

**– Tony Davies, CEO**

# Our People, Places & Practices

We are committed to and have been fortunate enough to attract a highly skilled and dedicated workforce. We thrive on positive workplace culture and wellbeing, and have established a culture and wellbeing committee to take charge of these initiatives. We provide internal supervision for all staff and external supervision for all managers and frontline staff. After consultation with our staff we have developed a new set of organisational values that align with our newly merged organisation.

We strongly support women in leadership with 80% of the senior leadership team being female. We are also committed to family friendly and flexible workplace practices to ensure that staff can balance their work / life commitments.

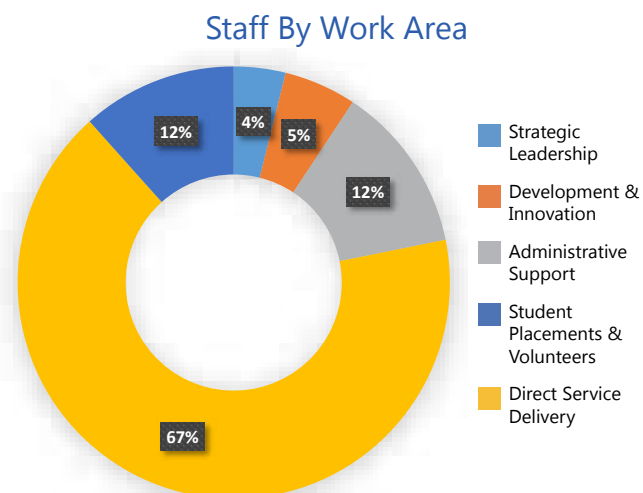
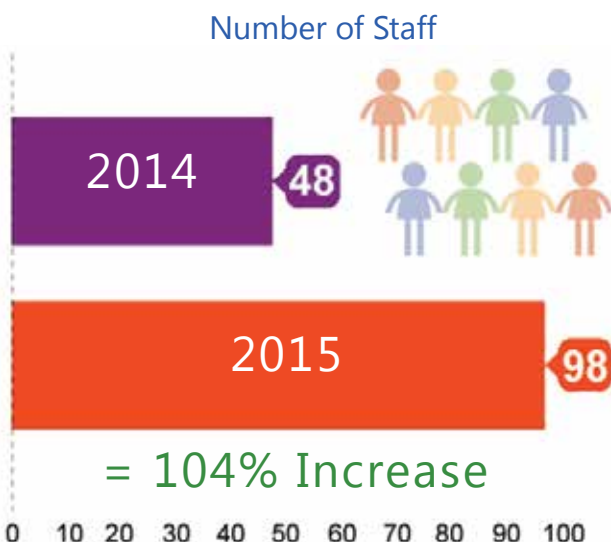
## Practice Framework

This year also saw the implementation of our practice framework. The framework combines the organisational values and principles that underpin our approach to working with individuals, families and communities with specific evidence-informed methodologies and

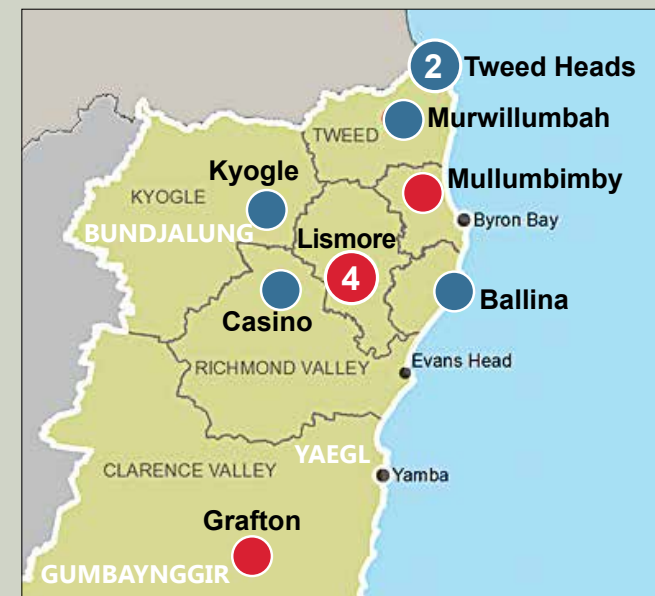
techniques considered fundamental to achieving high quality outcomes and service excellence. The framework is driven by a designated committee and guides the whole organisation, reaching beyond client services to influence our working relationships, our leadership and management style and relationships with community. These practice principles will also influence policy design, resource development, accountability measures, quality assurance and service outcome evaluation.

## Our Volunteers

Our volunteers and student placements have once again this year contributed enormously to the work we do. We typically have 10 volunteers at any one time who generously provide their own time and energy to our Connecting Home Program, the Computer Clubhouse, Links to Learning, Development and Innovation, and Corporate Services teams. Some programs rely heavily on the involvement of volunteers who are able to provide a range of specialist skills or lived experience that add value to the services that we provide. Our sincere thanks goes out to each and every one of our volunteers.



## Where we are:



● New offices established 2014-15

This year we established new offices in 3 towns and upgraded offices or provided extra premises in 4 towns, providing even more of a physical presence in the Northern Rivers area in relation to direct service delivery.

All of our offices harbour some sort of shared office arrangement; our goal is to co-locate with other community services to promote collaboration across the sector and ensure better access for our clients.

4 out of 5  
of the senior leadership team  
are female

# Highlights & Achievements 2014-15

Achieved accreditation against the NSW Disability Service Standards and the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES)

Rollout of specialist Family Mental Health Support Service (Mijung Jarjums)

Annual Turnover

2015

\$13,448,657

2014

\$6,156,789

= 118% Increase

Participated in workplace Compassion Relay for staff wellbeing

NRSDC partnerships reach  
**85%**  
of regional NSW

Merger with Youth Connections North Coast

Rollout of Specialist Homelessness Services and North West Alliance Ability Links

Exceeded targets in service delivery programs



# Housing & Homelessness

Housing supply and affordability in the Northern Rivers region is an immense issue. NRSDC works to advocate for and support people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or needing assistance to secure stable tenancies.



## Connecting Home Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS)

Connecting Home delivers a prevention and early intervention response to homelessness, collaborating with mainstream agencies to identify and respond to individuals and families at risk of homelessness.

The program works with people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to achieve long-term housing goals, supporting them to reconnect with their families or to find secure accommodation.

Staff work intensively to sustain existing tenancies where specialist assistance is needed, with concentrated

**“The centralised intake process ensures consistency and streamlined processing for new clients. Clients have access to highly skilled staff at the point of intake. Clients who need face-to-face case management are also supported by skilled staff.”**

— Cathy Serventy, SHS Manager

**2041** individual contacts by Connecting Home Homelessness Service, 2014-15



**1449** singles, couples and families (**1084** adults, **365** children)



**592** Young people



support to people with complex needs and young people aged 16-25.

Connecting Home provides information, referrals and co-ordination to help people navigate housing and support services. It has established links with other local services and business such as real estate agents to help people gain and maintain a tenancy.

We also provide crisis response through emergency short-term accommodation in collaboration with Housing NSW and the state-wide Link2Home Service. A crisis accommodation centre located in Scott St, Byron Bay, is staffed by 5 volunteers who stay overnight.

All 45 transitional properties have been consistently occupied and successful case management has occurred for many of the young people and families accessing the Connecting Home service. Those who are already homeless are supported and safely re-housed; those in crisis are provided with safe and secure accommodation and supported to access stable housing.

*Consortium partners: Tweed Family Centre, North Coast Community Housing, St Vincent de Paul, Byron Bay*

**A SPECIAL  
THANK YOU  
to our Scott St  
volunteers!**

*Photo by Connecting Home client Michael.*



*Community Centre, Murwillumbah Community Centre, Northern Rivers Women's and Children's Service, and Northern NSW Primary Health Network.*

## Northern Rivers Housing & Homelessness Forum

The 2014 Northern Rivers Housing & Homelessness Forum was attended by 130 people from across the region. This event was organised by the Northern Rivers Housing & Homelessness Forum Steering Group and sponsored by NNSW Local Health District, North Coast Medicare Local and the NSW Dept of Family & Community Services.

The Master of Ceremony was Adrian Pisarski, Executive Officer of the national peak housing agency National Shelter, and organisers took advantage of Adrian's extensive knowledge and experience and asked that he begin the day by providing a broad national perspective.

The morning's program included Pam Brunner (Acting District Director, Department of Family & Community Services), Vicki Rose (Executive Director Allied Health/ Chronic & Primary Care, NNSW Local Health District) and Vahid Saberi (Chief Executive of NSW North Coast Medicare Local) speaking of their work together under a newly formed alliance to improve health services for vulnerable members of the regional community. A workshop followed to identify and prioritise the unmet

health needs of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and to inform the subsequent work of this alliance.

The afternoon program began with a series of presentations on the NSW Going Home Staying Home homelessness services reform and an overview of the new service delivery approaches by the CEOs of the two regional organisations that will deliver the Specialist Homelessness Services in the Northern Rivers. A Q&A session followed, providing a timely opportunity for people to seek clarification or comment on service provision in the region.

"We have held forums at least annually for the last 6 years and each have had a different focus," explained Northern Rivers Housing Forum Steering Group convenor, Trish Evans. "Bringing health and homelessness service providers together as we were able to do today is something we have been asked to do for sometime. Information and an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the local implications of the Going Home Staying Home reform of specialist homelessness services has also been a key issue for the region's community services sector. Our feedback is that today's forum has been a very useful event."



## Youth Homelessness Matters Day



Photo by Connecting Home client Lilly

The Youth Homelessness Matters Day event put support for homeless young people on the menu of local cafés.

On April 15, in honour of National Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2015, NRSDC's Connecting Home team facilitated a public awareness campaign asking local coffee shops to add stickers to their takeaway cups to help draw attention to youth homelessness in the Northern Rivers region.

In Australia 26,000 young people aged 12-25 years old experience homelessness every night. 70% of these young people have left home to escape family violence, child abuse or family breakdown.

Cafés throughout the region joined the campaign to raise awareness and to help break commonly held stereotypes about youth homelessness – which doesn't just mean sleeping rough on the streets. 'Hidden homelessness' is the first and most common way young people experience homelessness – through couch surfing, living in a car or living in overcrowded accommodation.

Although 42% of the Australian homeless population are under 25, many young people don't seek help because of the stigma. Youth Homelessness Matters Day aims to reduce the shame and social stigmas and to ensure there is appropriate help available.

Participating cafés also displayed a donation box on their counter, with a poster highlighting the services available.

# Inclusion

Programs supporting inclusion provide access to the community, services and resources to people with a disability or other additional needs.

## North West Alliance (Ability Links)

NRSDC is the lead agency of the North West Alliance Ability Links program, working with five Alliance Partners to deliver the program to people with disabilities, their families and carers in the Northern and Western districts of NSW – an area covering approximately 85% of regional NSW.

Alliance Partners are:

- Northern Rivers Social Development Council;
- Mid Coast Communities in the Mid North Coast Region;
- Pathfinders in the New England region;
- Care West in the Central West and Orana Far West regions;
- Intereach in the Riverina/Murray region;
- Murrumbidgee Medicare Local, representing Medicare Locals across the Northern and Western Regions.

The Alliance, through a team of 54 co-ordinators known as 'Linkers', delivers the Ability Links program in their respective regions. They work with people with disabilities, their families and carers to realise the choices in their lives, by accessing knowledge, resources and opportunities in their communities. The program promotes the rights of people with disability to live inclusive lives in all spheres – community, social, public



*The North West Alliance Steering Group behind the wheel.*

and private – and builds capacity within communities to expand inclusion of people with disabilities.

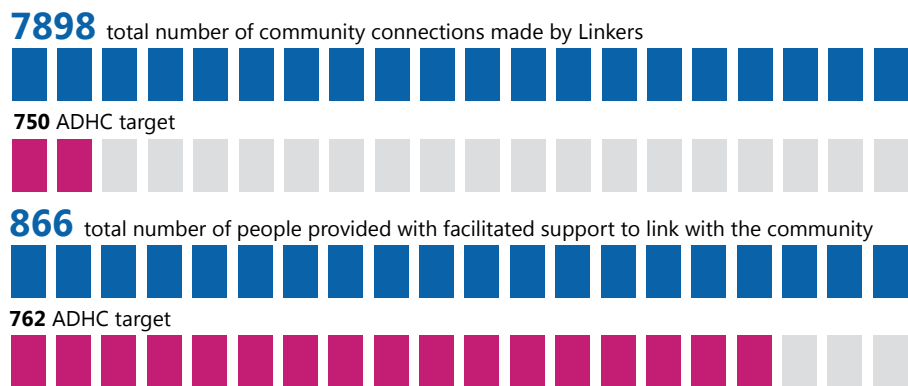
The Alliance participates in local planning activities to improve access to local services by people with a disability. It also develops strong relationships with diverse communities and a wide range of mainstream, Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse organisations. If required, it provides a locally based first point of contact for information about referral to the disability system.

As lead agency, NRSDC supports the North West Alliance leadership group to manage all aspects of the delivery of the Ability Links program.

## Impact

**Individual outcomes:** Increased social engagement; increased engagement in work, volunteering or education/training; increased confidence; increased engagement with services/organisations.

**Community outcomes:** Groups, businesses or services becoming more inclusive through physical, attitudinal or service delivery changes.



## Far North Coast Ability Links

Ability Links provides a locally based first point of contact (a "Linker") to assist people with a disability, their families and carers to access resources and opportunities in their local communities.

There are 14 Linkers across 7 offices in Grafton, Ballina, Casino, Kyogle, Lismore, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah. Many staff have Lived Experience of a disability, a mental illness or as a carer.

The service works with people to build their strengths, skills and confidence, supporting them to build new networks and access support and services in their communities to enable them to achieve their goals.

It works alongside communities and mainstream services, supporting them to become more welcoming and inclusive.

Outcomes experienced by participants include:

- increased self-esteem and confidence
- increased social connections
- greater motivation
- feeling more secure and less alone
- increased access to financial assistance/support and services
- increased access to employment-related activities and support with employment
- increased access to housing



*Participant at the Ability Links gym in Kyogle.*

Ability Links partners with community organisations to run projects that support inclusion. In its first 12 months projects have included: a program to support learner drivers with a disability to get their provisional licence; a gym group run in Kyogle for people with disabilities; and an inclusive drumming group at Tweed. Far North Coast Ability Links has also become a partner organisation with Timebanking NSW, a community volunteering program that allows the exchange of services between members.



## In Kruize Control

Kingscliff student Kruize Phillips, 14, and his mum were hoping to get a wheelchair for Kruize, who has cerebral palsy and cannot walk due to problems with tendons in his legs. But his mum said there was no way they could afford a chair, particularly an electric chair which would be their dream.

Then his local Linker connected them with local man, John Govers. Sitting in his garage was a near-new electric wheelchair which had belonged to his wife who had passed away four years ago. John had come into the Community Centre to see if he could donate the wheelchair to someone who could use it.

Kruize and his mum were over the moon. They decided to make it an occasion by inviting the local paper and arranging the handover at the Community Centre. It was obvious that John was very moved by the occasion and Kruize was delighted with his new wheelchair.

"I just can't believe it, this is just so awesome, I can't believe it's mine," Kruize said. "All of my friends are going to be so jealous, they're all going to want tows on their skateboards."



“Ability Links has been able to support people to move from social isolation to connection. Linkers are allies to assist them to achieve their goals and to make connections they might only have dreamed of or not thought possible.

“When people ask if they meet the criteria, what forms they need to fill in and how much they need to pay, it is great to be able to say that the criteria are very broad, there are no forms, just an initial conversation and that the service is free.

“We have a team with Linkers who have a disability, a history of mental illness, chronic illness or experience as a Carer. This bank of lived experience enables us to better connect with many people in a more immediate way.”

— Clayton Dunn, Manager



## The Belonging Project

The Belonging Project works with children with a disability aged 0-8, their families and carers, and specialist and general services in the Tweed community to build social inclusion.

The project started in 2012-13 as a research partnership between NRSDC and the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University. Stage 1 involved talking to children aged 0-8 with additional needs and their families about what it means to feel included and connected in the Tweed Shire community.

Stage 2 turned to designing and implementing capacity building workshops, activities, training and events in the Tweed Shire. This included a series of art workshops involving 40 kids held at Tweed Regional Gallery and the Kids Caring for Country Aboriginal cultural group at Murwillumbah, where kids were asked to create a picture of something that made them feel as though



they belong. The artworks were displayed in a public exhibition at Sunnyside Mall in Murwillumbah. The exhibition is available for display in public spaces to attract attention to the concept of ‘belonging’ and highlight the skills, talents and heart of the kids.

Stage 3 of the Project is now underway – developing a comprehensive community education and awareness campaign championing the issue of social inclusion for children with additional needs and ways that a community can become more inclusive of everybody.



NRSDC Ability Links launch in Tweed, November 2014.



## Network Development Project

The Network Development Project supports children with a disability aged 0-15 and their families to build social networks in their communities. The project works with families across the Casino, Kyogle, Lismore and Ballina districts.

The Network Development Project also designs and delivers new supports or interest groups for people with similar needs, with the intention that they will become self-sustaining.

The project helps increase the resilience of families and children with disability by reducing the stress and

isolation experienced by them. It aims to build their self-advocacy skills and capacity so they can identify and access a range of formal and informal supports. People are linked to existing organisations, services or groups.

Partner programs within NRSDC are Ability Links, Family Referral Service, Mijung Jarjum Kids in Mind, and Connecting Home.

Partner organisations are: Interrelate; Northcott; Aspect; Cerebral Palsy Alliance: Partners in Recovery; Brighter Futures; Casino Neighbourhood Centre; Kyogle Family Support Services, Ontrack - Northern Kids Care; Community Health; Schools; Early Learning Centres; and Early Intervention Centres.

## Women's Mandala Art Group

The Women's mandala art group was started as an informal support group for participants in Ability Links and Network Development Project. The group offers adult women facing mental health or other disability challenges, and/or mothers of children with a disability, a weekly social gathering, with an opportunity to experience art techniques, relaxation and mindfulness.

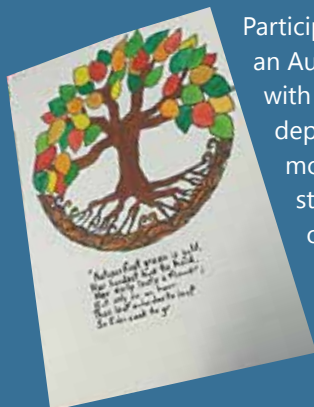
The group ran for 8 weekly sessions of 2 hours, within school times, with space for up to 8 women.

Participants included a deaf woman and an Auslan interpreter, a young woman with some cognitive delays plus depression and anxiety, and 5 single mothers, all under considerable stress with children with a range of disability, from mild to severe (eg global developmental delay, autism, cerebral palsy).



All the women commented on how relaxing it was to have time just for themselves, to do something so peaceful and enjoyable.

Natural friendships were created, in particular for one mother who had had very little social connection or outlet. Discussions of their children's different needs and their common difficulties forged bonds between the parents. Two women, both without cars, discovered they lived near each other, have swapped phone numbers and are keeping in touch regularly.



## Leaving Care Mentoring Service

This service provides mentoring to young people with disability who are leaving care. It operates across the Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed Heads regions.

## LGBTI Ageing Regional Forum



NRSDC hosted the LGBTI Ageing Forum – 'How is the National LGBTI Ageing & Aged Care Strategy relevant to My Services?' The event was supported by Alzheimer's Australia NSW and UnitingCare Ageing. 60 workers in the aged care sector from across the region attended and this event, which led to a subsequent Shared Wisdom LGBTI elders gathering involving 40 community members to gather stories to use in ongoing awareness raising and education to increase inclusion and access to services.

"Wonderful program – great diversity, breadth of appeal."

"May I thank NRSDC for its work for positive recognition and inclusion of old/er lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex peoples."

– Feedback from participants

# Young People

NRSDC offers an array of programs and activities for the region's young people.



## Lismore Youth Connections

Youth Connections provides events and activities to engage young people and the community. It targets all community members, but specifically socially and financially disadvantaged people; young people under 18 and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Youth Connections provides information and assisted referral; delivers youth-specific learning programs; promotes access to local community facilities; and develops volunteer capacity within the community.

Highlight events of the past year include the Young Songwriters Competition, Young NAIDOC Week and the opening of the region's first Computer Clubhouse.

2015 Young Songwriters Female winner Indigo Gebbett.



## Lismore Computer Clubhouse

The Youth Connections Computer Clubhouse opened its doors on 14 October 2014, providing a safe, free after-school program for young people aged 11-18yrs. The Clubhouse is part of a worldwide network of Intel computer clubhouses, providing a place where young people can have access to high technology and skilled mentors to assist them to gain creative confidence.

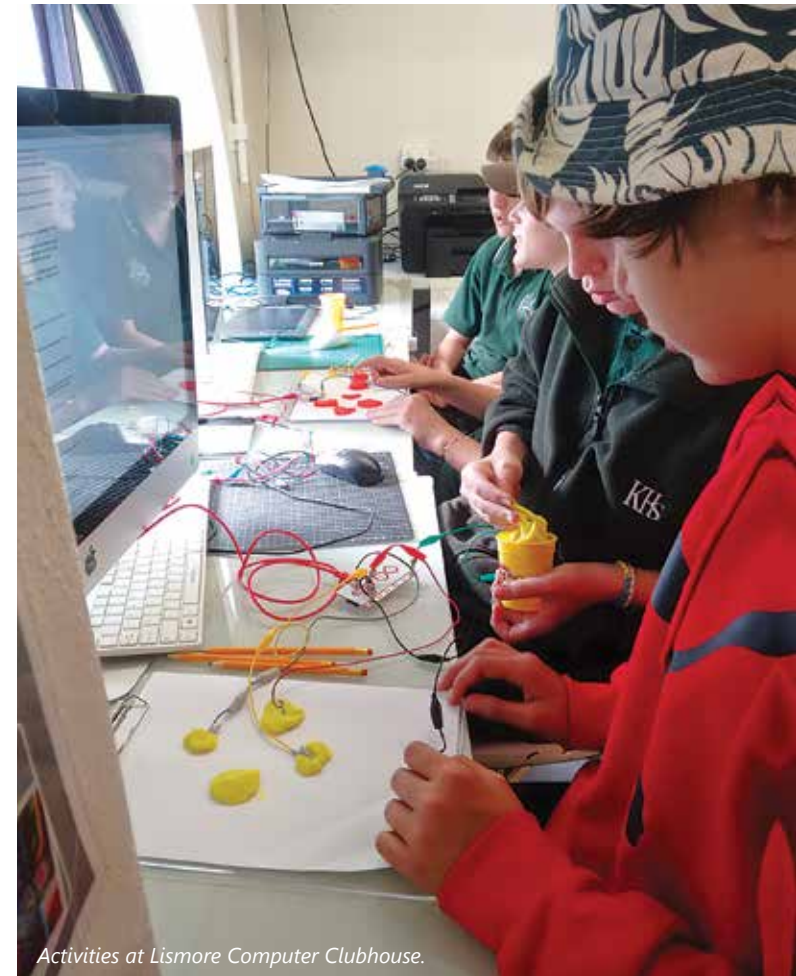
The Lismore Computer Clubhouse inspires and nurtures youth creativity in the region, establishing a working model for building young people's skills and confidence.

More than 100 members signed on in the first year of operation and there are currently 45 active members who attend one day or more a week. Four school groups have accessed the Clubhouse weekly through the Links to Learning program and targeted programs in conjunction with PCYC, YWCA and RED Inc. will commence soon.

## Links to Learning

Links to Learning works with students aged 11 to 18 to provide life skills, team building, communication and conflict resolution skills. It links to the vocational education and training system, building confidence, self-esteem and capacity via individualised case management and group programs (RAGE, Rock and Water, Drumbeats).

Links to Learning operates in the Lismore LGA with engagement from four local high schools: Kadina, Richmond River, Nimbin Central and Lismore High School.



Activities at Lismore Computer Clubhouse.





**126** total number of young people assisted by GIT 2014-15



**100** FaCS target



## Getting It Together

Getting It Together (GIT) is an early intervention program to assist vulnerable young people aged between 12 and 25 years of age (priority is given to those under 18 years of age) with alcohol and/or drug problems. GIT aims to help young people find opportunities for positive change in relation to their drug and alcohol use.

The program focuses on early intervention, individual and family-focused interventions and group work.

Staff work collaboratively with schools, mental health, headspace, police, Juvenile Justice and any other youth services where there might be vulnerable young people whose drug use has become problematic.

Vulnerable young people receive personal support to build increased self-esteem and improved life skills. They are connected with employment, education and training and given support to transition to self-sufficient living, free of dependence on alcohol or drugs.



Reconnect/GIT Deadly Yarn Up Day in Grafton.



Reconnect/GIT Fighting Fair Training.

## Main impacts:

“Reducing isolation and connecting young people with the greater community through education, employment support, and meaningful activities that further their growth and development. We offer outreach services to the more isolated high schools - there is often no possibility of the young person coming to an office for an appointment.”



“Empowering groups of young women in high schools. Often this can be the first time these young people are exposed to content on healthy relationships, abuse, creating boundaries assertive communication and self-care.”

– Lucinda Moss, staff member

## Most rewarding part of your work:

“Providing support to adolescents so they feel less alone in their experience and have the opportunity to feel understood and ‘rotten’; sometimes for the first time in their lives.”

“Facilitating honest conversations with young people about their current difficult life experiences in particular with regard to their families. This can be in a group or individually. Groups have the additional benefit of normalising life experiences in a shared environment thereby reducing isolation while enhancing support.”

– Monika Obirek, staff member

# Families & Children

Programs for parents and children improve child wellbeing and development, ensure child safety and enhance family functionality – with benefits flowing to the wider community.



**106** families assisted by Reconnect (youth homelessness prevention) 2014-15



**91** FaCS target



## Northern Rivers Reconnect

Reconnect assists young people aged 12-18 (12-21 for recent arrivals to Australia) to stabilise their current living situation and improve their engagement with family. The program aims to assist young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families.

Reconnect uses family-focused early intervention strategies such as counselling, family mediation and group work to help young people achieve family reconciliation, stabilise and improve their housing, as well as improve their level of engagement with education, work, training and the community.

The program has a team of 5 who cover different regions from Tweed to Grafton.



“Working with parents to repair disconnection or set healthy limits and build secure and trusting relationships between family members places the emphasis on family competency and empowerment. This is a resource-effective approach in an economic climate of limited funding for social programs.”

— Ayla Garlick, Reconnect Team Member

## Family Relationships Support Program

This program supports young people aged 12-24 and their parents and/or carers. It aims to provide integrated services for families (particularly those that are vulnerable and disadvantaged) to improve child wellbeing and development, safety and family functioning.

Services include internal and external counselling to vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and their parents and carers; facilitating the “Staying Safe” program; one-on-one counselling of up to 5 sessions of 1 hour each; and delivering issue-based group work (e.g., Anger Management and Parenting Adolescents).

There are five program outcomes:

1. Families learn to function well in nurturing and safe environments.
2. Children and families gain the knowledge and skills for life and learning.
3. Families, including children, especially those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage.
4. Organisations provide integrated services and work in collaboration with other services and the community.
5. Services focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged families and children.





**992** total number of contact enquiries 2014-15



**473** referrals for direct work with families



**519** service enquiries (linking service providers to appropriate services for their clients)



## Far North Coast Family Referral Service (FRS)

The Family Referral Service aims to link vulnerable children, young people and families in need of assistance with appropriate support services available in their local area.

Prevention and early intervention is a primary focus of the program, supporting parents to link into community services to assist them with the demands and challenges of raising children. FRS provides information, referrals and support, including face-to-face case coordination.

FRS enhances local service provider knowledge of other supports in their catchment area, strengthening coordination and collaboration among service providers to promote child safety, welfare and wellbeing. It provides consultation and support to service providers in relation to Child Protection matters, and is the leading agency for inbound referrals of vulnerable children, young people and families falling below the risk of significant harm (ROSH) statutory reporting threshold for child protection concerns.

FRS has an intake office located in Lismore, with outreach workers in Lismore, Tweed Heads and Grafton. It offers support to clients via the telephone as well as delivering face-to-face services through meetings, home visiting and outreach programs.

The FRS is delivered in partnership with Interrelate Family Centres Ltd.



Achieved  
**137%**  
of target set for  
outbound referrals

“When a family connects with you – it is that particular moment when a person steps over into trusting you as a worker, trusting the service will do what they say they will do – and they start working with you towards their goals.”

— Nikki Lee, Family Outreach Worker

## Communities for Children (Family Connections)

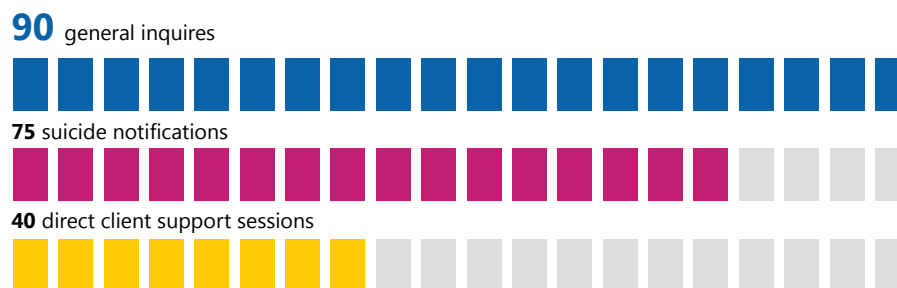
This service provides case management, parenting and family support, including a weekly supported playgroup, to new and expectant parents and vulnerable parents. It targets parents aged 25 and under with children who are 8 and under. Priority is given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Family Connections offers families advice, support, strategies and skills training to deal with difficult behaviours, conflict resolution, household management, access to other services and advocacy. It aims to engage, build trust, provide long-term support, and reach out to other family members to offer support where the need has been identified. The service provides case management to 12 clients per year.



# Health & Wellbeing

NRSDC programs provide support for specific physical, emotional and mental wellbeing needs in the local community.



## StandBy Response Service

StandBy Response Service provides a 24/7 coordinated community response to assist families, friends and associates who have been bereaved through suicide, regardless of when or where the suicide occurred.

StandBy operates from Tweed Heads to Port Macquarie, providing immediate crisis response via telephone or face-to-face home visits. Our service is delivered with compassion, understanding and respect; walking alongside people at a time of greatest need.

StandBy delivers training and workshops to increase the sustainable capacity of communities to respond to and support those bereaved by suicide.

*NRSDC and United Synergies gratefully acknowledge the funding provided by the Australian Government.*



'Walk Out Of The Shadows Into The Light'- South Tweed Heads, 11 September 2014



## Family Planning Service

With clinics operating in Lismore and Kyogle, the Family Planning Service supports women and men from adolescence onwards to make choices for themselves about their reproductive and sexual health by providing high-quality, confidential and professional reproductive and sexual health services.

The service is supported by NSW Health Northern NSW Local Health District and is bulk-billed, ensuring it remains affordable to people from disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

NRSDC has provided family planning to the Northern Rivers community since 1979, making it one of our longest-running services.



Number of individuals who used the Family Planning Service, 2014-15.

Over 15 collaborative activities enhanced and developed links with community partners, including community and mental health, NGO services, Police, workplaces and schools.

Over 62 participants attended suicide bereavement awareness training.



# Strengthening Our Region

Sector and community support and development and innovation are major components of NRSDC's work. Our engagement with our sector and our community enhance regional capacity to achieve positive outcomes.

## Training and Professional Development Program

Our Training Program provides responsive training and professional development opportunities to community and health sector employees to improve services to our community, generate innovation and build capacity in a vibrant regional sector. Over the year, 667 people participated in 45 training events, with 98% stating they would recommend the training attended.

### Quality Trainers:

"Best trainer I have ever had, very respectful, talks in a very empowering way."

"Presenter respectful, humorous, very informed as well as experienced. I'm ready to learn more."

"Extremely knowledgeable, passionate, well prepared and engaging facilitator."

### Relevant effective training:

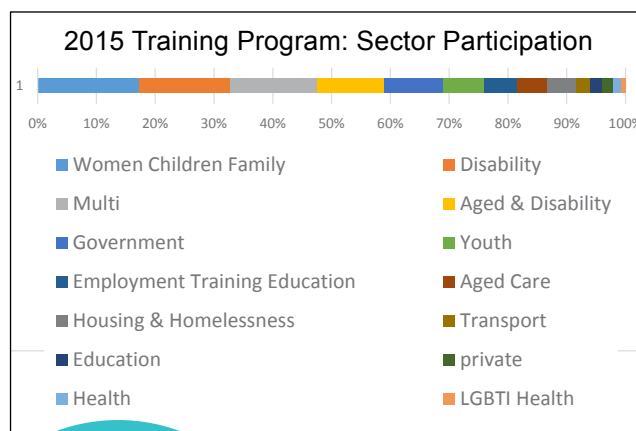
"Excellent, practical; will result in better practice for me and my staff."

"Very exceptional information – very valuable."

"A great course which I believe should be essential for all."

"Thoroughly informative, a lot of great useful information."

"I gained everything I was hoping to from the workshop."



98%  
of participants  
would recommend  
the training they  
attended.

667  
people  
participated in  
45  
training events.

### Valued by Our Sector:

"Thanks sincerely. I've no doubt you are changing the sector person by person. I feel completely inspired and empowered."

## Dementia Education for Carers

The Dementia Care Education Program provided local, free training to 103 community members caring for someone living with dementia.

"Other participants stories were valuable."

"Excellent presentation."

"The session answered all my questions and more."

"Much needed for the Indigenous community."

Thank you, our Elders will all benefit."

– Dementia Care Education participant feedback

## Therapeutic Skills Training

In response to an expressed need in the Clarence Valley and Tweed areas for support for workers to work more effectively with children and families affected by trauma, NRSDC ran subsidised intensive therapeutic skills training 'Working Effectively with Trauma' in both sites, involving 73 workers (representing 25 community-based services, 10 schools and 10 health services). 98% of participants reported that the training would change the way they worked with children and families.

## Learnings from Research

Working to disseminate research findings on good service delivery practice, NRSDC facilitated a local seminar and workshop – Learning from the Keep Them Safe Program Evaluation: Improving Child Protection Outcomes in the Northern Rivers – with the Centre for Children & Young People, Southern Cross University and Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW.

## Ageing & Disability Sector & Community Development

NRSDC's sector support provides information to ageing and disability services directly and through a series of regional interagency networks and cross-regional forums, ensuring continued commentary on both State and Commonwealth sector reforms.

Our work aims to build the capacity of the ageing and disability service sector across the region to deliver responsive services and develop best practice.

We provide a range of support, resources and information services to Commonwealth-funded Home and Community Care and State-funded Community Care Support Program services and others for the benefit of the local populations.

### Ageing & Disability Digest

NRSDC compiled and distributed 12 monthly Aged and Disability Digests to 205 sector workers.

### Northern NSW Community Care Conference

In May 2015, NRSDC co-hosted the two-day inter-regional Northern NSW Community Care Conference (with Mid Coast Communities, Doorroongen Djugun and New England HACC Development) in Coffs Harbour. The conference was attended by 120 delegates from across Northern NSW.

## Regional Social Plan Stewardship Group – A Collaboration

NRSDC has brought together 25 community and government organisations from the human services sector to work collectively to improve community wellbeing and attract and facilitate investment for positive social impact in the Northern Rivers.

The Regional Social Plan Stewardship Group was established in February 2015 to support and manage implementation of the plan launched in early 2014. The group is linking its activities with existing groups and networks in the region and developing shared measures for our impact to help us track if and how our collective action is contributing to positive change.

We are focussing our work on:

- improving outcomes for children and young people

- a collective approach to domestic and family violence, including prevention
- affordable housing investment and supply

In June 2015 the Stewardship Group started developing an online scorecard that uses a results-based accountability framework to identify:

- population results we are seeking to impact
- how our region is doing on key indicators
- the partners who may have a role to play in doing better
- evidence about what works to do better
- how we will act to affect change – our strategy focusing on the best opportunities to work collectively.

Any organisation supporting the purpose and objectives of the Stewardship Group can nominate to join. Find our Terms of Reference at [www.regionalsocialplan.org.au/index.php/our-future-plan](http://www.regionalsocialplan.org.au/index.php/our-future-plan)



## Advocacy & Information



### Social Justice in the Pub

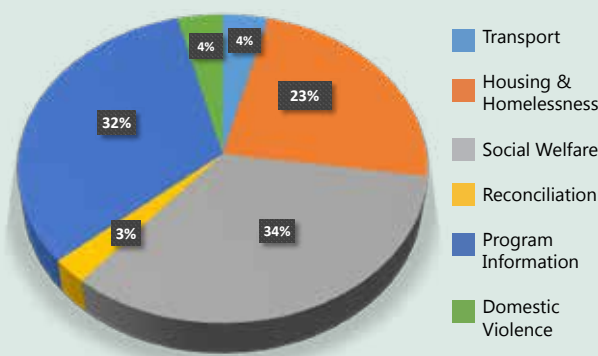
In May 2015 we accepted the invitation to participate on the speaker panel at the St Vincent de Paul Society Social Justice in the Pub event in Lismore – Housing Affordability. The event was attended by approximately 60 members of the community and workers in the sector.

### State Conference Presentation

NRSDC seeks opportunities to highlight social and economic conditions in regional NSW. Earlier this year we delivered a paper at the Shelter NSW state conference (attended by 150 delegates) – *'A Great Place To Live: Population Growth in a Non-metropolitan Region – Northern Rivers'*. This presentation outlined the impact of the undersupply of affordable housing in the Northern Rivers.



### NRSDC Media Coverage, by topic



NRSDC continues to be approached by media for commentary on social and economic issues in the region. We have benefitted from a good, long-standing relationship with the local media that enables us to raise issues and disseminate important information to the local community.

### Pre-Election Forums

To increase opportunities for community members to question local candidates' views on key social issues in our community, NRSDC hosted Meet the Candidates Forums for the NSW 2015 State Election in Tweed, Grafton, Lismore and Ballina. These events were attended by more than 100 people.

### Response to Government Inquiry

Earlier this year the NSW Government released its Sound Housing Discussion Paper for comment. NRSDC worked with members of the Northern Rivers Housing Forum to develop a submission outlining social housing opportunities and challenges in the Northern Rivers region.



### E-News

NRSDC's electronic newsletter is compiled and distributed fortnightly to 1040 organisations and individual subscribers from across the region. E-News is designed to relay local, regional and national news, research reports, grant information, and information on events and development opportunities.

### Strengthening Regional NSW

An increasing amount of NRSDC's work to strengthen regional communities extends beyond the Northern Rivers. The North West Alliance model is a consortium of six locally embedded organisations with shared values who have successfully come together to provide consistent and quality Ability Links NSW services through 85% of regional NSW. The Alliance partners, capitalise on their local knowledge and embeddedness in their communities, diversity of existing programs and services, social capital and geographic coverage to provide considerable infrastructure to leverage off. Collectively, the Alliance social capital extends across local, regional, state-wide and national networks and activities enabling extended scope, reach and sustainability of programs, cross sector planning, service delivery partnerships and systemic change.

NSW Department of Family & Community Services has commended NW Alliance for innovative, coordinated implementation and delivery of the Ability Links program and has drawn from its work on data collection, best practice guidelines, recruitment of peer workers and advisors and its participant engagement practices for state-wide Ability Links program enhancements.

## Transport Development Project

The Transport Development Project works across the Northern Rivers to increase transport access and opportunities. The project supports and facilitates development of relevant, effective, affordable and accessible transport solutions that help create a fairer society by supporting people to participate in the community.

The project works collaboratively with organisations and communities from Tweed to Grafton and west to Casino and Kyogle, with particular focus on our most transport disadvantaged communities.

It looks at options to transport disadvantaged people who have

difficulty in accessing a private vehicle or mainstream public transport, such as people who are young, older, Aboriginal or with a disability.

Over 500 people have accessed transport information at Transport Information events across the region in 2014-15.

2014-15 saw increased access to transport information through 5 transport information events, distribution of the Northern Rivers Transport Guide, development of the Lismore Base Hospital Patient Discharge Transport Information sheets and promotion of the new regional NSW trip planning website and 131 500 number.

*Transport Expo in Grafton.*



### Lismore Transit Centre Project

The Lismore Transit Centre Project used place making strategies to transform an empty neglected transit centre into a safe, welcoming and vibrant community space for all users. This collaborative project combined the assets of a vacant transit centre space and a community group who were seeking a shop front in the CBD, to create a low-cost solution that builds community capacity and has created a great place.

The information kiosk at the transit centre closed in 2008. In 2013 it became clear that antisocial behaviour and having no staff in the space were affecting security, feelings of safety and comfort for passengers and their willingness to use the centre.

The Lismore Environment Centre opened a shopfront inside the transit centre. The shopfront was designed to integrate into

the existing space to meet the requirements of the environment centre and transport information provision, and to support natural surveillance, guardianship and management of what is now a vibrant, functional community space.

Evaluation of the changes at the transit centre shows that the space is now perceived by users as being safer, friendlier, vibrant, welcoming and a valued resource for transport information. Local businesses commented on the improved space around the transit centre and the positive impacts for their business.

This project adds to existing evidence around the success of place making approaches in creating positive community spaces and supports place making as an effective strategy in shaping the ways that places are managed and used.

## 2014 Community Sector Ball & Awards

Each year NRSDC hosts the signature event on the Northern Rivers social calendar - the annual Community Sector Ball and Awards night.

In 2014, more than 250 people gathered at Lismore City Hall dressed in 'Roaring 20s' style to applaud all 84 award nominees, their organisations and their supporters.

The event attracted a large range of Northern Rivers community sector organisations and lots of new faces celebrating the work of our dedicated community services workers.

Attendees were entertained by some of the finest acts on the Northern Rivers, dancing the night away to headline act 11-piece swing band the Well Swung Daddies. MC for the evening was our region's world famous poet David Hallett, while other performers included comedian Nick Penn from Brisbane's Sit Down Comedy club, acrobats Darcy Grant and Emma McGovern, and a Sassy Salsa dance troupe. Lismore's La Vida Restaurant provided catering for the three-course dinner enjoyed by guests.



Thank you to our  
Ball & Awards sponsors



# Our Board



## **Paul Cruickshank – President**

Paul Cruickshank is an environmental lawyer working with the Office of the Environment and Heritage. Paul has extensive senior management, public affairs and change management experience in a range of organisations including Greening Australia, Leightons and OTC. Paul is passionate about social enterprises and through his contribution to the NRSDC Board aims to ensure a robust, viable and vibrant social sector in the Northern Rivers.



## **Karen Hazan – Deputy Chairperson**

Karen Hazan is a director of Trenches McKenzie Cox Solicitors of Lismore. She has experience in all areas of advocacy including family law, employment law, mental health and criminal law as well as conveyancing, probate, wills and contested estates. She is an accredited specialist in Family Law. Before coming to NRSDC Karen was a long-standing board member for Youth Connections North Coast Inc. Karen joined the Board of NRSDC as she enjoys being involved with and contributing to community

organisations which provide quality services to people who find themselves socially or economically disadvantaged.



## **Keith Sloan – Treasurer**

Keith Sloan is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Southern Cross University after serving on the staff of the Business School in Lismore for some 23 years. He has more than 40 years of research, consulting and teaching experience in the areas of international finance and economics, investment analysis, portfolio management, and corporate finance and over 10 years board experience with listed, unlisted and not-for-profit boards. In his role as a professional economist Keith became acutely aware of widening

divergence in the quality of life experienced by people living in this wonderful part of Australia and sees his work with the NRSDC board as making a small contribution to redressing these imbalances and building a stronger regional community.



## **Glenys Ritchie – Secretary**

Glenys is a Councillor for the Lismore City Council. She brings expertise in human resources, management and administration in the social services and the government sector. She has a long-standing interest in social welfare and equity. Aside from her position on the NRSDC Board, she is a member of several Council-related committees including the Sister City Advisory Group, Master Games, Richmond River Historical Society and Lismore Rainforest Botanical Garden.



## **Simon Adcock**

Simon Adcock is the Manager of Corporate Services at Lismore City Council and brings expertise in information technology, management consulting and local government. Simon also holds a Master of Business Administration and is passionate about increasing the efficiency of organisations. He is keen to put something back into the community and NRSDC provides a fantastic service and strong advocacy.



## **Kellie Shields**

Kellie Shields' experience, expertise and skills have developed over a rewarding 30-year career in social services. Kellie has extensive knowledge of the aged, community, disability and health sectors and now consults to organisations and services. Previous roles have included Manager Community Development North, Regional Learning and Development Manager UnitingCare Ageing, and State LGBTI Project Officer NSWACT. When not in her garden, Kellie enjoys public speaking and strategic planning.



## **Deborah Stafford**

Deb Stafford is an experienced community development practitioner with a passion for social justice and inclusion. She brings expertise in community engagement, project implementation, research and evaluation, strategic advocacy and sector development from her work in both leadership and direct delivery roles. She currently works to create positive change in the field of mental health and also provides strategic consulting services to local organisations. As an NRSDC board member, Deb draws on foundations of social justice, creativity and collaboration to contribute to thriving local communities.



## **Mark Ippolito**

Mark Ippolito is the Head English teacher at Kadina High School and brings 16 years experience teaching in rural and remote communities. He is passionate about providing opportunities for young people in our communities. He was named 2012 NRL Secondary Teacher of the Year. He has also held positions on the Board of Northern United Rugby League Club and the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre. Before coming to NRSDC, Mark was a board member for Youth Connections North Coast.



## **Kate Olivieri**

Kate Olivieri is the Community Development Officer at Richmond Valley Council and was previously Equity and Diversity Officer at Southern Cross University. She brings expertise in program monitoring, research and evaluation from her experience in social policy and international development in Australia and East Timor. In addition to this she has special interest in cultural inclusion and youth issues and was previously on the board of Youth Connections.

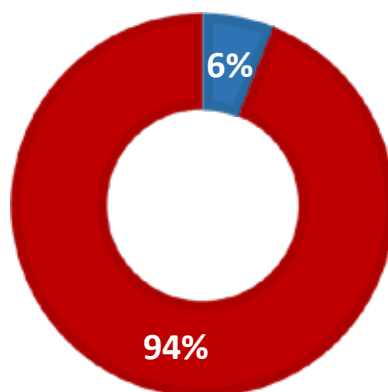
# Financials

NRSDC's primary financial objective is to invest in positive social change. We aim to maximise the proportion of funding that goes into programs and services while ensuring that we hold sufficient equity to provide working capital, meet employee entitlements, and invest in new programs. We also aim to ensure that NRSDC is able to continue to work to the benefit of the community long into the future.

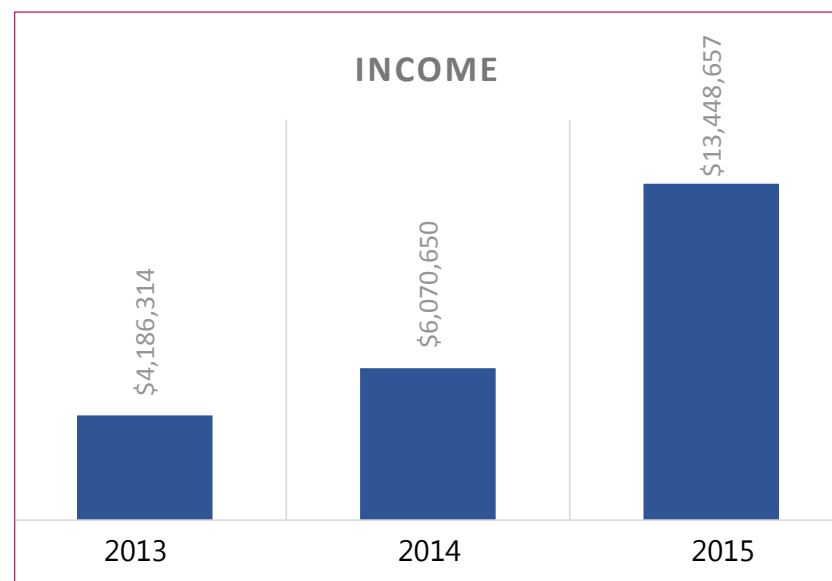
In 2014-2015 NRSDC produced a strong financial result while delivering effective programs and services. NRSDC produced a surplus of \$509,875 in 2014-2015 increasing member's equity to \$1,275,014. This surplus includes \$196,113 in equity transferred from Youth Connections North Coast Inc and an operating surplus of \$313,762.

## INCOME SOURCES

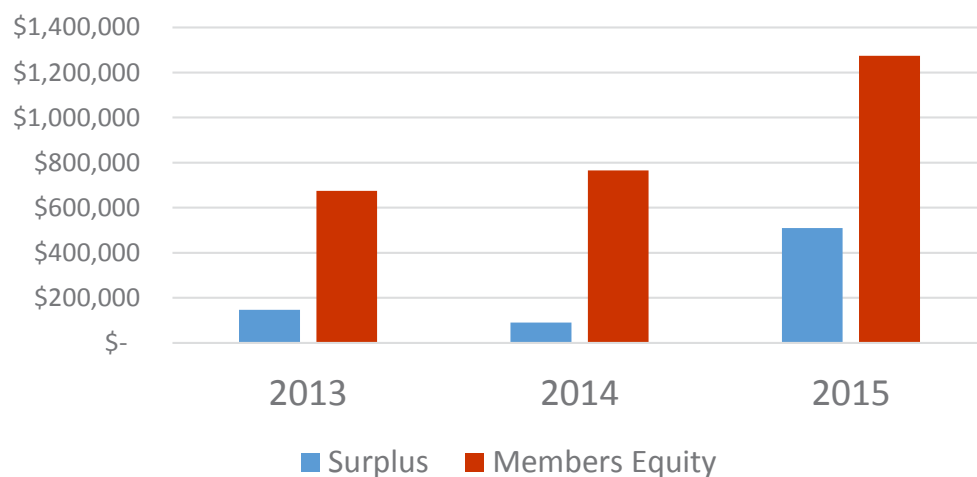
■ Other Income ■ Government Grants



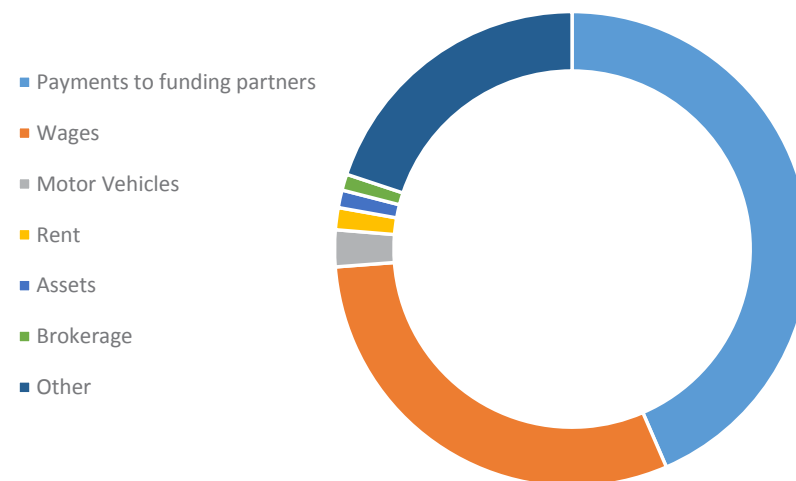
## INCOME



## Operating Results



## Expenditure





Cover images courtesy of Dustaway.

# Thank you to our funding bodies

NRSDC's program are made possible with the support of the following funding bodies:

