

Social  
Futures

2017-2018

ANNUAL  
REPORT





# Social Futures

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## Key areas of focus

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Social Futures is a voice for positive social change in regional Australia, helping to create connected, resilient communities. With more than 40 years' industry experience, we are a community service leader, striving to create change through our work across homelessness and housing supports, youth and family services, sector advocacy and programs that promote genuine participation for people with disability.

Our programs now reach communities in more than 85 per cent of regional and rural New South Wales. We are proudly regional; advocating for and understanding our regional communities.

As a National Insurance Disability Scheme (NDIS) Partner in the Community we provide support services to a significant number of participants, making up a large proportion of our overall service delivery as an organisation.

In combination with our other programs we provide authentically person-centred services, offering complementary wrap-around support and collaboration with other service providers.

We are increasingly results and outcomes focused, committed to refining our practice and maintaining our strong, vibrant workplace culture. We are focused on continued robust financial management and interested in growth to fill gaps in service delivery.

### **Our key areas of focus are:**

#### **Children, young people, individuals and families**

We work with individuals, families, other services and the community to promote healthy relationships and strong families; helping to keep children and young people safe and supporting individuals and families to reach their potential.

#### **Inclusive communities supporting social and economic participation**

We work in our programs and with others to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children and young people, people with disability, older people, LGBTIQAP+ communities and linguistically diverse communities to participate in community life, work and education.

#### **Households having affordable and appropriate housing**

We work directly and in partnerships to reduce homelessness and to build more affordable and social housing in our communities.

#### **Strong and connected regional communities**

A 40 year history of serving regional NSW puts us in a strong position to advocate for and support development of strong communities and well-connected services. We fill an important service delivery need in regional Australia.



# Vision

Thriving people, strong communities



## Our purpose

We work to achieve positive social change in our communities.

## Our values

**Integrity:** acting fairly, honestly, openly and consistently

**Inclusion:** valuing diversity, connection, belonging and social justice for all

**Learning:** improving our knowledge and understanding

In all our connections with staff, stakeholders and participants we acknowledge and recognise resilience, and we focus on potential and capacities, not on limitations or shortcomings.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners 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.

# 2017-2018 At a glance

## Our NSW footprint



Service Delivery covers **85%** NSW footprint

Our NSW regional footprint

- Service delivered by Social Futures
- Service delivered by subcontractors and Alliance partners

## Our participants

### A snapshot of our participants by service stream

**69%**  
Inclusive communities supporting social and economic participation  
Total of **14,685** participants



**22,428**  
TOTAL SOCIAL FUTURES PARTICIPANTS

**13%**  
Access for households to affordable and appropriate housing  
Total of **3,265** participants

**14%**  
Children, young people, individuals and families  
Total of **3,467** participants

**4%**  
Strong and connected regional communities  
Total of **1,011** participants

## Contents

**Social Futures** has made every effort to ensure this publication is free from error and/or omission. We are proud of our regional community origins and we thank our participants and staff who consented to share their stories in these pages. Most participants' names have been changed for privacy reasons.

### The Ripple Effect

We wish to acknowledge Social Futures' Learning Circle Facilitator Nick Freeburn who designed *The Ripple Effect* artwork featured in this report and has generously shared it with Social Futures. The design symbolises our regional communities and the way they are relational within themselves and to each other, all connected by the flowing rivers, the land, the environment and the people. It represents the way Social Futures works towards fostering inclusive, supported and safe communities.

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# Practice Excellence

**Social Futures Practice Excellence encourages deep learning through regular reflective practice and supports staff to develop their knowledge and skills following our practice framework.**

The organisation learned important lessons from our period of growth by adopting co-created change management as a more inclusive approach to change. If a planned change impacts significantly on staff work patterns then they have the opportunity to collaboratively plan the implementation of that change. This approach provides better outcomes by drawing on staff expertise, including knowledge of local context.

We created a new identified position within the Practice Excellence Team. **The Learning Circle Facilitator** is an identified local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander position that explores ways of informing and developing the Social Futures Practice Framework through a deeper understanding of traditional wisdom and practice. The role focuses on implementing the Practice Excellence aspects of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and supports staff to strengthen their knowledge and skills around meaningfully engaging and working alongside local Aboriginal communities.

The Practice Excellence team began developing a strengthened approach to the way Social Futures supports its people to flourish and thrive through monthly supervision, reflective practice and annual learning and development planning.



Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/practice-excellence/](https://socialfutures.org.au/practice-excellence/)

## Our Reconciliation Action Plan

**At Social Futures a significant proportion of our participants identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, further emphasising the need for us to be culturally aware and competent.**

Our staff overwhelmingly support action towards reconciliation. We have developed our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) with advice and guidance from Reconciliation Australia, and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in Lismore, Tweed and the Clarence Valley.

Our vision for reconciliation is for genuine relationships, strong partnerships, and connected communities. We acknowledge that access and

connection to country, knowledge and community are integral to wellbeing.

Our RAP commits us to change and growth, developing strategies to acknowledge and celebrate strength and resilience, and seeking ways to improve knowledge and understanding.

Our RAP is transparent and holds us accountable to progress our commitments in the following capacities:

- relationships
- respect
- opportunities
- tracking, progress, reporting

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/about/rap/](https://socialfutures.org.au/about/rap/)

# CEO and Board message

**Social Futures works to achieve positive social change in our communities. It is a pleasure to present this overview of activities for the 2017-2018 financial year. It has been a busy yet rewarding year during which we continued to develop as an organisation and grow our reach and impact in regional communities across New South Wales.**

During the year we worked with 22,428 participants, reflecting continued high demand for our services. Highlights of the year include:

- Driving implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across regional NSW through delivery of Local Area Coordination.
- Welcoming new colleagues in Western and Far Western NSW, with offices established in Bathurst, Broken Hill, Dubbo, Orange and Parkes.
- Launching our Reconciliation Action Plan and working to build stronger, respectful relationships with communities across our footprint.
- Continuing to focus on practice excellence through our Practice Framework and our work embedding lived experience expertise within the organisation.
- Major events highlighting the big issues affecting our communities, including the Northern Rivers Housing Forum and establishing the Better Chances Forum to focus on improving outcomes for children and young people in the region.

Looking forward, we know there is still much to do to ensure that everyone has access to the opportunities and supports necessary to live well and participate in community life. We will continue to advocate and work to address major issues for our regional communities, such as homelessness and housing stress, support for families, transport, access to services and having the best possible NDIS.

**Our achievements over the year are due to our extraordinarily talented, creative and passionate team. Our deep thanks go to staff, the Board, supporters, and collaborators in the sector for their contribution, perseverance and dedication. As always, our heartfelt thanks go to our participants who have shared their lives with us and allowed us to witness their many accomplishments.**



Acting Chair Karen Hazan  
Image: Social Futures



CEO Tony Davies  
Image: Social Futures



NDIS participant Phil, pictured with Gina, his Local Area Coordinator. Image: Social Futures

## Phil's magic garden

Phil loves nothing more than spending time in his garden, planting his own sustainable organic vegetable patch and looking after his feathered friends in his own home in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales.

These seem like simple pleasures but for Phil they seemed like an unattainable dream – until he received his National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan, and turned fantasy into reality.

Phil has been living with an acquired brain injury and ankylosing spondylitis for 24 years. He has challenges with everyday tasks and remembering times/dates and important meetings, but he does not accept excuses for not getting out into the community and living life.

**Phil was excited at the prospect of the NDIS rollout, but admits to feeling anxious and worried when he attended the pre-planning meeting with his Lismore-based NDIS Local Area Coordinator (LAC) from Social Futures. “My LAC put my fears to rest and took me through the process,” Phil says.**

When Phil attended the follow-up meeting to implement his new plan he emerged at the end shouting with joy! “I bought cake to celebrate. All my needs and goals are coming true.”

**With his NDIS plan in place, Phil has so much going on in one week he needs to schedule in rest time.**

Phil spends a lot of time in his garden which has been made more accessible for his mobility needs. His NDIS plan funds a support worker to help him tend to his goose and chickens, and he now employs someone to mow his lawn and trim his trees.

With his NDIS funding Phil has been able to organise some home modifications to provide easy access to his bathroom/shower, and a reliable form of mobility equipment which does not place pressure on his spine and legs.

He also now has transport funding to get to his many appointments and shopping. “I’m especially grateful because I’m now able to visit my elderly father who lives some distance away. Before I only got to see him once a year.”

Social Futures is an NDIS Partner delivering Local Area Coordination services in New South Wales. We provide Local Area Coordination (LAC) services to nearly 80 per cent of regional NSW directly in Northern, Western and Far West NSW; and through our subcontractors Mid Coast Communities and Intereach, on the Mid North Coast and Murrumbidgee respectively.

Our Local Area Coordinators assist eligible participants to join the NDIS, prepare individual plans and support their implementation, once

approved by the Government’s National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). We also work with local communities to improve inclusion of people with disabilities and help them understand how the NDIS is having a positive impact in our communities.

The NDIA provides direct support to participants in very remote areas; those with very high care needs; and where there could be a conflict of interest for Social Futures’ staff and their families.

**Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/ndis-lac/](https://socialfutures.org.au/ndis-lac/)**



## Independent living suits Grace to a 'T'

**When Grace finished school a few years ago, all she wanted to do was move out of home, crank up the music and live her own life.**

Pretty much the same as many other young adults keen to begin leading an independent lifestyle – except that in Grace’s case she has mild cerebral palsy, a mild intellectual disability and epilepsy.

Grace’s parents Wendy and Neville backed their daughter’s ambition but the supported accommodation options in the Far Western NSW town of Broken Hill were limited for a young woman of Grace’s age.

They eventually found a home ideal for Grace’s circumstances but the problem was to find suitable support to ensure Grace could cope on her own. Enter the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Local Area Coordinator (LAC) Michael McKee who works for Social Futures in Broken Hill. During Grace’s pre-planning, Michael identified a need for Grace to build her social inclusion by participating in day programs, to obtain her driver’s licence and to develop her ability to live independently.

**One year on and Grace is so busy she barely has time to watch her favourite TV shows.**



NDIS participant Grace, pictured with Michael, her Local Area Coordinator Image: Social Futures

Grace now attends day programs at a local disability service provider from Tuesday through to Friday, and does work experience at a local early education centre on Mondays.

Her NDIS plan means she can access support workers to help her at home seven days a week, and she has just started getting specialist driver training to help her get her P-plate license.

As if that isn’t keeping her busy enough, Grace also attends Zumba classes three times a week and is a volunteer crèche staff member at the same gym.

**“I’ve got heaps of friends from school and now I’ve made a whole heap more at Zumba, so I go out a lot to the movies or for a coffee,” Grace says.**

Local Area Coordination	Far West	Mid North Coast	Murrumbidgee	Northern NSW	Western NSW
Plans submitted	229	2,204	2,310	2,817	1,932
Plans implemented	203	1,465	1,517	2,791	1,287
Community engagement events	111	192	131	250	141
Participants at community engagement events	627	8,172	2,579	10,289	3,769
Participant satisfaction	100%	97%	95%	93%	94%
Staff living with a disability or as a carer of a person with a disability	17%	66%	37%	55%	19%

# North West Alliance Ability Links NSW

**North West Alliance Ability Links NSW** is an innovative consortium of five Ability Links community service organisations. As Lead Agency, Social Futures manages the effective coordination of Ability Links NSW for 85% of regional NSW from Wagga Wagga to Broken Hill to Tweed Heads.

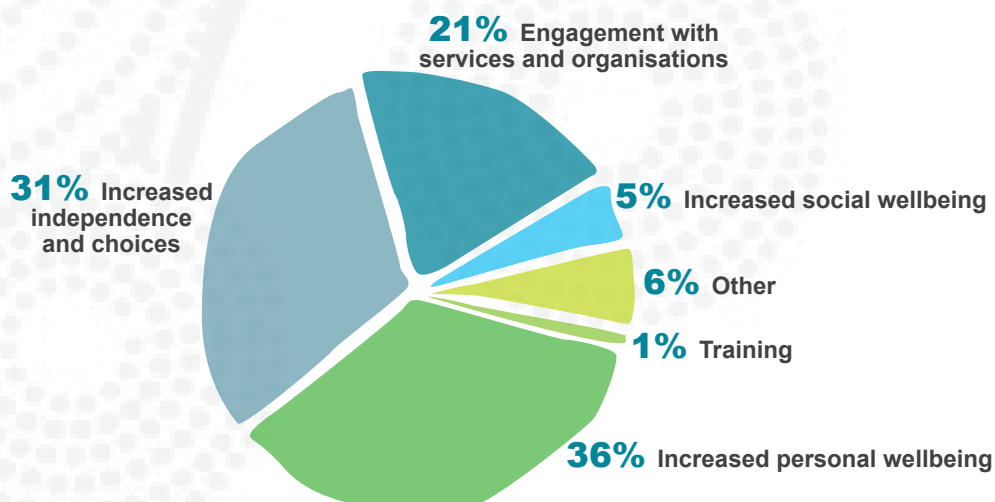
**Ability Links NSW** is an award winning program that builds the capacity of people with disability to connect to community and achieve personal goals. We also work with communities to promote the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities.



## North West Alliance Ability Links NSW

	Far North Coast	Central West	Mid North Coast	New England-Tablelands	Orana Far West	Riverina Murray
New participants	976	389	975	507	457	822
New Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants	16%	10%	9%	34%	11%	5%
New culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds participants	10%	6%	6%	6%	11%	5%
Individual outcomes achieved	2,251	1,424	5,264	928	2,803	2,399
Community outcomes achieved	57	422	1,944	101	505	190

## Types of individual outcomes achieved



# Lived Experience Project

## Lived experience provides authentic connection and inclusion

**The safe and effective use of lived experience expertise is a game-changer for service delivery in the community sector.**

Workers with first-hand lived experience of marginalisation and navigating the service system can learn to share knowledge, insights and personal reflections within a structured professional framework. Evidence shows the framework provides authentic connection and inclusion for participants, their communities and the workplace.

This year, Social Futures' Lived Experience Project developed three face-to-face training packages and delivered 14 full-day workshops across New South Wales.

Over 200 Ability Linkers, managers and human resources staff from providers across NSW attended training sessions on building and supporting the contribution of lived experience expertise.

Social Futures' Ability Peer Linker Gary Shallala-Hudson (pictured right) was one of four NSW linkers mentored to develop his co-facilitation skills and build lived experience capacity within Social Futures.

**"I'm really keen on our Lived Experience framework and proud of Social Futures," Gary says.**

"Sharing anything you have experienced with intent and purpose to foster hope and role-model recovery and successes is a really powerful thing. Peer workers can be in many different kinds of roles – it's so diverse. But one thing we always are is a resource to our team, our program and our organisation."



"I love it. I just can't get over the fact this is what I get to do for a living."

Social Futures has been at the forefront of using lived experience expertise in delivering better services for the past seven years. In 2017-2018 the Ability Links Lived Experience Project distilled these learnings with research and consultation to develop and deliver evidence-based frameworks and training for Ability Linkers and managers across NSW. Social Futures is finalising an online training package to increase access and the use of lived experience expertise as a professional asset in workplaces across Australia.

## Lived Experience Project

**254** participants attended **20** training/capacity building events across NSW

**99%** of participants surveyed were satisfied and reported the training has a positive impact

**The Lived Experience Project** promotes choice, voice and control for people with disabilities. Social Futures has developed a best practice framework using lived experience as a professional asset. We have implemented training for Ability Linkers, other workers and organisations, which is currently being rolled out across NSW.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/disability-and-inclusion/lived-experience-expertise/](https://socialfutures.org.au/disability-and-inclusion/lived-experience-expertise/)

# Far North Coast NSW Ability Links

**Meredith is confident, educated, more connected**



**Meredith is the solo parent and full time carer of her son Karime and is a great example of taking the initiative to demystify the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for not only herself, but within her community.**

Meredith and her son moved to Ballina six years ago when Karime was still at high school, and anticipating the NDIS roll out, Meredith began a learning journey about the NDIS model so that when it arrived in the Northern Rivers she was prepared.

Meredith says the massive cultural shift of choice and control which the NDIS provides requires a lot of education and preparation.

Meredith met Sally, a Social Futures' Ability Linker based in Ballina, who supported her to launch her own information group in Ballina to help the community better understand the NDIS.

"Sally helped me establish connections within my new community so I wasn't so isolated. She also helped me find supports for my son" Meredith explains.

Meredith launched the Community Disability Information Alliance (CDIA) in October 2014 to share what she learned with other locals.

**"Ability Links paid for monthly venue rental and refreshments so we could meet in a safe and confidential space to inform, educate and empower each other," Meredith says.**

**"Sally provided support to set up the Alliance, promote and spread awareness of the meetings. I developed an agenda each month which helped demystify some of the language and terminology used in the NDIS."**



Meredith launched CDIA.

Sally supported Meredith's grant funding applications, ensuring the Alliance is sustainable long term. It now has over 100 people on the database, with more than 20 people attending the monthly meetings.

All the participants have successfully transitioned to the NDIS from state-based funding, assisted by information gathered at the group.

"CDIA has worked hard to dispel misinformation and untruths and to dissipate fear about the NDIS through education," Meredith says.

Feedback from Alliance participants is they are more confident, educated, more connected and have made choices and decisions that they never would have considered for their loved one before attending CDIA.

"Full inclusion and active citizenship is possible for all people with a disability," Meredith says.

## Sheli is making big steps

On 31 March the relentless rains in the aftermath of Cyclone Debbie caused extensive flooding in Northern New South Wales, the Tweed and southern areas of Queensland.

54-year-old Sheli's Lismore home was inundated with floodwater. It was a creative project which helped her deal with the trauma that this created.

"I was living in a studio downstairs and I saw a 'duck pond' full of water. It engulfed my home so quickly and I lost everything. It was the most incredible feeling of invasion. Dirty, muddy; I can't even describe it," Sheli says.

Close to where Sheli lived a community services disaster relief hub was set up in the disused Lismore train station.

Social Futures' Ability Links NSW partnered with other community stakeholders to create Arts Recovery Community Hub (ARCH) in the station.

**The ARCH workshops provided an opportunity for people who had been flood affected to engage with community services in a non-confrontational way, and for community services to reach people who would not normally engage in a traditional counter-service approach.**

Aboriginal artist Michael Phelps was running some of the workshops and Sheli was encouraged to paint what she felt.

Sheli's mother and father were both artists and this cathartic process has provided Sheli a new focus. Gradually the traumatic flood experience has been processed with creative endeavours.

**Far North Coast Ability Links** works with people with disability, their families and carers, to live the lives they want in their local communities. It also supports local communities to be welcoming and inclusive for people living with disability.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/ability-links/](http://socialfutures.org.au/ability-links/)



"Social Futures facilitated an art exhibition in December featuring different artists who painted at ARCH. I'm very proud that one of my paintings was bought by a guy from Social Futures and it now sits in his office," Sheli says.

"I'm also a singer-songwriter and I wrote a song 'The Night Where Debbie Came' which I've recorded on my second album."

Sheli's revived sense of optimism is contagious.

"I had a life where I couldn't do things. Now I've become very expressive and creative on my own. Social Futures has helped me make big steps in my life after Cyclone Debbie."

**2,970** community activities reached

**14,071** people

### 2018 SNAPSHOT SURVEY

**93%** of participants surveyed were treated with respect

**72%** of participants surveyed had partly or totally achieved their goals

**69%** of participants surveyed have learned new skills to help achieve their goals

**83%** of participants surveyed say their situation has improved due to support

# Far North Coast Family Referral Service



## Advocacy is why I come to work every day

**Family Referral Service (FRS) supports people when they just don't know where to go.**

As a Family Referral worker since the service first started six years ago, Melinda really enjoys her job based in the Grafton office.

"I work with families to help tease apart the main issues occurring for them and assist them to focus on aspects that they are finding a bit challenging," Melinda explains. "From there we look for places to refer them to for assistance." Melinda observes: "We aim for a holistic wrap around referral service, but the reality is we are limited to the kinds of services available here (Grafton)."

**Melinda recognises her strength lies in advocacy. "I love to give people the confidence to navigate their way through systems. The ideal is empowering people and that's part of what motivates me to turn up every day," she says.**

The Clarence Valley is a large footprint and often requires people seeking services to travel long distances.

Melinda has developed strong connections within the Clarence Valley community of partner services. "I'm well known and the connections I have are invaluable to providing positive outcomes for participants," Melinda explains. "Often the paperwork can be so onerous for families to complete. I can go to a specific service and have a discussion that assists in easing the paperwork. The service providers know that I have the participant's back.

"The participants I work with are so diverse. There is a lot of advocacy around domestic violence situations, where people are working their way through relationship breakdowns.

"They may be facing financial disadvantage, be unaware of Legal Aid and need support making an application.



Melinda, Family Referral Service worker.

"I also do a lot of work with young people who often experience difficulties at school and may have given up attending school altogether. I work with the school to make it easier for the young person to access education.

"Homelessness is also an increasing issue here in the Clarence and the challenge is the lack of available and affordable housing stock."

As rewarding as her role is, Melinda acknowledges it can be relentless. "Supervision is important and Social Futures has a conscious understanding just by the nature of the work we do that vicarious trauma is inevitable. As a child I learned a lot about compassion through my dad who was a child in occupied Holland in WW2. I think subconsciously I learned to recognise people can be severely impacted by situations outside their control; whether it be government laws, societal bigotry or the lottery of birth. It was a natural progression to move down a pathway to social justice and social equity, they're part of my value system."



**589**  
families supported

**527**  
participants linked to support services

### 2018 SNAPSHOT SURVEY

**100%** of surveyed participants reported they were treated with respect

**79%** of participants surveyed learned new skills assisting them to achieve future goals

**89%** of participants surveyed reported a positive impact with their family

**79%** of participants surveyed have built connections with people or services to help them in the future



## Family relationship changes for the better

The support Rachel\* and her 14 year old daughter Holly\* received from Family Referral Worker Jillian assisted them to change the trajectory of their relationship for the better.

At home Rachel was experiencing significant mental health issues and had lost hope. The electricity had been cut off and there was no food in the house. When Jillian met the family, Holly was living with a group of homeless people in town and not going to school.

“My thinking was let’s try and get the home up and running again. There’s no teenager who wants to stay in a home with no power and no food,” Jillian says.

Rachel’s Centrelink payment had been stopped, so together they went to Centrelink.

“The appointment gave me some hope that things would get better. With Jillian’s help I was able to get my payments back on track,” Rachel says.

By Monday Rachel had money in her account and her self-esteem and hope for the future was returning. The power company were contacted and the power was switched back on.

“With this small bit of support, Rachel went from passively accepting her lot to thinking she could make things happen,” Jillian says.

“Despite some cognitive impairment and a history of domestic violence, Rachel displayed the strength and resilience to go and get her daughter.”

Rachel’s daughter Holly eventually came home and they’re now on an upward trajectory.

Family Referral Service is an intermediary between the participants and other services. It was Jillian’s job to step away at this point and Holly has now been referred to Connecting You”.

“Every day I’m humbled by people’s courage and strength. I’m proud of my role,” Jillian says.

*\* Not their real names*

The Far North Coast Family Referral Service is part of a state-wide network providing support to children, young people and families around the challenges and demands of everyday family life. Services include referrals to local services, information and case coordination support.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/family-referral-service/](https://socialfutures.org.au/family-referral-service/)

# Elements

Youth and Family Relationships Program

## Drawing anxiety away

**The counselling that 22 year old Kelly\* received as part of the Elements program has made a huge difference to her life.**

Not so long ago she was suffering from anxiety and having negative thoughts that were impacting her life.

"I realised that I was listening to a lot of the fear that went on in my head and that it stopped me from making the right decisions," Kelly says.

"I've started to realise that I don't have to listen to it."

Providing free counselling for 10 to 24-year-olds and their parents, Elements worker Maire assisted Kelly with fortnightly sessions to work through her concerns and to work towards her goals.

**"Maire is amazing - I would love for more people to be like her. At the start I was hesitant but I wanted to try. It took a while for me to open up, but now it's created a solid base for me and it's actually working for the first time which is really exciting," Kelly says.**



"We've been focusing on keeping me present and staying in the moment. It's really helped me."

Another activity that has helped Kelly is drawing. "I never have a picture, I just draw and things come up," she says.

"Sometimes when I'm in a very anxious state I finish the drawing and I see things more clearly. I think that's part of my Aboriginal culture."

Kelly is now starting to work towards her dream of working as a chef at one of the restaurants near Uluru in Central Australia.

"It's the whole cooking process that I like... the fact that all these ingredients go together and make something really amazing," she says.

"I'm really good at improvising, and I just think it would be so good to go to The Rock [Uluru] and work there."

*\* Not her real name*

## Elements

**153** participants

**10%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

**38%** participants live with disability

**80%** of participants surveyed have learned new skills to help them to achieve their goals

Elements - Youth and Family Relationships Program is based in Lismore and provides free counselling for 10 to 24-year-olds and their parents to build supportive family relationships. Elements also delivers the Healthy Relationships programs to schools.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/elements/](https://socialfutures.org.au/elements/)



# Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind

## Therapy through clay

**The Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind (MJKIM) project was perfectly suited to assist Elizabeth\*.**

With its focus on the wellbeing and resilience of young people who are at risk of developing mental ill health, the program was just what the 11-year-old needed.

Elizabeth suffered family trauma as a baby and had an unsettled early childhood. The trauma of those experiences was later reflected in her behaviour at school.

But through MJKIM's gentle mix of sand and symbol work and Clay Field therapy, this body trauma was addressed and resolved in a very gentle, playful and non-threatening way.

"It helped me a lot to be honest," Elizabeth says.

"I felt like I could talk to someone other than my mother about what was going on.

"Before when I felt horrible I didn't feel comfortable to open up but now I can."

Elizabeth particularly enjoyed the clay therapy with her caseworker, Pip. "We would talk and then model the things we talked about," she says

"It's kind of like telling a story about yourself but using clay instead of words."

"It does kind of feel scary at the start but when you go through it, it gives you a lot of happiness. It's someone who actually knows how to deal with things and help you through them."

A few months into the therapy, Elizabeth realised how well she was progressing.

"I didn't really notice that I was getting better with my emotions, then I noticed that I wasn't getting into trouble at school as much," she says.

"It felt like I finally fixed it and helped myself."

\* Not her real name



## Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind

**287** participants

**150** participants attending Mijung Jarjums events

**19%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

### 2018 SNAPSHOT SURVEY

**89%** of participants surveyed have learned new skills to help achieve their goals

**89%** of participants surveyed say their situation has improved due to support

**Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind** is an early intervention family mental health support service. We promote wellbeing and resilience in children and young people who are at risk of developing or are showing early symptoms of mental ill health.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/mijung-jarjums-kids-mind/](https://socialfutures.org.au/mijung-jarjums-kids-mind/)

# Reconnect and Getting it Together

## Helping a mum and son connect

When 16-year-old Gabe\* and his mum Josephine\* experienced tough times in their relationship it resulted in Gabe moving away to stay with his grandad.

That didn't work out well and all Gabe wanted to do was move back to his mum's and return to school.

Gabe and Josephine were referred to the Social Futures' Reconnect and Getting It Together (GIT) programs.

"At the first session it was just Monika and me," Gabe explains.

"It was good to talk to her one-on-one."

Monika learned that both Gabe and his mum wanted to make things better between them but they just kept clashing.

Over a number of sessions, both individually and together, Monika introduced Gabe and his mum to selected counselling and mediation approaches. These were combined with solution-focused strategies and goal setting. Slowly Gabe started to gain trust in his mum and Josephine learned her son wanted and needed her input in their relationship.

"The most significant change for this family has been the facilitation of open and honest dialogue without blame," Monika says.

"This has given both mum and son some practical skills they can put into place. They've developed the ability to discuss their challenges without blame or criticism on both an emotional and practical level."

As a mum, Josephine is grateful for the relationship she now has with her son.

**Reconnect** assists young people 12-18 aged years who are at risk of homelessness, to stabilise their current living situation and improve engagement with their families.

**Getting It Together** helps people aged 12-25 find opportunities for positive change in relation to their drug and alcohol use: building self-esteem and improving their life skills through individual and family-focused interventions and group work.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/reconnect-and-git/](https://socialfutures.org.au/reconnect-and-git/)



"I can see now my confidence was pretty low. Monika helped me to get better at talking with Gabe and working out compromises. It's not always easy, but I feel like we are a bit more of a team now," Josephine says.

Gabe's outlook on his relationship with his mum is also much brighter.

"Monika really helped me and mum open up and talk about stuff. Before we'd just argue. I feel a lot more hope now," Gabe says.

*\*Not real names*

### **GiT**

**103** participants

**74%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

**86%** of participants surveyed were given the help they needed

### **Reconnect**

**116** participants

### **2018 SNAPSHOT SURVEY**

**100%** of participants surveyed learned new skills to help achieve their goals

**100%** of participants surveyed reported the support improved their situation

# Youth on Track

## Offering support for a cycle of change

**Joelene\* was leaving the police station with her mum, after a police caution for shoplifting when they met Liz who works as a support worker for Youth on Track.**

"I could see Joelene was upset and challenged," Liz says.

Having fled the care of an abusive relative, the young woman was homeless, angry and stealing to survive.

"I was just sleeping on people's couches, running amok – I used to steal to get everything," Joelene says.

The referral from the Police Youth Liaison Officer enabled Liz to work directly with Joelene and her mum to create a cycle of change.

**"Everyone forgot to tell Joelene that she's a great kid and that she's worth the world. As a family service Youth on Track was able to work closely with Joelene and her mother over the coming months to develop deeper understandings of healthy relationships, problem solving, trust, nutrition and budgeting," Liz says.**

"Liz stopped me from going out stealing, breaking the law all the time," Joelene says. "That died down a whole heap because I had someone I could trust and talk to."

Liz supported Joelene to find alternatives to stealing what she needed via developing money management skills, budgeting and learning how to shop cheaply.

She also provided her with support and encouragement to pursue a healthier path.

"A sense of self-esteem is so critical for young people, particularly in the way they perceive themselves and their place in the world," Liz says. "I tell her how she is a precious person."

Boosted by this support, Joelene has not reoffended and is working towards aspirational goals, such as her dream of becoming a chef on the Gold Coast.

"I'm definitely happier these days". "I'd like to go there and start fresh," Joelene says.

*\* Not real name*



### Youth on Track

**58** participants    **120** referrals

#### 2018 SNAPSHOT SURVEY

**74%** of participants surveyed felt supported by Youth on Track

**80%** of participants surveyed reported Youth on Track had given them the skills to choose not to reoffend

**91%** of participants surveyed are now aware of support services they can use

Youth on Track is an early intervention program for 10-17 year olds that responds to a young person's identified offending related risks and needs. Referrals are made directly from New South Wales Education and Police. Youth on Track is funded by the NSW Department of Justice.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/youth-on-track/](https://socialfutures.org.au/youth-on-track/)



## It feels good to be a part of this community

Right from the get go, when headspace Tweed Heads opened its doors, exceptional young people were demonstrating their leadership skills.

Local young volunteer Keiah was instrumental in the development of service delivery as well as assisting the set-up of the YAG (Youth Advisory Group).

She is now YAG president and says everyone is happy with Tweed headspace and she feels good to be part of this community.

In 2017 Keiah and her YAG colleagues identified a cultural need in the Tweed Shire and set up Compass in response: the Tweed/Southern Gold Coast LGBTIQAP+ Youth Network, (coordinated by headspace Tweed Heads).

“When I was younger I had some rough times and relied on community services support, which really helped,” Keiah explains.

“I get to advocate for other young people. It’s easy for them to relate when they’re speaking to someone with lived experience. It’s satisfying to give back and reassure people it’s OK to not be OK.”

**In October, Compass facilitated the inaugural Tweed/Cooly Diversity Walk with a fantastic turn out of colourful people (and a few colourful canines!) coming together to celebrate the wonderful diversity of local community in a vibrant, proud march through the main local streets.**

The walk was so successful it will continue as an annual event. In addition to the annual Diversity Walk, Compass has developed and presented training sessions that are making visible inroads in the local area for LGBTIQAP+ young people, including schools.



Compass inaugural Annual Diversity Walk, October 2017

In March 2018, Keiah and YAG colleague Adrian were selected to co-present at the headspace National Conference in Melbourne with headspace Tweed Heads Community Engagement Officer Claire Cottone.

They talked about Compass work in a break-out session titled *Rainbow Warriors: creating safety, support and social inclusion for LGBTIQAP+ young people at a local level*, sharing tips with other headspace services from across Australia on how to rock youth participation in groups and events.

“Keiah and Adrian’s passion and commitment have made a massive contribution to the work of headspace Tweed, and to the wider community,” says Claire.

Keiah reflects, “I can see myself being a youth worker in the future; it’s a passion of mine. It’s given me that drive to say there is light at the end of the tunnel.”

headspace	TWEED HEADS	LISMORE
Community events and training	61	70
Networking and sector activities	52	81
Program participants	442	435
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	13%	14%
Participants who identify as LGBTIQAP+	14.5%	22%

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## Don't be afraid to speak up

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**Luke is a young man who understands the pressures of life can sometimes get too much if support isn't found, and he is using his experience to help others.**

As the youngest of five brothers, it was tragic news to Luke and his family when they lost one of his older brothers to suicide.

Luke was just four years old at the time but he remembers his brother with pride.

"He served in the Australian Defence Force as a peacekeeper in East Timor and returned to civilian life with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)," Luke explains.

"I've been told that he and I are very alike, both in personality and interests. I think that's why even now his death still grips me like a vice sometimes.

"I've always had the feeling deep down that if I was just a bit older I would've been able to help him, maybe even help prevent losing him. That's what hurts the most."

It's the experience of going through this loss that inspired Luke to sign up with the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) run through the Lismore **headspace**.

Luke first got involved with **headspace** after seeking out support to deal with anxiety and heavy emotions he went through after supporting a friend.

Find out more: [headspace.org.au/](https://headspace.org.au/)

He found that helping to support his friends who were struggling emotionally had a positive impact on his own wellbeing.

"The people at **headspace** have made such a difference to my day-to-day life," Luke says.

"My main piece of advice is just seek help. Don't be afraid to speak up. The hardest part is the initial call to **headspace**. It gets so much easier from there and it's worth it.

"Also, never apologise about mental health. It's an important topic that shouldn't be shrouded in apologies. Please don't let stigma stop you from getting the help you really need. It could save a life."

The YAG meets regularly to work on projects and has been instrumental in helping Luke to prioritise his own self-care and develop techniques for dealing with anxiety, as well as sharing these learnings to help others.

"Through YAG I've met some awesome people that have taught me things I never would've learned otherwise."

A keen photographer, Luke has started photographing **headspace** events which is a great launch pad for his own photography business.

The year after his Higher School Certificate Luke's close friend attempted to suicide and he stayed with her all night to make sure she was OK.

The experience impacted his mental health and he sought help at **headspace** Lismore.

"I stood outside the doors for almost half an hour before I managed to get the courage to walk in and ask for help," Luke remembers.



headspace YAG member, Luke

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## Lismore Young Songwriters

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**Friday 13 was anything but unlucky for the finals of the 2018 Lismore Young Songwriters Competition.**

Now in its ninth year, the competition coincides with National Youth Week in April and is a long standing community-based youth-focused event.

Social Futures' programs The Clubhouse, Links to Learning and headspace Lismore partnered with other community stakeholders including Southern Cross University, Northern Rivers Conservatorium of Music and Lismore City Council to create a professional platform for talented regional young people to showcase their skills, acting as a stepping stone into the exciting and competitive world of music.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/lismore-young-songwriters/](https://socialfutures.org.au/lismore-young-songwriters/)



Lismore Young Songwriters 2018 Finalists, Frequency

# Links to Learning



## Sally finds her voice

There was a time not so long ago when Sally\* hated the idea of failing so much she developed anxiety and resisted trying new things.

Sally was referred via her school to Links to Learning, an outreach school-based program aimed at Year Eight and Year Nine students, focussing on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM). The weekly program is delivered over one school semester and aims to build self-esteem, teamwork and communication skills.

**Links to Learning support worker India says, “We try hard to create a safe learning space. Young people are encouraged to develop skills to think creatively and embrace the process of trial and error. We encourage them to identify their own preferred learning style.”**

The program also supports students to be more engaged in school and explore potential job and career skills.

**“A lot of the activities involve non-permanent processes – so it’s all about the doing, not the end product. Without the pressure of a final outcome, the young people can experiment and play. Often they discover innovative ways forward which really builds confidence,” India says.**

Over the coming weeks Sally’s confidence began to grow. “I just decided to do it - I thought it would do me good,” she says.

“We did things which were really fun - a lot of art stuff like making stencils and lots of Photoshop things.

“I did pictures of myself and my friends, we used a green screen background so we could pretty much put in whatever background we wanted.”

Sally is now much more confident with getting outside her comfort zone and says she will definitely recommend Links to Learning to other school students if they ask.

“I’d say that it’s really fun and it gives you a lot more confidence and stuff,” she says.

*\* Not real name*

## Links to Learning

**136** participants

**Links to Learning** is funded by New South Wales Department of Education. Group facilitators deliver a program to eight participating schools in Northern NSW, with the aim of engaging young people in ongoing learning by focusing on STEAM subjects (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths), as well as team dynamics and interpersonal skills. **Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/links-to-learning/](http://socialfutures.org.au/links-to-learning/)**



The Clubhouse is a safe, free, after-school drop-in program for young people aged 12 to 18 years. It offers members access to STEAM technology, creative art mediums and mentors who nurture their creativity and assist them to gain skills and confidence.

**Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/clubhouse/](http://socialfutures.org.au/clubhouse/)**

## The Clubhouse

**90** participants

**3** events

**1,652** hours of service

**148**

life skills programs

**117**

social inclusion program sessions

## 2018 SNAPSHOT SURVEY

**77%** of participants surveyed said "I am better at finding ways to overcome problems or challenges that I encounter at school."

# Connecting You

Homelessness Youth Assistance Program

## Natasha goes from strength to strength

Since her participation in Connecting You, Natasha\* has gone from strength to strength.

From being at risk of homelessness and estranged from her mother, the 14-year-old is now happily living at home and thinking about future career options.

Connecting You provides practical support for 12 to 15-year-olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In Natasha's case the program provided support to both her and her mother, with the latter receiving strengths-based, attachment-focused support.

"It really helped with my [relationship with] mum," Natasha says.

"It's awesome with my mum now. We have really good chats."

Natasha also had great chats with her Connecting You caseworker, Shelly.

**"We used to go for hot chocolate and coffees and talk about things. We'd just chat about stuff that was going on for me at the time. Just getting things off my chest," Natasha says.**

Natasha is diving into her passion for football and boxing which has proven a great way to get fit, make new friends and expand her horizons.

"I just find it easier to relax now and make friends, you know?" she says.

"I was hanging out with my friend today and we went on a boat. It was really nice."

Natasha's love of sport has also inspired one of her future career choices – personal training.

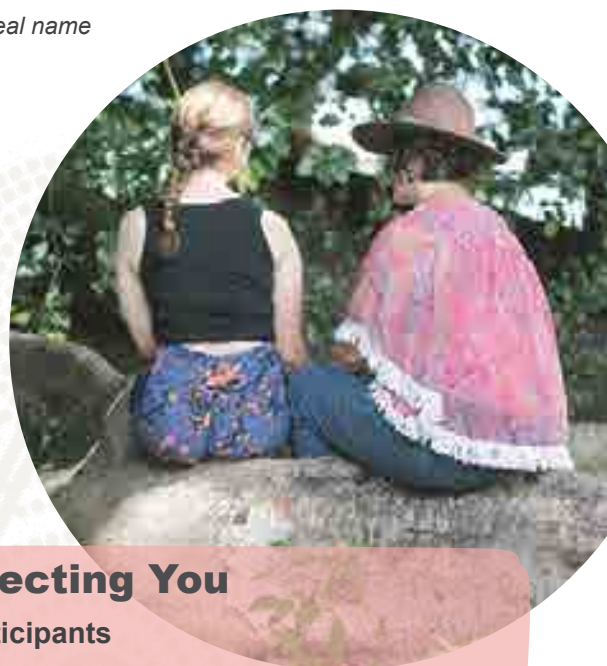
"If I could do anything it would be a personal trainer or a lawyer," she says.

"I like getting fit so I thought I could help other people do that too."

Her thoughts about being a lawyer also stem from wanting to help people.

"I used to get in trouble a lot with the law. If I ever become a lawyer I can help kids who get into trouble like me, like some of the other lawyers did for me."

*\* Not real name*



### Connecting You

**35** participants

#### 2018 SNAPSHOT SURVEY

**75%** of participants surveyed say their goals are fully/partially met

**75%** of participants surveyed say they learned new skills

**100%** of participants surveyed say they were treated with respect

Connecting You, our Homeless Youth Assistance Program (HYAP), provides practical and emotional support for 12 to 15-year-olds who are at risk of homelessness. Case Management support assists young people to reconnect with family, friends, work, education and their community. The service is only available to young people referred by New South Wales Family and Community Services.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/connecting-you/](https://socialfutures.org.au/connecting-you/)

# Connecting Home

## Unconditional friendship and guidance

When Louise\* (pictured), 50, looks around her home she feels a deep sense of stability and security.

It's a long way from the places she used to rest her head.

"I was homeless for just over three-and-a-half years," Louise says.

"I had to have an operation and after that the relationship I was in ended.

"The whole jigsaw puzzle just fell to pieces then. I was in a hole and couldn't get out of it. I couldn't work, couldn't study and couldn't find anywhere to live."

Connecting Home played a crucial role in helping Louise to get the suitable, permanent social housing home she is in now.

Jenny, a Connecting Home caseworker, helped Louise apply to be placed on the priority housing list.

The application was successful and some months later Louise found a quiet, comfortable home that didn't require her to spend her entire pension each week.

"I call them God's secret angels," Louise says of the staff at Connecting Home.

"They didn't just help me to find a place, they also gave me unconditional friendship and guidance."

Caseworker Jenny described Louise as "one of the most remarkable, resilient women I've ever met."

"After what she's experienced it's pretty amazing to see her progress," Jenny says.

Louise is now giving back to the community herself by volunteering at a charity shop called Mend and Make Do Crew that sells recycled items.

"I'd also like to get involved with the soup kitchen," she says.



Louise\* at her quiet, comfortable home.

"I'm really excited to find out about all the wonderful things people do for the community."

"I was the hare and now I'm the turtle, but slow and steady wins the race."

\* Not real name

### Connecting Home

**2,882** new participants

**19,168** occasions of service

**4** events with 200 participants attending

#### 2018 SNAPSHOT SURVEY

**94%** of participants surveyed felt they were treated with respect

**87%** of participants surveyed achieved their goals

**61%** of participants surveyed learned new skills to help achieve their goals

**85%** of participants surveyed say their situation improved due to the support



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## I do encourage people to reach out

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**For 58-year-old Ray, becoming homeless was something he had resigned himself to.**

He had been living in a tent in the bush in the Northern Rivers for three years and would continually move around so he wasn't discovered by the police or rangers.

It was after ongoing health issues that Ray moved to Tweed Heads to better access health services, but the rental tenancy he secured expired and he became homeless again.

**"I ended up in a bit of a spiral. Everywhere I went and everything I did didn't work. I was in a car for a while and I ended up putting a big tent up at the beach. I was just accepting what I had," Ray says.**

Ray suffers from severe cervical spine spondylosis, sciatica, osteoarthritis, chronic back and lower leg pain. Ray had always shared a laugh and had a smile, but his homelessness exacerbated the increasing mental and physical pain he was experiencing. A referral to the Social Futures Connecting Home program came next.

"Fortunately they assigned a wonderful support worker named Jenny. From that point things started looking up," Ray says.

Jenny spent the next few months advocating on behalf of Ray; writing letters, processing documentation and navigating the system. Finally Ray was approved for secure North Coast Community Housing suitable to his physical needs. On a transformative Monday Ray signed his tenancy agreement, was handed the keys, and moved in. Jenny remembers receiving the elated phone call from Ray.

"He said, 'Guess where I'm calling you from? My house!' Everything in his voice had changed, he was now genuinely happy and laughing," Jenny says.

Ray is already planning to grow passionfruit, herbs and vegetables in his courtyard.



**"I have running water and a fridge and now I can have a shower every day. I sleep in a bed, cook in my own kitchen and I feel like a king. It's just back to normality really and in that sense I'm pretty happy about it," Ray says.**

Ray says he'd encourage other people who need help to speak up.

"I do encourage people to reach out in the same way I have. I see people and I chat to them and I just say never give up, you've gotta keep going."

*\* Not real name*

**Connecting Home** supports people who are experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness. The program provides case management and support from Tweed Heads to Grafton, assisting people to maintain their tenancies; helping them find new housing; and supporting people with complex needs over a longer term.

The program provides support specifically for:

- 16 to 25-year-olds
- adults and families
- adults with complex needs

**Find out more:**

**[socialfutures.org.au/connecting-home/](https://socialfutures.org.au/connecting-home/)**

**Northern Youth Project** works with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The service commenced in April and will assist up to 100 participants each year, supporting some participants to remain in their home and working with others requiring short and longer term accommodation and support.

# Choices

## Formative influences inspire Dr Kate Hawkins' career

**Choices Reproductive and Sexual Health Clinic GP, Dr Kate Hawkins follows in the footsteps of her nursing mother Rosalind Hawkins, who worked at the clinic soon after it started in 1979. Back then the clinic was called Family Planning Service (FPS).**

"The Lismore and Kempsey clinics were the first pilot programs in regional NSW," Kate says.

"I was six-months-old when we arrived in the Northern Rivers in 1981. My parents quickly became involved in the fledgling service: Rosalind as an FPS Nurse and Patricia Martyn on the Lismore Health and Welfare Council Committee, administering the FPS."

As a child Kate rarely saw Rosalind working in a clinical capacity. Her earliest memories revolve around meetings.

"There seemed to be a lot of them!" Kate laughs.

"I was given brightly coloured pamphlets to play with, blown up condom balloons, or if I was very lucky a model of the female pelvis to pull apart and put back together as some kind of anatomical 3D puzzle, while the adults had discussions about service provision and budgets."

**Kate's career in health promotion started early after her childminder's car suffered a mishap. Her mother Rosalind, a nurse, was required to run a sexual education class for college students and was forced to find entertainment for three-year-old Kate.**

"I was tasked with taking a basket of condoms around to all the students. It was a great icebreaker and got everyone to relax and start talking," Kate recalls.



Kate with her Registered Nurse mum, Rosalind



Dr. Kate Hawkins at Choices Clinic with the model of the female pelvis

Kate was also the go-to person for high school peers wanting free condoms, who were too embarrassed to access the service themselves.

The main influences leading to Dr. Kate working in reproductive and sexual health were the open and honest conversations she experienced at home about sex, relationships, pregnancy, and sexuality.

"It meant I was very comfortable talking about these topics, and very accepting of people's differences. I also developed a strong sense of social justice, especially regarding women's reproductive rights."

Four decades on, Kate says reproductive and sexual health needs within the community are just as prevalent.

"The need for affordable and accurate care for people of all ages, incomes and genders; ensuring affordability whilst guaranteeing service sustainability is always a challenge."

"Our clinic hours include business hours and after-hours options, enabling choice for people to attend."

**825** clients

**5%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

**Choices** Reproductive and Sexual Health Clinic (formally Lismore and Kyogle Family Planning Service) provides high quality, confidential and professional services to assist young people and adults to make positive choices around their reproductive and sexual health. Book an appointment online: [socialfutures.org.au/choices](https://socialfutures.org.au/choices) **Find out more:** [socialfutures.org.au/choices/](https://socialfutures.org.au/choices/)

# Standby

## Support After Suicide



**High school student Jonah\* lost his best mate to suicide. The bereavement impact felt insurmountable. Jonah's mum Julianne\* was proactive in seeking support from as many places as she could.**

Social Futures' NSW North Coast StandBy Coordinator Rose visited Julianne and Jonah at their home during that difficult period.

Julianne recalls the visit during what was a disorientating time for the family.

"We felt in such a dark place. Rose listened compassionately, gave us information and helped us make a bit of sense of a situation very foreign to our family, and she has continued to check in from time to time on our family's wellbeing," Julianne says.

Research indicates that for every death through suicide 135 people are impacted and 10 or more are significantly affected.

The StandBy Support After Suicide Program run by Social Futures is now recognised as Australia's leading suicide postvention program dedicated to assisting people and communities impacted by suicide.

**"For each of us the journey of grief is different. Seeking support and practising care of self is as important as safe expression of grief and remembering well the one you have lost. I'm also an advocate for the idea of 'no wrong door'. If you're not sure or can't remember who to call, contact any service, because support workers have insight into what is available in the sector and will be able to link you in with what you need," Rose says.**

Julianne is thankful for the ongoing support of the Social Futures program, StandBy and its staff.

"There is no fast fix to our situation. StandBy has continued to support us: for this I am very grateful," she says.

*\* Not real name*



### StandBy Support After Suicide

**128** referrals received

**15** notifications of suicide attempts

**101** suicide notifications

**12** community capacity building projects

**15** community training sessions

**83%** of participants surveyed are satisfied with the service

**89%** of participants surveyed believe the service is an important form of support for people bereaved by suicide

**StandBy: Support After Suicide** is a 24/7 free and confidential coordinated community crisis response service that supports the health and wellbeing of families, friends and associates bereaved by suicide, from Tweed Heads to Port Macquarie. StandBy gratefully acknowledges funding provided by the Australian Government National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program (NSPLSP).

**Find out more:** [socialfutures.org.au/the-standby-service/](https://socialfutures.org.au/the-standby-service/)

# The Network Development Project



## Working holistically

**Fourteen-year-old Daniel\*, his mother and younger brother were escaping a domestic violence situation and had only recently been reunited.**

When Network Development Project (NDP) support worker Abby Nguyen met the family, Daniel was experiencing unsuccessful distance education. His anxiety and low attention meant he did not attend for more than two hours, twice a week. The NDP worked holistically with the family unit, providing wrap around person-centred support via collaborative work with other Social Futures programs and service providers in the wider community.

**While it took a long time to build trust, the family were eventually linked in with mental health support, mentors for Daniel and his brother and support for Daniel to re-engage with his education at a new school, where his additional needs were recognised and appropriate supports arranged.**

Daniel and his brother were also supported to attend activities after school and during the holidays, providing respite for their mother.

While the road ahead will still bring challenges exacerbated by domestic violence and past trauma, the future is much more positive, with real opportunities for community engagement and education.

The NDP provides information and education for parents alongside children's activities at community events. Support worker Abby says she has been impressed again and again by the resilience of families she works with.

"In the face of extreme adversity, many of the families have not only the individual challenges of raising more than one child with a disability, but often they live with socioeconomic disadvantages as well," she says.

*\* Not real name*

**The Network Development Project** supports children with a disability aged 0-15 and their families to build social networks in their communities. The program ended in June 2018.

**53** new participants (families)

**14%** of families with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members

## Richmond Care Choices

With offices in Lismore and Ballina, Richmond Care Choices supported **93** participants with an ongoing disability, to help increase their independence and quality of life at home and in the community.

Over **2,252** hours of service. The program ended in June 2018.

# The Belonging Project

**3** sensory tent and pod chair donations to Clarence Valley and Richmond Tweed Regional Library services.

**18** workshops with **365** attendances on the following topics:

- the Nurtured Hearts Approach;
- Resilience, Mindfulness, Communication and Boundaries series for parents and carers;
- Inclusion is Communication Strategies (supporting children of all abilities);
- Early Detection for Better Outcomes;
- Inclusion is Play for All;
- Inclusion as a Culture of Partnership (respectful and trusting relationships with parents);
- Inclusion is Reflective Practice

Since 2012, **The Belonging Project** worked to increase inclusion for children aged 0 to 8-years with additional needs and their families. The project responded to parents' needs, designed community development strategies and raised community awareness about inclusion. The project was completed in June 2018.

**Find out more:**

[socialfutures.org.au/everybody-belongs/](https://socialfutures.org.au/everybody-belongs/)

## Workplace Inclusion Network

The Workplace Inclusion Network (WIN) aims to create a more inclusive culture in Northern Rivers' workplaces, which supports people who are in recovery from – or currently facing – mental health challenges. WIN offers free 'Working It Out' employer training, mentoring for employers, and mentoring and employment support for project participants.

**17** employees with a lived experience of mental health

**25** employers completed the Inclusive Workplaces training



Detail of The Belonging Project sensory tent.

# Northern Rivers Housing Forum

## Embracing teaching-learning relationship

**Chief Executive of Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), Mik Smith, has recently joined the Northern Rivers Housing Forum.**

Mik acknowledges that the forum has become a culturally safe space for Aboriginal partners to participate, share and openly discuss challenges faced in their communities.

“Social Futures has developed a deeper understanding of working with Aboriginal communities,” Mik says.

“The forum focusses on working with – not for – Aboriginal people, which is a huge swing. I understand how long it really takes to move a large organisation like Social Futures in that direction: it’s like turning a cruise ship around.”

It’s this willingness to turn the cruise ship around that has cemented Mik’s faith in Social Futures hosting the Northern Rivers Housing Forum, particularly by embracing a teaching-learning relationship.

“They may know all sorts of things in a professional sense; but how do you do your work in a black way, if you’re white? It’s about having the respect to understand the lived experience of being Aboriginal.”

**“We come to the table because it’s about developing relationships, having mutual respect and being open. We come together in a way that’s fair and equal with an understanding of Aboriginal people, culture and ways of doing things that is very family-centred. Today Social Futures provides the conduit to allow for the development of innovative solutions that aim to address systemic issues from an Aboriginal perspective,” Mik says.**

The forum has a focus on sharing assets, intellectual property and intellectual knowledge. Mik says the result is a collective influence with an ability to make positive social change.

“I attend the meetings because I respect what Social Futures is trying to achieve and I have developed a strong working relationship with forum members and associates.”

“It provides an opportunity for everybody to get out of their office, and more often than not, their comfort zone, to actively engage in dialogue with Aboriginal professionals. The forum is respectful, structured and corporate in the way it operates, but socially and culturally safe in the progressive outcomes that we seek to deliver.”

## The Northern Rivers Housing Forum

**232** forum attendances

**16** Housing Forum activities

The Northern Rivers Housing Forum is a group of organisations and concerned individuals that identifies and highlights housing issues, needs and challenges; and works towards innovative and sustainable approaches to address them.

Find out more:  
[socialfutures.org.au/development/](https://socialfutures.org.au/development/)

## Better Chances Forum

**221** attendances at **27** workshops, steering group meetings and other activities

**99%** of forum participants surveyed reported satisfaction

**96%** of forum participants surveyed reported a positive impact

The Better Chances Forum works to identify and share ways to improve opportunities for children, young people and their families across the Northern Rivers.

# Transport

## Loving the ride

Public transport is often a hot topic in regional areas and over the last 12 months it has been for the right reasons, with the introduction of the Byron-Ballina-Lismore Commuter Bus.

In 2017, Social Futures collaborated with Northern New South Wales Local Health, Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services (HART) and Northern Rivers Buslines through the Lismore Sustainable Transport Group to put forward the Lismore Commuter Bus proposal.

With strong advocacy from Lismore MP Thomas George, the commuter bus route between Lismore, Ballina and Byron Bay was launched in December 2017 by Transport NSW.

**The initial six month commuter bus trial was well-received by local commuters and as a result the trial has been extended for a further 12 months.**

Lismore MP Thomas George said the trial service provides better connectivity for North Coast communities.

“Lismore is a major regional hub, with good health facilities, particularly Lismore Base Hospital, as well as Southern Cross University and other services,” he said.

“The bus service means North Coast communities continue to have better access to these services in the region. We know how important better transport is for our regional communities, particularly here on the North Coast.”



Commuters enjoying the Lismore commuter bus.

The trial is being operated by Blanch's Bus Company, overseen by the Transport NSW Rural Regional Service. The ongoing viability and benefit to the communities continues to be evaluated during the extended trial period.

The commuter experience has been made even better with the addition of free newspapers courtesy of The Northern Star and the latest Telstra Wi-Fi hotspot technology, (the first of its kind on a regional public transport bus).

Social Futures' People and Culture Assistant, Jacqueline Alinaitwe regularly uses the bus from her home in Ballina to work at Lismore.

“I have been driving between Lismore and Ballina for about three years for work and the cost of petrol was too much for me,” she says.

**“The weekly pass turns out to be almost half of the cost of driving my car and the service has friendly drivers and a great bus community developing. I've made new friends enroute and I'm enjoying the extra leisure time, catching up on social media or reading a book.”**

**34,083** Going Places website users

**11** Aboriginal transport needs sessions held

**31** organisations represented at

**27** Transport Working Group meetings

### Transport Development Project

Our Transport Development Project works to increase access to transport across the Northern Rivers. Initiatives include managing the local transport website [goingplaces.org.au](http://goingplaces.org.au), convening transport working groups and running transport promotion activities such as transport information days and Car Free Feb.

Find out more: [goingplaces.org.au](http://goingplaces.org.au)

# Training

## Connecting to Country to gain understanding

**Social Futures is committed to growing staff understanding of the Aboriginal cultural heritage within the nations where we live and work, and the communities we support, to ensure the cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness of our services and our work environment.**

In line with our inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan, Social Futures provides staff with opportunities to participate in annual Cultural Awareness training and in 2017-2018 over 150 staff were trained. We've been excited by the participant feedback which provides us with insight into how much our staff understand about our Aboriginal cultural heritage and helps us to identify the scope to continue building diverse and layered understanding.

We acknowledge the wisdom and learnings shared by our trainers:

- Ashley Moran – Heritage Conservation Officer at NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Archeologist and Bundjalung man, who shared knowledge of local history, artefacts and significant sites.
- Clark Webb – Gumbaynggirr man and Executive Officer of Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC); Uncle Bing Cecil Laurie – the last Gumbaynggirr Elder to speak Gumbaynggirr as his first language and Matthew Jeffery of BMNAC.
- Jindeena King, Tracey King, Bundjalung Elder Lillian King (three generations of Bundjalung women); Bundjalung Elder Marie Debridge; Melisa Bolt and Rachelle Roberts of Bundjalung Tribal Society, all of whom generously shared their knowledge and experiences.

An example of our Cultural Awareness training took place in June 2018 on Gumbaynggirr Country, near Grafton on the NSW North Coast. Twenty-five Social Futures staff experienced an immersive, holistic day learning about Country, pre-colonial and post-colonial history, language, flora and fauna and celebrating a living culture across a number of locations. The training was presented by Clark Webb, Uncle Bing Cecil Laurie, (who shared his personal stories), as well as Matthew Jeffery and Kahle Singh, a local Gumbaynggirr young person being mentored by BMNAC.

**“I was so inspired by the enthusiasm and pride in culture that Clark, Matt and Uncle Bing shared with us. The fact that Uncle Bing was teaching the young men language and new skills during the workshop demonstrated how culture is passed down generationally by spoken word. I loved walking on country, learning about the sophisticated agriculture and land conservation practices, and the nutritional and medicinal properties of the local plants. This was such an optimistic, enriching learning, totally focusing on culture, strengths and open discussions.”**

*Participating staff member*

Training and Development Officer Helen Lassen says "the training truly exemplifies community capacity building."

"The staff feedback demonstrated how much they learned and how powerful the first-hand stories were. Culture is understood through community, land, language, history and personal experiences. This training offers all this as well as creating job opportunities for young people, helping share the knowledge and understanding across generations."





## Training and professional development

Social Futures provides a comprehensive annual program of training and professional development to support staff and community services and health sector employees improve services to our community, generate innovation and build capacity in a vibrant regional sector. The Training and Development Officer can also tailor in-house training for organisations.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/training/](https://socialfutures.org.au/training/)

### Training

**159** participants attended **16** community training events

**100%** of community training participants surveyed were satisfied and reported a positive impact

**563** participants attended **35** sector training events

**99%** of community training participants surveyed were satisfied and reported a positive impact

# Ageing and disability sector development

## Elder abuse awareness: responding to sector development need

Often it is frontline workers who become aware if an older person may be experiencing abuse. Information sessions play a key role in supporting workers to respond safely and appropriately to prevent further abuse from occurring.

Social Futures' Strategy and Engagement project team, in collaboration with other local services, identified a need for delivery of information sessions for workers from the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) on identifying and responding to abuse of older people.

Social Futures' Sector Development Project Officers, Lisa Cook and Linda Wirf collaborated with NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit (EAHRU) in developing training sessions appropriate to different service provider organisational needs.

EAHRU estimates just over 55,000 older people experience elder abuse in NSW. With an ageing population this is expected to increase. Elder abuse can affect anyone, with adult children representing 50% of those who commit elder abuse. Psychological and financial abuse are the most common types of abuse reported to the NSW Helpline and Resource Unit.

In total, we delivered nine information sessions to 180 participants in Tweed, Ballina, Lismore, Brunswick Heads, Kyogle and Alstonville.

Ballina Administrator Monique Pollock from Tweed Byron and Ballina Community Transport took advantage of the free training delivery for her volunteer drivers.

"The flexible training format was great," Monique says.

**Ageing and Disability Sector Support** works to build capacity across the region to deliver responsive services and develop best practice in ageing and disability.

Dementia Care Education delivers free information sessions to carers of people with dementia and families in locations across the region, in collaboration with Dementia Australia and the Dementia Outreach Service (NSW Health).



"Our drivers are predominantly retired volunteers so availability for training is a challenge, but Linda provided flexibility by delivering during our bi-monthly driver meeting. The feedback was really positive."

Monique acknowledges identifying elder abuse can be a grey area.

**"Linda provided helpful information about recognition of what elder abuse is. She made the training engaging for our volunteers and gave them confidence to acknowledge a duty of care. Feeling empowered to report so that the responsibility can be passed up and addressed promptly is incredibly helpful," Monique says.**

"We provide a variety of training opportunities for our volunteers, we'll definitely look to continue elder abuse awareness in our training calendar."

### Ageing and disability sector development

**289** attendances at **27** workshops, community of practice meetings and other activities

**98%** forum participant surveyed reported satisfaction

**98%** of forum participants surveyed reported a positive impact

# Community engagement

## Community engagement during 2017-2018 was as diverse as the regional communities we work with.

For several months Ability Links facilitated a pop-up art space in the heart of Lismore for the community to access the free drop-in space for therapeutic and creative focus in response to trauma triggered by the flood experience.

Valuable Ability Links and NDIS LAC community engagement connections are developing through building meaningful relationships and outreach visits to communities in Baryugil, Muli Muli, Tabulum, Box Ridge, Cabbage Tree Island, Dubbo, Narromine, Orange, Broken Hill, Cullen Bullen, Forbes, Bathurst, Parkes, and Mudgee.

Our regional sector community service development team continued to convene solution-orientated round table meetings, focused on housing affordability, access to services for remote communities and aged care.

Our transport team convened Transport Working Groups across the region which were attended by local government, bus and community transport providers and taxi companies, with key outcomes including the innovative new commuter bus service and the roll out of the Car Free February campaign.

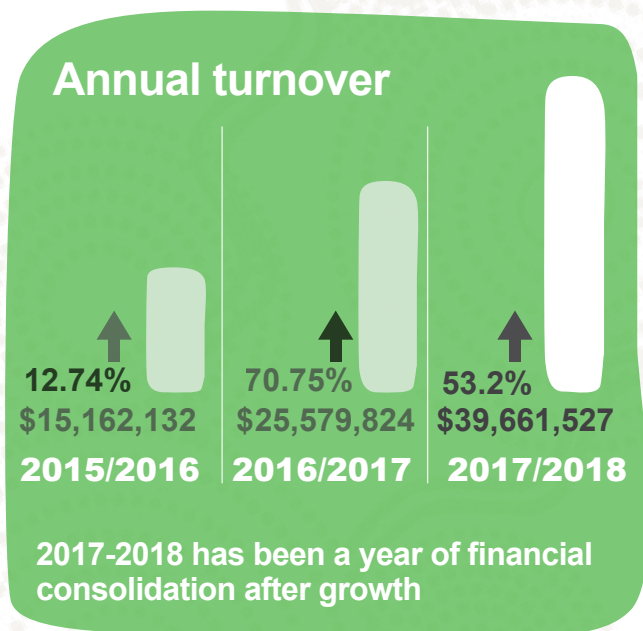
Mijung Jarjums Kids in Mind, The Belonging Project and the Network Development Project consistently collaborated in providing fun, educational, inclusive activity sessions to connect and support children and families at a wide variety of community events.



The Dirty Laundry Day Project is a Social Futures initiative, opening up dialogue, reducing stigma, empowering survivors and ensuring our wider community participates in the conversation around domestic and family violence.

Find out more:  
[socialfutures.org.au/dirty-laundry-day/](https://socialfutures.org.au/dirty-laundry-day/)

# Finance



2017-2018 provided Social Futures the opportunity to consolidate after significant growth the previous year.

A focus has been standardising and improving a number of our processes and systems, with much more automation to follow in 2018-2019.

The organisation's expense management system, Promaster, and automated payroll self-service system, Empower HR, were both examples of this.

A Learning Management System (LMS), Business Performance System and Client Management System are also in development to be deployed across several other programs.

A \$666,971 surplus is pleasing and supported by improved approaches to our acquittal and reporting processes. Efficiencies have been achieved in our fleet which will be further pursued in 2018-2019 with a focus on sustainability in both our fleet and accommodation.

# People and Quality

Social Futures continued large growth in 2017-2018, with 120 new staff coming onboard. Implementation of the EmpowerHR system automated the payroll process and enabled staff to access their personal and leave information, saving managers approximately \$2,000 per fortnight in efficiency.

Our first globally benchmarked staff survey was undertaken with 89% of staff reporting engagement with the Social Futures' values and culture. We also continued to enhance our communication around change and the newly adopted co-created change processes within the organisation, striving to bring staff along on the decision-making journey where possible.

In our appetite for continued improvement we achieved NSW Disability Service Standards and Australian Service Excellence Standards Accreditation. The organisation also participated in reflective practice and supervision supported by the Practice Excellence Team.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan was endorsed, and several of the initiatives outlined in this Plan were started.

A Learning Circle Facilitator was employed to work closely with our Practice Excellence Manager to capture, distil and share learning across the

organisation and connect the Social Futures Practice Framework with our Reconciliation Action Plan. This ensures that our knowledge and practice draws on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdom.

Connection was also championed, with our staff All In Day in October bringing together around 220 staff from across our large geographical footprint (85% of New South Wales) to engage and connect.

## People and Quality

**267** staff

**126** new employees

**1,580** employment applications

**350** hours paid study leave provided for continuing development

# Engagement and Communications

## Events attended:

- Transport information days (11 throughout the year)
- Splendour in the Grass (July) Byron North
- Homelessness Connect (August) Lismore and Casino
- Child Protection Week: Stronger Communities, Safer Children (September)
- Regional Homelessness Summit Ballina (September)
- National Carers Week (October)
- Social Inclusion Week events in Tweed and Grafton (November)
- National headspace Day (November)
- ArtState Lismore (November)
- Dirty Laundry Day (November)
- NDIS School leavers workshops (December)
- Car Free February (February)
- Lismore Aboriginal Services Forum (March)
- One Year On (April)
- Lismore Young Songwriters Competition (April)
- Culture, Country and Connection (Koori Mail May)
- Tweed Kinship Festival (May)
- IDAHoT Event Lismore (May)
- National Reconciliation Week (May and June)
- NAIDOC and Young NAIDOC (June)

## Committees, working groups and partnerships we convened or attended:

- Better Chances Forum
- Social Change Collaboration
- Community of Practice (Ageing)
- Northern Rivers Housing Forum
- Transport Working Groups (7 groups, 27 meetings)
- Aboriginal Transport Unmet Needs Working Groups (11 meetings)
- Communities North Consortium (Homelessness)
- Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group
- headspace interagency groups
- North Coast Inclusion Network (NCIN). (Social Futures is Co-Chair)
- Regional White Ribbon Committee
- Compass (Tweed LGBTIQAP+ professionals and community members)
- Lower Clarence Services meeting
- Northern NSW Local Health District Community Engagement Advisory Committee

Social Futures continued to engage with other organisations and professional and community stakeholders through a diverse range of activities and events. These included committees, interagency meetings, conferences and seminars, communities of practice, formal and informal partnerships, professional development; and information workshops, expos and other community events.

**71%** increase in traditional media

**211** articles, of which:

**144** were printed and online press

**56** in radio

**11** on TV

**200,000** website visits

## Traditional media by topic

**23%** housing or homelessness

**19%** children and young people

**17%** inclusion and disability

**15%** transport

**12.5%** Aboriginal issues

**13%** other issues, with **5%** on the floods and housing affordability

# Accreditations

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Social Futures is an accredited White Ribbon Workplace, which acknowledges that Social Futures demonstrates effective leadership, resource allocation, communication, human resources policy development and training to create a safer and more respectful workplace.

Find out more: [socialfutures.org.au/about/white-ribbon/](https://socialfutures.org.au/about/white-ribbon/)

We are third party verified and hold full accreditation against the:

- NSW Disability Service Standards
- Australian Service Excellence Standards
- We have implemented child-safe working practices

Additional accreditations:

- headspace Integrated Monitoring Framework – (hIMF) Pilot May 2017
- SHS Quality Standards – met by accredited status against ASES
- Youth on Track Self Assessment completed May 2017

We are currently working towards:

- ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management and Assurance
- The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Standards for General Practice
- Rainbow Tick (through Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria)
- NSW Standards for Statutory Out of Home Care 2013

# Thank you

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All that's left to say is a heartfelt thank you to our many and varied stakeholders.

To our participants – thank you for the opportunity to share your journey and for the resilience and courage you demonstrate.

To our 280+ Social Futures staff across our vast footprint – thank you for your commitment every day to delivering quality service to our participants and communities and for contributing to our workplace culture.

Finally, thank you to our funders and to the many key delivery partners in our diverse community sector.

Social Futures wishes to thank for their donations:

Lismore City Council

Commonwealth Bank

QBE Insurance

Lions Club of Kingscliff

The Next Generation Group of the Far North Coast  
Group of Show Societies – Generation AG

Quota International

Fleet Partners

Far North Coast Softball Association

As well as other organisations, businesses and individuals within our communities who dug deep.

Your generous donations help us deliver this important work to our valued communities.

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

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**E: [contact@socialfutures.org.au](mailto:contact@socialfutures.org.au)**

Join us on



Ballina | Bathurst | Broken Hill | Byron Bay  
Casino | Coffs Harbour | Dubbo  
Grafton | Kyogle | Lismore  
Mullumbimby | Murwillumbah  
Orange | Parkes | Tweed Heads

Key funding partners



**Australian Government**



**NSW**  
GOVERNMENT



Social  
Futures

2017-2018  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners 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.