



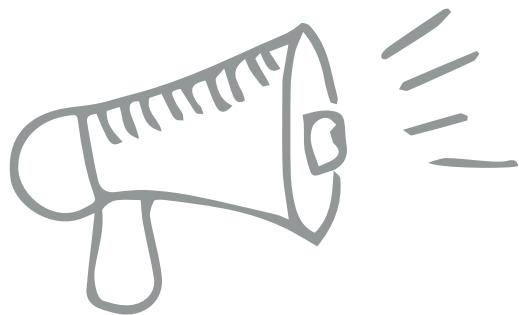
CELEBRATING 2016/17

Annual Review





Introduction



Ability Centre has been providing services and supports to people with disability since 1951.

What started out as a group of parents coming together to passionately advocate for their children with cerebral palsy to be recognised and supported, has grown into an organisation that is now the most comprehensive provider of disability services in Western Australia.

Today, Ability Centre serves more than 2,000 people across the State and has nearly 1000 staff. Our services encompass every aspect of life, whether it's help with daily living, support at

school, a place to call home, a break from it all, help to get around, a job or just fun!

Our clinical expertise includes a full range of therapy services, psychology, social work, as well as health services including nursing, dentistry and podiatry.

Our goal is to help everyone, irrespective of their age or situation, to fulfil their potential. To create possibilities. To dream.

Whatever you need.
Wherever you are in life.
We are here for you.

Realise your abilities.

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Chairman's Message



“We want more people to be able to access the services and supports they need to live a life of their choosing”

For 66 years Ability Centre has been dedicated to supporting people with disability, from the early days when parents came together to raise awareness of cerebral palsy and advocate for services through to current times where our organisation now serves more than 2000 customers and employs nearly 1000 staff.

It's an incredible organisation with an incredible history. I was immensely proud to be elected as chair this year and to have the opportunity to help steer the direction of Ability Centre at such an important time for people with disability.

The roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will see an even greater number of people being able to access the services and supports they need. While planning around the form and timing of the NDIS rollout in WA continues to evolve, we are passionately committed to the NDIS becoming a success so that our customers can benefit.

Regardless of whether it's a Federal or a State scheme, the principles of the NDIS are

consistent with our own values. We want more people to be able to access the services and supports they need to live a life of their choosing, and to have control over their own direction and destiny. The shift from block to individualised funding under the NDIS is integral to this.

While we operate in political uncertainty, what is certain is that Ability Centre will continue to provide an exceptional level of service and support to our customers – whatever they need and wherever they are in life. We also need to evolve as our customer base grows and continues to expand, to support people of all disabilities.

This requires having a clear focus for the future and this year a large amount of effort has been dedicated to developing Ability Centre's Strategic Direction 2017-2021. The Board has worked closely with the Executive Team to design a five-year plan that refocuses our Purpose, Vision and Mission and reflects the commercial imperatives of operating in a new funding environment, while making sure the customer is at the heart of everything we do.

We are proud of our renewed purpose to



empower people to realise their abilities and hold our vision close to our hearts.

I am confident that the Strategic Direction has provided the foundations the organisation needs to continue its trajectory. It is firmly connected to the past with our purpose and vision reflecting the original essence of the organisation, but recognises we need to evolve the services, systems and processes to continue meeting the needs and expectations of the people we support and their families.

The next five years will be incredibly exciting for all involved and we can't wait for the Strategic Direction to be shared over coming months.

While we've been immersed in planning for the future, we've also kept a keen eye on the present. The Board hears about the amazing efforts of Ability Centre staff to bring joy to our customers every day. What's more, staff have been willing to jump into new roles, learn new skills and support their colleagues during a time of significant change.

This connection to staff, customers and the day-to-day operations is vital for the Board and motivates us to work even harder to provide a high standard of governance. Doing so ensures

that the right platform is in place for Ability Centre staff to continue their great work.

There is a lot of ability and knowledge in our Board and the organisation is fortunate to be able to call on their expertise. I would like to take this opportunity to thank fellow Board members for their commitment to Ability Centre.

I would also like to acknowledge former Chair Rob McDonald, who stepped down as Chair in July after three years of outstanding service. Rob has been a passionate advocate for the organisation, and we are fortunate Rob continues his long-standing involvement with Ability Centre as a Board member and member of the Finance Committee.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I'd also like to thank Ability Centre's CEO Suzi Cowcher and the Executive Team for their drive, passion and expertise to continuously improve our organisation. It's been a privilege to work with you.

I'd like to thank our partners, funders and volunteers. Your ongoing support helps make it possible for us to deliver the best possible experience for our customers.



Finally I would like to thank our customers and their families who are at the heart of everything we do. Their faith in us to provide care and support, and their generosity in allowing us to be part of their lives, is something we are privileged to be part of and never take for granted.

Justin Scanlan



“Don’t expect extraordinary results from ordinary actions”

- Stephen Osoko

CEO's Message

The 2016/17 financial year has been characterised by change, courage and an unashamed focus on our customers.

The disability services sector is going through an enormous transformation and rather than just riding the wave, we’re leading from the front by challenging ourselves to do business differently.

For the last 12 months we’ve focussed on making sure the organisation has the right foundations to meet the evolving needs of our customers, both now and in the future.

A roadmap for the future

For 66 years we’ve been supporting thousands of people to live a life of their choosing. We want to continue to do this for another 66 years and beyond!

For this to happen, Ability Centre must be sustainable and have a clear roadmap for the future direction of the organisation.

We’ve worked hard to develop a Strategic Direction for the next five years that will ensure we grow in a structured way, delivering great things where customers need us.

The new direction emanates from the past and

builds on our strength in supporting people with cerebral palsy, while sharing our skills and experience with people of all abilities across Western Australia.

It’s been driven by a deep understanding of our customers with a focus on nurturing a great workforce and culture, while building efficient and effective systems and processes. When all of these things come together, we have a strong and sustainable future.

We’re excited to reveal the full Strategic Direction when we launch it towards the end of 2017.

Designing services to better meet customer needs

This year we’ve also worked hard on our renewal program which has seen a number of new service delivery models launched in our service areas aimed at delivering improved services.

We’ve spent huge amounts of time listening to our customers, staff and partners to deeply understand their needs and frustrations.

For our customers, one of their biggest frustrations is having to re-tell their story to different staff within Ability Centre so we’ve made a number of changes.

One of the most significant has been the introduction of a single point of entry for people who make contact with us.

Due to the complex nature of disability services, referrals and funding streams, we identified multiple ways people contacted our organisation.

This makes it really hard to provide a consistent experience, but also meant customers had to re-tell their story to multiple people.

Now, there's one front door via our Customer Engagement Team who provide a single point of contact for people entering the organisation. It's making a big difference in the way we interact with and support our customers.

Another big focus in 2016/17 has been the construction of the new shared living villas on Bradford Street in Coolbinia. They are going to set a new standard for how people with complex support needs are able to live a life of their choosing and have control of their own environment through innovative design and technology. We hope to welcome customers to their new villa towards the end of the year with the official opening in the first quarter of 2018.

A passionate and committed team

Staff are critical to ensuring a strong and bright future for Ability Centre, and I'm so proud of the team who work in our organisation.

The combination of a fluid NDIS policy environment and a focus on redesigning

services has meant there has been a degree of uncertainty and instability. We've not taken the easy approach to building an even better organisation but our staff have embraced change and continue to deliver great outcomes for our customers.

Critical to this has been bringing people together so we can share what we want to achieve. Our leaders meet on a regular basis and we've also held a number of roadshows across the organisation to share our plans with staff and gain their feedback about where we're heading.

The driving force has been the underlying passion and commitment shown by Ability Centre staff every single day. I'm blown away by our staff who always go the extra mile.

From therapists' continued quest for knowledge to provide the best possible support to our customers through to staff who go out of their way to find the best technology for a customer to live more independently. Whether it's a meaningful gift for a special birthday or working with our partners to help someone return home after an injury, the genuine care of our staff is astounding.

NDIS

It would be remiss of me to talk about the future of Ability Centre without referencing the NDIS. It is the biggest social reform of our time and brings significant opportunities and challenges for the sector.

The changes that we've been introducing to the organisation ensure Ability Centre can respond to the different funding environment and the greater customer expectations brought about by the NDIS.

While there has been a lack of decision about whether Western Australia will have a Federal or State administered NDIS, we welcome it in any form. In our view, any organisation should be able to adapt to whoever is running the scheme. We just keep moving forward.

Thank you

Thank you to customers who have chosen us as their partner, our staff who continue to engage, the leaders in our organisation who have been open to new ways of working, and a Board who have been brave in co-designing the new direction we have created.

Ability Centre really is a remarkable organisation. We have staff who have been with us for nearly 40 years, and even bring their family members to work with us! We have customers who have been supported by us for more than 55 years and suppliers who have become part of the Ability Centre family for decades.

We're looking forward to building on these strengths, consolidating our position as the most comprehensive provider of disability services in the State so people of all abilities can continue to thrive in their community.

Suzi Cowcher

Board and Executive



Justin Scanlan
Chairman



Daniel Butler
Deputy Chairman



Mino Intini
Treasurer



Priya Cooper



Glenn Mitchell



Gary McGrath



Robert McDonald



Kellie Hasluck



Janelle Marr



Maria Mansour



Ken Nylander

The Ability Centre Board continues to provide rigorous governance and support to the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Team. Good governance is increasingly complex and demanding but, as always, their commitment to our purpose continues to drive their giving.

The Ability Centre Board has a proud history of leading and responding to major reforms in the

disability sector. Fortunately, in the face of the NDIS, our Board had the foresight and excellent leadership to engage in further strategic planning, building on the strengths of the organisation, diversifying services and ensuring our business is sustainable.

With support from the Board, the Executive is providing the leadership and innovation necessary to drive change across the organisation. We have responded to a changing

environment by not only redesigning our services but also refining our organisational structure. Our new structure revolves around our customers and strengthens our relationship with them.

Our organisational structure has the Chief Operating Officer (COO), the operational General Managers and their associated teams who interact directly with customers, at its centre. This clearly positions our customer relationships at the heart of our organisation.



**Chief Executive Officer
(CEO) Suzi Cowcher**



**Chief Financial
Officer (CFO)
Darren Cutri**



**Chief Human
Resources Officer
(CHRO) Phil Simich**



**Chief Operating
Officer (COO)
Maria Davison**



**Chief Innovation &
Development Officer (CIDO)
Benjamin Jardine**



**General Manager
Therapy & Health
Services (GM T&HS)
Catherine Greenway**



**Acting General Manager
Employment Services
(GM ES) Greg Davies**



**General Manager Community
Services (GM CS)
Wendy Cox**

Innovation Journey

Everything we do at Ability Centre is focussed on helping our customers to realise their abilities. It's the reason we exist and the reason people want to work with us and for us.

If we're going to continue to help our customers thrive, we know Ability Centre has to evolve. We've always needed to respond to a changing environment, challenge the conventional way of doing things and continually evolve our services.

Ability Centre has always had a focus on continuous improvement but in early 2016 it became clear that we needed to do something different. We needed to rapidly introduce changes but without negatively impacting our staff or customers.

We considered a number of options. We could run traditional projects and make adjustments to the current services in the day-to-day operating environment; or we could outsource it entirely and ask someone else to design new services that we could then introduce.

Neither option was right for Ability Centre. With the roll-out of the NDIS, we knew the rules would continuously change and we knew customers would want different things, but the rest was unknown.

We needed something that was agile and flexible, and we wanted to truly co-design solutions with both our staff and our customers. It was essential that our services addressed the actual problems and needs of our customers – not what we thought they were.

We also had a responsibility to not inadvertently throw out all that is great about Ability Centre and to preserve the legacy of 66 years of excellence.

And so we created the Innovation Hub.

A hothouse for innovation

The Innovation Hub was launched in May 2016 and it's a hothouse for nurturing new approaches through the use of design thinking to develop and test ideas based on deeply understanding the audience.

It's linked tightly to operations with many of the Innovation Hub team being seconded from across Ability Centre to make sure thinking reflects everyday realities. The role of Chief Innovation and Development Officer was created to guide the team and ensure a focus on choice and control, value for money and sustainability.

The entire Executive Team undertook design thinking training to understand the process and how prototyping works differently to

pilots, the traditional way for disability services organisations to introduce innovation.

The focus of the Innovation Hub is our operating business units, the largest parts of our organisation. Our four current prototype areas include:

- a new approach to therapy service delivery
- an improved customer experience
- new ways to provide services in shared living and community inclusion, and
- improved technology support for staff.

These prototypes have been informed by empathy interviews which were held with staff, customers and partners. The interviews revealed there was a clear need to provide more efficient services, to reduce the complexity of working with us, and improve the integration of different business units so our customers could access multiple services more easily.

From concept to pitch in 48 hours

Complementing the Innovation Hub activity was the opportunity to participate in a think tank hosted by the Commonwealth Bank.

We met in their Sydney Innovation Lab and undertook an intensive two-day workshop that provided a master class in design thinking. Ability Centre was the only disability services organisation to take part.



Our challenge was to identify a key customer pain point and design a solution in less than 48 hours. Having already undertaken a number of empathy interviews, we were in a good position to identify these and decided to develop a prototype to improve communication.

We then had to pitch our prototype to a panel of experts in an environment not dissimilar to Channel 10's Shark Tank! Our team, consisting of representatives from Ability Centre and the Commonwealth Bank, was unanimously selected as the winner.

The output from the think tank is now in development. It was an invaluable experience and we can't wait to share this project in reports to come.

“We needed something that was agile and flexible, and we wanted to truly co-design solutions with both our staff and our customers.”

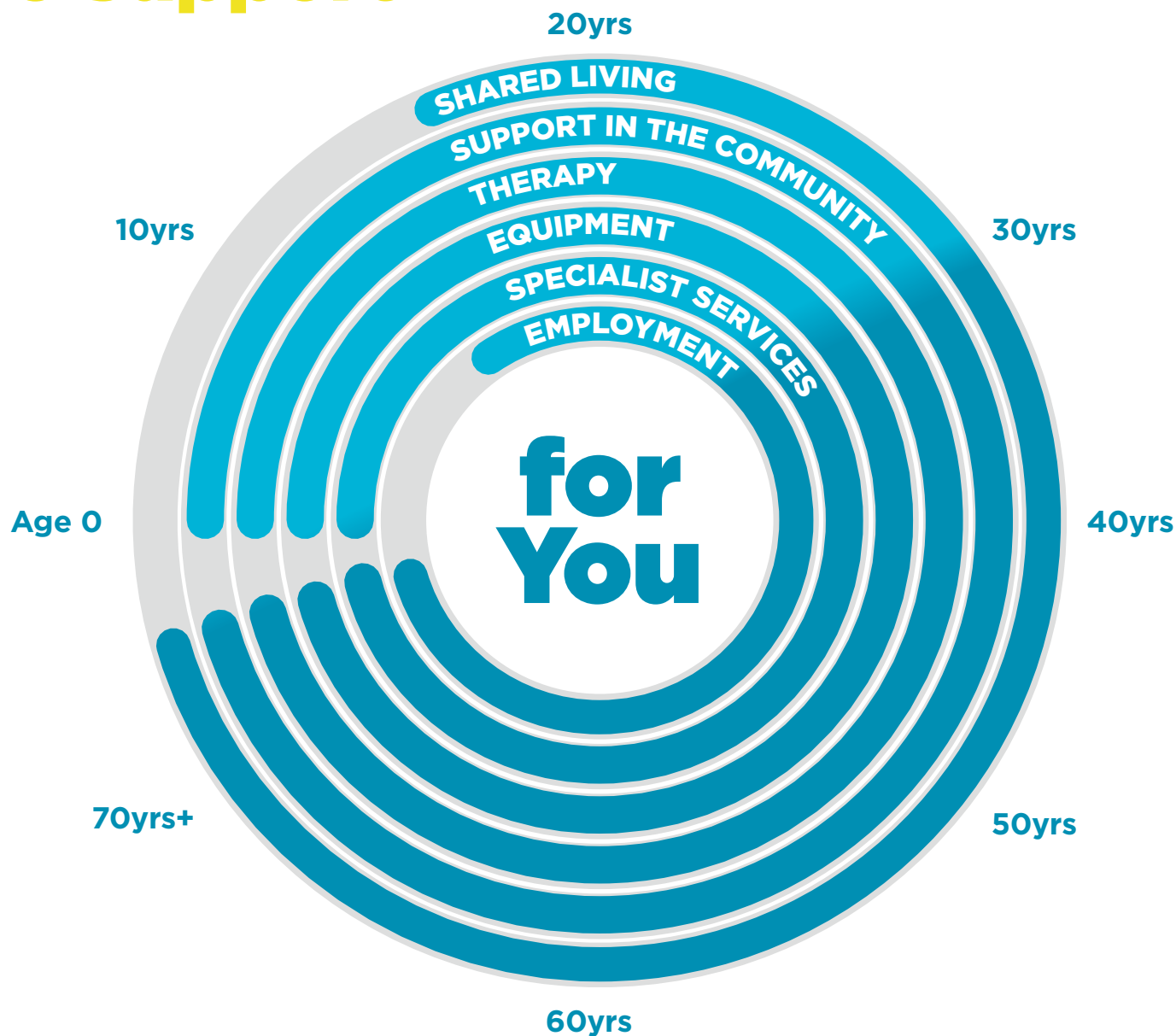
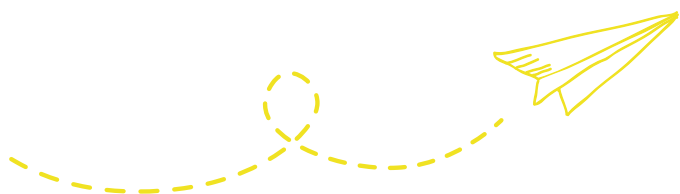
The future

Our innovation journey has only just begun. Whilst we have started with specific re-design processes and embedded design thinking in our DNA, we will be launching the next stage of innovation during 2018. This will include a

systematic approach to innovation and continuous improvement and more mechanisms to bring new and exciting technology and approach to all service delivery. We'll be launching new prototypes, continuously trying new things and seeking feedback to make sure Ability Centre remains relevant to our staff and customers.

Comprehensive Support

We have a long history of providing services to people with disability in Western Australia and are here to support you to get the best out of your NDIS plan.



The most comprehensive support for people with disability in WA.

SHARED LIVING

- Live in a home of your choice, with others or independently
- Plan trips and holidays
- Catch up with friends and family

COMMUNITY

- Get out in your community and take part in arts, leisure and sport programs
- Have a break (respite or a holiday)
- Take part in sporting and recreational activities
- Volunteer and gain work experience
- Gain access to further education at TAFE and university

THERAPY

- Physiotherapy
- Occupational therapy
- Speech therapy
- Nursing

Some early outcomes from therapy:

- Learn to walk
- Learn to talk
- Dressing yourself
- Handwriting skills
- Make friends
- Improve flexibility and mobility
- Play your favourite sport
- Reach developmental milestones (home baby intervention service)

EQUIPMENT

- Improve your wheelchair mobility
- Control your environment
- Sit well and comfortably
- Sleep well
- Get out and about in your community
- Communicate independently
- Modify your home
- Effectively use your technology
- Complete everyday tasks

SPECIALIST

- Dental Service
- Dietetic Service
- Social work and psychologist support
- Gait Analysis
- Lower Limb and Foot Biomechanical Service
- Mealtime Service
- Orthotic Service
- Podiatry Service
- Spinal Clinic
- Stepping Out
- Upper Limb Movement Analysis

EMPLOYMENT

- Job training
- Upskilling
- Support at work



Customer Engagement

Customer Experience Project

Customer Contact Team

Ability Centre's new Customer Contact Centre has been created to help customers explore their service delivery options more easily.

The range of services and supports within the new disability landscape can be difficult to navigate. Central to the NDIS is customer choice and control over the support and services they receive. This is a big transition for many customers and the different service and support options presented can be overwhelming.

Before our Customer Contact Centre was established, each of the Ability Centre's service divisions managed their own customer enquiries and interactions separately. People engaging with Ability Centre do so because they can easily get everything they need from the one place, however the inefficient system resulted in lost opportunity to combine services. It also disrupted the focus on service delivery for our therapists and support staff.

Our new dedicated Customer Contact Centre, with a central phone number for all business units is making a real difference. Onsite at our

Coolbinia Hub, our staff are helping to ease confusion by ascertaining the customer's needs and directing their enquiries to the appropriate service area. Having the appropriate systems and infrastructure in place for our customers helps to maximise a therapist's time in doing what is most important: spending time with the customer.

A new customer relationship management system will soon be in place to make the customer experience even easier, removing the need to provide information to staff more than once and enabling staff to have all information readily available.

Customer Engagement Team

The advent of the NDIS brings much opportunity, but is undoubtedly a big transition for customers. Ability Centre is committed to providing individuals and their families with the knowledge and support they need to navigate the new world.

Responding to the changing needs of our customers, we established the Customer Contact Team to help new and existing customers to navigate the maze of disability services and supports on offer.

To further facilitate a positive experience, Ability Centre is trialling a Customer Engagement Team to reduce the confusion surrounding the shift in funding models and improve the way we support customers in the NDIS trial areas.

Experienced Customer Engagement Coordinators have assumed the role of key contact and check-in with customers regularly and make sure we are meeting their needs. The Customer Engagement Team also play an important role in preparing customers for their NDIS plans and providing person-centred support in the pre-planning stage to ensure customers have the right mix of services and supports to achieve their goals.

Affirming our commitment to helping people realise their goals, the Customer Engagement Team also works with customers, their families and support networks to make sure the goals set out in NDIS planning sessions are reached. This service, known as support coordination, helps to minimise the complexity of managing multiple providers and aims to coordinate supports effectively to fit with customers' lifestyles.



Customer Engagement

Working with our customers

Justin - Customer Contact Team

Justin is the calm, gentle, reassuring first point of contact for many people who call Ability Centre. Often, people seeking the services of Ability Centre for themselves or for family members, are overwhelmed and information overload has caused some confusion and insecurity.

“People also don’t want to call and get passed around from person to person”, explains Justin, “they don’t want to have to tell their story again and again.”

It’s easy to see the vital role Justin plays in customer contact. Regularly, callers will phone, unsure of who to talk to, unaware of the exact services required and a little stressed by their need to urgently find help for loved ones. Being the first point of contact, Justin’s expertise is to bring calmness to the conversation, to engage the customer in a conversation to find out more about their situation, to help ease their discomfort, and then to connect them to the person who is best placed to advise about their specific situation.

Around six months ago, the mum of a young boy with a disability called. Her son had been sitting at home, wasn’t being active and was unhappy. This in turn led the mum to become

increasingly agitated as she wasn’t able to find the right services to help her son. To add to her problems, she’d been passed from one service provider and specialist to the next, and felt like she was running around in circles.

Then she called Ability Centre and spoke to Justin. Within a minute or two, she was engaged in a relaxed conversation with a person who had both the passion to help, and the expertise to direct her to the right person to help her son.

“I love what I do”, says Justin with a smile. “I love helping people, so this isn’t work. This is my second home.”

Carrie - Customer Engagement Team

Working alongside the Customer Contact Team, Carrie and the Customer Engagement Team play a vital role in helping families transition to the NDIS.

For many new customers, little is understood about the NDIS. The overwhelming volume of information and vast range of information sources has only added to the confusion.

Carrie’s expertise is to be the guiding light for families new to the NDIS, as she carefully explains, reassures, and equips them with the knowledge that helps them to make the most of their situation.

“Not enough people explain things in simple, layman’s terms”, says Carrie. “People respond really well when I break it all down for them, and reassure them that we’re on their side – we’re here for them”.

Entering the NDIS can be daunting, and confusion around funding and services is common. Families are often not provided with an exact breakdown of their funding, flexibility isn’t explained, and they are unsure how to start or use their plan. For many, even the word ‘therapy’ is too broad and they aren’t sure about exactly what services they are entitled to.

With expert knowledge about the subject and a passion to help, Carrie becomes the reassuring single point of contact for these families. Using their specific plan as a basis and liaising directly with NDIS, Carrie provides the families with understanding, clarity and insights that are a great comfort during a stressful period. Through her, families understand their funding, and can ensure that the services they are receiving, are the best available for their loved one.

“Many people need better information,” says Carrie. “But many people also just want to know that there is someone who is going to look after them.”



Shared Living



Feeling at home with Ability Centre

For over 66 years, Ability Centre has been helping people to feel at home. We have more than 25 houses across the Perth metropolitan area, designed or modified specifically to suit the needs of the customers who live with us.

Our accommodation options include a mix of houses, community units, transitional accommodation and villas, most of which are located in vibrant communities close to public

“They also told us they wanted better communication and to have more of a say in how their supports are provided. Of course, we listened.”

transport, shops and of course, plenty of cafes and restaurants!

While housing styles change, and feature walls come and go, our ethos will not. We will continue to provide a safe, comfortable, companionable and contemporary home where:

- there is support and care when you need it
- your personal preferences, privacy and dignity are respected
- your independence is maximised
- you are connected with the community
- you are enabled to pursue your interests and friendships.

Customer centred vision

Our customers told us they wanted greater consistency in their support staff, to provide peace of mind and build stronger relationships. They also told us they wanted better communication and

to have more of a say in how their supports are provided. Of course, we listened.

To support our customers, we looked at new ways to provide services in our shared living spaces and community inclusion. A new model of service was launched on 1 January 2017, within four homes located in the City of Bayswater, also due to transition to the NDIS. The new model introduced:

- customer selection of preferred staff (including relief)
- rostering to prioritise preferred staff as selected by customers
- move to smaller teams of staff to improve consistency
- one Coordinator and Team Leader for all supports in the home and community
- preparation for the transition to NDIS, including customers understanding their

NDIS funding and determining how and when they want to use it.

We continue to explore how shared living services can be provided to meet customers' needs while being sustainable under an NDIS. With further investment in technologies underway, Ability Centre plans to expand the use of preferred staff selection and smaller regional teams across all Community Services into the future.

A very happy anniversary

Ongoing collaboration with our valued partners makes it possible to deliver the best outcomes for our customers. This year we celebrated our 'paper' or one year anniversary of supporting housemates at a new home made possible by our fruitful partnership with the Disability Services Commission. For one year, our support staff have been working with the housemates and their families to make each house a home. From the collection of photographs lining the walls, it's easy to see the amazing impact the new found friendship between staff and housemates has had. There was no question whether this event was one to be celebrated, and celebrating in style they did, even bringing together some family members who had lost contact over ten years earlier.



Shared Living

The housemates – A friendship 50 years in the making

Siblings Joy and Dennis and their friend Michael are a testament to Ability Centre's dedication to offering our customers services and supports throughout their lives - from young children, to working adults and now, into retirement.

The trio has been intrinsically linked through Ability Centre and they have been in each other's company for over 50 years and are best mates to this day.

As children with disability they were not allowed to attend mainstream school so their first interaction was at the Spastic Welfare Association's Sir James Mitchell School.

"I had a very good teacher there," Dennis said. "She came out all the way from England. And her name was Mrs Pritchard and she was a lovely teacher. She was a very good person and she helped me all the way... She got me that far, and we all wanted to keep her."

Their bond continued after school as they transitioned into the workplace at Ability Centre's social enterprise, Goodwill Engineering, which is still a thriving business today.

The three also moved into a share house together with the assistance of Ability Centre, and although they have moved five or six times over the years, they have always been at home together under the same roof.

When a discussion starts up about what's for dinner, there are no arguments or protests. Joy said they've been together for so long that they know exactly what the others like and don't like.

The three have accessed a comprehensive set of services through Ability Centre and developed strong and meaningful relationships with staff.

One of those staff members, Karen O'Shea, has been alongside the friends from the very beginning of their time with Ability Centre.

"We all grew up together. We are family to each other. Karen is part of our family," Michael said. "She does a lot for us. If we ask her to do

something for us, she'll do it. She'll do what we ask her to do if she can. She listens to us. She makes us feel like we're important. She wants to make us happy."

"She is very kind and friendly to everybody, not just us, to everybody. She is very busy but always finds time for us and she takes the time to understand what we need," Dennis said.

Michael, Dennis and Joy's story is one of friendship and love, and there's no doubt that in the years to come they'll continue to do everything together.





Shared Living

A new vision for supported accommodation

We are committed to providing contemporary, welcoming and homely environments for people with high physical support needs. Each home should maximise choice and control, increase independence and create links with the local community.

Our new villas on Bradford Street are currently being developed to provide the latest in accommodation for our customers with high support needs. These five exciting new villas, funded by Disability Services Commission, Lotterywest and Ability Centre through a bequest, will become a flagship in shared living. They will provide an optimal environment to live life with complex support needs. The design we've created has been based on feedback from

customers and their families, and we've also drawn on learnings from our visits to shared living models across Australia.

The villas are nestled in a prime location, and have beautiful views of Coolbinia Reserve. Each villa has is spacious and customers can enjoy the privacy of their own room, or relax in the social environment of communal areas, like a large central lounge room or a customised activities centre. Technology has been embedded throughout the design of the villas and each person will have customisations giving them even greater control over their environment.

Completion is due in October 2017, and the first customers will be able to move into these amazing homes towards the end of the year.





Abingdon
**HILLROYD
REDEVELOPMENT**
shared supported
accommodation
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PEREY & WHITE



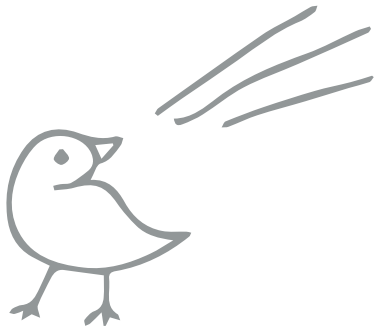
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“From adventures to arts, from games to academic studies, Ability Centre provides something for everyone.”

Community Inclusion



At Ability Centre, we strive to ensure that every individual is actively involved and valued in their community.

The positive impact that skills building and recreation opportunities can have on community inclusion can be immense. We know that strengths and interests vary between individuals, and so a one size solution is never suitable when it comes to helping people get the most out of life. This is where our specialised Community Inclusion service comes in. We speak to each of our customers to discover what they are passionate about, where their strengths lie, and the skills they'd like to develop.

By placing an emphasis on individual customer choice, we coordinate meaningful learning and recreational activities, enabling both adults and children to achieve their personal goals and reach their full potential. From adventures to arts, from games to academic studies, Ability Centre provides something for everyone.

During 2016/17 our creative and adventurous team helped to create some unforgettable experiences – they supported some of our customers to travel overseas, take part in sporting championships, enjoy barbeques with friends and family, attend music festivals, gain education qualifications and much more. Some even scored acting roles in a TransPerth advertising campaign!



Community Inclusion

Gareth's story



Gareth Goodway started working life as a teacher but took a year off not long after he qualified and never went back.

Instead, he pursued a career in disability services. Some may say this was Gareth's true calling in life as he is now celebrating 10 years with Ability Centre.

"I worked at The Quadriplegic Centre when I was just out of high school and continued there part-time throughout university. I was focused on becoming a teacher but that changed after I took some time out and realised it wasn't for me."

Gareth joined Ability Centre in 2007 as a Community Support Officer (CSO), a role he describes as being like a life coach.

"Being a CSO is a rewarding job. It enables people with disability to get involved in their local community, pursue their interests and live the life they want. It's hugely varied, lots of fun and never boring!"

After four years as a CSO, Gareth applied for the job of Team Leader in the Opportunities Team. This is a broad role, and includes identifying

“I’ve seen a substantial change in the last 10 years. Community access used to be about going to local community centres or studios but society has moved forward and is far more inclusive. ”

new experiences for Ability Centre customers, opportunities for them to learn new skills, and developing links with the community to facilitate inclusion.

“My job is about helping people get out into their local communities. I also work with different businesses and groups to help improve access for people with disability.”

In recent times, a large part of Gareth’s job has been to work with State and local government departments to advise on access and inclusion.

“I’ve seen a substantial change in the last 10 years. Community access used to be about going to local community centres or studios but society has moved forward and is far more inclusive.

“We’re approached to advise on inclusivity but also to ask our customers to provide their input. Recently, I’ve been part of the group reviewing the accessibility for the new Perth Stadium, and

together with some customers, we’re helping design a new swing for a playground that will be part of the Scarborough redevelopment.

We also contribute to Disability Access and Inclusion Plans for local councils, like the Town of Victoria Park, and Government agencies such as the WA Police.”

He loves this aspect of the work. “I like building partnerships and relationships with other organisations and businesses so people with disability have an even greater opportunity to be an active member of their community.”

Reflecting on his career with Ability Centre, Gareth said there had been many rewarding moments but there are number that stand out.

“We’ve got a new community space being built in Coolbinia, which will be fantastic when it’s finished. I was really proud to be part of the process and I can’t wait to see the different

community groups becoming involved in this.

“In terms of our customers, they are all amazing and it’s hard to single out any one person however, Lindy and Eleana spring to mind.

“Lindy is a fantastic artist and I’ve been encouraging her to follow her passion. An art teacher got in touch with me and wanted to work with an artist to bring out their inner style. I arranged for Lindy and the teacher to meet and they really hit it off. We applied for a grant to make this happen and the rest is history. Now, the aim is for her to have her own exhibition.

“And then there’s Eleana. I’ve known her for a long time and she volunteers at Tuart Hill Primary School. She listens to students read and also loves the garden but she’s in a wheelchair and it was always difficult for her to get involved. Together with the school, we applied for a grant, and a new fence and paving was laid to allow easy wheelchair access and a safe, slip-free pathway. We also worked with Dreamfit to design height adjustable, portable garden beds. Eleana was part of the working group to make it happen and she’s now a regular in the garden.”

Looking forward to the next 10 years, Gareth said he wants to continue contributing to making Western Australia a more inclusive society. “I’m looking forward to the day when I read an inclusivity report and the disability section is no longer on the back page!”

Having A Break

Respite care

Respite used to be positioned as simply helping parents of kids with disabilities to recharge. However, modern-day respite offers so much more and benefits the whole family.

Ability Centre provides both in-home and out-of-home respite services. In-home respite

provides families with support in their own home. While the out-of-home respite service is located at accommodation in Rivervale and Balcatta for adults, and Ballajura for children and teenagers.

We provide respite services for people with a wide variety of disabilities including autism, acquired brain injury, intellectual disability and physical disability.

Taking a break during the week

Many people use out-of-home respite services over the weekend but there is growing interest in mid-week respite. In fact, due to growing demand this year, we have opened additional respite spots for children from Perth's south metropolitan area in Ballajura.



Mid-week respite provides a second home for children with disabilities during the week and gives them focused one-on-one time, as well as the opportunity to make new friends and to develop independence. We've created a family-like atmosphere and replicate home routines as much as possible. The children take part in the daily life of the house, such as helping with shopping and preparing meals. After school, they have afternoon tea, we talk about their day and the kids can do their homework or recreation activities before having dinner and going to bed.

Somers Street

For adults, we offer many 'home away from home' locations where customers can meet new people, socialise and be supported by skilled team members who provide a high level of care and support. Over the past year we have worked with many of our customers to design and plan their respite stays, tailoring to their needs and factoring in support services, equipment, leisure activities and transport. We have all aspects covered.

We're thrilled that from October 2017, our adult customers will be able to make use of our new retreat in Belmont.

Top award for 'second mum'



There's little doubt Bernadette Williams is a much loved and highly respected member of the Ability Centre team.

As Coordinator of Respite Services, she oversees respite support for 300 children and adults with disability and their families, a role she tackles with great passion and outstanding leadership.

“It was a huge honour to be nominated for this award and amazing to have won. I am still smiling. Working at Ability Centre with our wonderful staff, customers and their families I receive far more than I can ever give.”

It came as no surprise that she was announced as the winner of the Excellence in Leadership at the 2017 Disability Support Awards.

“It was a huge honour to be nominated for this award and amazing to have won. I am still smiling. Working at Ability Centre with our wonderful staff, customers and their families I receive far more than I can ever give”, said Bernadette.

Nominating Bernadette was Darce Luke, who has known Bernadette for over fourteen years as a customer of Ability Centre's Arnhem Court respite care.

“I love Bernie because she is my second mum,” said Darce. “At a time in my life when things were difficult she took me under her wing. She made me feel comfortable, loved and warm.

Bernie is an irreplaceable person in my life. She is family to me and always will be.”

These same sentiments are shared by the people who work under the leadership of Bernadette, with Arnhem Court's Acting Team Leader Grace Doyle also involved in supporting the nomination.

“Bernie always wants the best for her staff and she is very appreciative of the work we put in, and makes her staff feel valuable,” said Grace.

“She is not only a role model for staff but she teaches us how to be loyal, considerate, good team players and how to flourish as a worker. Bernie means so much to us and without her Arnhem Court would not be the loving, inviting home environment that it is.”

Therapy and Health Services



We are renowned for our therapy and health services and the last year has seen us continue to build on our strengths in this area of our operations.

The importance of early intervention

Early intervention is vital for families of babies and young children but it is the way we provide support that makes the real difference. Children

thrive when families know how to support their development and our therapists work together to show parents how to support new skills through play and learning in their own homes. Therapists also work with other significant people in the child's life such as childcare workers, teachers and extended family members so that these strategies are shared for greater developmental outcomes.

Our early intervention programs operate across the metropolitan area and in country regions supporting our young customers to reach their potential and to meet the aspirational goals that their parents build for them. We are now working in child and parent centres in the City of Swan sharing our knowledge and supporting local families and agencies in the area.

The power of togetherness

At Ability Centre, we compliment one-on-one disability therapy sessions with playgroups. These are an enjoyable form of group therapy, but provide far more than just fun and games for the children. Led by our highly trained, dedicated therapists, our playgroups focus on collaborating with children and their families to find ways to overcome their obstacles and make their goals reachable, and encourage a sense of togetherness for the children.

Social wellbeing is also promoted in our playgroups by providing children with opportunities to engage with others and form friendships. Parents also reap the benefits of the social environment with many friendships and support networks formed at playgroup.

The benefits of intensive block therapy

First piloted in 2016 with school aged children, our intensive block therapy programs are reaping rewards and have now been expanded.

Parents of the children involved were thrilled with the progress made in developing a skill set in such a short time. Their excitement at the results spread and we now offer intensive therapy blocks to people of all ages and all disabilities for physiotherapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy. Our running groups are in great demand as parents have seen results that they never anticipated- their child is now able to participate in sport and physical activity.

Positive behaviour support

Over the past year, we have worked hard to better understand how we can offer a more person-centered service to our customers. We focused on the area of complex and challenging behaviours and the best way to support those who have disabilities requiring additional attention and focus. The result was Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), a framework for supporting children, teenagers and adults who display unique and challenging behaviors that may limit participation in the classroom, social situations and in the community.

We are now working to embed PBS related values, principles and practices across our organisation. This means we are building skills with our staff and collaborating more. The implementation of evidence-based behaviour

interventions to supplement the support for our customers has substantially helped those with unique disabilities and has helped their families and carers to better understand and support challenging behavior. This is leading to a more fulfilling, enjoyable and integrated life within the community.

A new approach to therapy service delivery

Our customers are at the center of all that we do and we're always looking for ways to improve our therapy services. Through Customer feedback, we have identified a number of new ways of working to ensure that we match the right staff to the right service in the right location. This ensures that staff are able to maximise their time to deliver quality supports and services for our customers. Examples of this approach include:

- Establishment of a team of therapists in a number of locations within the Perth East Metropolitan area who use mobile technology to enable effective and efficient follow up within a therapy session, allowing the team to better support customers to reach their goals.
- A new way of working that is more flexible and responsive and ensures that our therapists can continue to support more people in their homes and communities. Staff can spend more time delivering supports and services, and creating more meaningful connections with customers.

Clinical and specialist services

Our allied health services are available to people with disabilities of all ages: children, teenagers and adults right across Western Australia. A number of service delivery points across greater metropolitan Perth are available and expanded regional and remote access is achieved through the Country Resource Program. In-home services are also available, and community locations such as schools and workplaces are widespread. We strive to maximise participation and encourage independence through a broad range of interactions and routines. These include:

- Dental Service
- Dietetic Service
- Gait Analysis
- Lower Limb and Foot Biomechanical Service
- Mealtime Service
- Orthotic Service
- Nursing Service
- Podiatry Service
- Psychology Service
- Spinal Clinic
- Stepping Out
- Upper Limb Movement Analysis

Therapy and Health Services

Changing lives

Learning is fun for Zoe

“Like every two-year old, Zoe is a stubborn little kid and only wants to learn when she wants to” says Lisa, Zoe’s mom, with a smile.

Born six weeks prematurely and diagnosed with Global Developmental Delay, the focus for Zoe’s treatment has always been to help her learn in order to catch up. The solution devised by her Ability Centre team has been to make the learning so much fun that it doesn’t even feel like learning.

With the key team comprising Kirsty for speech therapy, James for physiotherapy and Courtney as occupational therapist, Ability Centre has become one of Zoe’s favourite places to visit.

“She loves them”, says Lisa. “Zoe’s always so happy to walk through the doors. The team has made learning so much fun for her that she doesn’t even know she’s learning. They’re amazing.”

Early intervention and a comprehensive team have been pivotal to her progress, and Lisa explains how drastic the improvements have been: “Through early intervention we saw heaps of progress, but once we joined Ability Centre, that progress increased 10-fold.”

Importantly, Zoe’s learning isn’t limited to the days she visits Ability Centre. Regular in-home visits by the Ability Centre team have also assisted the family to create an environment that’s perfectly suited to Zoe’s needs, and helped Zoe’s parents to learn more about how they can ensure that her learning is ongoing.

“In-home visits have helped so much. The sessions at home are very comfortable for Zoe. Ability Centre has also helped us identify what toys are best, how to use them, and how to use the things we already have to their best effect. We’ve learned so much too”, says Lisa.

With their extended family in New Zealand, and a new baby due, Lisa has also found the additional support provided to the family invaluable.

“The respite has been so great. And the tools and support we’ve received from Ability Centre have been huge”, explains Lisa. “Kirsty is literally always there to talk to about anything, and the team has been amazing”.

Since joining Ability Centre early in 2017, Zoe’s parents have made her happiness their set goal.

“We just want her to be a happy little girl. Of course, we want to see progress and to see her

learning new skills so she’s catching up. But ultimately what we really want is for her to be happy”, says Lisa.

It’s not difficult to see that together, the team at Ability Centre is helping to achieve that goal. Lisa explains:

“Zoe loves every minute – it’s incredible to see how much she takes from each session. Seeing her so happy makes all the difference”.

Keith’s inspirational victories

You’d never guess this chatty 20-year old wasn’t able to walk or talk at two years old. And it’s not only the vast magnitude of the obstacles that Keith has overcome that are inspiring to the people who meet him. It’s the manner in which he’s turned every disability into an ability; every challenge into an achievement.

“It was Dr Chan at Ability Centre that got Keith walking”, recalls Keith’s mom. “He learned to walk about the same time as his sister who is two years younger.”

“At the time”, adds Keith with a chuckle, “all I wanted from my therapists was chocolate.”

Learning to walk was the first of many major

achievements for Keith, and by the middle of his first year of pre-primary, he had begun to speak. This marked a significant milestone in Ability Centre's assistance with Keith's transition from home to Kindy to school, with the team having successfully helped him learn a range of new skills by creating a formidable partnership between Keith, his parents, his teachers and the Ability Centre staff. It was a partnership that would prove life changing for Keith.

Not satisfied with only being able to walk, Keith joined the Little Athletics club. Soon, he came to embody the ethos of the club, that aimed to instil the belief that running a race was not about coming first or last. Rather, success should be measured by each individual competing against themselves, making the goal constant improvement by running personal best times.

After achieving more personal best times than anyone else in the club two years in a row, Keith was honoured by being made the Club Captain. This wasn't his final athletic achievement, however. He recently achieved a bronze medal in both the 100M and 300M at the State Disabled Sports Association event.

Drumming was introduced by Ability Centre as

part of his therapy to improve the dexterity of right arm, and assist with overall hand and feet co-ordination. It became an instant love for Keith.

"I've always loved music and movement, so the combination was perfect for me", he explains. Like just about everything else Keith attempts, he wasn't satisfied with remaining at the beginner level, and wanted to achieve more. "At first, I wasn't that good with my right wrist", he adds, "but now I am." He now plays the drums in a band, which recently performed for the crowd at Ability Centre's Golf Day.

Turning a disability into an ability is a constant theme in Keith's success stories. From music therapy to band member. From being unable to speak, to chatting effortlessly and even learning some Hungarian and Chinese. And from his hydrotherapy sessions at Ability Centre, he developed a love of water and swimming, inspiring him to join the Super Fins Swimming Club that trains on Saturday mornings.

"It's a great social team", says Keith of his swimming club friends. "I also can't wait to go back to Rottnest Island, to do the 500M Jetty to Jetty race."

While sport and music are great loves of his, there is another difficult transition Keith has



made into a success story. Gifted with a rare community spirit and work ethic saw him awarded the Citizenship Award at school for his enormous amount of volunteer work and community service. This proved the ideal preparation for entering the job market, where he now enjoys his work at Good Sammy's and Ferrier Hodgson.

From the two-year old that entered the doors of Ability Centre unable to walk or talk, to the inspiring young achiever at 20, an extraordinary amount of work and effort has taken place between Keith and his team.

"There are so many people and services at Ability Centre I'm thankful for", he says. "There are so many specialists who helped me. A big thank you to all those who supported me."



Country Resource Program

Over the last year, our Country Resource Program (CRP) has continued to deliver targeted education and consultative services to regional and remote Western Australia. Our Country Resource Teams work collaboratively with schools and community health professionals to share our specialist knowledge and expertise, ideas and strategies to assist children and adults.

We live and work in the local community and this gives our customers confidence in what Ability Centre can offer and has enhanced our working connections with agencies in the region.

Highlights for the last financial year include:

- Six video conference sessions to WA Country Health therapists from across Western Australia to provide education and training on evidence based intervention and therapy techniques for people with cerebral palsy and similar conditions.
- Regional visits to Geraldton, Port Hedland, Karratha, Northam, Narrogin and Merredin to provide assessment and reviews for customers. During these visits, the Ability

“We live and work in the local community and this gives our customers confidence in what Ability Centre can offer and has enhanced our working connections with agencies in the region.”

Centre team has also been supporting customers and their families to prepare for the roll out of NDIS.

- Continuing to build our South West services for 58 customers living in Busselton, Geographe, Vasse, Keeley, Abbey, Dunsborough, Cowaramup, Margaret River, Nannup, Manjimup and Donnybrook. These customers have a wide range of disabilities, from very complex physical disabilities to individuals with high functioning autism.
- Establishing a new hydrotherapy group in Busselton.
- Advanced plans for a hand assessment, therapy and splinting clinic in Busselton.

An individual approach

Everyone we see in the South West has an individualised WA NDIS Plan and we work with families and carers to support positive outcomes in everyday things. It might be supporting a young person to make the transition from primary to high school; keeping healthy through fitness and dietetic support or modifying the family home to increase a child's access to the backyard to play. Simple but effective support.

We offer local occupational therapy, speech pathology and physiotherapy and our customers also able to access Perth based specialist support for psycho/social services, dietetics and podiatry.

Equipment



Dreamfit

Dreamfit creates bespoke equipment to help people get the most fun out of life. Our goal is to enable customers to experience new opportunities for participation and inclusion. It's our belief that out-of-the-box thinking and the innovative use of the latest technology makes almost anything possible.

Throughout the year, we've been engaged by thrill seekers, holiday makers and sports players to find a solution for their mobility challenge. People have come across the country to discuss what is possible with our dedicated staff and engineers and they have supported many people to fulfil their dream right from assessment and fitting, through to development and equipment testing.

An opportunity for freedom

Earlier in the year, Dreamfit received an enquiry from a customer in New South Wales. The customer had seen the duet wheelchair bike and was hoping it would give him and his daughter the opportunity to spend more quality time and have some good old fashioned fun. As Dreamfit has an extensive range of bikes and trikes, the customer made the decision to fly with his daughter to Perth to trial our duet wheelchair

bike. The father described his dream for his daughter as "An opportunity for more freedom, feeling the wind in her hair, participating in bike rides with other friends". There was no need to go away and think about it further, a quote for the bike was requested there on the spot.

CP Tech

At CP Tech, our equipment and technology is personalised to customers, helping them to live the life they want. Whether the equipment helps people to get out and about, sleep better, or communicate, our therapists, engineers and technicians can help, specialising in equipment assessment, prescription and setup, guaranteeing everyone gets the right equipment for them.

Wizzybug continues to fly

As the sole distributors of Wizzybugs in Australia, we're proud to play such a big role in kids gaining access to early powered mobility at a young age. With their toylike looks and their flexible power wheelchair functionality, the Wizzybug is the perfect set of "first wheels" for those as young as even 14 months old. Over the past year, our Wizzybugs regularly flew off our shelves and to interstate, some reaching as far as New Zealand.

Technology for living – opening life's doors

Technology for Living is a two-year joint project between Ability Centre and Rocky Bay. It examined how emerging technologies could help people to have more independent control of their environment, for example opening doors, controlling lights, and playing music.

One of our clients to take part in the project was Eleana Bredemeyer. Eleana lives in shared living accommodation but was unable to enter and exit her home independently using the wireless door remote. She needed a way to access the door from her chair, so she was provided with a switch adapted door remote and a trigger switch. She can now enter and exit her home independently and let her visitors in.

Another aspect involved helping Eleana to communicate with her family and friends independently and privately. She had a push button mobile phone but often had to rely on others to make calls for her. This was replaced with a smartphone that could be used with the HouseMate Pro and app – technology which allowed her to use her phone independently, as well as control her house including turning on the TV, switching the light switches on and accessing music.



These new technologies have helped to greatly increase Eleana's independence, and encouraged her to consider what else she has the potential to control in her environment.

The equipment Dream Team

Working together, Dreamfit and CP Tech have created some life-changing equipment. Beach wheelchairs with floating wheels is one example.

More recently, Dreamfit was contacted by the Ability Centre Country Team regarding a South West customer who was looking to source a sensory board for their young daughter. After many planning discussions via phone and Skype, a quote was submitted in March 2017.

Better Start Funding approval was received in April 2017, and production quickly began. A

Dreamfit Technician and the CP Tech Upholstery Team worked together to create an 'amusement park' themed sensory board with moving parts, different textures, lights and sounds. The sensory board was handed over to the three year old girl and her mother in July 2017 amidst squeals of delight. They couldn't wait to attach it to a wall in their games room. A great team effort!

Equipment

Owen's customised mobility

“We didn’t know what was available, what the differences and benefits were, or how to fund the equipment. Ability Centre’s vast knowledge of the possibilities changed everything”.

Nowadays, one of Owen’s favourite activities is going to the beach with his family but that hasn’t always been easy for him. Four year old Owen was born with a very rare genetic condition, Lissencephaly - meaning smooth brain - that affects him on a global level, where he needs 24/7 care and assistance with everything he does. As Owen grows, mobility and positioning have been something that his family have always had to consider, and the equipment he and his family now enjoy make things so much easier.

“I didn’t know where to start with equipment”, says Taryn, Owen’s mum. “We didn’t know what was available, what the differences and benefits

were, or how to fund the equipment. Ability Centre’s vast knowledge of the possibilities changed everything”.

Together with Owen’s mum, his Ability Centre team put a plan in place to customise equipment that would empower Owen to do more, move more and enjoy more.

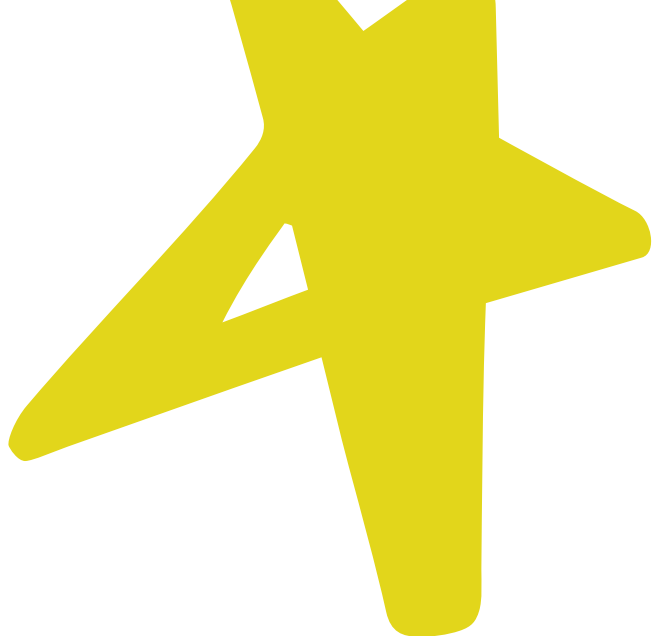
At first, an adaptive stroller fitted by CP Tech was an ideal solution, but Owen’s growth and development soon meant he needed to progress to a manual wheelchair that’s light, easy to move and fits comfortably in the car. Scott from CP Tech also consulted with the family to enable them to choose colours and additional customisations that Owen liked and suited his personality.

“We can take his wheelchair everywhere”, explains Taryn. “It even enabled us to take a family trip overseas.”

“He’s not a baby any more. He has his own identity like every four year old boy. This equipment has added a whole new range of fun”, adds Taryn. And fun is exactly what it’s added to Owen. All terrain wheels mean it’s easy to move across grass and now allows Owen to go and watch his cousins play sport. His Hippocampe beach wheelchair from Dreamfit is fitted with inflatable wheels so that it floats, giving Owen the opportunity to enjoy the water he loves so much.

“Our family loves going for walks on the beach, and it’s now easier than ever”, explains Taryn.

Inside the family home Owen also uses equipment daily. This includes a standing frame that allows him to spend some time upright, bearing his own weight, providing him with even more opportunities for both development and play. He also has an activity chair where he



is provided with customised postural support for meal time and play time, as well as a high-lo electronic bed which allows for comfortable sleep. This also makes it easier for family and carers to dress and change Owen.

Owen's goals and equipment requirements are discussed annually with team leader Rowan and the Ability Centre team. It's here that new plans are put in place, like new equipment, his transition plan to kindergarten, and his physical requirements.

"His equipment is part of our everyday life", says Taryn. "As Owen has grown and become a bigger boy, it's made feeding, moving him and daily activities so much easier."

"We're able to be a lot more on the go nowadays," explains Taryn. "The equipment has added so much more fun too. I don't know where we'd be without Ability Centre and CP Tech."



Employment

Goodwill Engineering



As a disability enterprise for close to 70 years, we continue to provide our supported employees with the tools to feel empowered, self-sufficient and valued in the workforce with the aim of creating a fun place to work.

In the past year we have enhanced our employees' environment and ways of working at Goodwill including:

Accessible bathroom funding

We were awarded funding through Job Access for a new bathroom facility with a shower and hoist. This new extension allows for a more streamlined approach when delivering personal care and manual handling transfers and gives our staff a safe environment to operate within.

Height-adjusted table funding

Through Job Access we were granted the funding

to purchase six height adjustable tables. These tables allow for both electric and manual wheel chairs so that our employees can work on a wider range of machinery, encouraging individuals to build on their skill set and confidence.

Offering greater choice and control for daily tasks for employees

We have recognised that at times, employees were losing focus and not meeting their goals. To address this we implemented a higher rotation schedule to ensure employees are moved onto different tasks up to three times daily to ensure they remain focused, happy and in turn, more productive.

This has resulted in a more positive workplace, greater productivity and greater job satisfaction.

Expansion into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

We now have 15 Goodwill Engineering employees under the NDIS in Perth, and one employee under the WA National Disability Insurance Scheme (WA NDIS).

We have trained our staff to focus their energies into developing our employee's skillset and achieving their individual employment goals. We are working hard to retain our employees by

creating individual KPIs and help them further develop their own independence.

Establishment of a retirement plan

We have been working hard with the assistance of the other business units in Ability Centre to put a succession plan into place to support our aging workforce for when the time comes to transition into retirement. We want to ensure that our employees receive ongoing support in later life stages as retirees.

New employee opportunities

We have also engaged the employee group to manage the cleaning internally. This has given the employees the opportunity to step up and show their commitment and dedication which they pride themselves on. They have learnt new skills which have seen three of our employees achieve a wage increase. By our employee group taking over this task completely we no longer require external cleaning services.

Committee groups

These longstanding committees have changed last year to help employees drive the direction of fundamental business objectives. We have three committees that are elected by their peers every year, and this year we have reviewed

this process so the employees are contributing and providing feedback.

Our Social Committee promotes social integration through sausage sizzles, dinner dances (the highlight of the social calendar), picnics at Whiteman Park and Melbourne Cup lunch.

Our Workers' Committee promotes compliance to meet our six Disability Service Standards by helping and assisting with audits, regular meetings and obtaining employee feedback.

The Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Committee oversees safety and health in the workplace. The Ability Centre OSH Advisor visits our business once a month and provides employees with updates on new policies, guidelines and incident reports. He also provides them with professional support.

Long service awards

This year we celebrated many staff receiving long service awards:

- Justin Bernau, 15 years
- Lynette Cucel, 40 years
- Ian Gelley, 35 years
- Patrick Martin, 40 years
- Ryley Taylor, 10 years

Business activity

Due to the statewide building industry downturn the business has been steady but a little quiet. This provided us the time to work on other opportunities such as:

- Western Australia Police – with our ongoing contract we have been busy fitting out a number of police stations this year with various cabinets including – Cockburn, Exmouth, Stirling st, Kalgoorlie, Northam Boddington and Perth Headquarters.
- Through our good work with the supply of cabinets for the WA Police they have engaged us to manufacture more products such as coat hangers and light fixtures, and also led us to manufacture cabinets for Perth Arena and the Supreme, High & Children's courts.
- Our laser machine has kept busy with expansion in supply of products for the agricultural industry for customers including Shuttle Gauge and Fowler.
- We have built a new machine to manufacture a new wire tie to support the growing trend of timber and metal frame construction houses. This new product will be rolled out to all customers in the coming months.

Employment

Nothing gets past Chris

With 42 years of service under his belt, Chris is one of the longest serving members of Goodwill Engineering, the only Australian Disability Enterprise involved with production in WA.

Described endearingly as the ‘patriarch’ of the company, Chris’s motor control is limited to his right foot which is used to steer his wheelchair and expertly control the machinery he’s lovingly worked with for decades.

Like the other employees who’ve been assisted and supported by Ability Centre to achieve their goal of gainful employment, Chris began his career with a physical assessment to accurately gauge the types of roles he’d be able to fulfil in the Goodwill business. Depending on the employee, their goals and their assessments, Goodwill offers machine operation, welding, product assembly, packaging and store management.

There’s no hesitation about which role is his favourite according to Employment Support Officer Jamie, “It’s the Economy Hanger Straps machine, without doubt. He’s a gun with that.”

Customised to suit Chris’s foot-control ability, the Economy Hanger Straps machine is a vital component in Goodwill Engineering’s economy hanger production, one of the building industry

products that Goodwill supplies to Bunnings and other building industry specialists.

“He’s so in tune with the machine, he knows if there’s a problem before anything happens”, continues Jamie. “Just by the sound the machine makes, he knows if there’s a problem.”

“He’s so in tune with the machine, he knows if there’s a problem before anything happens... Just by the sound the machine makes, he knows if there’s a problem.”

It’s this meticulous attention to detail that has seen Chris achieve the title of Quality Control Officer. “He picks up stuff most of us miss”, adds Jamie, “and he’s one of the most experienced in the company’s 58-year history.”

As if to confirm his attention to details, Chris corrects Jamie: “59 years.”

With high-support needs, Chris has benefitted from the broad support and services of Ability Centre. Like the majority of the 65 employees at Goodwill Engineering, he enjoys sessions

with his OT, speech therapist and other specialists at Ability Centre when needed.

“For years, he worked five days a week, but that’s been reduced to two days a week now as he nears retirement”, explains Jamie. “Ability Centre will definitely play a big role in assisting

him with his transition to retirement.”

Described by colleagues as “awesome”, “always smiling”, “wicked sense of humour”, and praised for his unwavering work ethic over the years, it is very obvious that his colleagues at Goodwill Engineering will miss Chris when the time for retirement arrives.

But his colleagues aren’t the only ones. It seems the factory machinery will also miss a person that truly understands them.



Employment

Create Employment

For over 20 years Create Employment has provided disability employment services in the Perth north metropolitan area. A strong profile and outstanding performance has lead to an increase in market share from 13% to 25% in the last financial year - the largest recorded growth since our current contract began in 2010.

Expanding services

To cater to the growing customer numbers and their need for better community access, Create Employment now operates in four new locations in addition to existing sites Coolbinia, Currambine, Ellenbrook and Malaga. Job seekers and employers in Canning Vale, Joondalup, Mirrabooka, Yanchep and surrounding areas now have easy access to our experienced team and our high quality job matching service.

The move into the new regions has been extremely positive and we have seized on exciting opportunities to expand into other industries, creating more choice and opportunities for job seekers. With the retail industry experiencing a slump in consumer spending and a reduction

in hiring, we have been creating stronger links with companies in hospitality, manufacturing, construction, and disability community services. Our team is passionate about finding meaningful employment for people in an industry that suits their interests.

Outstanding performance

From July 2018, there will be changes to the Australian Government's Disability Employment Services (DES) program and Create Employment is well positioned to meet the growing number of DES participants. We are proud to say that throughout the past 12 months, we have maintained outstanding performance against the National DES Star Rating System.

In late 2016 we were again recognised for our excellent performance record with the release of Australian Government DES Star Ratings for the September quarter awarding Create Employment a 5-star rating. We scored top marks at all four of our operating sites - Malaga, Currambine, Coolbinia and Ellenbrook - making us only one of a handful of providers in Western Australia to receive or maintain a 5-star rating across all its operations. We are currently ranked 56% above the industry average.







Employment

Florinda's story

Sixteen years ago, Florinda began working in disability employment with Ability Centre, and was appointed a coordinator in 2005. Since then, her experience and dedication has seen her role evolve into the manager of Create Employment, the job placement division of Ability Centre.

"I love what I do and I'm constantly learning", says Florinda, "my work means everything to me."

Those are the traits that have benefitted the many people who have started their journey towards finding employment under Florinda's leadership.

The journey through Create Employment begins when a person is identified as being eligible for disability employment support due to a permanent disability or barrier and requires assistance in finding employment in the general labour market.

Ability Centre's Employment Coordinators begin the process by meeting the candidate, getting to know them, and understanding their



“We want to carefully place the right person in the right role so that we create a successful match.”

goals and ambitions. Together, a plan is devised that takes into account exactly where they are, and identifies the skills and knowledge that will enhance the candidate's opportunities to achieve their goals.

For some, the journey may begin with pre-employment opportunities, like volunteering their time and services. For others, training in a certain field may be identified by Florinda and her team as being the ideal starting point. These important first steps provide the candidates with the required background knowledge and skills that will assist them with their transition

into the career of their choosing.

While Create Employment is often able to assist a candidate to find employment relatively quickly, for others a longer nurturing period may be required depending on their job choices. Job Club is a seven week workshop created by Ability Centre to help candidates prepare more thoroughly for the career that lies ahead.

The Job Club workshop entails gaining and refining a range of new skills, and building deeper knowledge of the employment market. Presentation skills, best practice resume and

cover letters, interview coaching and application processes are some of the lessons taught, to enable each candidate to improve their prospects. Additionally, candidates are exposed to labour market insights, like current and future growth sectors, to help them target the jobs most likely to deliver long term prospects and satisfaction.

A broader understanding of the job market is enhanced by guest speakers, who cover a range of topics beneficial to job seekers. The rewarding end result is a person who is job ready, well presented, and armed with the skills they need to achieve their ambitions.

Under Florinda's guidance, each candidate also has a face to face meeting with their coordinator every two weeks. It is here that their goals are reviewed, plans are refined and relevant activities are included to help the candidate become more job ready and more competitive in the job market.

During this period, Florinda and her team work to market the candidate by actively searching for job opportunities and canvassing potential employers.

“We don't just want to find a short term job,” says Florinda, “we want to carefully place the right person in the right role so that we create a successful and sustainable job match.”

Florinda likes to keep busy – when she's not working to help people find work of their own, one of her favourite activities is being in the great outdoors.

Research

Research is the cornerstone of delivering evidence based practice and helps to ensure the quality of our services.

Each year we pursue a vigorous research program, with projects arising from the needs of our customers. Projects are then selected based on the funding available, timeframe for completion and the staff who have an interest in the area.

To ensure we deliver the best results, we have a rigorous quality review process which involves research, consumer, and clinical input. We also collaborate with a wide variety of partners including Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, Telethon Kids Institute and universities.

This year we have covered a wide variety of topics ranging from respiratory health in young people with cerebral palsy through to the benefits of trampolining. The following are some of the highlights:

Respiratory health in young people with cerebral palsy

Each year, one in 14 children and young people (aged up to 26 years) with cerebral palsy (CP) is admitted to hospital with respiratory illness. Two in five of these young people are re-admitted the next year with some experiencing multiple admissions.

To help young people with CP and their families to identify early risks of respiratory disease, we surveyed 551 young people with CP (aged 1 to 26 years) and their parents about their respiratory health in 2011-12. We then tracked their rate of hospital admissions for three years, enabling us to identify risk factors for subsequent respiratory hospital admissions in children and young people with CP.

This research helped us create an interactive online respiratory checklist that aims to identify early warning signs of respiratory disease. This checklist alerts young people with CP and their parents of the risk factors to watch out for.

By identifying early risk factors, our aim is to improve the quality of life of children and young people with CP, reducing hospital admissions, and potentially preventing irreversible lung damage.

Research team: Dr Marie Blackmore, Lisa Moshovis, Dr Noula Gibson, James Davies (Ability Centre), Dr Andrew Wilson, Dr Katherine Langdon, and Natasha Bear (Princess Margaret Hospital for Children). The original survey was funded by Health Networks Funding from the WA Health Department. The linkage and checklist were funded by individual contributions to Ability Centre research and by Non-Government Centre Support.

Supporting Aboriginal children with disability in Kalgoorlie

The Pika Wiya Kuthupa team provides unique services to the people of Kalgoorlie, guided by

the Tjina Maala Community Reference Group and community based Story Telling Circles.

It originated eight years ago when team members of the Ability Centre Country Resource Program noticed that Aboriginal people in the Goldfields region had poor access to therapy services despite high rates of disability. We decided to explore the needs of Aboriginal families caring for a child with a disability in the Goldfields area and support these families.

In 2014 we established the Tjina Maala Aboriginal drop-in centre, based in Kalgoorlie. Services include advocacy and information for Aboriginal families of children with disability, and for other service providers working with Aboriginal families.

Since 2015, Aboriginal Community Engagement Officers have provided support for Aboriginal and non Aboriginal students with disability at the Eastern Goldfields Education Support Centre. They work in the classroom and within the school's work experience program.

The project has also developed a range of resources for students, families and service providers. Tjina Maala resources include two Message Books, a storybook on Otitis Media, a Wongatha based activity book, and colouring books on going to hospital and a death in the family. These resources are distributed state and countrywide, with support from a generous private Foundation donation.

The project team remain involved in community events, such as NAIDOC Family Day and Close the Gap; and contribute to Aboriginal media, such as The Indigenous Storybook.

Research team: Dr Jillian Pearsall-Jones, Caris Jalla, Deanne Williams, and Penny Evans (Ability Centre). The project was funded by Non-Government Centre Support.

Adapted bungee trampolining for children with cerebral palsy

Trampolining is fun and can motivate many children to be active. However, not all children with disability can access this activity because of physical barriers.

To help people of all abilities enjoy the benefits of trampolining, engineers at Ability Centre Dreamfit made an adapted bungee trampoline especially for children with disability. It is a normal trampoline but has elasticated cords attached to a belt providing body weight support.

To determine the benefits for the children taking part, we undertook a research study which involving following four children with cerebral palsy who used the trampoline twice a week for 12 weeks. There was always a physiotherapist supervising them very closely.

We found that the program strengthened leg muscles and helped children to get up and down more quickly. The children's parents reported a range of benefits including improved fitness, greater confidence, a reduction in falls, and improvements in therapy participation.

All of the children enjoyed bungee trampolining, and parent satisfaction was extremely high. We concluded that bungee trampolining, when closely supervised by a physiotherapist, is a safe and enjoyable way of strengthening legs and becoming more active.

Research team: Asheigh Germain, Dr Sian Williams (Curtin University), Dr Marie Blackmore, Dr Noura Gibson, Becky Newell (Ability Centre). The project was funded by an Early career researcher (ECR) Research Grant from the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science, Curtin University.

Mental health in children and youth with cerebral palsy

For a long time, families and therapists of children with cerebral palsy (CP) have requested increased psychological and social work support for children and youth with mental health and behavioural challenges. So when we were invited to join the Disability Working Group at the Telethon Kids Institute (TKI), we asked the group to investigate mental health in children and youth with CP.

The first step was to find evidence about the extent of mental health symptoms and disorders in children and youth with CP. We undertook a systematic review of all the published evidence about the prevalence of mental health disorders and symptoms in children and youth with CP.

Our review showed that children with CP have a higher risk of mental health symptoms than

children with no disabilities. This highlights the importance of mental health services and mental health assessments for these young people.

The systematic review is called "The prevalence of mental health disorders and symptoms in children and adolescents with cerebral palsy: a systematic review and meta-analysis", and it was published in the journal Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology this year.

Research team: Jenny Downs, Emma J Glasson, Amy Epstein, Rachel Skoss, Peter Jacoby, Andrew Whitehouse, Helen Leonard (Telethon Kids Institute), Marie Blackmore, Jillian Pearsall-Jones (Ability Centre), Katherine Langdon, Peter Rowe, Peter Clissa (Princess Margaret Hospital for Children), Ravisha Srinivasjois (Ramsay Health). This project was funded by a Telethon Kids Institute Seeding Grant.

There are a range of other research projects in the pipeline:

- supporting people with CP during their whole lifespan
- helping children with CP get a better night's sleep
- an app for supporting home-based exercise programs in children with CP
- an all abilities football program for children with disability

NDIS Readiness



Maria Davison joined Ability Centre just six months ago and she has already immersed herself in the organisation. As the Chief Operating Officer, she's playing a key role in ensuring Ability Centre is prepared for the NDIS.

A psychologist by training, Maria previously worked in aged care organisations where she helped manage teams through significant change including the move to greater customer choice and control. We asked Maria about her previous experience and what the NDIS means for Ability Centre.

Maria, congratulations on your six months with Ability Centre! What attracted you to our organisation?

I was attracted to working in a sector that was going from being funder to customer controlled under the NDIS. Organisations like Ability Centre were completely customer controlled initially, created by customers because their needs weren't being met.

Over time, the sector became regulated and the balance of power shifted to the funder.

The idea of turning it back to the purpose of the original founders is really exciting.

What experience did you bring with you that is relevant to the new NDIS environment?

In my previous roles I spent a lot of time working with my teams to develop a very clear understanding of what forms the basis of success. Essentially, this is making sure you really know your customers, and that you've got the right people and services in place that will meet and exceed their expectations brought about by changes such as the NDIS.

The other side is having a clear vision for staff so everyone knows how they are contributing to the success and how each area of the organisation relies on each other to provide a single view for the customer.

Once you've got those at the forefront of everything, you can then put the mechanisms in place to make sure the organisation is efficient and viable under a scheme like the NDIS. These mechanisms – like better systems, processes and technology – become enablers for the people at the front.

What opportunities does the NDIS bring?

From a customer point of view, it offers transparency and greater choice. They know

exactly how much money they have to spend on different services. This means they can really look at buying the services from the organisations that best suit them, and don't have to put up with things they're not happy with.

The power that comes with that is great for people who were often in a situation where they were receivers of a service through a funder rather than a customer.

What does this mean for disability service providers?

As organisations, we have to make sure we are as good as we can be – making sure the customer promise is strong and consistent, as well as being commercially viable.

At Ability Centre, one of the things our customers most value is consistent staffing and maximising face-to-face time. This is an ideal platform for us as it's exactly what our staff want too.

The challenge is getting the background right to make more face-to-face time possible in an environment where the price is set by an external force.

So what do providers need to do?

Providers need to think about how they're presenting themselves to customers.

It may be that a customer comes to us for one service but how do we best provide them with the information about the whole suite of products on offer in a way that makes sense?

For this to happen, different business units need to stop operating like mini organisations and become more integrated. Customers don't see business lines they just want someone to provide a solution!

That means people have to lift up from the individual services and learn more about the organisation. We're starting to do this by having a central front door through the Customer Engagement Team.

What's been the biggest impact of the NDIS to date?

More people will be eligible to receive funding, which is a tremendous thing. People who previously couldn't get any funding for care or support will now have access to services. For people already using disability services, they'll now have greater transparency which will lead to more choice.

How has Ability Centre coped with the indecision about which NDIS scheme will run in WA?

We know it's moving to individualised funding,

whether it's a Federal or State administered system and we're currently operating in both. We've built the capability to help customers navigate through either system and prepare them for what the new world will look like.

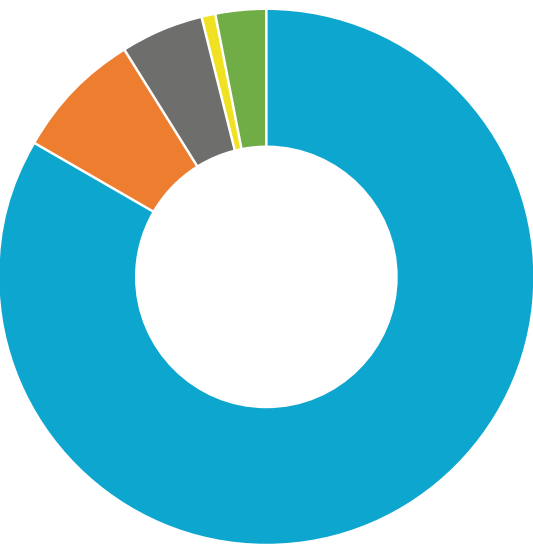
It's been a combination of preparing for either a Federal or WA NDIS, while we continue to provide services to around 2,000 current customers who still receive funding under the old system.

What are you looking forward to in a future under NDIS?

It's all about providing great services now and in the future. We'll continue to build on our speciality in cerebral palsy and will extend our services to support an even greater number of people with disability including those with autism, intellectual disability and acquired brain injuries.

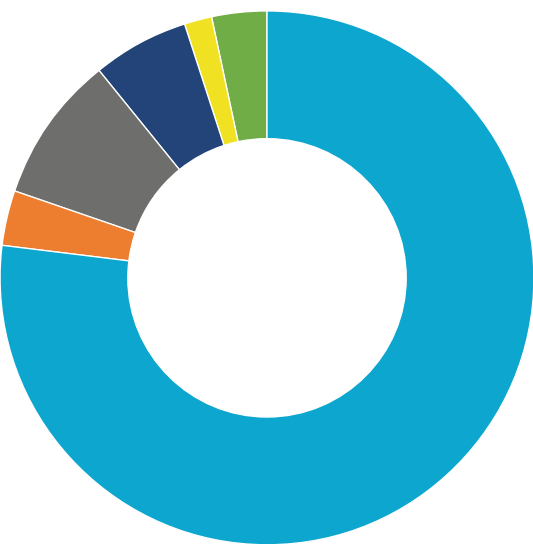
A big opportunity for us is also enhancing our strength of supporting people at different ages and stages. There are some customers who have been with us for their whole life, and I think this is something unique that Ability Centre offers. We can provide a full range of services so you can have a continued relationship with us without having to chop and change.

Financials



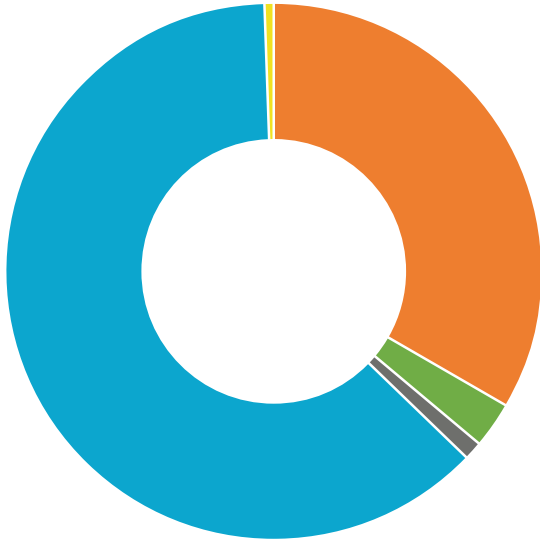
What we earned

	\$M	
Grant Funding	53.93	83%
Product Sales	5.03	8%
Service Revenue	3.29	5%
Capital Grants	0.53	1%
Other Income	1.88	3%
Total	64.67	100%



What we spent

	\$M	
Employment Expenses	50.03	77%
Depreciation and Amortisation	2.10	3%
Cost of Goods Sold/Sponsored Equipment	5.84	9%
Supplies, Occupancy & Maintenance	3.81	6%
General & Administrative Expenses	0.97	1%
Other Expenses	2.12	3%
Total	64.88	100%



What we own

	\$M	
Cash & cash equivalents	23.87	34%
Receivables & Prepayments	1.96	3%
Inventories	0.75	1%
Property, Plant & Equipment	44.45	62%
Other Assets	0.23	0%
Total	71.25	100%



What we owe

	\$M	
Trade Payables	1.83	8%
Deferred Income	6.73	31%
Employee Benefits	9.85	46%
Other Liabilities	3.22	15%
Total	21.63	100%

Our People

Lara's story



It wasn't a straight forward path that lead Lara to that life changing interview 8 years ago.

Having encountered people with a learning disability early in her life, she knew that it was her calling to make a difference to people with disability, but at the time she didn't realise it was possible to actually make a career of it – to do it full time.

She'd studied teaching, specialising in helping kids with disabilities, she'd done community service, she'd volunteered her time to a range of causes, but like the teaching course, it was unspecialised, seemed to only scratch the surface, and she couldn't find a way to be entirely immersed.

Then she stumbled upon an advertisement for a team leader role at Ability Centre. Shortly after, she found herself in the interview that would change her life, and hundreds of other people's lives along with it.

Even at 21, her enthusiasm, dedication and focus was obvious, and despite her age and lack of experience, her leaders at Ability Centre recognised the immense energy she'd bring to the organisation.

Eight years later, Lara has fulfilled a range of

roles within Ability Centre, from Coordinator to Project Manager and now Manager.

“Despite my different roles, some things haven’t changed at all,” explains Lara. “I’m still learning as just fast as I did in those early days when I first joined.”

A self-proclaimed “change junky”, Lara adds a key dynamic to an organisation in a fast changing sector – a hunger for learning, and finding better ways to serve customers. Selected for a scholarship to Los Angeles in April 2017, she brought back a number of key strategies to share with the organisation.

“I learned some valuable lessons about ways we can further improve to benefit our customers. But there was another great lesson I learned: the standard of service we offer at Ability Centre is truly world class, and in some ways we are ahead of our counterparts abroad. We have such a great team here.”

Teamwork is always at the forefront of Lara’s description of her role.

“We don’t start with offering services to customers. We start with talking to them and understanding what it is they want to achieve. Only then do we put the right services and team in place to help them get where they want to be.”

It’s this customised approach that leads

“We don’t start with offering services to customers. We start with talking to them and understanding what it is they want to achieve. Only then do we put the right services and team in place to help them get where they want to be.”

to the most effective results, and the most rewarding experiences for Lara and the teams of specialists. For some customers, it has meant completing a course they always wanted to do – some have even completed degrees. For some, it means just a few hours a week to help them get up, get ready and get where they need to be. And for some, Ability Centre Respite Services mean an opportunity for family or carers to get their own “me time” and pursue their own interests. How successes are defined is as varied as the people themselves.

“We don’t see people in disability categories,” explains Lara. “Each person is an individual with their own unique challenges, goals, dreams. And the rewards of helping them get where

they want to be are immense. Some of those rewards can seem small on the surface, but are memories that will last forever.”

Lara tells the story of a customer who, for a long period of time, had been relatively unresponsive to any attention she received. Until one day, a puppy that had been introduced as part of her therapy, jumped up onto her lap. Everything changed in a second. In an instant, her face lit up. “She burst into laughter,” says Lara. “real, honest, hearty laughter.”

Lara’s loved her eight years at Ability Centre that started with that first nervous interview. But she’s not alone. Her many clients are as thankful as she is that she found her destiny.

Our People

Length of Service Awards

We are honoured to recognise the following incredible staff who have contributed so much to Ability Centre over many years:

5 years

Abby Taylor

Alwynn Aherne

Andrea Bruens

Ann Cook

Anneleise Kandemulla

Lilly Marial

Audrey Mwanza

Belen Stepanek

Brima Kamara

Carly Pickering

Cassie Taylor

Catherine De Laeter

Cheyenne Walker

Clara Wallin

Daniel Ndayishimiye

David Butler

Deanne Gray

Deborah Simmonds

Eileen Allen

Elide Bot

Elizabeth Danckert

Emma Morrison

Emma Torphy

Fatmata Roberts

Fernando Bonomo

Flora Andle

Francis Jengo

Georgina Humphries

Giovina D'Alessandro

Gloria Smith

Hilary Kavumbura

Immanuela Lebib

Janet Clarke

Jessica Edgar

Joanne Parkinson

Jodie Cakebread

Joelene Mills

Kamsinah Jaffar

Kaung Lynn

Khaled Ahmad

Kunali Shah

Laura Cheng

Lesley Gallagher

Lisa Johnson

Lynne Morgan

Marie Lamvohee

Marilyn Garcia

Mary Rautao-Seth

Mathew Patroni

Miriam Obudo

Nick Dorjee

Nicola Johns

Norman Mallon

Paris Nutt

Pema Yuden

Rachel Rodoreda

Ram Bhattarai

Rowan Johnson

Sarafina Ayuel

Scott Shipsides

Shirley Lynn Mahasaputra

Stephen Bowley

Stephen Cathie

Sue Maras

Susan Santoro

Suzannah French

Tulla Tapfumaneyi

Victoria Smith

Willie Manual

Yolanda Johnstone

Zhiheng Li

10 years

Adrienne Weston

Alice Bak

Alice Modo

Almaz Desalegn

Ann hill

Darren Otterburn

Elaine Lobo

Emma Griffiths

Jeannette Edwards

Jessica Morris

Jolene Hawkes

Kate Shackleton

Lex Barndon

Monica Sommerauer

Nicole O'Rourke

Rosa Torres

Stephen St John

Tim Jenkins

Wendy Prestianni

15 years

Community Services

Adriene Webb

Angie Mckenzie

Bob Graham

Chris Atkinson

Cliff Dong

Glenda Peddie

Helen Graham

Peter Stubbs

Therapy & Health Services

Andrea Williams

Heather Plummer

Strategic Corporate Support

David Tuffley

20 years

Community Services

Diana Beckford

Paul Carter

Employment Services

Neil Wood

25 years

Community Services

Barry Thurn-Valsassina

Fiona Elliot

Gwyneth Griffiths

Executive Services

Ron Widdison

30 years

Employment Services

Doug Ennis

Strategic Corporate Support

Bryan Bennington



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