# Affilia Solve Centre 2017/18



Ability Centre is a not for profit disability service provider that has been supporting Western Australian families for more than 60 years.

We are committed to providing our customers and their families the services and supports they need. Ability Centre supports people living with cerebral palsy, autism and other physical and intellectual disabilities.

Our innovative and responsive services can be provided from early infancy through to adulthood. We believe that building a strong relationship with you and your family, is the key to reaching your potential.

Ability Centre has built its reputation as a leading disability service provider by providing excellent service, allowing our customers to thrive.

**Empowering people** to realise their abilities.

**Ability Centre Australasia** 

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Chairman's Report Acting CEO's Report

The Board and Executive Organisational Structure

The year at a glance

Community
Services

Therapy and Health

Commercial
Services

Create
Employment

Research and Development

Innovation Hub

People and Culture

Philanthropy and Fundraising

Financial
Summary

## **Chairman's Report**



In a person centred organisation like Ability Centre, the Board firmly believes in the importance of a great workplace culture and we have made continuous improvement a priority for the Executive.

The Board has continued to endorse a wide range of policies and initiatives that improve service delivery for our customers and support Ability Centre's transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Over the last year we have seen Ability Centre's renewed purpose to empower people to realise their abilities strengthened and brought to life through a number of inspiring stories from our customers and people. The launch of our vision for the future, our mission and values has set strong direction and foundations for our organisation as we face into the future. I want to thank and acknowledge all our customers, families, supporters and our people for your continued trust in Ability Centre.

2017/18 was also a year dominated by preparations for moving to the NDIS. The announcement by our State Minister for Disability Services in December 2017 that Western Australia would join the nationally delivered NDIS from 1 July 2018 was welcome. It provided clarity and direction for our organisation however the enormity of the change in this new funding model cannot be underestimated. On behalf of the Board, I thank everyone at Ability Centre who has diligently been working on how we can best support our customers and achieve the best outcomes for them under the new arrangements.

One of the most significant responsibilities of the Board is to appoint the Ability Centre's Chief Executive Officer. With the resignation of Suzi Cowcher in February 2018, the Board began the national process of recruiting a replacement. Our Chief Financial Officer Darren Cutri stepped into the role of Acting Chief Executive Officer

and I thank Darren and the other Executive members for their support and enthusiasm during this interim period.

The Executive, with the support of the Board and our people, began a major transformation process in preparation for the many changes that are occurring within our sector. This included developing a new Strategic Plan for the next five years that builds on the strong history of Ability Centre and positions us for a successful future under changed funding and market conditions.

On 3 May 2018 we had a landmark event with the opening of our new \$12 million Bradford Views accommodation complex in Coolbinia. The Hon. Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Disability Services officiated and it was a wonderful occasion for our Bradford Views customers, families, friends and staff to gather.

This new permanent accommodation for people with complex disability needs was made possible with funding from Department of Communities, Disability Services, Lotterywest and the Estate of Bob Sykes.

Bradford Views has set a new standard of care in Australia. It provides permanent villa style accommodation for 20 residents with capacity for an additional six people in the Transition Villa for those needing support to move to their next permanent home.

Attraction and retention of great employees is one of our key initiatives and the Employee Pulse Survey conducted in April 2018 has given us some strong indicators of where we are doing well and areas for improvement. In a person centred organisation like Ability Centre, the Board firmly believes in the importance of a great workplace culture and we have made continuous improvement a priority for the Executive.

Ability Centre is growing and it is an honour to be leading the Board of such an incredible organisation. We ended the financial year with 2,479 customers and 966 employees and revenue in excess of \$69 million.

Looking ahead, our approach to the next financial year remains positive, focused on growth and quality services. That said, we anticipate financial challenges as the organisation becomes more exposed to the NDIS funding structure and the tight operating margins this will bring. The operational change required by our people as we transition to the NDIS, should also not be underestimated.

During the year we farewelled a number of Board members who have tirelessly given of their time and expertise over many years. Our thanks to Maria Mansour, Glenn Mitchell, Kelly Hasluck and Rob McDonald. We welcomed Melissa Northcott, Roslyn Elms, Daniel Butler, and Robert Radley.

Ability Centre is focused on our customers and their families and I would like to thank everyone involved in delivering the best possible outcomes for them – employees, partners, funders and volunteers. Again, my heartfelt thanks to the customers and families who continue to have faith in us to provide care and support and their generosity in allowing us to be part of their lives.

It is an honour and privilege to Chair this amazing organisation with so many inspiring customers, families and people. It is this heart that will guide us through the challenges and opportunities in the context of the new NDIS environment.

**Justin Scanlan** 

Justin Jean Van

Chairman



# Acting CEO's Report



We exist to support and serve people living with disability and this requires dedicated and passionate employees.

## There is no doubt 2017/18 was another year of shaping our organisation in readiness for full National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) implementation.

We welcomed the decision by the Western Australian Government in December 2017 that we would be joining the national scheme. The decision brought clarity to the sector, and from that point onwards, we have continued to refine how we will support our customers and their families with the transition.

Our Strategic Direction underpins how we are going to achieve our business goals in a structured and sustainable way and we have continued to pursue the strategic initiatives developed last year.

### **Customer Management System**

While there are many threads to adapting our organisation to operate successfully under the NDIS, our new Customer Management System technology project is crucial to improving the customer experience, ensuring consistency of data and embedding process efficiencies.

Due to launch in the first half of 2019, this has been a substantial piece of work this year. It has required us to focus on how we engage with customers and maximise the therapy and support services they receive; on how we schedule our work: as well as on how we integrate mobile technology and increase our geographic locations across Western Australia.

### A strong organisation

Our organisation exists to support and serve people living with disability and this requires dedicated and passionate employees. In April we launched an Employee Pulse Survey across the organisation and we were very pleased with a participation rate of 48%. Our results were benchmarked

Our new Customer Management System technology project is crucial to improving the customer experience, ensuring consistency of data and embedding process efficiencies.

against 150 Australian not for profit organisations and we have clear areas for improvement as well as an understanding of what we do well. Communicating the survey outcomes to our employees and leveraging our strengths to address areas for improvement is an ongoing priority for our senior leaders.

### **Bradford Views**

There have also been many highlights and celebrations this year. In May 2018 the opening of Bradford Views, our new \$12 million accommodation complex at Coolbinia, was a landmark occasion.

We welcomed the Minister for Environment; Disability Services Hon. Stephen Dawson MLC as well as customers, their families, our staff, suppliers and many of our supporters to the official opening.

Bradford Views is state of the art accommodation for people living with disability with complex needs and the four villa style residences provide a truly home like environment for our 20 customers.

For many, this is the first time they have had their own letterbox, front door and private bedroom with ensuite facilities. As part of this project, we were also able to set up a Transition Villa designed specifically for people needing support to learn skills that will enable them to move home and live independently. This is a much needed service in Perth and we welcomed our first four customers in May.

### **Dedicated to research**

The work of our dedicated research team was also recognised on a national and international level this year.

The CP Respiratory Checklist that is now available for use in the general community to help prevent hospitalisation due to respiratory illness is providing practical support following six years of investigation and trials.

Another research team has been published for their work looking at the ability to run in children with cerebral palsy and the physical benefits of this activity. Their research continues using 3-dimensional gait analysis with children participating in our Xcelerate running program.

Most of this research is carried out on a voluntary or part time basis by our staff, often with the involvement of clinicians from other organisations. We believe research is vital for continuous improvement for people living with disability and we will continue to seek funding for this work.

### **Disability Employment**

Providing employment for people living with disability is another important part of our organisation. Demand for supported employment through Goodwill Engineering or placements for people through Create Employment have continued to strengthen. From next year the disability employment sector will be deregulated and both divisions are well placed to increase their market share.

Create Employment continues as a registered Disability Employment Service provider and will add offices in Canning Vale and Mandurah to its portfolio from 1 July 2018.

### **Fundraising and support**

Our heartfelt thanks also go to all our donors and sponsors who supported our Golf Day in October 2017 and our mail appeals throughout the year. It is always pleasure to work with the community groups and individuals who make us their charity of choice.

Funding and support from Telethon for our In-home Baby Intervention Service (IBIS) was confirmed again this year and the program is now funded until July 2019. This specialist therapy service is making a real difference to babies up to 24 months at risk of neurodevelopmental conditions.

IBIS customer Ava with her Dad Scott and therapist Amanda



### **Partnerships**

We are committed to supporting families with young children and we were delighted to agree a partnership with Kalparrin that will begin in July 2018. Kalparrin is a not for profit organisation supporting families with children with disabilities, and is based at the Perth Children's Hospital.

As an advocate for people living disability in Western Australia, we also sponsored the 2018 Disability Support Awards and supported the International Day of People with Disability. We continue to be an active member of Ability First Australia and we are very proud that two of our senior leaders received scholarships that will see them visit and learn from disability organisations in the USA.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Executive, staff and volunteers for the significant contribution they make. Every day they help make a difference in the lives of our customers and their families. Your passion and commitment to our purpose of empowering people to realise their abilities, is truly appreciated. My sincere thanks to you all.

The coming year will bring more challenges and opportunities for Ability Centre. I am confident we will continue to support people of all abilities to thrive in their community and be a provider of choice across Western Australia.

**Darren Cutri** 

Acting Chief Executive Officer



## **Board**of Directors

As at 30 June 2018













O1. Justin Scanlan ChairmanO2. Janelle Marr Deputy ChairmanO3. Mino Intini TreasurerO4. Daniel Butler

**05. Priya Cooper** 















06. Ros Elmes07. Robert Radley08. Gary McGrath09. Melissa Northcott10. Ken Nylander

Directors who resigned during 2017/18: Maria Mansour, Rob McDonald, Glenn Mitchell and Kellie Hasluck

## **Executive Team**

As at 30 June 2018











### **01. Darren Cutri**Acting Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer

**02. Maria Davison**Chief Operating Officer

**03. Tamsyn Howard** Chief People Officer

**04. Lorraine Gregoriadis**Chief Innovation and
Development Officer

## Organisational Structure

### **Chief Executive Officer**

Chief Operating Officer

Chief Financial Officer Chief People Officer Chief Innovation & Development Officer

Therapy and Health

Finance

Human Resources **Innovation Hub** 

Community Services Property and Fleet

Employee Relations Customer Engagement

Commercial Services

**Payroll** 

Occupational Health and Safety

Communications

Create Employment

Risk and Audit

Learning and Development

Marketing

Business Analysis Information and Communication Technologies

Industrial Relations Fundraising

Clinical Governance and Care 2479

total unique customers during 2017/18 **1.3**m

hours of supported accommodation provided

20.22%

year on year customer growth for 2017/18

386

staff members have been with us for more than 5 years 225

new employees joined us over the course of 2017/18 <15

workers compensation claims, 56% below the industry average

\$69.01m

total income earned during 2017/18

\$**57.33**m

grant funding received during 2017/18 \$21.85m

cash and cash equivalents on hand at the end of 2017/18







## Community Services

### **Shared Living**

Our Shared Living team provides a range of accommodation options for people living with disability including houses, community units, transitional accommodation and villas throughout the Perth metropolitan area.

Our staff provide support to customers to choose a compatible home and support them to live comfortably in their homes, achieve their goals and engage in day to day household tasks. We support people to engage in a variety of leisure, recreational and educational activities and support residents to connect with family, friends and the surrounding community. Over the last year, we welcomed nine new residents into homes across Perth. Searching for, finding and then moving into a new home is an extensive process and Ability Centre provides support every step of the way.

In readiness for the Quality and Safeguarding Framework that will be rolled out in WA in 2020, we participated in the Quality and Safeguarding project run by National Disability Services. Our Positive Practice consultant has focused on training and mentoring staff to embed positive support practices in the day to day support we provide, raise staff awareness and establish policy and processes for the elimination of restrictive practices.

Customers who live in the local government areas of Bassendean and Bayswater began to transition to the NDIS in July 2017. We supported 28 customers through the pre-planning and planning process to obtain their first NDIS plans and they are

now moving to their second NDIS plan with good outcomes. We will continue to support customers as their funding transitions to the NDIS with information sessions with our staff and the NDIS planners in each of our homes.

### **Bricks and Mortar Project**

In July 2017, Ability Centre received a grant from Perpetual's Impact Philanthropy Program for the Bricks and Mortar project.

The project aims to optimise the physical environments of a cluster of our accessible houses and encourage residents to engage with technology to increase their independence and create future social, financial and health benefits.



Under the guidance of Project Officer and Senior Occupational Therapist Fern Demeo, the project is producing fantastic benefits for the individuals involved. Customers are showing an increased confidence in moving around their homes and the community and using assistive technology devices to increase their independence.

Some of the key outcomes for the project to date have been the:

- Installation of accessible kitchens at Edale and Errina Road houses to enable residents to engage in household cooking.
- Introduction of safety pendants for customers to increase their safety and independence moving around the community and their homes.
- Introduction of assistive technology to enable voice activation of lights, the television and Netflix and the ability to independently access music and photos on iPads.
- Automation of doors to allow customers to open and close their own front doors without assistance.



### **Respite Care**

We provide families with a range of respite options to support children, teenagers and adults with disability.

Our services provide both customers and their families time to have a break, to meet people and often enable the person with a disability to continue to live in their own home.

Ability Centre has four purpose built residential respite homes located throughout Perth. This allows us to provide care for up to 40 children and 75 adults in overnight accommodation, in addition to inhome respite across the metropolitan area.

The key highlight for 2017/18 was opening Somers Street. This is a purpose built five bedroom home centrally located in Belmont for adults looking for a weekend retreat. Open from Friday to Sunday night, the house primarily caters to young adults living south of the river.

Looking ahead, our respite services will continue to expand, change and develop as customers transition to the NDIS. The team is currently looking at new innovative respite options which will provide recreation, leisure, social connection and therapy support while our customers are away from home.

### **Self-Directed Services**

Self-Directed Services supports customers in their daily life - wherever they need assistance.

A team of 20 works across Perth supporting our customers in the community or their home. This support includes personal care, housekeeping, attending appointments, and building relationships in the community. This important support service allows customers to remain independent and to realise their abilities.

This service has grown over the last financial year due to the increase in the number of NDIS customers. We are now providing services over shorter periods of time to a



Over the course of the next 12 months, a focus will be on assisting customers to self-direct their funding under the NDIS.

more diverse range of customers. The demand from new customers is for support to connect with the community, which is a shift away from personal care being the most requested service.

Over the course of the next 12 months, a focus will be on assisting customers to self-direct their funding under the NDIS. Work will also begin on reviewing workforce models and our processes to ensure we continue to provide a service that is in high demand.

### **Community Inclusion**

Community Inclusion provides customers with the opportunity to be active members of their community. During 2017-18 our customers grew by 9% across the metropolitan area.

Our customers range in age from 4 to 74 years of age and each one has a diverse range of interests. They participate in activities such as music therapy, after school programs, tertiary studies, playing sports, volunteer work, and vocational and special interest classes and join in community events.

Our Community Inclusion Art Program is very popular amongst our customers. This year, our customers participated in art classes held in the community, our hubs and at Midland TAFE. A number of

these customers have exhibited their art in exhibitions being held by their local shire or art organisations.

For customers who participated, the major benefit has been connecting with other artists in their community. Building these strong connections and friendships has increased their self-esteem and their wellbeing has improved.

In 2018-19 the art program will be expanded into the Bradford Views art room. The room will be open to local artists to use and engage with customers to learn and experiment with different art mediums.

We have been continuously improving our business processes to ensure higher levels of customer satisfaction and stronger outcomes. This year a strong focus has been placed on matching our customers to the right support person, whether this is an existing Ability Centre employee or someone recruited from the customer's own network. This will continue to be a focus as the majority of our customers transition to the NDIS during 2018-19.



### **Case Study**

## A new way of living



### **Bradford Views**

Bradford Views is leading the way in accommodation design for people with disability. Its four villas provide permanent and transitional housing for people with complex needs.

Bradford Views opened its doors to 20 permanent customers during December 2017 with the official opening by the Minister for Disability Services Hon. Stephen Dawson MLC, on 8 May 2018.

From the initial concept, Bradford Views has been designed for the people living there and their unique needs. The contemporary and welcoming environment has been designed to maximise the choice and control that our customers have in their day to day lives. Integrated technology and assistive technology, give customers in both the permanent and transition villa a new level of independence.

The Transition Villa at Bradford Views opened in May 2018, operating as a standalone service, the first of its kind for Ability Centre. It provides accommodation and support to people with both disability and acquired brain injuries.

Customers living in the unit receive support to build their independence and confidence through rehabilitation, life skills training and building social networks to help them move into their next home. We recognise each customer's requirements are unique and that some may stay at the unit for a few months, while others may stay for up to two years. The Transition Villa team is made up of nursing and allied health professionals and support staff that change in response to the needs of transitioning customers.

The unit provides a much needed service for the Western Australian community as there has been lack of dedicated facilities for people transitioning back into a home environment.

Anita picking chillies in the vegetable garden





## Therapy and Health

Our Therapy and Health team is renowned for providing excellent care for our customers and their families. This dedicated team of professionals works with customers of all ages to help them achieve their goals.

Our extensive metropolitan services are centred in three hubs – north, central and south. We also provide services in the Wheatbelt and lower South West regions of Western Australia with our teletherapy practice reaching across the State.

Throughout the year there has been a clear focus on preparing our customers for the NDIS roll out. The year ahead will be supported by the introduction of a new customer database and mobile technology for all staff to increase efficiency, transparency and accountability in service provision.

### South

This year our South team experienced significant growth in customer numbers and expanded the locations where we provide services mainly due to the roll out of new WA NDIS regions across Perth's southern suburbs. We were able to support adults who hadn't received therapy for many years or who had developed progressive conditions. This new growth area is directly linked to the changes in eligibility rules as part of the NDIS.

Extensive growth was also experienced with targeted, specialist services in Positive Behaviour Support (PBS). Our Senior Clinician in Positive Behaviour Support has led the development of this approach across the organisation which has benefited a range of customers with programs modified to meet their diverse needs.

The South team also expanded its service into the Mandurah and Murray regions. Next financial year, the team will be establishing a permanent office in Mandurah to expand our local services.

### **Central and East**

Over the last year, the Central and East teams have embedded new processes to support their customers who are transitioning to the NDIS. 213 customers moved to the NDIS which was an increase of 40 customers. We expect a further 75 customers to transition next year. There has also been growth in Disability Professional Services customers in non-NDIS areas.

The Central team also increased the range of group activities and intensive block therapies we offer due to customer demand. The main growth area has been in providing gross motor skills groups for school aged children. The groups aim to improve fitness, agility, balance and strength and help prepare for participation in community sports and bike riding.

New this year, our Food Explorers Group is receiving much support from our parents. This multisensory group exposes children to

### Our State wide teletherapy service provides therapy support through video conferencing wherever you live.

new foods in a safe and positive way. Their parents are also learning techniques to assist with shopping and food preparation.

A key focus for next financial year will be the launch of our Future Thinking project. This project is developing online resources to provide information for people with physical disabilities to enable them to lead a good life with positive outcomes across their lives. It is anticipated that the project will be launched in late 2018.

### **North**

Over the last year, our North team saw customer growth in the majority of its services. In particular, the number of customers receiving premium speech pathology through the Child Development Service contract, doubled. We now have three Speech Pathologists offering the service from our North Hub.

The North team has also experienced significant growth with Disability Professional Services customer numbers - an increase of almost 40 places - and an increase in referrals from Princess Margaret Hospital/ Perth Children's Hospital (PCH) especially during transition between the two hospitals. The relationship with PCH and King Edward Memorial Hospital is enhanced by our In Home Baby Support (IBIS) program with both organisations

working closely to ensure at risk babies and toddlers receive high quality, early intervention services.

In early 2018, we hosted an international customer from Sri-Lanka for an intensive therapy block. While in Australia, he accessed a range of specialist support services from Ability Centre including, CP Tech, water-based and land based physiotherapy sessions and input from our highly skilled Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists and Community Inclusion Workers.

### **Country**

The Country team has consolidated their presence in the South West and Wheatbelt regions with customer numbers steadily growing. During 2017-18, customers in the lower South West were part of the WA NDIS roll out and the NDIS was introduced in the inner Wheatbelt. Customers based in remote Western Australia are now also accessing specialist therapy and equipment services under their self-managed WA NDIS funding.

A key highlight for the Country team was the development of our State-wide teletherapy service. This service provides therapy support through videoconferencing wherever a customer lives in WA, as long as they can access an internet connection. Services currently being offered are speech pathology, occupational therapy and some physiotherapy.

The key focus areas for the next year will be establishing offices in Busselton and Bunbury to create greater brand awareness and provide a central clinic space for customers. We are also looking to develop an in-home respite program for the South West region.

### **Case Study**

## **Teletherapy** is a timesaver



### **Teletherapy Services**

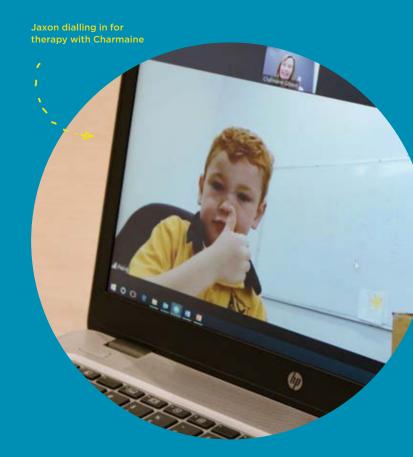
Teletherapy is a service we provide to customers in regional and remote Western Australia. A customer can access this service from any location as long as they have a computer or tablet with a camera and access to an internet connection.

Since the start of 2018, five year old Jaxon Smith from the Great Southern town of Jacup has been receiving weekly speech therapy sessions via teletherapy. Senior Speech Pathologist Charmaine runs the session from Perth linking in with Jaxon and his Education Assistant (EA) at his school in Jerramungup with his mum joining in from their home 30 kilometres away.

Jaxon's Mum Mel, said it has been excellent to have his speech therapy via teletherapy. "We no longer have travel two and half hours to Albany for his speech therapy, which is a long journey for a five year old. Jaxon's clarity has really improved since starting the sessions with Charmaine as well as his vocabulary."

Speech Pathologist Charmaine said, "from my perspective the positives for Jaxon have been the consistency of therapy sessions. We have seen some good progress. As we link up during term time with his EA, we have also explored strategies to use in the classroom with him every day. She has been a wonderful support with the follow up between sessions."

Ability Centre offers speech pathology, occupational therapy and some aspects of physiotherapy through our teletherapy service. This is a growth area for the organisation as it improves access to important services for customers so that more time can be spent on therapy rather than on travelling.









## Commercial Services

Our Commercial Services team was newly formed this year combining the established business units of Goodwill Engineering, CP Tech and Dreamfit.

The combined group delivers posture and mobility equipment, sleep advice and solutions, assistive technology and recreational equipment solutions to over 700 customers with complex needs. Goodwill Engineering provides supported employment to over 70 customers who manufacture construction hardware in the highly commercial environment of housing construction.

### **Equipment Services**

CP Tech delivers equipment that is essential for everyday living. Our customers begin by telling us – I must be able to move independently, I must be able to communicate with my world, I must be able to interact with my world. Dreamfit supports our customers with their recreational goals and life passions – I want to go to the beach, I want to ride a bike with my friends, I want to play lawn bowls, I want to play computer games with my friends.

While CP Tech and Dreamfit support very different customer goals, their philosophy is closely aligned - working with the customer to achieve their best possible outcome; focusing on an individual's abilities and working to find the best equipment solution.

The combined group delivers posture and mobility equipment, sleep advice and solutions, assistive technology and recreational equipment solutions to over 700 customers with complex needs.

11,387

hours of CP Tech therapy services delivered during 2017/18 Both CP Tech and Dreamfit work with commercially available products that sometimes need modification. Our in-house workshop delivers the technical skills to build, modify or create any equipment prescribed for a customer. Our workshop team can also deliver really out of the box thinking to design and build something unique.

Over the last year we have continued to develop wheelchair seating equipment contracts that will allow us to provide a faster service to customers. We also purchased over \$3 million of Community Aid and Equipment Program (CAEP) funded equipment on behalf of the Department of Communities to support people living with disabilities.

In April we launched a successful social media campaign across Western Australia to promote webinar style videos on correct wheelchair operation and preventative maintenance. The videos were funded by the Disability Services Commission and the posts were viewed by 33,836 people during the campaign.

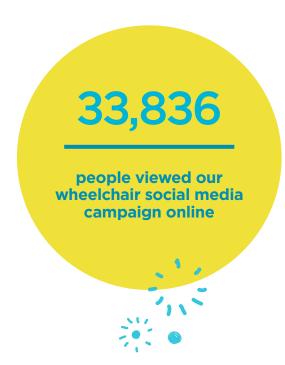
interest in our hire service. A current project to design a lawn bowling

In May we took part in the inaugural Perth Assistive Technology Suppliers Australasia (ATSA) Independent Living Expo which was a great opportunity to showcase our products and services to the broader community. We have continued to be the sole distributor for Wizzybug children's wheelchairs in Australia and New Zealand and sold eight to customers in the last year as well as experiencing continued strong

Our goal is to shorten the time taken to deliver a product that meets individual needs while supplying it as quickly as possible.

With Dreamfit we would like to be the supplier of choice for families who want everyday solutions to the question "what can we do as a family to engage in activities with other community members or groups?"

machine is a great example of an answer to this guestion. The specially designed equipment will allow our customer to be fully involved in this everyday sport. As the customer is restricted to a motorised wheelchair, the new equipment is operated using the wheelchair's steering equipment. The bowling machine allows the customer to vary the speed with which the ball is released and its direction all from the comfort of his wheelchair. Once trials are complete with this customer at his local bowling club, we will explore marketing the equipment to other people interested in pursuing this sport.



### **Case Study**

## Malachi switches on



### **Assistive Technology**

One of our youngest customers is three and half year old Malachi Carpenter who is impressing his family and his therapists with his ability to use assistive technology.

Diagnosed with Stage 4 quadriplegic plasticity cerebral palsy, Malachi has limited verbal speech and was starting to get frustrated that he couldn't do things like other children or access things like an iPad.

The initial solution was a switch on his wheelchair at head height so he can use his head to activate different devices.

Occupational Therapist Maria helped Malachi to start using the switch by playing an electronic game. He quickly got the hang of it and the next step was teaching him to stop, wait and see and press the switch at the right time for more control. This control will help him target what he wants to say using a communication device in the future. The team is already working on an eye gaze trial to give Malachi quicker access to technology in the future.

His Speech Pathologist Jade has also been involved in the process and she is delighted with Malachi's ability to adapt and learn with the switch technology. She believes that Malachi is going to be a total communicator by using all sorts of different strategies and methods that assistive technology can unlock for him. This will give Malachi autonomy in his life and the ability to participate fully in his community.



### **Goodwill Engineering**

Goodwill Engineering (GWE) provides supported employment opportunities for 71 people living with disability. Within a commercial and industrial workplace, we provide general and bespoke training for our supported employees so they can achieve their career goals.

GWE has been operating for over 50 years as a metal fabrication workshop and our customer portfolio includes organisations such as Bunnings, BGC, Pioneer Water Tanks and Western Australian Police Force.

Our product range includes building hardware, dominated by wire brick ties for the domestic new home building market. With the homebuilding industry declining in the past few years, we are looking to increase our product range and find new markets. Our fabrication business is diversified with products such as steel ladders and gun cabinets for WA Police and the court house.

We have 75 identified tasks in our workshop that can be carried out by people with a disability. Each employee has the opportunity to learn as many or as few of the tasks as they choose. Our aim is to explore ways to upskill our employees that maximise their job satisfaction and career progression. More than 48% of our current employees have worked with us for more than 10 years and 24% have more than 20 years' service.

GWE has a range of job roles available including machine operation, welding, product assembly, packaging and logistics. Employees have the opportunity to work on a variety of tasks throughout each day so they remain focused, happy and productive. There is also a weekly rotating roster to ensure people have the opportunity to perform a variety of tasks during the week.

This year three supported employees achieved E Level classification, the highest skill/pay level, which has never been achieved before. We also had a supported employee move to general employment with the support of our team at Create Employment.





We have a number of committees to ensure our supported employees have a say on how their workplace runs as well as helping them build their social and organisational skills.

### Our supported employees

GWE is more than a place to come to work - it is a community. Our employees view themselves as being part of one big family and many have been with us for most of their working lives. It was an incredible milestone for everyone when we celebrated 50 years' service for Wayne Hurman this year. We were also delighted when Ryan Harding became the first GWE employee to receive a recognition award at the annual WA Disability Enterprises Awards from the Minister for Disability Services Hon. Stephen Dawson MI C.

We have a number of committees to ensure our supported employees have a say on how their workplace runs as well as helping them build their social and organisational skills. This was the first year that the committees were solely run by our supported employees. All supported employees have the opportunity to provide suggestions and feedback and it is the committee members' responsibility to feed these back at their workplace meetings.

Safety is something we take seriously and all supported employees undertake regular training to recognise the risks of working within the factory and are able to identify potential hazards and assist with eliminating those risks. The Safety Representatives and the Safety Committee are very proactive in problem solving.

The Social Committee plans all the social activities for the year. The Dinner Dance is the highlight of the social calendar for our supported employees and their families and carers and the dance floor is always full!

Our supported employees love coming to work, they are always smiling and energetic, happy to move to another machine and nothing is ever a problem. This energy is so welcoming, inspiring and uplifting.

### Looking ahead

The introduction of NDIS brings a great opportunity to expand the number of supported employment positions we can offer.

This means we can look at expanding our current hardware range and begin to produce new metal fabrication products. Increasing our product range will ensure stability in commercial revenue when the housing industry goes through its normal peaks and troughs.



### **Case Study**

## More than just a job



### **Supported Employment**

Ross Lester is a shining example of the positive difference being part of the Goodwill Engineering community can make in people's lives. Ross has been employed for 31 years and has steadily built his work and social skills to the point we can't imagine the place without him.

Over three decades there are few tasks at Goodwill Engineering that Ross hasn't conquered. He has worked in stores and the welding bay and is very knowledgeable in our press area as well as the wire machines and packaging process. He can also work on the reach trucks and moving equipment.

Recently, Ross achieved our E Task level by overseeing and assisting set ups for other employees ensuring that the product is readily available for his work colleagues. This work level also requires undertaking product quality control and weighing packages to ensure the correct boxes are going to the relevant stores.

But it is not just his work skills that make Ross a great team member - he is a great friend to everyone that crosses his path. Over the years, Ross has been a great mentor to our work experience students as well as our younger/newer employees by providing guidance, advice or assistance when needed.

Ross is always keen to assist in problem solving and has been appointed on many occasions throughout his career on several of the employee committees to provide valuable insight into tasks within the factory.

This has included assisting with quality audits for our service standards which have resulted in a number of improvements to our service delivery. Ross has a vast knowledge of Goodwill Engineering and a great work ethic and his thoughts and opinions are always valued.

Ross is a valued member of our community. He is flexible, always willing to lend a hand and to share his experience as someone employed and aging with a disability.





## **Create Employment**

For more than 25 years, Create
Employment has been supporting
Western Australians with a disability,
a health condition or injury to find
and keep a rewarding job.

As an accredited Disability Employment Service (DES) provider, this small team continues to punch above its weight in the disability employment sector and their success has continuously translated into an increased share of the Perth market.

In the last year services have extended to job seekers in Joondalup, Mirrabooka and Yanchep and over 50 people were placed into various jobs. Overall 73% of these people achieved one of the most significant milestones in the DES program and reached 26 weeks in employment and beyond. This is a key measure of success for the service internally and externally.

The DES program measures how effective providers are at successfully placing people into employment through a DES star rating system. Create Employment ended its strong performance for the year and the 2010 contract on a high. It achieved a 4 star rating for all sites and a 5 star rating for its Currambine site. This meant that Create Employment concluded the financial year performing 40% above the national average.

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From 1 July 2018 the sector will be deregulated and all providers returned to a zero base Star Rating. Despite its small size, Create Employment has retained its business and secured additional business in the East Metro Area and Dale. New offices will be opening in Canning Vale and Mandurah respectively.

The deregulated market also means that Create Employment will no longer be guaranteed business by receiving job seeker referrals from Centrelink. A key feature of the new DES model is that it is more aligned with the NDIS model and offers jobseekers more choice about who their provider is. From 1 July 2018, Create Employment will need to proactively attract jobseekers to its service.

In preparation for the new operating environment, the team commissioned some independent research to review key competitors, and better understand its business strengths and opportunities for increasing brand awareness. A key outcome of this review was the dominance of Ability Centre as a brand compared to Create Employment which will see the team fully integrate under the Ability Centre brand from 1 July 2018.

Looking ahead, the team will have increased capacity to find job placements across more locations. A brand refresh and a new marketing approach will be vital in the deregulated market. As the only disability not for profit organisation operating in Perth, we will continue to match job seekers and employers to ensure meaningful work placements.

## **Case Study**

# Nick finds job success



### **Employment Placement**

One of our long term customers Nick Doyle, is a great example of the breadth of support Ability Centre offers.

Nick has received services from Ability Centre since childhood and when he needed to find meaningful employment it was time to introduce him to Create Employment.

Create Employment provides support to people with a disability, health condition or injury to find and keep a rewarding job. Nick began working with Create Employment in 2014. His goal when first meeting with Amy, his employment coordinator was to work in the warehousing industry and have health and safety be a key part of his role.

Amy has helped Nick find the right job and team to fit his skills. Nick wanted to be in a supportive team environment, to be able to work on a forklift and have a job for life. In 2017, Amy was able to support Nick to find a permanent job at Ward Packaging.

Nick loves his job. The support he receives from both Amy and the team at Ward Packaging have meant that his job fits his goal. Nick now works on the forklift, helps as a safety coordinator and with other general tasks around the warehouse.

To makes sure that Nick was set up for success, Create Employment has provided him with special tools and equipment to help him achieve his day to day work tasks.

Rob, General Manager at Ward Packaging said that Nick has made a positive impact to their team and has really gelled. "I would recommend hiring people with disability, it's really straightforward and the team from Ability Centre are terrific to work with."





## Research and Development

Ability Centre has a well-recognised Research and Development Program. Our dedicated team of clinicians and scientists investigate ways of improving the quality of life for people living with disability and their families.

The team has a rigorous quality review process, involving research, consumer, and clinical input. Our strong partnerships with Perth Children's Hospital, Telethon Kids Institute and Australian universities ensure we deliver the best results and are able to implement research findings into our services to ensure the best support for our customers. The research we undertake covers a range of areas that affect the lives of our customers.

## **Respiratory health**

Respiratory disease is a major cause of hospital admissions and premature death in young people with cerebral palsy (CP).

In 2011-12, a research team from Ability Centre, Perth Children's Hospital and Telethon Kids Institute surveyed 551 young people with CP (aged 1 to 26 years) and their parents about their respiratory health. After that, we tracked their hospital admissions for three years. This enabled us to identify risk factors for subsequent respiratory hospital admissions in children and young people with CP. We published our results this year<sup>1</sup>.

This project led to the creation of an online interactive respiratory checklist to help young people with CP and their families identify the early warning signs of respiratory disease. Go to abilitycentre.com.au/resources/cp-checklist/ to access the free checklist. The research and checklist were made possible by Health Networks Funding and Non-Government Centre Support.

Now that we know which young people with CP are at risk of respiratory disease, we want to intervene in order to prevent and manage this problem.

This year, we received a grant from the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Research Foundation to systematically review all of the published literature on prevention and management of respiratory disease in children with CP and to seek expert input from around the world to determine the best ways to manage respiratory disease in children with CP.

### **Exercise apps**

Ability Centre therapists regularly prescribe home-based exercises for children with physical disabilities. These exercises are important for keeping children's muscles from getting sore and tight, increasing strength and improving motor skills, endurance, and sports skills.

Exercise apps are designed to help users to persist with their exercise programs. In 2015, Ability Centre received funding from Non-Government Centre Support to evaluate an online, app-based exercise prescription package called Physitrack.

Rowan Johnson is leading the project, and is enrolled in a Masters degree at Curtin University. The team published their research protocol this year<sup>2</sup>, and they are currently analysing their results, which will be reported in the coming year.

The first study gave some useful pointers about exercises apps for children with physical disabilities. This year, the team received a second grant from Non-Government Centre Support for development and evaluation of an app to meet the needs of school-aged children with disabilities.

## Running in children with cerebral palsy

Xcelerate is a running program designed specifically for children with CP. The original program was developed by Dr Gavin Williams from Epworth HealthCare for adults with Acquired Brain Injury. With Gavin's help, it was adapted by Dr Noula Gibson for children with CP. It has been further developed by Annie Chappell, who is undertaking a PhD at Curtin University. The initial funding for this project was provided by Non-Government Centre Support to set up this program in 2014.

In order to develop this program, the project team looked at published evidence about how children with cerebral palsy run. This year, their systematic review was published<sup>3</sup>, it concluded that the ability to run is likely to contribute positively to physical activity levels, general health and participation. It found limited evidence about what limits running ability in these children.

This has led the project team to the next phase of their research program. Using 3-dimensional gait analysis, they are investigating the kinds of changes that occur in children with CP who participate in Ability Centre's Xcelerate running program.

This year, the team received a second grant from Non-Government Centre Support for development and evaluation of an exercise app to meet the needs of schoolaged children with disabilities.

- Blackmore et al. (2018). Predicting respiratory hospital admissions in young people with cerebral palsy. Archives of Disease in Childhood. Mar 19. [Epub ahead of print].
- Johnson et al. (2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of home exercise programmes using an online exercise prescription tool in children with cerebral palsy: protocol for a randomised controlled trial. BMJ Open, 8(1):e018316.
- 3. Chappell et al. (2018). Running in people with cerebral palsy: A systematic review. *Physiotherapy Theory and Practice, Feb 6 1-16.* [Epub ahead of print].

\$270,840

of research funding grants were received during 2017/18

## **Case Study**

# Kids are kicking goals



### **Starkick Program**

Children with disabilities are more restricted in their sports participation, have lower levels of fitness and higher levels of obesity than their peers without disabilities. To encourage physically active lifestyles, children need to be exposed to a broad variety of physical activity and sports during early childhood to increase the chance of finding activities the child enjoys. A significant barrier to doing this is a lack of suitably supported sports activities for children with disabilities.

Starkick is an all abilities football program founded and launched by the Coolbinia Bombers Junior Football Club in 2015. The Starkick program welcomes boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 12 years of all physical and cognitive abilities. The program promotes inclusion, equality and opportunity and runs as an integral part of the club's Auskick Centre.

In 2016, Rob Geersen from Coolbinia Bombers Junior Football Club approached Ability Centre to ask if we would help evaluate the benefits of Starkick and ways it could be improved.

Dr Noula Gibson teamed up with Dr Sian Williams and Dr Lynn Jensen from Curtin University to meet this challenge. During the 2016 and 2017 football seasons, they assessed physical and psychosocial outcomes from children participating in Starkick.

At the end of the season most of the children showed improvements in at least one physical aspect assessed. There was a high level of satisfaction with the program and how it was delivered. It also enabled the children to participate more in the lives of their families and communities. Their parents also identified Starkick as a means for forming friendships, developing a sense of belonging and improving behavioural and social aspects of disability. The research team developed a coach's resource, which has been presented to the Australian Football Commission Inclusion All Abilities Manager. The project was funded by Non-Government Centre Support.

Starkick participant Orlena and her mum Stephanie





## Innovation Hub

## **Setting up for success with NDIS**

Our journey to adjust and transition our operations for continued success under the NDIS dominated our strategic thinking this year. We welcomed the certainty that came with the announcement in December 2017 that Western Australia would join the national scheme and this decision allowed us to sharpen our focus on how best to service our current and prospective customers.

With such a fundamental change to our funding structure, the Innovation Hub has continued to develop our new customer engagement model. It has been trialled and refined with customers in the eastern suburbs of Perth and we are well placed for a roll out across all our customers as they join the NDIS.

To ensure we can support customers achieve their goals and maintain our financial sustainability, we are implementing a model with centralised customer administration that ensures our therapists maximise their therapy time with customers.

A 'one stop shop' approach for customer support will ensure customers are not dealing with different staff members and repeating information, data is consistently recorded and dedicated coordinators will have an overview of all services we are providing. Central to this will be the implementation of a new Customer Management System in March 2019.

With such a fundamental change to our funding structure, the Innovation Hub has continued to develop our new customer engagement model.

28

of our Shared Living customers gained their second NDIS plan

Until the NDIS roll out is complete in 2020, we will continue to support customers from a range of funding models. This presents operational challenges as we manage multiple systems and funding requirements. As at 30 June 2018, 25% of Ability Centre customers had NDIS or WA NDIS plans. A continued focus for the year ahead will be the provision of information and support to assist our customers to make the most of their new NDIS plans.

The NDIS is the biggest social reform of our time and it presents opportunities and challenges for all in the disability sector. We continue to work with industry colleagues through Ability First Australia to influence how we can streamline and innovate for our customers and the broader community. We also believe we have an important role to play in continuing a dialogue with state and federal governments as an advocate for people living with disability in WA.

Our Customer Experience Team is the first point of contact for our customers and they provide a consistent approach ensuring people are connected with the right person to assist them.



### **Customer experience**

Our customers are at the heart of all we do. Our Customer Experience division is dedicated to ensuring we are easy to contact and that we provide great customer service.

Our Customer Experience Team is the first point of contact for our customers and they provide a consistent approach ensuring people are connected with the right person to assist them. During 2017-18, there were over 28,416 interactions with customers, in person, over the phone and by email.

The team also connects customers who have a new NDIS plan to an Engagement Coordinator, who works with them to set up their plan and activate their supports and services. Each coordinator is committed to providing our customers and their families with the support they need to navigate the NDIS.

During 2017-18, our coordinators engaged with more than 270 customers who were moving to the NDIS. This number is expected to increase during 2018-19 as the NDIS roll out continues across WA.

A feature of the NDIS is a coordinated approach to planning for customers who access supported independent living. This year, our Customer Engagement and Community Services teams supported 28 of our Shared Living customers to gain their second NDIS plan. For some of these customers, the new NDIS Supported Independent Living quoting process was used. This government initiative ensures that our customers receive individual funding to be supported in their home, build their capacity and increase their life skills. During 2018-19 a further 102 supported independent living customers will transition to the NDIS and we will use the learnings gained this year to provide a seamless transition.

Our Customer Engagement Coordinators also supported 13 customers to apply for a reviewable decision. This is when a customer asks the National Disability Insurance Agency to review their plan within the first three months of it being allocated. Each customer had a positive outcome with changes to their plan being made to include increased supports or funding.

The coordinators also successfully supported eight customers to apply for a change in circumstances review due to a significant change in their support needs. The applications resulted in an early plan review and an increase to their supports and/or funding.

Looking ahead to 2018/2019, our Customer Engagement Coordinators will be supporting our customers to transition to the NDIS. We will focus on continuous improvement of our business processes to ensure that our customers have a first class customer service experience.





## People and Culture

## It was another busy year for our Human Resources team making sure we had the right people, in the right place at the right time.

We had an increased focus on our recruitment approach and providing our leaders with the tools they need to support our frontline staff, which translates into improved customer service.

As with all other parts of our organisation, preparing for the leaner NDIS environment has been central to our work over the last year. Positioning Ability Centre for growth has meant a comprehensive review of our systems and processes with a number of key initiatives due for implementation in 2018/19. We were also pleased to continue to represent Ability Centre on the National Disability Services' Workforce Sub Committee as it looks at how to ensure the industry can harness the people resources needed for this once in a generation change to providing disability services.

### Recruitment

We have changed our recruitment approach with more emphasis on personal fit for our organisation and our customers. We introduced a new suite of tools that provide more understanding of each role for candidates as part of our recruitment discussions. Use of case studies and 'a day in the life' descriptions are proving very beneficial.

### **Learning and Development**

Our commitment to better supporting and upskilling employees was also a theme this year and work is well underway to introduce a new Learning Management System which will see us embrace e-learning. With a geographically dispersed workforce this is a vital step and will complement the new mobile technology being adopted across the organisation as part of the Customer Management System Project.

### **Occupational Health and Safety**

Our occupational health and safety record continued to improve with a 40% increase in employees reporting hazards compared to last year. We benchmark favourably to industry standards and will continue to strive for excellence in our employees' safety.

## **Employee Enterprise Agreements**

The second half of the year saw the beginning of enterprise bargaining for three Agreements - Ability Centre Therapy, Professional and Administrative Employees Enterprise Agreement (HSU) 2018; Care, Support & Trade Employees Enterprise Agreement (UV) 2018 and the Ability Centre Nursing Employees Enterprise Agreement (ANMF) 2018. Our strong union relationships are underpinning very positive discussions and progress for each Agreement. This has also been an opportunity to update language and terminology for a modern diverse workforce and ensure staggered timing for future negotiations.

Our Employee Pulse Survey was a key achievement this year with 48% of our workforce completing the online survey.

## **Employee Pulse Survey**

Our Employee Pulse Survey was a key achievement this year with 48% of our workforce completing the online survey and the results were very encouraging. We have a dedicated workforce who are committed to improving how we do things, want to make a difference in the lives of people with disability and feel valued by their immediate supervisor. Our employees told us they would like to know more about our values and strategic roadmap and hear more frequently from our senior leaders.

The pulse survey was the first in recent history and will be followed up in late 2018 with a more comprehensive employee cultural survey.

Looking ahead, we are committed to ensuring we have the best possible workplace culture and the roll out of our new values from July 2018 as well as building on our employee survey results will be key to achieving this.







## Philanthropy and Fundraising

## Philanthropy and fundraising are seen as key growth areas as funding for disability services and supports moves to the NDIS.

In August 2017, we engaged an external organisation to help develop our fundraising strategy. Since then our newly appointed Philanthropy Manager, has been undertaking surveys and actively reaching out to donors to better understand what motivates them to support our organisation and how we can recognise their contribution.

Our quarterly mail appeals and individual giving make up more than 40% of all income received by fundraising, and continue to be vital to our strategy. A key focus for the next year will be to evolve how we engage with our individual donors.

A number of community groups donate to Ability Centre on an annual basis and have done for many years. Point Walter Ladies' Golf Club have been donating the proceeds of their fundraising events to provide equipment for Ability Centre customers for over twenty years. This year they generously donated \$7,500.

The Old Rams Muster has donated proceeds from their annual charity lunch to Ability Centre since its inaugural lunch in 2001. In October 2017 they raised over \$6,000 which was used to fund physiotherapy equipment for our Bradford Views residents.

A key focus for the next year will be to evolve how we engage with our individual donors.

infants and toddlers have benefited from IBIS since its inception

### **Telethon Grant**

Our In Home Baby Intervention Service (IBIS) continues thanks to funding through Telethon. This specialised program is designed for babies considered at risk of neurodevelopmental conditions up to the age of 24 months and is currently funded through to 1 July 2019.

IBIS was initially piloted in our North Hub for 12 months. Due to the success of the program additional funding has been received through Telethon. This funding is being allocated to an expansion into the South metropolitan region and to set up an equipment loan library for families.

Since its inception, 56 infants and toddlers have received this service, with nearly a third of children discharged from the program no longer requiring therapy input. The remaining children who have completed the program have been supported to transfer into disability services.



### **Toybox**

Toybox International has been putting smiles on Ability Centre customers' faces for more than a decade.

Receiving your first bike as a child is a huge milestone and for a child with disability, the freedom gained from hopping on a bike or trike cannot be underestimated. It provides them with freedom to be out with family and friends and become more active in their community.

Over the last year, Toybox International has funded 13 bikes/trikes for our customers, fulfilling their mission to light up the faces of Australia's sick and disadvantaged children.

### **City of Joondalup**

The Drum Beat Program is a therapeutic drumming group that has been adapted to suit the needs of children with intellectual and physical disabilities. This year, we received a City of Joondalup grant to be able to run this program four times per year, for up to 40 children, primarily with autism. It's a positive way of giving them strategies to manage impulsivity, social skills, communication skills, attention and isolation. When the children attend the group, they immediately benefit from improved self-esteem and a strong sense of belonging.

### **Annual Charity Golf Day**

The Annual Charity Golf Day was started in 1987 by one of our long-time supporters Fred Margaria and continues to be our major fundraising event. Every year, Perth's corporate community has come together in support of children and adults living with disability.

Last year, the day raised \$36,000 with all profits going towards helping Ability Centre provide vital services to almost 2000 children, adults and their families throughout Western Australia.

### **Community support**

We would also like to acknowledge the following community groups for their generous support in 2017/2018:

- Combined Charities Association
- Cottesloe Golf Club Bridge Group
- Mercedes College
- Nedlands Golf Club
- Peninsula Golf Club Inc.
- · Point Walter Ladies' Golf Club
- Presbyterian Ladies' College
- Quadrant Energy
- The Old Rams Muster
- WA Police Intelligence Services
- Water Corporation

Our thanks also go to the individuals who raised funds through a variety of events including HBF Run for a Reason and the Clty to Surf Fun Run.

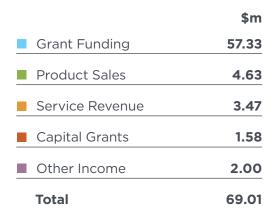
**72** 

players participated in last year's Annual Charity Golf Day



## Financial Summary







	\$m
■ Employee Expenses	54.98
Depreciation	
and Amortisation	2.41
Costs of Goods Sold/	
Sponsored Equipment	5.29
■ Supplies, Occupancy	
and Maintenance	3.69
■ General and	
Admin Expenses	1.62
Other Expenses	2.85
·	70.04
Total	70.84







	\$m
Trade Payables	1.58
Deferred Income	10.19
Employee Benefits	10.55
Other Liabilities	3.63
Total	25.95







## **Ability Centre Australasia**

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