



# ANNUAL REPORT



FOR THE YEAR JULY 2017 TO JUNE 2018



## About This Report

Welcome to the Distinctive Options 2018 Annual Report. This report uses financial and non-financial information about our organisation's services, operations, highlights and performance on objectives for the 2017-2018 financial year. It documents information about our goals for the future and how we seek to achieve these.

## Audience

This report is targeted to the following stakeholders: participants, their families and supporters, federal and state government partners, our local communities and services, and the Distinctive Options staff members who deliver our services.

## Accessibility

This document has been created on InDesign and optimised for screen readers and other assistive devices used by persons with disabilities. This document includes consistent paragraph styles, anchored images, alternative text for images, established content orders and metadata. This publication is available in alternative formats on request.

## Feedback

We welcome your feedback on this report. Please email [info@d-o.com.au](mailto:info@d-o.com.au) or contact us on 03 9740 7100.

## Locations

After School Care Melton 159-211 Coburns Road, Melton	After School Care Sunbury 127-143 Circular Drive, Sunbury
Community Connect Bendigo House 1 125 Wills Street, Bendigo	Community Connect Bendigo House 2 12 Maple Street, Golden Square
Community Connect Kyneton 11 Jennings Street, Kyneton	Community Connect St Albans 12 Lester Avenue, St Albans
Community Connect Sunbury 12b Horne Street, Sunbury	Individual Supports Outreach (regional) c/o Head Office, 12/36 Macedon Street, Sunbury
Group Supports Lifestyles 1 24 Macedon Street, Sunbury	Group Supports & Head Office Lifestyles 2 12/36 Macedon Street, Sunbury

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# Our Organisation

## Who We Are

Distinctive Options is a not for profit charitable organisation that provides support for children and adults with a disability. Participants can access services of their choice, including group and individual support. Distinctive Options employs 157 people and is assisted by eight volunteers throughout the year. Turnover is more than \$5.5 million a year. Distinctive Options is a company limited by guarantee.

## Our Stakeholders

Our stakeholders are:

- Our participants and their supporters
- Our staff
- Our volunteers, including our Board members
- The communities we serve
- Government regulators and funders
- Our informal partners
- Our suppliers

## Our Vision

It is our vision that people who access our services are supported and empowered to fulfill their potential, gain equality in the community and enjoy quality of life outcomes comparable to broad community expectations.

## Our Mission

To give weight to the vision of empowerment and equality, it is the mission of Distinctive Options to provide real life choices for the people we support, their families and significant others in the community.

## Our Values

### People

Respecting diversity, knowledge and wellbeing

### Human Rights

Ensuring participants' human rights are understood and respected

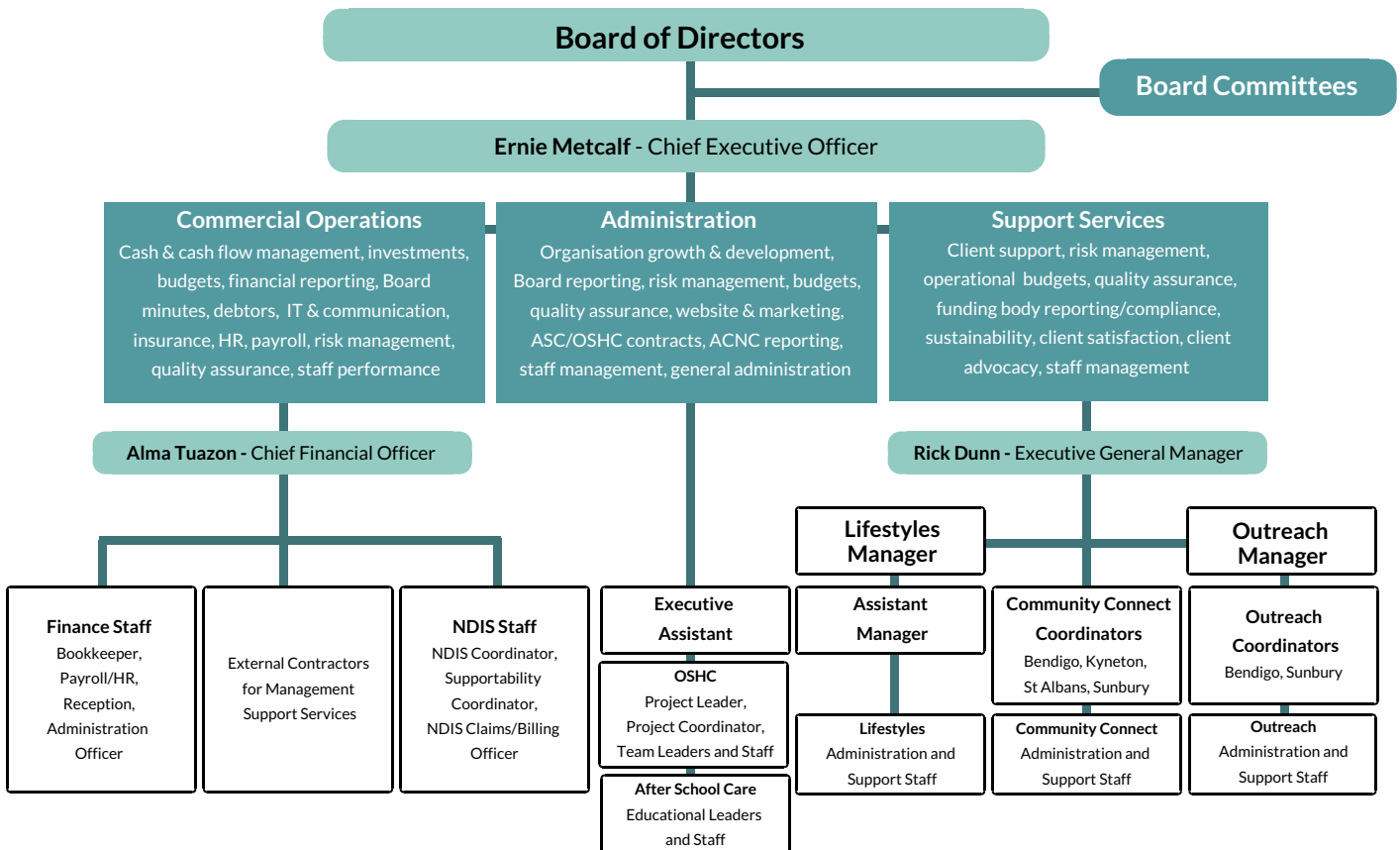
### Collaboration

Achieving more by working together

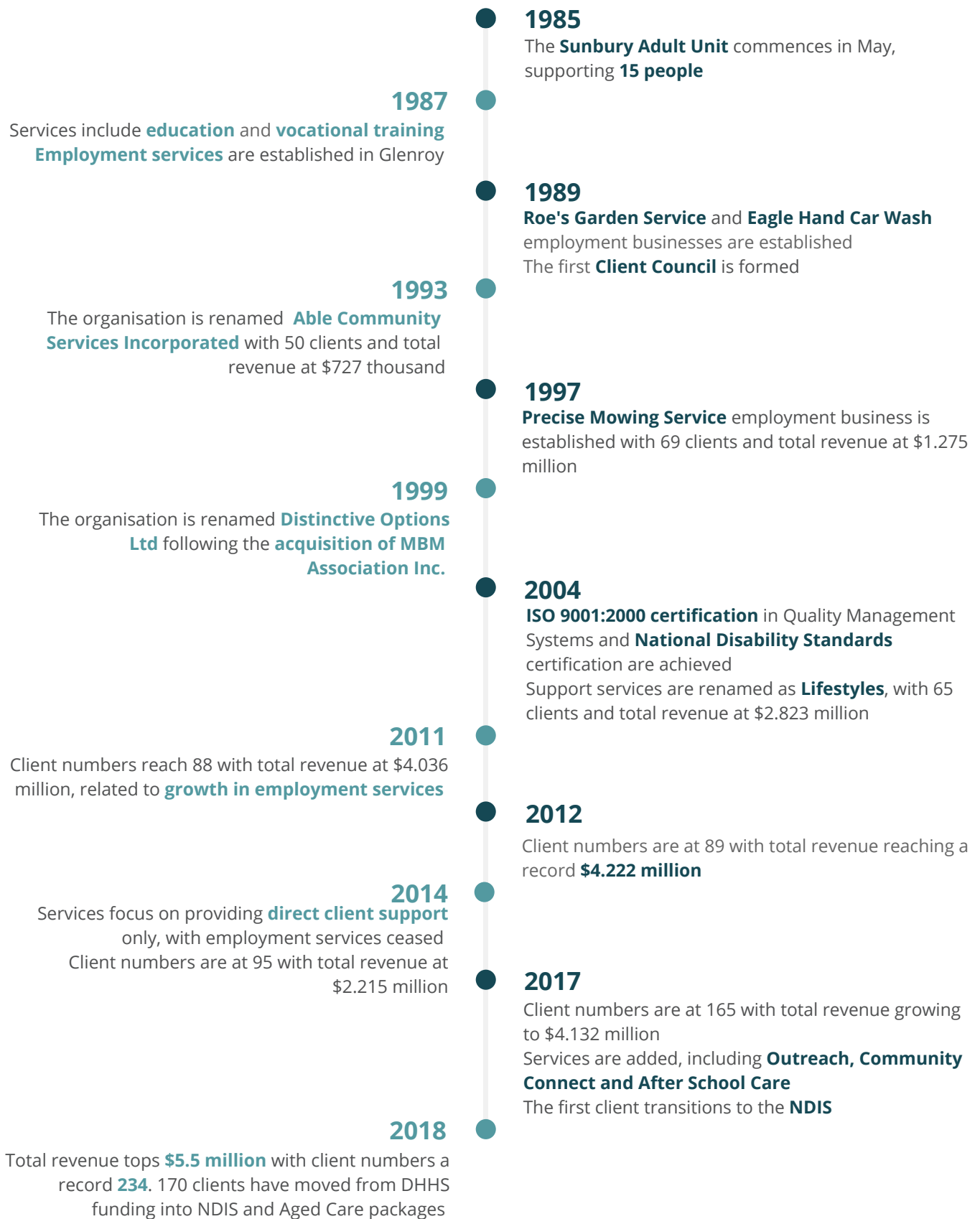
### Excellence

Being the best we can be

## Organisation Chart



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF DISTINCTIVE OPTIONS



# Feedback

Collecting and acting on feedback is extremely important to us at Distinctive Options. We believe that all types of feedback are valuable and should be used to continuously improve our organisation and each of the services that we provide. Some of the ways people can provide feedback include:

- The Participant Feedback Form that is provided to all participants when they begin at Distinctive Options and is regularly used on Program Review Days throughout the year
- Annual participant surveys and family/carer surveys and evaluations
- Annual staff surveys and evaluations
- Via email to [info@d-o.com.au](mailto:info@d-o.com.au)
- Via our Facebook page
- When visiting any of our services or chatting with our staff

## Compliments

During the previous 12 months, the management team implemented a Compliments Register in which positive feedback from participants, their families, staff and other services and individuals could be recorded and celebrated. Some of these compliments are shared below:

- “There is nothing out there like (the After School Care program). I wouldn’t put my child anywhere else. I can now go back to work.”
- “The kids had so much fun during their Outreach shift.”
- “Thank you (to Outreach) for your patience and professionalism.”
- “My child has blossomed since joining Bendigo Community Connect.”
- “Love the idea of a staff newsletter – thank you for putting it together.”
- “Thank you for the quality of support and advocacy (Lifestyles) is providing to my son.”
- “(My daughter) is very happy at Community Connect. I told the NDIS at her annual review that we are not interested in any other service.”
- “Your generosity and flexibility in delivery of services to (my Support Coordination client) is noted and highly appreciated.”
- “(My daughter) is very happy and other people have commented on how far she’s come. She enjoys being part of the choice making and having a say at Community Connect.”
- “(The After School Care program) is great and the staff are doing wonders.”
- “The regular communication regarding (my son) is excellent and I am impressed by the rapport you have developed with him (in Outreach and at Community Connect).”
- “I really find the attitude of all staff at Distinctive Options to be supportive, practical and very agreeable!”
- “I want to say that Distinctive Options is on the right track with the staff you are employing and supporting – thank you.”
- “Thank you for all of your support with our NDIS transition.”
- “What fabulous staff – caring, kind and patient. We really appreciate all the efforts to make our son comfortable and happy (at After School Care).”
- “My son comes home happy and talking about his day at Distinctive Options. We are very happy with his progress (at Kyneton Community Connect).”



# Message From The Chairperson

This year was my third consecutive year as Chair Person of Distinctive Options. I continue to be humbled and inspired by the people that make up our wonderful organisation.

My Directors and I continue to remain passionate and focused on our Mission to 'provide real life choices for the people we support, their families and significant others in the community'.

I want to thank our participants and their supporters that choose to be part of Distinctive Options. I also want to acknowledge the passion and dedication of our staff, management and Board.

We welcomed three new Directors to Distinctive Options throughout 2018 – Nancy Peat, Simon McKenzie and Graham Holt. Our new Directors have already made a positive impact to our organisation in the short time they have been on the Board. We also welcomed a new Chief Financial Officer. Alma Tuazon is highly credentialed and brings the financial experience we need in the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) environment.

This was a challenging year as we moved to the NDIS. As an organisation, we have made the relevant commercial and operational decisions and changes to ensure our organisation continues to strengthen and that we deliver on our Vision and Mission.

The key challenges we have addressed include:

- A new focus on cash flows and the way we transact under a new payment scheme.
- Restructured the organisation to ensure we become more commercially focused.
- Expanded the skills of the Board through the recruitment of three new Directors.
- Introduced a new Chief Financial Officer to improve our financial acumen.
- Improved internal controls to ensure good governance across financial and payroll systems and processes.
- Worked closely with our External Audit partners to ensure we continue to improve our standards.

While we have achieved many highlights, I would like to acknowledge the following:

- Increased revenue to \$5.5 million and reached record participant numbers.
- Improved financial performance in the current financial year, indicating the changes made within the organisation are paying dividend.
- Secured a new contract with the Department of Education and Training to deliver programs in Bendigo and St Albans.

I look forward to the year ahead and feel confident that our organisation is on a strong path to deliver on our strategy in an efficient and commercially focused way.

**Anthony Aboud - Chairperson**





# Message From The CEO

A CEO of a large commercial business stated: *Commercial enterprise is such an integral part of modern life that to consider them separately is to miss the point, which is that businesses exist not only for their shareholders, but also for the societies in which they operate. It follows then that businesses have to be involved in society and culture not just through a sense of duty, but also because by investing in society they invest in their own people.\**

The relevance of this is not lost on disability sector providers. The NDIS has forced traditional not-for-profit, community service organisations to adopt commercial business approaches in the new NDIS environment. Whilst this is not a bad change for the sector, it can be confronting for some people, including families or carers. The sector has to change to meet cash flow challenges imposed by the NDIS and its restrictions on unit prices. Not-for-profit organisations like Distinctive Options have not lost their focus on the communities they serve, but have had to adopt commercial practices to remain viable and sustainable to continue delivering quality disability support services.

The 2017/18 year not only confronted changes imposed by the NDIS, it also brought a number of internal challenges. In part, the financial reports indicate some of the challenges the organisation faced which resulted in a loss and a reduction in our cash reserves.

Most of the issues affecting cash reserves were from a management team level, with the financial pressures of the transition to the NDIS bringing home the need to focus on budgeting and business cases when making planning decisions. With the support of the Board, these issues have been addressed to ensure there is no further erosion of cash assets. Whilst the financial results are a harsh wakeup call for all involved, it has been a valuable lesson for the organisation about how quickly finances can be eroded without an appreciation of commercial management.

Some of the changes required this year included a management restructure as well as bringing in new key staff for our more commercial operational needs. These new staff included an experienced bookkeeper and a new NDIS billing staff member who work closely with our NDIS Coordinator. None of these new roles are funded through the NDIS but they are crucial to our cash flow. The restructure also meant that in September 2018 Distinctive Options employed a full time Chief Financial Officer, Alma Tuazon.

Alma will play a pivotal role in ensuring all our operational teams remain on track and on budget.

Talking to other CEOs from the sector confirms similar changes are being made in their organisations. As one local CEO commented: "...this has been the toughest six months I've ever had in the industry".

The current financial year is showing that commercial changes made are starting to pay dividends and the organisation is moving forward whilst participants continue to roll out into the NDIS.

Late in 2017/18, Distinctive Options secured a new short term contract with the Department of Education and Training to deliver Outside School Hours Care demonstration programs at Kalianna School in Bendigo and Jackson School in St Albans. Should the contract continue to be ongoing, these programs will provide a new substantial income stream for the organisation.

In closing, I thank the Board for their confidence and support. To my developing team, thank you for your dedication and enthusiasm to move and operate in new, more efficient ways as we take Distinctive Options into the future as a key niche market disability service provider.

**Ernie Metcalf - CEO**

\* From Lakshmi Mittal, Chairman and CEO, ArcelorMittal, 2009

# Year In Review

# 2017



## July

- Professional NBA players from the USA provide a free Basketball Skills Clinic in Sunbury
- 20 staff complete Advanced Training in Positive Behaviour Support
- Participants with NDIS funding in Group Supports move from a standard Service Fee to a User Pays System



## August

- Thirteen participants graduate with a Certificate I in Transition Education
- Five participants gain their Learners permit through a partnership with the Ability2Drive program
- The organisation successfully completes an external audit for ISO 9001 and the Department of Health and Human Services Standards



## September

- The staff survey is conducted (see Page 38)
- A minibus with a hoist is stolen overnight and located 2 days later in a creek
- Film groups partner with Sunbury Community Health (SCH) to record and edit videos for SCH's clients
- Participants travel to the Yarra Valley for a supported holiday



## October

- A new Community Connect house officially opens in Sunbury (see Page 23)
- Bendigo participants launch a DO Radio Show via Phoenix Radio
- Staff and participants attend the Melton Carers Expo and VALID Hume Disability Expo to share information about Distinctive Options



## November

- Participants and staff travel to Horsham to take part in the Tri-State Games (see Page 30)
- Participants begin preparing Christmas Hampers with CareWorks for local families in need
- The annual Melbourne Cup Parade is held in Sunbury
- DHHS announces the new Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme



## December

- The annual Art Show is held at Lifestyles in Sunbury
- Fifteen participants graduate with a Certificate I in Literacy and Numeracy
- Participants join the All Abilities tennis challenge
- Christmas parties for participants and for staff are held in Bendigo and Sunbury

# 2018

## January



- 22 new participants join Distinctive Options
- Sunbury Community Connect network into Sunbury's Reclink lawn bowls and luncheon
- Three new Directors are recruited onto the Board of Distinctive Options in the following three months

## February



- Staff and participants travel to Geelong to attend VALID's Having a Say Conference (see Page 30)
- The 2018 Participant Survey is completed

## March



- Kyneton Community Connect opens in Jennings Street as the fourth house (see Page 21)
- Bendigo Community Connect provides Group Supports over the holiday break for the first time
- Participants volunteer with Communiti-TEA at SunFest
- The NDIS rolls out across Sunbury

## April



- A partnership with Hume City Council is developed to provide weekly dance and voice classes in Broadmeadows
- The 2018 Participant Survey Report is released (see Page 28)

## May



- Distinctive Options partners with Hume City Council to provide the first Dance Party in Sunbury
- The Board of Directors, CEO and management team conduct a Strategic Planning Day (see Page 13)
- Distinctive Options receives a Bronze Award from the Australasian Reporting Awards for the 2016/17 Annual Report

## June



- The Ladies Only Group receive a cheque from Sunbury Women in Business to support their fundraising for CareWorks SunRanges
- The Tri-State Games fundraiser is held in Sunbury
- Nine participants graduate with a Certificate 1 in Transition Education

# Strategic Planning

Under Distinctive Options' Strategic Plan, its short and long term objectives are centred on the strategic intent to grow our services to assist and empower those we support, helping them achieve their potential to gain equality and inclusion in the community. Distinctive Options' strategy for achieving its objectives is contained within the organisation's Strategic Plan and built upon four key pillars: be resilient, be distinctive, be sustainable and be progressive. Within the Strategic Plan, Distinctive Options has 9 key strategic objectives which underpin these four pillars. They are summarised below:

**BE RESILIENT**

We aim to establish and develop processes and systems that enhance and build Distinctive Options into a resilient, dynamic and responsive organisation



**BE DISTINCTIVE**

We aim to develop a range of options that connect individuals from early childhood through adolescence and adulthood reflecting a whole of life practice system



**BE SUSTAINABLE**

We aim to create and maintain a system of financial management that supports that changing nature of the services we provide



**BE PROGRESSIVE**

We aim to be a leader in the disability sector as an innovator in support options and practices



- 1. Monitor and review the status and impact of the NDIS
- 2. Increase capacity and ability to meet broader community needs
- 3. Ensure best practice and continuous improvement in governance and management
- 4. Implement a strategic marketing plan
- 5. Remain financially viable
- 6. Closely assess all proposals for new business opportunities
- 7. Meet the needs of all individuals we support
- 8. Employ innovation and new opportunities to grow market share and sustainability
- 9. Develop community partnerships

Be Resilient

Be Distinctive

Be Sustainable

Be Progressive

## Strategic Planning Day

The Strategic Planning Day took place on the 5th of May 2018. It was attended by all Board members and members of the management team. Over five hours, attendees worked together in reflecting on and evaluating the organisation's progress for the previous year. The mission, vision and values were discussed, with agreement to update them in the next 12 months. Attendees broke into groups to deliberate over our customer profile, workplace culture and goals, then returned to share their thoughts and ideas. New objectives to reach the identified goals were brainstormed and selected. Attendees enjoyed lunch together, having conversations and sharing stories about their individual experiences of working at and with Distinctive Options. Feedback collected after the session showed that members found it very informative and worthwhile.

## Balanced Scorecard

The Balanced Scorecard provides an opportunity to review Distinctive Options' operational performance against the strategic goals set.

### Performance Indicators

The Balanced Scorecard review includes financial and non-financial performance indicators. Progress towards each objective listed on Page 12 is measured and monitored each month to ensure that the organisation remains on track to achieve its Mission and Vision.

The results of the 2017-18 Balanced Scorecard are described on the following page.

## Strategic Performance 2017-2018

This is the second year Distinctive Options has used a Balanced Scorecard to monitor its operational performance against strategic objectives. The graph below summarises the results from a challenging 2017-18 financial year, with the major issue being around financial results as alluded to in the CEO’s report.

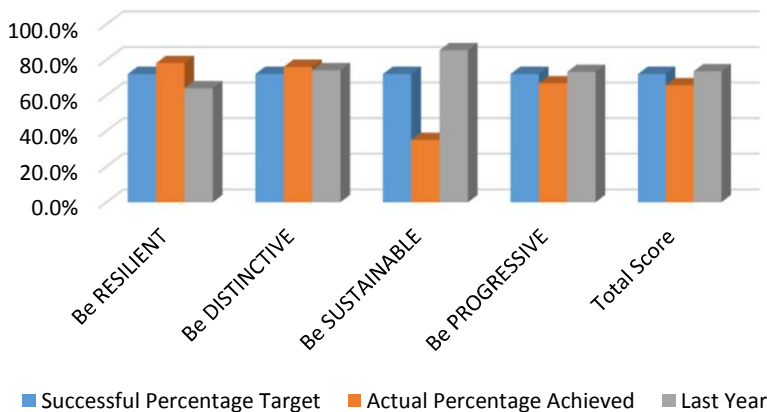
The **Be Sustainable** result was compounded by losses recorded across the organisation. Most of this was due to overstaffing in an attempt to forecast ratios that would be required under the NDIS. Over expenditure by the organisation was incurred in a number of other areas, and this, coupled with the transition into the NDIS, resulted in a reduction of the organisation’s cash reserves. As a consequence, this section only scored 35.0% of its targets. Remedial action taken has arrested this trend in 2018-19. This included some changes in action management along with a complete review of the staff structure to take the organisation forward. Distinctive Options also appointed its first Chief Financial Officer in September 2018 to bring more commercial/ financial expertise into the organisation. Dedicated software used for customer data and for NDIS billing is now operational and in use. This software billing system links directly to claim funding for services rendered from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) portal.

The **Be Progressive** results were slightly lower than the target, scoring 66.7%. Some of the targets for future growth opportunities in this section of the Scorecard were deferred due to financial pressures mentioned above. All the other targets were achieved, so the results were satisfactory.

Under **Be Distinctive** the score achieved was 76.0%, above the success rate set at 72% or better. These targets centered on meeting best practices. This is not just for the disability or the not-for-profit sector, but also some best practices expected from commercial businesses. It includes Australia and international best practices.

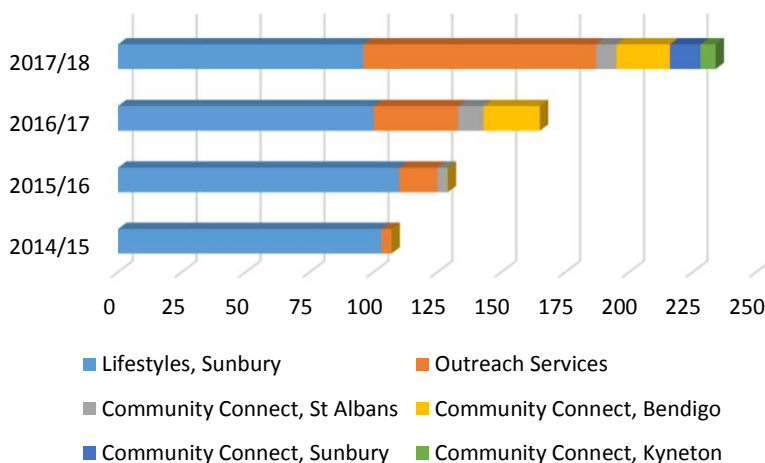
The **Be Resilient** targets includes growth in the number of people who we provide support services to. 2017-18 saw record growth in customer numbers and this has continued into 2018-19. Two new services were opened during the year: a new Community Connect Sunbury service in October 2017 and a new Community Connect Kyneton service in April 2018. We thank one of our partners, Cobaw Community Health, for assisting us to establish the new Kyneton service based on local consumer demand. Other targets in this section include monitoring and reviewing as well as capacity and capability targets. 78.1% of targets in this section were achieved.

Balanced Scorecard Strategic Goals Summary 2017-18



	Best Practice	Our Target	15/16	16/17	17/18
<b>Underlying Result Ratio (Profit Margin)</b>	≥ CPI	≥ 3.6%	-2.6%	4.5%	-5.5%
<b>Rate of Return on Assets</b>		≥ 10%	3.7%	10.7%	-18.3%

Customers by Support Service



# Financial Overview

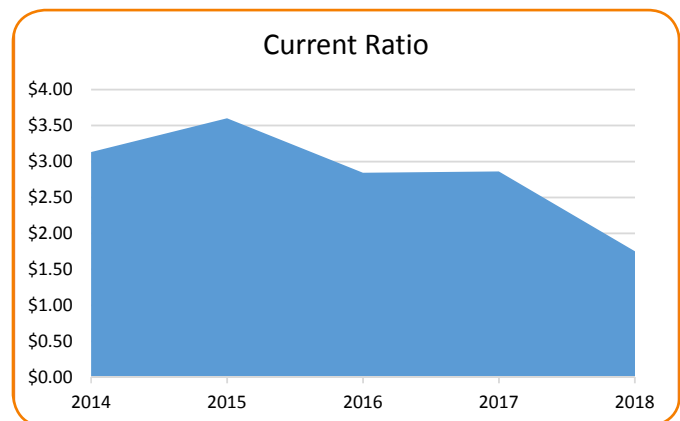
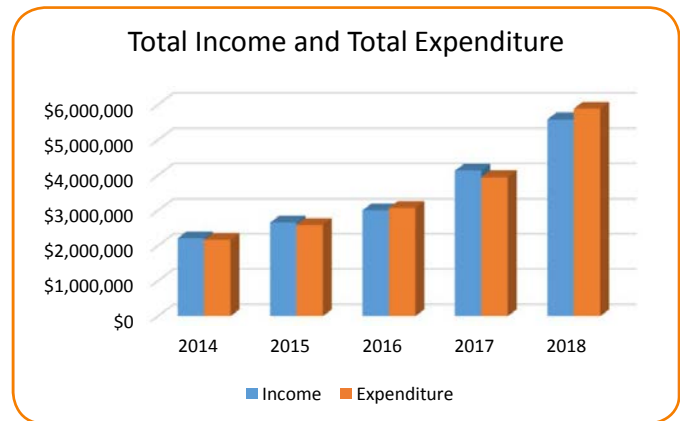
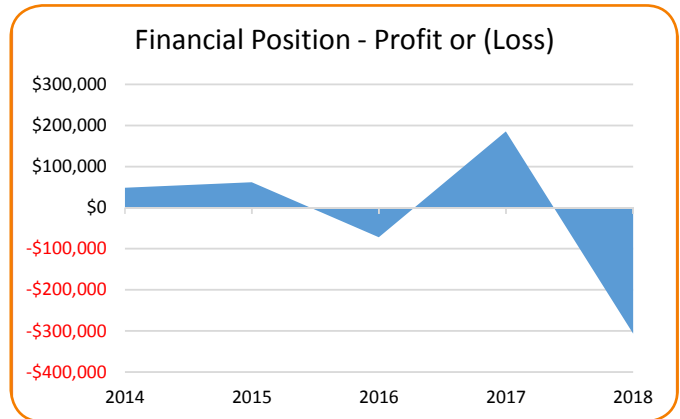
For the year ended 30 June 2018, Distinctive Options recorded a loss of (\$348k) compared to a profit of \$186k in 2017. Whilst the loss was disappointing for a number of reasons, the organisation’s need to take a much stronger commercial approach under the NDIS could not be more obvious. NDIS funding is paid after service delivery compared to the former block funding which was paid in advance. Coupled with this is the fact the unit prices under the NDIS are lower than the former model. Consequently, the sector has been squeezed financially, not only in the funding provided, but also from a cash flow perspective.

On a positive note, total income or revenue increased by \$1.46m (35.2%) compared to the previous financial year. The graph opposite highlights the exponential growth in income over the past two years. Total expenditure increased by more in 2017-18, being 50.4% higher than the previous financial year. Most of this expenditure increase related to employee benefit expenses (salaries and oncosts) caused by overstaffing. This was mainly due to errors in forecasting staff to client ratios under the NDIS. Sector pressure eventually saw these NDIS funding ratios set at a more realistic and sustainable level moving forward. These new staff to client ratio levels were adopted by Distinctive Options and significantly reduced employee benefit expenses in the new financial year without compromising the quality of services provided.

Some other costs relating to growth and development of services to meet the increase in the number of people being supported were also higher than in the previous year. Other general operational costs were well contained.

The effect on cash flow caused by the NDIS plus the increased expenditure is highlighted by the level of cash reserves held. The Current Ratio graph shows the organisation’s current ratio or liquidity ratio for comparative purposes.

Trade and other receivables have more than doubled, reflecting NDIS billing which is claimed back after service delivery is provided. The current ratio, although it has reduced, is still adequate to ensure that the organisation can meet its ongoing obligations. Long term financial management strategies put in place are expected to further strengthen this ratio over the next twelve months.



# Our Services



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# Sites and Services

## Lifestyles

The Lifestyles service is a group support option that is offered in Sunbury. Various activities and opportunities are provided each day, with participants choosing the options that they would like to do. Participants are grouped based on interests, providing a great opportunity to develop friendships.

## Outreach

Individual support is provided by the Outreach team. This service provides participants with their own staff member, allowing them the opportunity to have increased choice and control. Support is typically provided for accessing the community or working on independent living skills in the home.

## Community Connect

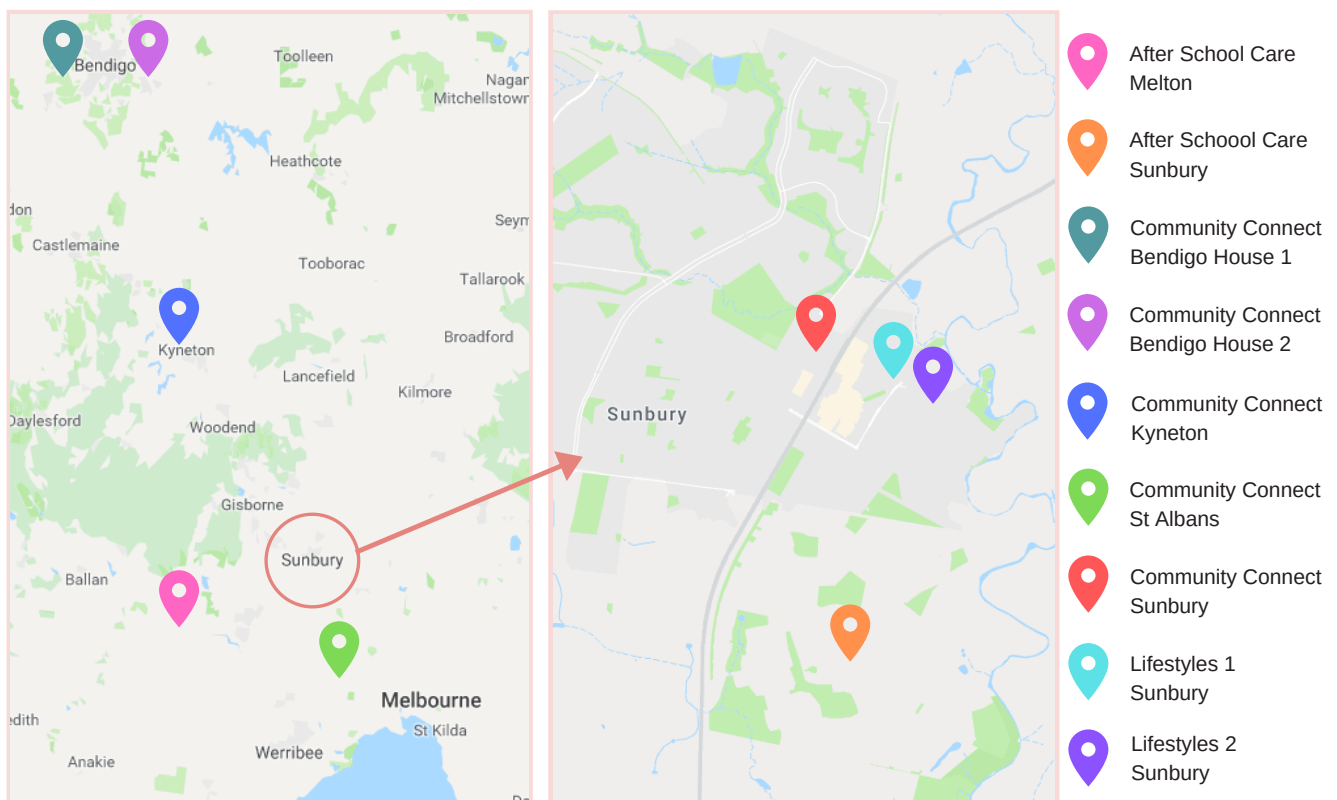
The Community Connect service is a group support that is provided from real houses. Small groups of participants meet during the week at the house before travelling into the community to undertake various activities. Independent living skills are also learnt, practiced and improved within the house.

## After School Care

Distinctive Options After Hours Care is a program that provides safe, secure and stimulating care for children that supports their emotional, social, physical and cultural development. After School Care services are currently provided in Sunbury and Melton at local specialist schools.

## NDIS Support

Support for all participants and families transitioning into the NDIS and those already on their journeys is provided by the NDIS Coordinator. This support may include pre-planning, attending NDIS meetings, developing quotes and service agreements, and helping to implement participant's plans.



# Lifestyles

**Our Lifestyles service is the original and longest running service at Distinctive Options. Over 100 participants access Lifestyles in Sunbury, attending activities, developing friendships and working towards their goals throughout the week.**

As at June 30th 2018, there are 120 registered Lifestyles participants. The NDIS is being rolled out progressively in Victoria over a three-year period between July 2016 and July 2019. Lifestyles currently supports 80+ participants with NDIS packages. The NDIS has seen a new way of providing support for people with disability, their families and carers. Similarly, we are continuing to review our systems and processes to support successful outcomes for our participants under the scheme and expand our supports outside of the traditional Day Service model.

Distinctive Options now offers service 50 weeks a year with a number of participants utilising their NDIS funding to attend over holiday periods and service closures. We have 25+ participants attend a monthly dance party run through the City of Hume. Working with the City of Hume has seen a commitment to running 3 Dance Parties in Sunbury which participants are able to attend independent of supports. We hold ongoing community inclusion out of regular service hours. A number of participants now receive regular consultations with Occupational and Speech Therapists, Physiotherapists and a range of Allied Health Support Services while attending the Lifestyles service.

We continue to support participants to attend the Tri-Sate Games, and offer individualised communication support and travel training. Distinctive Options is committed to working towards supporting people to get the right support and services in place to achieve their goals.

Lifestyle's currently employs a total of 65 staff. Six staff are currently undertaking a Certificate IV in Disability Studies Traineeship.

Distinctive Options is committed to ensuring our staff have the knowledge and skills gained through qualifications and/or experience to provide support to people with disability and enhance their ability to achieve greater levels of independence, self-reliance, community participation, choice and control. We acknowledge the commitment of our staff who continue to strive for excellence and maximise opportunities for greater independence and community participation for our participants. Lifestyles has been very fortunate to have the support of Melanie East, our NDIS Coordinator, whose knowledge of the scheme has helped provide a smoother transition for people with disability and their families and carers.

## Significant Events

- Our Food Cart Service continued to support the Royal Children's Hospital and donated a significant amount to the Good Friday Appeal.
- Travis Finney was the 2017 winner of the Annual Michael J Hines Award for the participant who best embodies Dignity in Adversity.
- Participants continued to attend Monthly meetings with VALID's Western Network.
- We hosted the Bi Annual Art Show.
- R&R Network continue to support their local and wider community with events held to raise funds for a variety of organisations and causes.
- Five participants were successful in obtaining their Learners Permits.
- One participant successfully completed a Barista Course.
- Twenty participants graduated from a two-year accredited course in Initial Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Certificate I Transition Education and Certificate I Work Education.
- Several participants undertook work experience, with two participants gaining ongoing employment.

This is a small snapshot of some of the achievements throughout the year, however participants continue to work towards reaching their individual goals daily.

**Carolyn Richardson - Lifestyles Manager**



# Outreach

**Individual support is provided to a large number of participants throughout regional central-north Victoria, from Sunbury up to Bendigo. It is the one of the most popular choices for participants, allowing them to have full choice and control over the activities that they would like to do.**

The Outreach service is focused on meeting participant's individual goals. Support can include self-care, meal preparation, household duties, shopping, transport to appointments, support to join in community events and assistance with study with further education. This support can be ongoing or occasional.

This year, numerous participants were assisted to complete courses. We have a participant who has obtained his forklift license which has allowed him to increase his hours at work. One gentleman has completed his CB radio course. We have also had numerous participants who have volunteered their time. Participants are regularly accessing the Boilover theatre group and Zumba.

We are supporting two young women who are living independently in their own homes. We assist them with meal preparation, budgeting, as well as grocery shopping and cleaning.

Outreach allows participants to increase their daily living skills as well as access the community. Some of our new participants have been socially isolated and through the encouragement of staff have started accessing the community on a meaningful and regular basis.

Hume has now transitioned into the NDIS and we have received numerous referrals for children and adults looking for support, including many who have never before had access to funding.

We are currently supporting participants from the age of 7 to 89 years old.

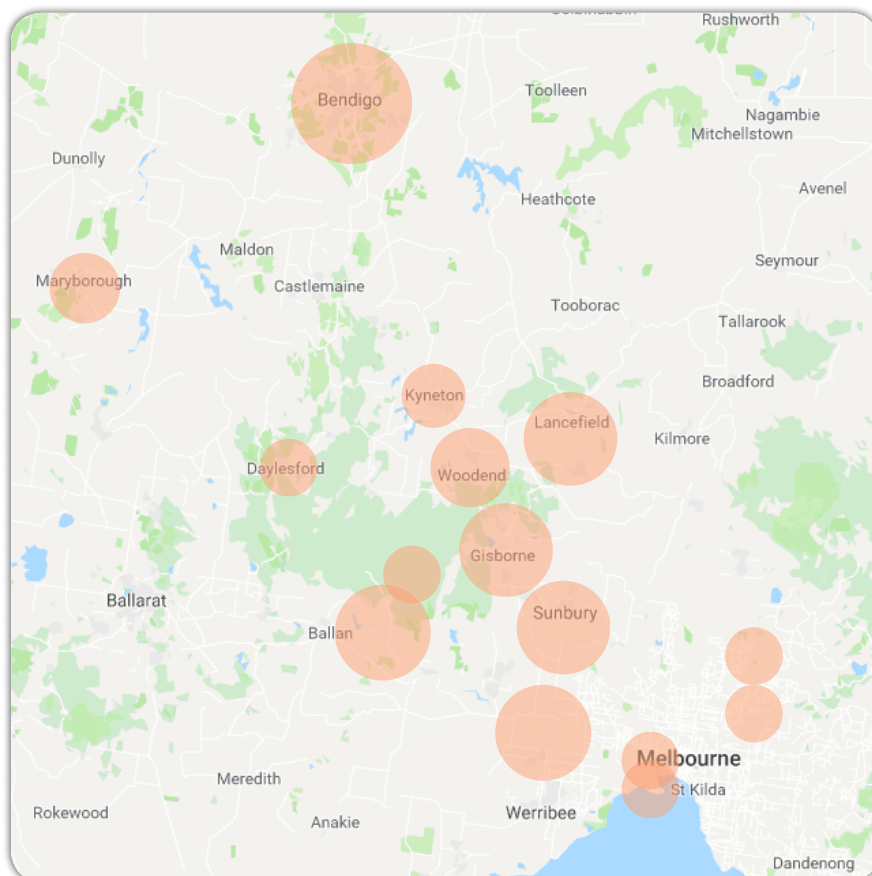
Our own participants have received increased funding for extra supports, allowing us to offer services and activities on the weekends.

The introduction of the NDIS has also allowed us to form great relationships with the local support coordinators. At the same time, our geographical area of support has increased, with numerous referrals from Strathmore, Melton, Kyneton and Lancefield.

I would like to welcome Matilda Tobin to the Outreach admin team. She joined us in March and is currently completing her Certificate III in Business. Matilda is a true asset to the Outreach service.

With the introduction of the NDIS to different areas throughout the following 12 months, Outreach is expected to continue to provide supports to new participants in new locations across Victoria.

**Jane O'Leary - Outreach Manager**



# Community Connect Bendigo

The Community Connect program at Distinctive Options aims to provide participants with real life choices. The service is provided out of houses in the community that act as a base point for meeting. Participants spend time in the community, building networks and undertaking meaningful activities. Independent living is practiced within the houses, including cooking, cleaning and caring for the home. Two houses are currently active in Bendigo, with others operating in Kyneton, St Albans and Sunbury.

Bendigo Community Connect aims to equip participants with the skills and confidence to achieve their goals within a team-based setting. Participants are given the opportunity to develop communication and negotiation skills, using these to build relationships with the wider community promotes independence and inclusion.

Our two current locations are welcoming environments that serve as 'base camps,' where meetings are held, reviews are undertaken and plans are made. They are places to seek shelter when it's just too hot to volunteer at the community garden, when a guest speaker is coming, or when we're baking cupcakes to share with the Foodbank volunteers.

Using public transport to get to and from activities is always our first choice. It promotes independence, it involves being in the community and it is affordable. Fortunately, Bendigo has a comprehensive network of buses and the V-Line service can take us further still.

Participants engage in a vast array of activities in order to meet their goals – from Balloon Football to sailing, from interviewing guest speakers to broadcasting live on radio, from decorating cakes to enjoying a pub lunch – the list goes on. Being flexible means that we can make the most of any new opportunities as they arise. Participants are provided with ongoing opportunities to review their chosen activities and propose new activities in line with their NDIS-funded goals.

It was most rewarding to know that participants from our Communications Rights Access group were engaged as consultants with Coliban Water. The group also presented a local take-away business with an award that recognises the retailer's efforts in welcoming customers with communication needs. Participants will develop this advocacy role in 2019, with the aim of improving accessibility to local services for all those with communication needs who are living and working in the Bendigo area.

One of our participants is now on the council's Disability Inclusion Reference Committee. Another who joined our radio broadcasting activity now volunteers at Phoenix FM as the receptionist. Two participants have continued their friendship outside the service and now meet up regularly for movie and lunch dates. This is what Community Connects is all about.

2018 was the first year we offered activities during the seasonal breaks, with a 4-day film making workshop running over the Easter break. Some of these participants have since worked on a small local project with professional film company Hebron Films. Now in the editing stage, this short film will be released soon.

All participants have now transferred to NDIS funding and adjusting to the changes has been a learning curve for us all.

Choice and control is at the heart of this scheme and that is why we place such emphasis on ensuring all participants have the opportunity to have a say in what we do.

This year we welcomed six new participants and seven new staff members, including administration professional Vickie Magee who provides essential support for the work we do. Staff development training included Managing Anxiety in Young Adults, Cultural Awareness with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) focus, Communication Access with Bendigo Health and First Aid. I wish to commend the staff who work so hard to provide such high quality support for our participants. They are truly passionate about the work they do.

Feedback from our most recent survey indicates that participants are seeking support over the holiday breaks, weekends and evenings. This is something we intend to develop into 2019. In response to the participant survey, we will continue to offer activities over the breaks and will also look at weekend options. We are supporting a small number of participants to attend the Having a Say Conference in Geelong in 2019 – our first trip away from 'home'.

If participant numbers continue to increase we will open a third location – a house from which to develop independent living skills.

**Catherine Woodger - Bendigo  
Community Connect Coordinator**

# Community Connect Kyneton

Since our grand opening in April we've welcomed 6 new participants and made some fantastic connections with people and organisations in the Kyneton community.

The house in Jennings Street is a beautiful historic building in the heart of Kyneton and is based on the wonderful model that the organisation currently have running in St Albans, Sunbury and Bendigo. When it first launched, participants were involved in setting up the house by choosing furnishings, appliances and items to set up a fully functioning kitchen.

We have also spent a lot of time getting active in the community, meeting people and linking in with local organisations. Over a short time we have made connections with the local council, the Goldfields Library, Cobaw Community Health, Intereach, the Midland Express, Kyneton Community Lunch, Kyneton Community Garden, The United Church Op Shop, Highlands FM and the Kyneton Senior Citizens.

The participants are actively involved in volunteering for the Kyneton community lunch, helping to set up and pack up for the weekly lunch.

They work in the United Church Op Shop, helping to load the truck to take surplus items to other charities in Melbourne. One participant is paid to deliver the local paper each week.

We have also completed a documentary on the setting up of Kyneton Community Connect, with participants taking on multiple roles as presenters, actors, camera operators, announcers, directors and writers. This has been a fantastic experience for all involved and a great learning experience. We have now started filming participants own stories, which will include personal stories as well as fictional stories.

We have started presenting our very own radio show on Highlands FM every Thursday from 11am -12pm. Participants choose the playlists, back announce songs and read weather forecasts. It is extremely exciting and we look forward to seeing how the show will develop in the future.

We also approached the local paper, the Midland Express, with an idea that we could take photos for the paper to accompany articles. After showing some examples of the participants work, they agreed. Peter had his photo published in the paper and received a credit beneath the photo.

We have most recently been helping the Kyneton Senior Citizens help set up and pack up for their indoor bowls as they were finding this a challenge. We have also linked up with the Macedon Ranges Shire Council and will be working with them to do front of house duties during performances at the Kyneton Town Hall.

Kyneton Community Connect is very much about participants achieving their own personal goals and leading the direction of the service. It is only early days but already there is a sense of friendship and teamwork. We all look forward to welcoming new participants as we grow.

**David Patterson - Kyneton Community Connect Coordinator**



# Community Connect St Albans

In 2018, St Albans Community Connect has focused on growth and outcomes. The service has built a strong participant base together with a resilient support team. This past year we have welcomed three new full time participants and four new staff members. The creation of this team has brought new ideas and a renewed energy to the service.

Community Connect in St Albans is aimed at increasing the life skills of the people that we support to achieve the life goals that they want to achieve. We support this through innovative thinking and creativity. The team caters as much as possible to individual learning styles and utilises various resources to assist with this.

This year, St Albans transitioned into the NDIS. The change has proved to be a little challenging, however we have still been able to retain the flexibility of our service that we pride ourselves on.

This year we have seen an enormous increase to the dedication in achieving individual goals. Participants have been able to explore volunteering opportunities, develop skills, build resumes and apply for employment.

Aiming activities at individual goals, participants chose to design and build a vegetable garden at the house which has been slowly growing and now producing vegetables for the group to use in their weekly cooking. Cooking has been a part of our service for some time, assisting in both communication and literacy skill development.

In 2018, St Albans accessed community programs, such as the Growing Healthy Community Project and Coffee Club to socialise with others and learn new skills. These activities are engaging, resourceful and encourage independence and healthy living.

Throughout the past 12 months, the service has grown in both participant numbers and quality. From January to June, we chose to focus strongly on communication, numeracy and literacy for daily use. Staff are focusing on implementing activities and options that meet participant goals, allowing other valuable outcomes to be achieved. This year we have also seen our participants attend various outings, including trips to various museums, the Melbourne Zoo, ACMI, the State Library, local skate parks and many other exciting locations.

The success of this service is largely due to the motivation and innovation of the staff here at St Albans. I have had the pleasure of leading a team that have the energy, experience and drive to create diverse and interesting days for participants that are engaging and goal-oriented.

The cohesiveness of the staff team resonates with the participants and assists in their achievements. Hannah, Tamara C, Sam, Zach, and Tamara M truly are exceptional in their positions and I thank them for the time and effort they give to this service.

In the next 12 months, the service is looking forward to creating new volunteering and employment opportunities for some of our participants. We are always working on sourcing new community inclusion options so that participants can be meaningfully involved with the community. We are looking forward to the full implementation of the NDIS in our area which should create even more choice for participants. We are excited about new participants that will be starting at the service in 2019 and look forward to taking further steps in reaching our goals.

**Aimee Wilson - St Albans  
Community Connect Coordinator**



# Community Connect Sunbury

Community Connect Sunbury, otherwise known as the Rad Pad, officially celebrated one year of service this year. Having access to a house has provided many opportunities for our participants to expand their skills and increase their independence.

In 2018, we introduced six new participants into the program. Our newest participants began 2018 with planned programs suited for student transitions that enabled them to work with familiar faces and focus on a specific life area (e.g. communication, community participation, literacy and numeracy). With time, each individual was able to branch off and make their own choices on what activities they would like to participate in, finding options that matched their individual goals, interests and aspirations.

We are proud to say that all of the participants of the Rad Pad have been actively engaging in home skills, independent cooking, solo travelling and moving out confidently into the wider community.

We continue to be amazed at the growth and development of the young adults of Distinctive Options. Working alongside each participant are family members who are eager to see them succeed.

Our participants have done a tremendous job at coordinating and planning internal and community events and fundraisers. In 2017-18, these included volunteering at Sunfest and Sunbury Street Life, facilitating sausage sizzles at Bunnings, and contributing towards Food Cart's annual donation towards the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal (raising around \$600).

The service is only as successful as our amazing staff: Beth, Zac, Lucy, Maureen, Hannah and Sarah. Each continue to go above and beyond in their service delivery. They impress us with their skills and dedication in providing participants with a high quality service. They are flexible and always happy to try new things, bringing their own wonderful ideas to the table.

We have personally witnessed staff forming meaningful relationships with participants and families, ensuring a positive environment for all.

As Acting Coordinators, we would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment Elena Cotchin put into the Coordinator role before going on leave. We have been able to continue her role with participants, families and support guiding us through this transition period. We would like to thank all that have supported us both through this transition.

Throughout the next 12 months, we will be focusing on offering increased after hours and weekend service options, building on participant independent travel skills, transition new participants into the service, networking more activities within the local community and accessing new venues and resources.

**Sarah Heriot and Melanie Mays - Acting Sunbury Community Connect Coordinators**



# After School Care

**Distinctive Options After Hours Care is a safe, secure and stimulating care for children that supports their emotional, social, physical and cultural development. We value each child's uniqueness and aim to provide each child with a sense of acceptance, accomplishment, growth and competence.**

We are committed to building trusting and respectful relationships with families, with the aim to allow caregivers to spend more time at work and with their families and friends without concern for their child's welfare while at the program.

The service is now into its third year, with programs running out of Melton Specialist School and Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School. Twenty-five children currently access After School Care at these locations.

Two Educational Leaders oversee the development of the program and ensure a high quality service is available for all families. Around ten Assistant Educators support the program's implementation, with many also working as Education Support staff for the schools who bring invaluable experience and skills.

The surveys provided to families throughout the year continue to provide positive feedback about the program and the staff.



Some of the comments they added this year include:

- What fabulous staff. Caring, kind and patient.
- We really appreciate all the efforts to make our son comfortable and happy.
- I think the program is great and the staff are doing wonders.

The survey also asked for information about several aspects of our service:

- Whether parents were satisfied with the program. All answered 'very satisfied'.
- Whether parents were satisfied with the staff. All answered 'very satisfied'.
- How parents felt about the prices. All answered 'about right'.
- How parents felt about the hours. All answered 'about right'.
- Whether parents felt their child is safe when at the program. All answered 'yes'.
- Whether parents felt their child is happy when at the program. All answered 'yes'.

This year, we transitioned from the Child Care Rebate/Benefit to the Child Care Subsidy. This was a massive process that required support from both staff and our families. We are now on the other side and have found that despite the extra tasks involved in setting up agreements and bookings with families, the benefits of a streamlined model outweigh these challenges.



It seems that the State Government has now realised the importance of providing after school programs to children with a disability and developed a Demonstration Program to assess and evaluate the model for themselves. Towards the end of this financial year, we successfully applied for funding from the Department of Education to provide the After Hours Care program to another two schools in Victoria – Kalianna School in Bendigo and Jackson School in St Albans. Each program is now operational, with many families already accessing these services.

**Sarah Quigley - Executive Assistant**





# NDIS Support

**Distinctive Options provides support to our participants on their NDIS journeys. A dedicated NDIS Coordinator ensures all participants and their families understand the NDIS and have access to reliable information and support during their transition and into the future.**

The NDIS is now in its 5th year of operation with Distinctive Options delivering NDIS-funded supports since September 2016. We have successfully transitioned all of our Bendigo and Loddon region participants, whilst the Hume region continues to transition across. In October 2018, the Brimbank region will commence with the rollout of the NDIS, again with the Brotherhood of St Laurence being elected for providing the Local Area Coordination partnership.

Just 29 participants fell under NDIS in June 2017. This has now grown to a record 170 NDIS-funded participants in June 2018, an increase of 487%. This has coincided with a 42% increase in participant numbers over the past twelve months.

Distinctive Options have a total of 34 participants who have not yet transitioned. I am in the process of supporting these families and participants with the pre-planning stages, including attending their planning meetings if they request my presence.



I have been the NDIS coordinator for a year and half now and have seen a number of positive outcomes for participants since the implementation of the scheme. There has been an increase in exciting social opportunities which have extended our typical service hours far beyond the standard 9am-3pm. This has given participants more flexibility and choice over activities offered by Distinctive Options, including monthly dance parties attended by up to 26 participants. We are also now providing supports over the learning block breaks, with interest continuing to expand. Distinctive Options successfully conducted two supported holidays throughout the year, allowing participants to attend the Having A Say Conference and the Tri-State Games.

Our Bendigo Community Connects service has also provided some fun extended hours activities including attending Aladdin, the Aquarium and Artvo in Melbourne. Participants developed travel training skills on their day trips to Echuca and Castlemaine, ran a film making project and attended a pottery class within the community. I am confident these activity options will continuously expand.

From our NDIS experience, we have seen a number of amazing outcomes. Some participants now have access to Allied Health services that they were previously unfunded for, several have been supported to successfully complete courses, obtain licenses, gain volunteer positions, and many others have developed independent living skills and develop new friendships. I look forward to seeing more positive achievements over the next 12 months as the NDIS evolves.

**Melanie East - NDIS Coordinator**

# Our Participants

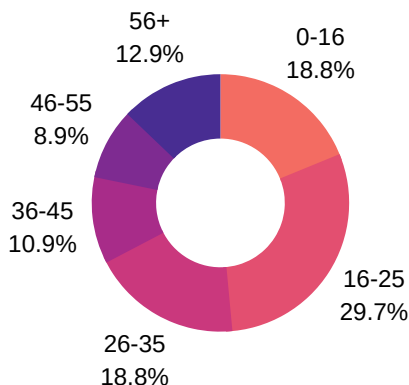


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# Participant Demographics

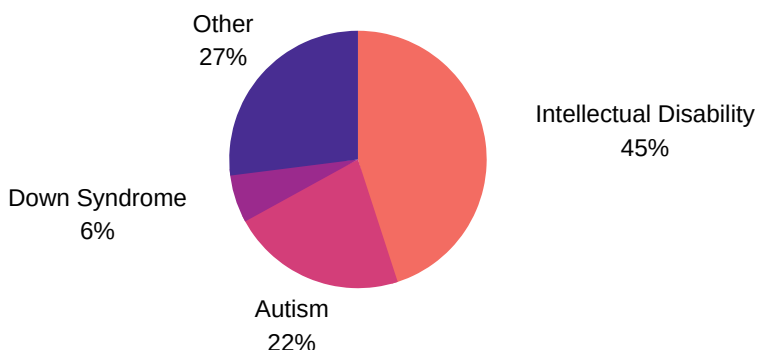
## Age

The largest age group for participants at Distinctive Options is 16-25. Almost half of our participants are aged under 26, with young people particularly drawn to our Community Connect and After School Care services. Participants aged above 35 are typically choosing to access the Lifestyles and/or Outreach services.



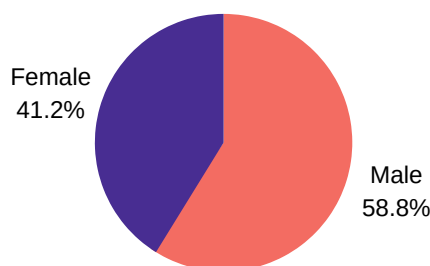
## Disability

The most common diagnosed disability of our participants is Intellectual Disability, a diagnosis that is commonly found alongside other disability including psychiatric conditions. Autism is the second most common, followed by Down Syndrome. The remaining percentage consists of various conditions, including psychosocial illnesses, Cerebral Palsy, Acquired Brain Injury and Epilepsy.



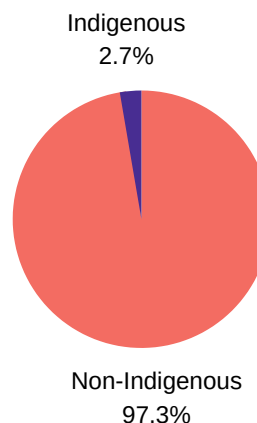
## Gender

More males than females access the services at Distinctive Options. This is particularly significant within the After School Care and Outreach services but is also a trend found in every other service except for Bendigo Community Connect where female participants are the majority.



## Indigenous Status

The majority of participants do not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, below the Australian average of 3.3% recorded in the 2016 Census. The Outreach service (specifically in Bendigo) makes up 50% of the Indigenous participant group. Seven participants identify as only Aboriginal, while two participants identify as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.



Participants

# Participant Survey

Distinctive Options is strongly committed to providing a quality service. In order to maintain service standards and facilitate continuous improvement, we conduct an Annual Participant Survey to gain valuable feedback from a participant perspective. Consulting participants regarding what they think about a service’s performance in upholding relevant Disability Service Standards, NDIS Principles and other government policy enables valuable feedback into the overall quality process.

In previous years, Distinctive Options partnered with VALID through its North West Region Self Advocacy project to develop and undertake a participant survey process. In 2017, Distinctive Options and VALID agreed that a new survey process was warranted to better capture feedback and from a wider sample of participants across all service types and locations.

A new Participant Survey, based on the original VALID Survey, was designed and implemented by Distinctive Options in 2017. A copy of the survey and an accompanying letter was mailed to every registered participant across all areas of service delivery with the exception of After School Care (who receive their own survey). Forty-eight participants took part, with an overall return rate of 24%.

What participants said we do well:

- I like having something different to do every day.
- I have made many friends here. It is really good and really fun. My favourite program is R&R Network.
- I know I can trust my support workers and they keep me safe.
- I am greeted on arrival by all staff. I am approached by the staff member I am working with that day as soon as I arrive so I know what to do and where to go.
- Staff listen to me if I say no and they talk nice and calm to me. I like my own space that they give to me.
- I choose my own goals. I get to choose my own programs.

What participants would like to see implemented:

- Activities available during term breaks
- After hours social activities
- More choices of different programs
- Participants to be more involved in changes
- Weekend and night time program choices

Review of the survey feedback provided thirteen recommendations. These included:

- That Distinctive Options continue to develop its capacity to offer social supports and activities outside of regular service delivery hours
- That a process be established whereby all participants are asked annually to nominate a staff member or manager at Distinctive Options who they would be most comfortable in speaking with in regards to any problems, issues or complaints at Distinctive Options.
- That processes be considered for including participants in decision making at both management and board level.
- That R&R Network participants be encouraged and supported to play a mentoring role with peers in recording and better managing interpersonal conflict with fellow participants.



# Rights and Responsibilities Network

Distinctive Options is proud to have three Rights and Responsibility (R&R) Network programs across the organisation in Sunbury, Kyneton and Bendigo. These are self-advocacy groups designed to represent the participant cohort. Agendas are tabled and minutes are taken. As the founder of the program, Josie Paladino, explains that “staff learn a lot from participants – it’s a two way street.”

*“It’s our right to make decisions in the community.”*  
- Emma

Participants are supported to run the meetings and individual participants are responsible for specific agenda items. The meetings empower participants to have control over the process and they are supported to follow up any initiatives and ideas, typing minutes as well as arranging visits from guests. The R&R Network group has become an essential part of Distinctive Options and its culture. R&R Network positions are declared vacant at the end June and December. Interviews are held for each position and a vote is held. The Chairperson position is rotated between all interested members. Everybody is given the opportunity hold a role of some sort.



Participants

Regular agenda items include voting opportunities, staying safe strategies, anti-bullying, public transport access, community concerns, staff reports, occupational health and safety, events planning, health and wellbeing, entitlements and community opportunities. Participants are also asked to discuss particular topics and to give feedback, including reviewing ideas and documents.

*“We learn to speak up and to have a say.”* - Simone

Not only do the R&R Network meetings give participants the opportunity to be involved in self-advocacy, quite often a great idea or initiative will come about to advocate for other people and groups. A great example of this is the fundraising BBQ that was held at a local supermarket in Bendigo to raise money for the Royal Children’s Hospital. This idea originated at an R&R meeting then was planned and organised at later meetings. \$190 was eventually raised at the BBQ and forwarded to the Royal Children’s Hospital. This gave participants a great sense of pride as well as being part of a valued community activity. Other fundraising activities conducted included Movember, the Red Cross and Sunbury CareWorks.

Guest presenters are invited to represent a broad cross-section of the community. Over the previous 12 months, guests at the three locations have included Relate, the NDIA, local Councillors, Bendigo TAFE, Bendigo Rights Information and Advocacy Centre, a Special Olympics Coach, the Victorian Electoral Commission, the local CFAs, Story Dogs Public Transport Victoria, Interchange and even a local radio personality.

*“I love having visitors. I love asking questions.”* - Stefan

R&R Network has independent representation at VALID’s monthly Western Networking meetings and are part of a VALID consultation group. Some of our members have also been invited to join consultation groups, independent of Distinctive Options staff support. This year, Stephanie joined a Voting Steering Committee and Emma joined a Family Planning Victoria Project Advisory Group.



As Josie explains: “the door to self-advocacy is open to all. We meet as a group because we like to learn from each other. I feel honoured to regularly spend time with such amazing and empowered individuals.”

*“We are trying to get as many people speaking up for themselves as possible and to be aware of the things that are happening, not just at Distinctive Options but in the wider community. We are committed to supporting those who are less fortunate than us.”* - David

# Having A Say Conference

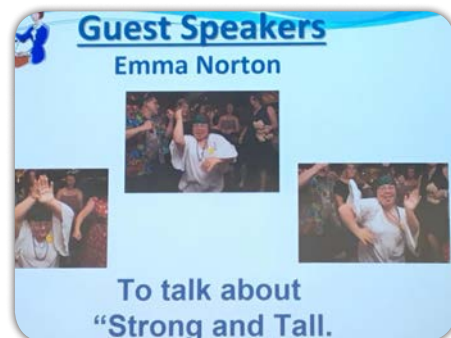
The annual VALID Having a Say Conference is the largest conference for people with disabilities in Australia. Participants can find their voice to speak, to be heard and to be respected. It is a conference where people listen to each other, not just to the speakers on stage, and where people respect each other's views and opinions and celebrate their common cause. Participants attend presentations workshops throughout the day and social events at night.

This year, ten participants from Distinctive Options travelled from Sunbury with three staff members. The theme was Community – Here I Come, with a focus on topics such as the NDIS, self-advocacy, healthy living and community involvement. Several participants from Distinctive Options presented to the Conference.



Emma Norton joined the Senior Practitioners Office in a presentation entitled 'Speaking Up Is OK' and also helped to facilitate a workshop entitled 'Stand Tall, Hear My Call'.

Stephanie Challis took out the Doug Pentland & David Banfield Award at the Conference for being an outstanding self-advocate.



*"I loved making new friends."* - Kiara

*"We all had a voice and shared lots of information."* - Stephanie

# Tri-State Games

In November, 8 participants travelled to Horsham to join a week-long sporting event that attracts athletes from Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. The DO Galaxy team are the only local group that participate. They work together for many months to arrange all requirements, including conducting fundraising, designing their uniforms, creating art work for the marquee, stocking the pantry, agreeing on team rules and ethos, and deciding which events they will participant in.

The Games promote friendly completion and social interaction for adults with a disability to participate in a range of events selected from indoor sports, track and field, swimming and team sports. Each night, events are held to give all athletes a change to relax and socialise with their counterparts. Outcomes include social inclusion, networking, sportsmanship and time management, among many others.



# Service Use

Distinctive Options provided services to more than 234 people with a disability in 2017-2018, up from 165 in 2016-2017, resulting in a growth rate of around 42%. As impressive as the growth has been, we must consider these in terms of the goals and objectives achieved by our participants. Each participant has a Person Centred Plan with their own goals, with staff working alongside the participant to take steps to achieve positive outcomes. Every hour of support provided takes participants one step closer to fulfilling their potential. Using service hours to achieve goals has become increasingly important with the rollout of the NDIS. Each participant has a plan with two large goals and up to five small goals. In order to continue receiving NDIS funding, we must demonstrate how the hours of service contributed to the participant meeting their goals. There was a significant increase in the number of individual support participant numbers and hours of service provided. This can be directly linked to the introduction of the NDIS, with participants having more choice and control. We have found many participants choosing to change some of their hours to individual support, with some even moving all of their funding into accessing individual support.

Although we do not receive any funding for the provision of support and advice to participants and their families through their NDIS journey, we continue to provide direct hours of support to ensure each of our participants feels informed and confident about the process, including pre-planning meetings, the development service agreements and participating in the annual NDIS review.

A breakdown of the number of participants and hours of service is provided below. Please note that some data has been estimated based on participant numbers and their typical hours of support. The After School Care program is reported separately as it is subject to separate legislation and standards.

## Number of Participants

Program	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Lifestyles	71	87	95	96	96
Outreach	24	29	35	35	90
Bendigo	-	-	-	24	21
Kyneton	-	-	-	-	6
St Albans	-	-	-	10	8
Sunbury	-	-	-	-	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>234</b>

## Hours of Support Per Week

Program	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Lifestyles	2,183	2,477	2,655	2,880	2,880
Outreach	173	176	320	475	2,930
Bendigo	-	-	-	576	507
Kyneton	-	-	-	-	43
St Albans	-	-	-	90	33
Sunbury	-	-	-	-	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,356</b>	<b>2,653</b>	<b>3,065</b>	<b>4,021</b>	<b>6,473</b>

## After School Care

Program	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Participants	-	-	12	21	27
Hours p/w	-	-	19	70	109







# Our People



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# Senior Management Team

Our Senior Management Team are the backbone of our organisation. They keep the operations of the business running and work towards the organisation's Strategic Plan. Each member has a team of staff that they oversee and support.



## Ernie Metcalf - Chief Executive Officer

Ernie joined Distinctive Options at the end of 2016. He holds a Master of Business Management and has 14 and a half years of experience in the disability sector. Ernie provides overall management of Distinctive Options, including business development and growth, marketing and reputation, financial management, Board and mandatory reporting, mentoring and strategic planning. He holds membership to the International Initiative for Disability Leadership, National Disability Services, Australian Institute of Company Directors and Harvard Business Review Advisory Council. Ernie is a founding member of a Victorian Disability Services CEO Best Practice Network.

## Rick Dunn - Executive General Manager

Rick holds qualifications in Business, Human Resources, Project Management, Education and Educational Psychology. With almost 20 years at Distinctive Options, he is responsible for a wide range of key tasks including operations management, strategic advising and overseeing all of the services provided to participants. Rick is also the Authorised Program Officer for reporting to the Office of the Senior Practitioner and the Authorised Officer for the Client Incident Management System (CIMS) at Distinctive Options. Outside of the workplace, he is a qualified furniture maker, visual artist and singer/songwriter.



People



## Jane O'Leary - Outreach Manager

Jane manages the Outreach service at Distinctive Options and has been employed with the organisation for 13 years. She oversees the delivery of individual supports for participants, including the direct management of two Coordinators, a trainee Administration Assistant, around 100 support staff and 120 participants. She oversees both the Sunbury and the Bendigo Outreach service. Jane is currently completing an Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management which she is due to finish late 2018.

## Carolyn Richardson - Lifestyles Manager

Carolyn has worked with Distinctive Options for 25 years. She oversees the daily operations of the Lifestyles service, ensuring the delivery of high quality and innovative supports for all participants. Carolyn manages the work of 3 Coordinators, 65 staff and over 120 participants. Carolyn started her career in disability working in one of the first Group Homes opened in Sunbury where she supported three of the founding participants of Distinctive Options.



# Executive General Manager's Report



Two and a half years into the rollout of NDIS has seen unrelenting change at all levels, with the policy itself constantly evolving and service providers forced to adapt at speed, in real time and with one eye on the many possible futures for disability services.

In spite of this relentless and sometimes unsettling change, it is with awe that I reflect on how admirably our front-line staff continue to focus on that which separates Distinctive Options from other providers. Where others think something is too difficult, too complicated or too ambitious, our direct support staff are the ones who inevitably find a way to make things work, constantly going the extra mile for people in spite of fluid compliance requirements, entrenched resistance and over-lapping systemic barriers. One can only marvel at their capacity to stay in the expansive, optimistic and collaborative mindset required to sustain best practice.

Certainly, the feedback from this year's Annual Participant Satisfaction Survey indicates the exceptionally high regard for staff held by those who benefit most directly from their skill, passion and expertise.

Now in its 5th year of implementation, this survey continues to provide valuable feedback and inform continuous improvement throughout the organisation. This year we also implemented our first ever Family Member and Supporter Survey which delivered an additional level of feedback from those who regularly engage with Distinctive Options.

This feedback, in addition to that gathered via our Annual Staff Satisfaction Survey and After School Care - Parent Feedback Survey, is typically positive, occasionally confronting and always informative in terms of how best we can adapt services and practices to meet the diverse needs of the Distinctive Options community.

Importantly, Distinctive Options strives to excel in terms of fulfilling not only its obligations under the NDIS, but to legislated or otherwise mandated compliance requirements.

The successful implementation of new Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) requirements, such as the Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme and a cyber-based Client Incident Management System, are but two significant systemic changes adopted by Distinctive Options in the previous twelve months. These initiatives, coupled with the recently released DHHS Code of Conduct for Disability Service Workers, have required significant investment by the organisation in terms of staff training and changes to existing systems and processes.

December 2017 saw Distinctive Options enter into an agreement with the Federal Department of Health so that supports can continue for those participants aged older than 65 years and who are therefore not eligible for NDIS funding.

We welcome the introduction of the NDIS National Quality and Safeguarding Framework in 2019, which will demand even greater transparency and accountability from service providers.

The design and introduction of a new User Pays system for Group Support participants saw the abolition of the former Service Fee model as a requirement under the NDIS. The alignment of this system with our Supportability Client Management System, accounting and payroll systems and the NDIS Portal, now underpins the business of service provision thanks to the significant investment and tireless efforts of those working behind the scenes at Distinctive Options.

I commend the tireless work of the members of our Operations Team who oversee direct service delivery and whose passion for realising the vision and mission of the organisation continues to see it prosper.

Finally, and on behalf of the Operations Team, I thank both the Board and CEO of Distinctive Options for their continued wisdom, confidence and determination for excellence in all that we do.

**Rick Dunn - Executive General Manager**

# Our People and Culture

## Workforce Details

Distinctive Options ended the 2017-2018 year with a total of 157 staff. This was a 51% increase from 30 June 2017 which reflects the growth in our services and client numbers.

## Traineeships

Ten staff undertook traineeships during the year specialising in disability and administration. Distinctive Options encourages staff to engage in professional development opportunities that are relevant to the workplace and within budgetary constraints.

## Volunteers

Distinctive Options has roles within the organisation that are filled through the active involvement of volunteers. These roles include Board membership and program support. Volunteers are screened before they can begin and are supported via a structured induction program. Between July 2017 to June 2018, approximately 20 volunteers supported our organisation. Access to training is available for volunteers as required (refer to Page 39 for more details about professional development). We are very grateful to the contributions made by all of our volunteers.

## Industrial Relations

There were two industrial relations issues during the year. One related to a redundancy and the other related to a casual employee. Both were resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

## Industrial Awards/Enterprise Agreements

Distinctive Options is covered by the modern Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHADS) for all pay rates for disability support workers, some managers and administration staff. The conditions of a 2009 certified agreement are still applicable for some employees, where relevant. The Children's Services Award 2010 applies to all After School Care staff.

## Wages and Superannuation

Salary rates increased twice during the year under the SCHADS Award and once for the Children's Services Award. Superannuation is paid at 9.5% of salaries as per legislation. Salary sacrifice is available to all staff according to Fringe Benefits guidelines for charities.

## Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme

The Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme is a Victorian Government initiative introduced in 2017 that aims to protect the safety and wellbeing of people with a disability who access disability services. All individuals who work in direct support roles or have contact with participants at Distinctive Options must be checked against the Disability Worker Exclusion List (the List). The List contains information about any individuals who were previously found to have harmed a person with a disability, allowing us to ensure our participants are kept safe.



## Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

Distinctive Options is committed to providing a safe environment for all staff, participants and visitors to our organisation, subject to the responsibilities described in the Commonwealth Work Health and Safety Act 2011. Each location has a representative who ensures their area acts in accordance with the Commonwealth legislation, following the OHS Schedule that is revised annually. First aid training is provided for all staff as required, including asthma and anaphylaxis training for staff who work in the After School Care programs. Distinctive Options provides a voluntary free Flu and Hepatitis vaccination program each year which 13 staff took advantage of. Significant improvements that were undertaken to support OHS this year included the appointment of an OHS Coordinator, as well as the recruitment of an OHS Leader at each service, allowing dedicated attention to each location's safety needs.

We also implemented a new Debriefing Policy that guides managers in supporting staff following a critical or major incident to reduce the risk of ongoing physical or emotional harm. With occupational violence and manual handling the most common risks to employees in the Disability Sector, Distinctive Options implements stringent policies and procedures. We have a comprehensive OHS Policy and Procedure that provides in-depth information about the practices we employ to increase safety and wellbeing at Distinctive Options.

Lost time	26 hours
Lost-time injuries	1
Serious injuries	0
Manual handling injuries	0
Rates of unplanned absenteeism	1

## Staff Newsletter

A monthly Staff Newsletter was introduced in late 2017. Topics addressed in the Newsletter have included interviews with senior management, reflections on the organisation's vision, mission and values, results from the Staff Survey, and information about mental health in the workplace, including self-care assessments and tips about mindfulness. The Newsletter is written by the Executive Assistant and is emailed to all staff at Distinctive Options.

## Equal Employment

Distinctive Options provides equal opportunity in employment to people without discrimination based on a personal characteristic protected under state and federal equal opportunity legislation, including age, disability, gender identity, parental status, race, religion, and sexual orientation.

## Employee Engagement Survey

In September, Distinctive Options conducted a confidential, online Staff Survey. The survey was provided to all staff and measured employee engagement. It also provided an avenue for providing confidential feedback, including what staff like about the organisation and what they would like to change.

Reflecting on what Distinctive Options does well, staff reported the organisation is a great, participant-centered service that supports all participants to achieve individual goals. Staff believe that Distinctive Options holds high expectations of participants and provides them with a variety of activities and skill-building opportunities with lots of choice. The organisation is viewed as inclusive, supportive, friendly, progressive, and professional, where staff are well treated and listened to. Staff recommended that Distinctive Options could provide more training, more time for administrative tasks, better IT systems and increased staff support. A lack of awareness about the organisation was also reported with a suggestion for more marketing and advertising to increase the community's knowledge about Distinctive Options and its services.

In response to the feedback provided by staff we have provided more internal resources on the Quality Management System (QMS). A Debriefing Policy has been introduced to ensure increased staff support and more marketing has been undertaken, including new materials (refer to Page 42 of this Annual Report for more information).

Forty staff chose to participate in the survey. Some of the results are provided in the table below.

Distinctive Options employees...	2017
Are aware of the vision, mission and values	97%
Are happy whilst at work	94%
Enjoy coming to work	89%
Believe their work is challenging, stimulating and rewarding	98%
Are clear on their job role and expectations	82%
Would recommend Distinctive Options to their friends and family	100%
Are proud to work for Distinctive Options	100%

## Professional Development

We are committed to providing professional development opportunities to all staff, including the provision of four internal professional development days per year. The training sessions are organised by Rick Dunn, the Executive General Manager. Those offered to staff this year include:

- Mental health awareness
- Manual handling and infection control
- Vehicle safety
- Preventing and responding to abuse
- Cultural awareness
- Proloquo2Go
- Understanding Autism

Staff are also encouraged to identify and apply for external training opportunities that interest them and are relevant to their role. Permanent staff who wish to complete a Certificate IV or higher in Disability will have their course costs subsidised or completely covered by Distinctive Options. This helps our staff to upskill and continue to improve. Staff who participate in Annual Reviews are further supported to access training to ensure continuous improvement in their skills and abilities.

## Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

Distinctive Options is committed to providing a workplace free from discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying. Behaviour that constitutes discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying will not be tolerated and will lead to disciplinary action being taken, which may include dismissal. Details about reporting and responding to discrimination, harassment and bullying are clearly defined in the Human Resources Policy and Procedure.

## Induction, Policies and Procedures

A structured induction program offers new employees a seamless introduction to their role within the organisation. It aims to highlight the goals and values of our organisation and to orient new staff members to workplace practices and structures, including meeting with the senior management team. Distinctive Options provides all new staff with a formal induction that introduces them to our organisation and to the services we provide. Important information including the National Standards for Disability Services and Occupational Health and Safety is provided and staff are educated on how to access the QMS that contains all of our policies, procedures and documents.

## Supervision and Mentoring

Supervision and mentoring is a critical component of our employee performance management framework. Supervision and mentoring ensures that our employees have the opportunity to discuss any pertinent and challenging issues which they encounter. It provides a forum in which to discuss employees' personal development in relation to how effectively they carry out their role and ensure that a shared value system is being promoted and applied. Staff employed at greater than 0.6EFT (minimum 22.8 hours per week) are required to participate in staff supervision with their line manager. Supervision may be direct one to one and/or group supervision in line with agreements with the line manager.

## Performance Monitoring and Review

Staff who work over 22.8 hours per week are required to participate in an annual Performance Review process. The purpose of the performance monitoring is to assist employees to understand their role and job accountabilities, provide them with coaching and guidance in the performance of their role, provide an opportunity to discuss any difficulties they are facing and work together with the employee to resolve problems and issues faced. Opportunities for career and role development are explored and work practices and staff attitude in relation to our mission, values, policies and practices is assessed. Contribution to the overall goals and objectives at various levels within the organisation is also reviewed.

## Flexible Work Practices

Distinctive Options is committed to providing working arrangements for employees to access flexible working hours, the choice to work from home, the chance to move from part time to full time employment (or vice versa) or any other reasonable arrangement. These flexible work arrangements aim to enable employees to better balance work, personal life and family commitments.

# Our Operations



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# Operating Environment

The operating environment continues to increase in complexity, providing a multifaceted challenge for Distinctive Options.

## Accreditations and Government Issues

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) provide funding for many of the organisation’s participants. A majority of participants have now transitioned across to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), however the organisation continues to meet the requirements of both regulators. Beyond this, participants above the age of 65 are moving into the federal My Aged Care system.

Various reports have raised issues about the NDIS and the NDIA, including the high number of complaints about the scheme, wait times for meetings and reviews, lack of qualified and knowledgeable planners, and questions about the sustainability of the scheme costs. With set unit prices provided by the NDIA, a number of disability services have reported financial challenges and a reduced ability to provide the services required by participants.

The management team works diligently throughout the year to ensure the organisation is compliant with legislation. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation takes place through internal reviews and audits. These activities have allowed Distinctive Options to meet, and even exceed, state and federal legislation requirements.

## Impact of Government Policies

Distinctive Options is required to comply with standards, service delivery contracts and legislative obligations from both state and federal bodies. Government policies have had a particularly significant impact on Distinctive Options throughout the previous 12 months. As the sector transitions into the NDIS, there has been a need to balance the policies and regulations of both the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Distinctive Options has continued to undertake State Government quality assurance requirements through regular independent audits against the Disability Standards.

Distinctive Options is further guided by legislation, regulation and standards in regard to issues of child protection, participant welfare, privacy and confidentiality, health and safety, industrial relations, and records management.

As a charity and not-for-profit organisation, Distinctive Options also endeavours to meet the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), including the submission of the Annual Information Statement and financial documentation. Financial and accounting matters are further subject to the requirements of the Corporations Act 2001 and Australian Accounting Standards.

## Research, Development and Technology-Related Issues

Distinctive Options actively participates in a number of partnerships and networks. These opportunities allow our Board of Directors, managers and key staff to stay well-informed of the latest research and development occurring across the disability sector throughout Australia and internationally.

As a member of the peak body National Disability Services (NDS), our management and key staff are actively involved in various sessions on key issues affecting the sector throughout the year.

The CEO and members of the management team are active participants of the International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL), a forum that brings leaders from across the world together to discuss best practice models and innovations.

The CEO is also a member of the Harvard Business Review (HBR) Advisory Council and the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD). The HBR Advisory Council brings leaders together to share their opinions and views with peers on current business issues and research findings.



## Continuous Improvement

Quality management at Distinctive Options is managed through a cycle of internal audits and ongoing continuous improvement. Our Quality Management System (QMS) is certified as AS/NZS ISO 9001:2016 compliant. Monthly QMS meetings are attended by the senior management team to ensure all members are involved in the continuous improvement process. Changes to QMS documents are communicated via staff emails, the staff newsletter or at the monthly QMS meeting to the senior management team who share the information with any staff affected by the changes.

## Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability

With a goal to integrate sustainable development into all of our activities, we are committed to minimising our impact on the environment. Some of the measures we have put into place to support this are:

- Conserving natural resources by reusing and recycling, including recycling toner cartridges and using electronic communication where possible
- Using energy responsibly throughout the organisation
- Working with suppliers who promote sound environmental practices
- Supporting all of our participants to act in an environmentally responsible manner



# Marketing

## Marketing Events

Managers and coordinators attended many expos and information sessions across Victoria over the past 12 months, with a goal to communicate and promote Distinctive Options to a wider audience. Participants supported this goal by attending alongside staff at many of these events, providing their own ideas and opinions about the organisation. This is an initiative that always invites positive comments and feedback, with many other services only sending staff to marketing opportunities. This year, Distinctive Options hosted stalls at events including the Melton CARE Expo, Our Choice Expo in Bendigo, Brimbank Disability Expo, Hume City Council Disability Expo and many more!

## Brand Awareness

This year, brand awareness has been developed through printed and online material, video production, strategic initiatives and attendance at events. Corporate Services have worked on brand integrity and improving the quality and consistency of marketing materials. New banners were designed and have been used at various internal and external events. The organisation also developed business cards and NDIS brochures to bring fresh materials to the organisation.

## Social Media

We have seen a huge growth in our social media presence on Facebook in the last twelve months. As of June 30, our Facebook page has 1197 likes, up from 743 likes the same time last year. Reach, the number of people seeing our posts on their newsfeeds, has increased from 422 people to 584 people per day. Information about our services and participants is provided, with around five posts each week. We are very grateful for the staff who volunteer their time to update our Facebook page with posts and photos, and who respond to the various enquiries that come through to the page every day.



# The Way Forward

After what was a challenging and demanding 2017-18 year for both the Board and management, the way forward has positive indicators on a number of fronts.

## Service Growth and Development

Distinctive Options is a quality, innovative, niche disability service provider. The organisation doesn't pretend to be everything to everyone, but we do pride ourselves on the quality of services offered along with innovative support options. Whilst a few may disagree with our internal assessment or view, evidence clearly shows the majority of families, people supported and our business or community partners agree. Over the past two years the growth in client numbers has been 27.9% in 2016-17 and 41.8% in 2017-18, with similar growth in support hours, providing one major source of evidence. Already in the first quarter of 2018-19 this client number growth sits at 11%. Our unfunded NDIS Coordinator staff member who provides specialist service advice to families is part of the reason for this growth. Coupled with services like Outreach and the smaller Community Connect sites, these appeal very much to families and participants because of their innovative approach. They offer greater choice and flexibility for individuals to achieve their life goals.

## Commercial Acumen and Business Focus

Whilst Distinctive Options will always have a clear focus on our support services and delivery, under a NDIS organisations must take a more commercial stance in order to continue to be sustainable. For our organisation this meant employing a new Chief Financial Officer who commenced in September 2018. It also means more 'back of office' administration staff have been needed to ensure NDIS and user pays billing is accurate and timely to meet cash flow needs. Prompt recovery of debts owed has to be a key focus of not for profits in the new environment.

Even the concept of the term "Not For Profit" provides a misnomer in its name. Not for profits must, and have to, generate profits in order to continue to develop, refine and innovate support services or options for people. For the first quarter of 2018-19, Distinctive Options is financially better placed than it was at the end of June 2018.

In July 2018, Distinctive Options successfully tendered for a new \$2.9m contract with the Department of Education and Training to deliver an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) demonstration project. We have partnered with another disability service on the other side of Melbourne as a consortium to deliver these services at Specialist Schools in Bendigo, St Albans, Officer and Aspendale. For Distinctive Options, this means OSCH programs will be delivered at three school sites, two in Bendigo and one in St Albans. Whilst this is only currently a short term contract, if successful it could become a new longer term income stream for the organisation outside of NDIS funding. An interesting side line or spin off to this project is the ability for Distinctive Options to create a new organisational employment arm for eligible supported employees in a social enterprise-type environment. These supported employees will be paid a proper full adult wage rate.

Marketing of our services and options is another part of the commercial needs. Traditionally, disability services have not done a lot of this, relying on word of mouth. In today's competitive NDIS world, word of mouth may not be enough. Paying for marketing has to be considered in light of funding and profit margins as no NDIS funding directly covers marketing costs and other overhead expenses either.

## The Future

Distinctive Options is well placed to continue to grow and thrive in a highly competitive disability market place. Mergers or acquisitions are regular occurrences in the sector and Distinctive Options is very conscious of this, along with the fact that bigger is not necessarily better if you are inheriting either a dysfunctional or viably challenged organisation as part of a merger. Opportunities come and go, so an organisation must be vigilant in what it considers and with what organisation. Our professional Board and management vigorously scrutinise new business cases to ensure they meet organisational and community needs, and that any new potential opportunities are capable of being viable long term. Because of the development and evolution of our organisational operational platforms, Distinctive Options is ready to embrace and successfully meet sector changes or opportunities now and into the future.

# Our Governance



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# Board of Directors

The Distinctive Options Board of Directors is comprised of a number of individuals who bring a range of governance skills to the organisation. The role of a Director is voluntary and unpaid, with each member choosing to share their experience and skills with Distinctive Options. The Board met 14 times in the previous 12 months to ensure professional governance was in place and maintained. This is not restricted to just financial operations, but includes a variety of strategic objectives they have set for the organisation. The major governance issue throughout the year was clearly cash flow and cash reserves as we transitioned into the world of the NDIS. The Board was faced with a number of challenges throughout the year in consultation with the CEO. Remedial action was taken once issues were identified to ensure the long term sustainability of the organisation.



**Anthony Aboud**  
Chairperson

Anthony joined the Board in 2013, taking on the Chairperson role in December 2015. He brings over 20 years of experience in banking and financial services and has held a number of senior leadership roles spanning strategy, operations, process improvement, sales, transformational change programs and customer experience.

Anthony holds a Masters of Business Administration. He is currently working as a self-employed contractor, utilising his banking and financial services background.

In addition to his role on the Board at Distinctive Options, Anthony holds an advisory role with Save The Children.



**Terry Rodrigues**  
Deputy Chairperson  
Member of the Audit and Risk Committee

Terry joined the Board in 2012 and retired from the public service in 2015 after 24 years. During the course of his career, he held operational, supervisory, investigative and managerial roles at both Melbourne and Darwin Airports.

Terry brings a wealth of knowledge around examining and implementing policy and procedural matters. He has experience in internal and external audits, risk management issues and the formulation and execution of operational endeavours. During his time at the Airports, Terry was able to meet various celebrities, including the Queen, several Prime Ministers, actors and military heads.

Terry holds a Bachelor of Commerce. He previously worked in the banking industry in Karachi where he was employed as an accounts officer with the largest commercial bank in Pakistan.



**Darren Quigley**  
Chairperson of the Audit  
and Risk Committee

Darren has been a member of the Board for four years, specialising in the field of accounting and law. He has over 25 years of experience in senior financial management roles, predominately in the public sector.

Darren is a Certified Practising Accountant. He has a Degree in Business majoring in accounting and law, as well as an Advanced Diploma in Financial Planning. He currently works for the Department of Education as a facilities manager. He is also a black-belt karate instructor with over 30 years' experience and volunteers for Sunbury State Emergency Service.



**Kalma Rathouski**  
Chairperson of the Strategy  
and Marketing Committee

Kalma is into her third year of being on the Board. She holds a Master in Social Science and has over 13 years of experience working for the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. In this role, Kalma gained experience in conflict resolution, investigations, stakeholder management and quality management.

More recently, Kalma was the Executive Officer of Lancefield and Romsey Community Financial Services.



**Derek Jones**  
Chairperson of the  
Governance Committee

Derek is a finance professional (FCPA) who has been a director with Distinctive Options for over two years. He has had a significant career in both the public and private sectors, including 15 years as a Finance Manager and Chief Financial Officer of Sustainability Victoria. He is currently working part time in a financial role.

Derek's areas of expertise include financial reporting, risk management, strategic planning, governance and compliance outcomes aligned to an organisation's strategic objectives.



**Graham Holt**  
**Member of the Strategy  
 and Marketing Committee**

Graham has over 30 years of water industry experience in Australia and internationally. He has experience in leading large customer service and operational teams. He is currently employed as the General Manager Customer and Community Relations at Western Water where he is responsible for managing customer support programs, communications, community engagement, network operations and water supply operations.

Graham brings a wealth of experience to the Board, specialising in customer service, marketing, media and communications. He has a strong understanding of occupational health and safety, the impact of culture on people’s needs, and the implementation and monitoring of Key Performance Indicators.



**Nancy Peat**  
**Member of the Strategy  
 and Marketing Committee**

Nancy is the National Insurance Manager at Mercer Financial Advice. She has worked in financial services for over 30 years, predominately in the insurance space. Nancy has a personal connection to the disability sector, with a grandson who has Autism Spectrum Disorder.

She joined the Board in 2018 to give back to the community and gain valuable experience. She brings valuable skills in business development, relationship building, financial management and marketing capabilities.



**Simon McKenzie**  
**Member of the  
 Governance Committee**

Simon currently manages the office of the Victorian Public Transport Ombudsman (PTO) which helps people resolve disputes about public transport issues including accessibility. He is highly experienced in dispute resolution, stakeholder engagement, company operations and regulatory affairs.

Simon is an admitted lawyer with a commerce degree and is a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

# Corporate Governance

Distinctive Options is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 and registered as a charity under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (ACNC Act). Ultimate responsibility for the governance of Distinctive Options rests with the Board of Directors.

## The Board's Role

The Board's role is to ensure Distinctive Options achieves its objectives and business goals whilst avoiding unacceptable actions and situations.

The Board is responsible for:

- Providing strategic leadership and setting organisational direction and goals
- Encouraging diversity of opinions and views
- Accepting collective responsibility for its decisions
- Providing a clear distinction between the Board and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) roles
- Working from an informed, well-researched information base
- Examining alternatives for action and planning according to the purposes and aims of Distinctive Options
- Ensuring that agreed actions are achievable, implemented and monitored
- Monitoring Distinctive Options' activities and financial position through detailed and specific reports to ensure that Distinctive Options' objectives are being met and the organisation is meeting its statutory and legal obligations
- Regularly reviewing Distinctive Options' goals in the light of participants' needs and in changing social and economic contexts

These responsibilities are set out in the Board's Charter.

## Board Committees

The Board operates three committees that are charged with the responsibility to consider specific issues in detail and make recommendations to the Board (refer to Page 50 of this Annual Report for more details).

## Board Meetings

The Board holds a minimum of 11 meetings per year, with additional meetings scheduled as required. The Board also meets periodically to participate in Strategic Planning and other important issues. The Chief Executive Officer participates in Board Meetings. Agenda setting is completed collaboratively among the Board Chair, Committee Chairs and Chief Executive Officer with final approval by the Board Chair.

## Board Members

Board members receive no remuneration for their services. They may be reimbursed for reasonable costs incurred due to Board activities. The Constitution provides an indemnity to directors. The Constitution specifies that:

- The minimum number of members shall be five
- No employees of the company, including the chief executive, can be a director of the company
- Directors are appointed for a maximum of three terms of three years each, expiring at the ninth Annual General Meeting following the appointment.
- Board members receive written guidance of the terms and conditions of their appointment and complete a structured induction program when first appointed.

## The Chair

The Board Chair is elected by the Board and is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Board provides vision and guidance to Distinctive Options
- Ensuring effective Board meetings
- Ensuring matters are considered in a timely, transparent matter
- Guiding the effectiveness and development of the Board and individual directors

## Management Responsibility

The Board has formally delegated responsibility for daily operations at Distinctive Options to the Chief Executive Officer and the senior management team (refer to Page 35 of this Annual Report for more details).



Director	Appointment Date	Term Expires
Terence Rodrigues	4th June 2012	AGM 2020
Anthony Aboud	12th March 2013	AGM 2021
Darren Quigley	6th June 2014	AGM 2022
Kalma Rathouski	16th March 2015	AGM 2023
Derek Jones	23th February 2016	AGM 2024
Graham Holt	27th February 2018	AGM 2026
Simon McKenzie	27th March 2018	AGM 2026
Nancy Peat	24th April 2018	AGM 2026

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Members	9	8	8	7	8

## Accountability

As the responsible body, the Board is accountable to:

- The members of the Company
- Relevant government disability funding bodies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Disability Insurance Agency and the Department of Education and Training
- The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
- The community
- The laws (as amended) relating to the:
  - Charities Act [Commonwealth]
  - Corporations Act [Commonwealth]
  - Occupational Health and Safety Act [Victorian]
  - Industrial Relations
  - Discriminatory Practices
  - Disability Services Act [Commonwealth]
  - Disability Discrimination Act [Commonwealth]
  - The Privacy Act [Commonwealth]

## Conduct, Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

Board members are required to comply with relevant laws and codes of conduct. They must act with integrity, good faith, fairness and honesty at all times. Our whistleblower policy reinforces this culture and allows any individual to report improper conduct without fear of retribution, including matters relating to governance. Each Board member is made aware of Distinctive Options' Code of Conduct and the Governance Policy that outlines the requirements of Ethical Practice, Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality. Potential conflicts at the Board level are declared, recorded and responded to in accordance with the Governance Policy. Each member of the Board is required to complete a Confidentiality Agreement as part of the induction process.

## Independent Advice

The Board, through the CEO, accesses independent advice from a number of sources. In regards to financial matters, this may be via auditors. For legal matters, this may be through the organisation's VMIA insurance or other legal services as required. For industrial relations, the organisation relies on advice from Workplace Legal.

## Board Review

The Board periodically reviews its own performance for its development and quality assurance. This year, they have engaged Leadership Victoria to undertake a Board Mentoring Program.

# Committees

## Audit and Risk Committee

Members: Darren Quigley (Chairperson), Terry Rodrigues

The Audit and Risk Committee assists the Board to:

- Review monthly financial reports and the annual budget cycle and recommend action to the Board
- Endorse the budget for Board approval and monitor expenditure
- Review the Risk Management Policy and endorse for Board approval
- Review the Risk Register on a quarterly basis
- Ensure there are adequate funds and resources for Distinctive Options to meet its statutory and legal obligations
- Monitor adopted liquidity and viability ratios contained within the Balanced Scorecard
- Ensure relevant legal requirements are met

## Strategy and Marketing Committee

Members: Kalma Rathouski (Chairperson), Nancy Peat, Graham Holt

The Strategy and Marketing Committee assists the Board to:

- Review the Vision, Mission and Values
- Oversee management’s organisational membership structure and advise on the recruitment of new members
- Review marketing plans, business plans, new business proposals/ opportunities for growing/ developing Distinctive Options, ensuring alignment with strategic plan
- Review strategic and marketing proposals and endorse for Board consideration/approval
- Review feedback on the quality of services and make recommendations to the Board
- Monitor progress of approved plans by quarterly monitoring of a Balanced Scorecard

## Governance Committee

Members: Derek Jones (Chairperson), Simon McKenzie

The Governance Committee assists the Board to:

- Review new and amended key policies prepared by management and endorse them for Board approval
- Develop a process for Board appointments and the associated recruitment of new Directors
- Develop and monitor Board-level policies that include strategic outcomes
- Appoint and hold the CEO accountable for implementing the strategic and business plan within company policy and approved budget
- Ensure the Board is functioning well, review the work of the Board and plan for succession and orientation of Board members

Director	Board		Committees					
	Director’s Meetings		Audit & Risk		Strategy & Marketing		Governance	
	Eligible	Attended	Eligible	Attended	Eligible	Attended	Eligible	Attended
Anthony Aboud	14	12			5	5		
Terence Rodrigues	14	13	9	9				
Darren Quigley	14	14	9	9				
Kalma Rathouski	10	8			8	8		
Derek Jones	14	12					3	2
Graham Holt	6	6			3	3		
Simon McKenzie	6	6					1	1
Nancy Peat	6	5			3	3		

# Risk Management

Distinctive Options is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all employees, participants and visitors. Risk management is recognised as an integral part of good management practice. The Board of Directors and CEO are responsible for the overall risk management of Distinctive Options through the implementation and monitoring of a strategic and operational risk framework. They oversee a variety of activities to ensure risks are effectively identified, analysed, treated, monitored and communicated.

As part of the risk management process, Distinctive Options:

- Promotes and supports good risk management practices
- Implements procedures to reduce risk
- Recognises that successful risk management is the responsibility of all personnel
- Encourages the identification and reporting of potential risks
- Provides thorough induction processes and training for staff in proactive and preventative practice to minimise the likelihood and impact of incidents
- Monitors the risk management system and incidents at all levels to identify and address trends and systemic issues

## Strategic and Business Planning

The Board of Directors is responsible for monitoring the organisation’s performance concerning the delivery of Strategic Objectives. This is supported through detailed reporting processes from Management that occurs monthly, quarterly and annually. Reporting of finances is particularly important, with monthly results reported against the Budget and revised annual forecasts conducted regularly.

## Internal Auditing

Internal audits occur at planned intervals to ensure the organisation is conforming to its quality requirements and to the requirements of ISO 9001. Audits are prioritised according to level of risk and are conducted across all areas of the organisation including governance, finance, operations, systems, processes and controls.

## Policies

The Board of Directors regularly contributes to governance policy reviews, including annual review of each Committee’s Terms of Reference.

## Risk Register

Distinctive Options maintains a Risk Register that records all identified risks for the organisation. The risks are categorised into four categories:

1. Business Viability and Sustainability
2. Values, Ethics and Reputation
3. Information Technology Management
4. Occupational Health and Safety

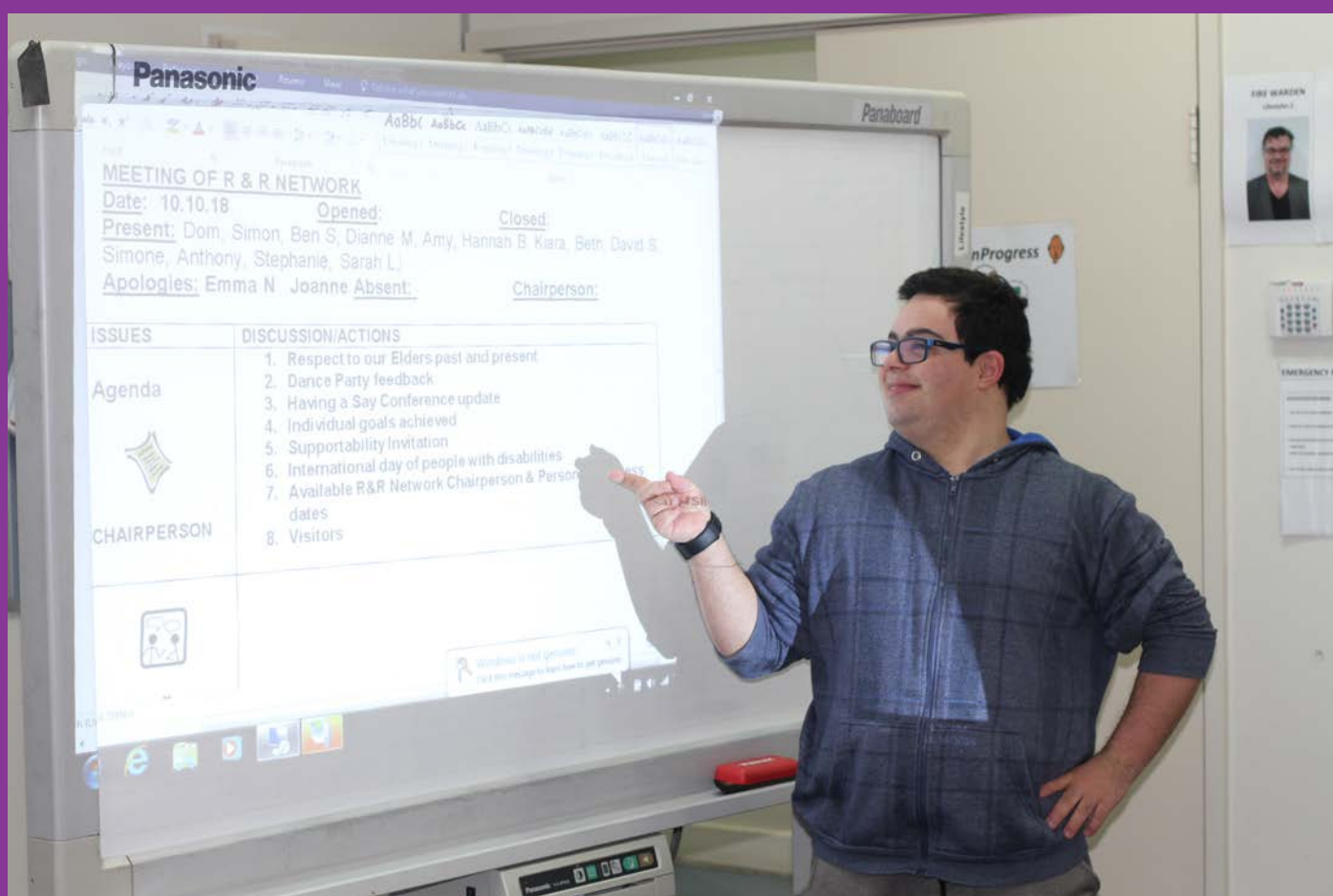
The Risk Register provides details about each identified risk, as well as information on how the risks have been assessed through the risk matrix.

## Risk Appetite

Risk appetite is the level of risk an organisation is prepared to take in pursuit of its objectives. A risk appetite guideline is in place to provide guidance to the Board of Directors and Management in making risk management decisions. The guidelines provide advice about the expected reasonable level of controlled risk to be achieved. Risk appetite also considers the prudent and efficient allocation of resources across various functions and the organisation’s accountability to various stakeholders. Each objective within the Strategic Plan is matched with a risk appetite rating, with most rated as Cautious or Open.

Appetite	Rating
Open	4
Cautious	3
Minimal	2
Adverse	1

# Our Finances



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# Financial Performance

## Statement of Financial Performance

Year Ended June 30 2018

	Note	2018 \$	2017 \$
Revenue	3	5,587,539	4,131,770
Employee benefit expenses		(4,890,414)	(3,158,720)
Client program costs		(115,832)	(122,613)
Rental expense		(217,944)	(185,663)
Depreciation expense		(91,343)	(61,345)
Motor vehicle expenses		(77,542)	(68,290)
Telephone		(42,803)	(19,342)
Staff amenities		(26,840)	(13,455)
Computer expenses		(108,450)	(77,067)
Consultancy fees		(10,621)	(14,909)
Training		(28,693)	(28,152)
Repairs and maintenance		(23,974)	(19,957)
Printing		(40,115)	(24,047)
Subscriptions		(15,098)	(30,545)
Equipment leases		(11,232)	(6,839)
Board of Management costs		(7,181)	(1,030)
Other expenses		(227,725)	(114,179)
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>		<b>(348,223)</b>	185,617
Other comprehensive income		-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>(348,223)</b>	185,617

The complete financial information and the accompanying notes can be viewed at Head Office.

Suite 12  
36 Macedon Street  
Sunbury VIC 3429  
03 9740 7100

ABN: 89 090 842 470

# Financial Position

## Statement of Financial Position

At June 30 2018

	Note	2018 \$	2017 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	339,928	479,073
Trade and other receivables	5	698,652	300,806
Financial assets	6	263,812	636,437
Other current assets	7	11,467	30,234
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>1,313,859</b>	<b>1,446,550</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>			
Plant and equipment		348,623	302,137
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>		<b>348,623</b>	<b>302,137</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>1,662,482</b>	<b>1,748,687</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	9	398,238	216,872
Provisions	10	367,675	243,183
Other liabilities	11	-	46,597
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>765,913</b>	<b>506,652</b>
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>			
Provisions	10	69,593	66,836
<b>Total Non-Current Liabilities</b>		<b>69,593</b>	<b>66,836</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>835,506</b>	<b>573,488</b>
	<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>826,976</b>	<b>1,175,199</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Retained earnings		826,976	1,175,199
	<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>826,976</b>	<b>1,175,199</b>

# Equity and Cash Flow

## Statement of Changes in Equity

Year Ended June 30 2018

	Note	Retained Earnings \$	Total \$
2018			
<b>Balance July 1 2017</b>		<b>1,175,199</b>	1,175,199
Surplus for the year		(348,223)	(348,223)
<b>Balance 30 June 2016</b>		<b>826,976</b>	826,976
2017			
<b>Balance 1 July 2016</b>		<b>989,582</b>	989,582
Deficit for the year		185,617	185,617
<b>Balance 30 June 2017</b>		<b>1,175,199</b>	1,175,199

## Statement of Cash Flows

Year Ended June 30 2018

	Note	2018 \$	2017 \$
<b>Cash Flows From Operating Activities:</b>			
Receipts from customers, government and other funding		<b>5,455,415</b>	4,129,189
Payments to suppliers and employees		(5,852,455)	(4,016,761)
Interest received		<b>23,099</b>	15,232
<b>Net Cash Provided by/(Used In) Operating Activities</b>	19	<b>(373,941)</b>	127,660
<b>Cash Flows From Investing Activities:</b>			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		<b>603</b>	-
Payment for property, plant and equipment		(138,432)	(129,491)
Redemption/(Placement) of term deposits		<b>372,625</b>	(636,437)
<b>Net cash used by investing activities</b>		<b>234,796</b>	(765,928)
<b>Net Increase In Cash and Cash Equivalents Held</b>		<b>(139,145)</b>	(638,268)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		<b>479,073</b>	1,117,341
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of financial year</b>	4	<b>339,928</b>	479,073

# Director's Declaration

## Principal Activities

Distinctive Options principal activities are to provide viable and sustainable disability support services to people in line with the organisation's Constitution and as a registered public benevolent institution (charity) and a deductible gift recipient.

## Short and Long Term Objectives

Under Distinctive Options' Strategic Plan, its short and long term objectives are centred on the strategic intent to grow our services to assist and empower those we support, helping them achieve their potential to gain equality and inclusion in the community.

## Strategy for Achieving the Objectives

Distinctive Options strategy for achieving the objectives is contained within the organisation's Strategic Plan around four key pillars: be resilient, be distinctive, be sustainable and be progressive. Within the Strategic Plan, Distinctive Options has 9 key strategic objectives which underpin these four pillars.

## Performance Measures

The organisation uses a Balanced Scorecard to measure operational performance against the strategic objectives. A summary of the results from the Balanced Scorecard are contained in the Annual Report. Some of these performance measures are based around maintaining and growing Distinctive Options competitive advantage.

## Members' Guarantee

Distinctive Options Ltd is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of, and for the purpose of winding up of the company, the amount capable of being called up from each member and any person or association who ceased to be a member in the year prior to the winding up, is limited to \$ NIL for members that are corporations and \$20 for all other members, subject to the provisions of the company's constitution.

At 30 June 2018, the collective liability of members was \$160 (2017: \$140).

## Board of Directors

Details and skills relating to each Director are included in the Annual Report under Board of Directors contained in the Governance and Management section.

## Other Items

The CEO is Distinctive Options' appointed company secretary.

## Meetings of Directors

During the financial year, 34 meetings of Directors (including committees of Directors) were held. Each Director's attendance rate at meetings is as per the table below.

Board meetings are held generally on the final Tuesday of each month, commencing at 6:30pm, at the head office, Suite 12, 36 Macedon Street, Sunbury.

## Auditor's Independence Declaration

The lead auditor's independence Declaration for the year ended 30 June 2018 can be found on Page 58.



### Distinctive Options Ltd


ABN: 89 090 842 470


#### Directors' Declaration

In the opinion of the Directors of Distinctive Options Ltd:

- a) The financial statements and notes of Distinctive Options are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:
  - i) Giving a true and fair view of its financial position as at 30 June 2018 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
  - ii) Complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Reduced Disclosure Requirements (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*; and
- b) There are reasonable grounds to believe that Distinctive Options Ltd will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Directors.

Director .....   
Anthony Aboud

Director .....   
Sharon Quigley.

Dated this 30 day of October 2018

## Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

### Independent Audit Report to the members of Distinctive Options Ltd

#### Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

#### Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a general purpose - reduced disclosure financial report of Distinctive Options Ltd, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2018, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and managements' assertion statement.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the Company's financial position as at 30 June 2018 and of its financial performance for the year ended; and
- (ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Reduced Disclosure Requirements and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

#### Basis of Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's *APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

#### Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance

The board are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards - Reduced Disclosure Requirements and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the board is responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the board either intends to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

## Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

### Auditors Independence Declaration

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June 2018 there have been no contraventions of:

- a. the auditor independence requirements of the 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- b. any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.



Seward Dawson



Jeffrey Tulk  
Partner

Blackburn  
Dated: 30 October 2018



Australian  
**Charities** and  
Not-for-profits  
Commission



THIS CERTIFIES THAT

**Distinctive Options**

ABN:89 090 842 470

IS A REGISTERED CHARITY  
AND HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM THE

**Australian Taxation Office**

TO THE

**Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission**

ON THE DATE OF  
**3 December 2012**

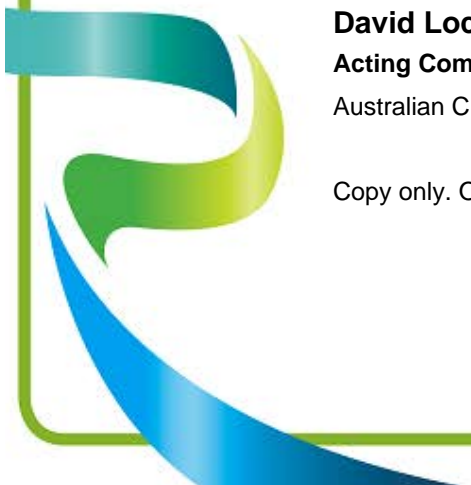
CERTIFIED BY

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. A. Locke".

**David Locke**  
**Acting Commissioner**

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

Copy only. Original available on request



# Appendixes



Glossary and Index

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Support Us

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# Glossary and Index

## Definitions

Accreditation	VALIDation that an organisation meets Australian or international quality standards
Balanced scorecard	Framework that allows performance against strategic goals to be measured
Continuous improvement	A structured ongoing effort to improve processes and services
Governance	The system by which the organisation is controlled, operates and held to account
Mission	A declaration of the organisation's core purpose and focus
Risk appetite	The amount and type of risk an organisation is willing to take to meet objectives
Risk management	A process used to identify, assess and treat risks to the organisation
Risk register	The tool used to identify, estimate, evaluate and counter-measure risk
Standards	Specific requirements about how an organisation should function
Strategy	The organisation's working plan for achieving its vision
Vision	A declaration of what the organisation desires to achieve

## Acronyms

ACNC	Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ASC	After School Care
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDS	National Disability Services
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
QMS	Quality Management System

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# Support Us

There are many ways you can support Distinctive Options to continue supporting people to achieve their goals and improve their quality of life. External support continues to become more important as we transition into the NDIS. As part of the NDIS, funding can only be used for staff entitlements, with a slight margin for running the business. This gives participants more choice and control over the supports that they access, but results in a lack of income for resources, equipment, program development and evaluation is difficult to come by. To ensure high quality programs and environments can continue to be provided as our organisation rapidly expands, the support of our community is greatly appreciated. Here are some of the ways that you can make a difference in the lives of our participants.



## Donate

Every donation we receive makes a difference to the lives of people with a disability. The donations we receive are used to provide high quality services and supports to the people in our community who need it most. You can set up monthly contributions or provide a one-off donation by calling us on 03 9740 7100. As a charity organisation, all donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

## Leave a Bequest

You can choose to leave a bequest to Distinctive Options in your Will. This legacy provides a significant contribution to the work that we do in the community and helps to secure the future of Distinctive Options. Contact your solicitor or call us on 03 9740 7100 to arrange this.



## Volunteer

Becoming a volunteer at Distinctive Options gives you the opportunity to share your time and skills with the people who need it most in our community. Volunteers play a significant role in improving the lives of adults and children with a disability. If you are interested in volunteering for Distinctive Options, you can contact us on 03 9740 7100.

## Support an Event or Fundraiser

Throughout the year, Distinctive Options holds events to raise awareness and generate funding for people with a disability and other worthy causes, including the Good Friday Appeal and the Annual Art Show. If you would like to participate in an event or support a fundraiser, please contact us on 03 9740 7100. Information about events is also provided at [facebook.com/distinctiveoptions](https://facebook.com/distinctiveoptions)





## Visit Us



Suite 12  
36 Macedon Street  
Sunbury VIC 3429

## Write To Us



Distinctive Options  
PO Box 41  
Sunbury VIC 3429

## Contact Us



03 9740 7100



info@d-o.com.au

## Accessibility

This publication is available in alternative formats on request.

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[instagam.com/distinctive\\_options](https://instagam.com/distinctive_options)

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are the custodians of the land on which we work.

