

Extraordinary and Exceptional!

Reflecting extraordinary community circumstances under which exceptional performance was achieved



DistinctiveOptions

In Life

2021 Annual Report



About this report

This Report provides information about our activities, operations, highlights and performance on objectives for the 2020-2021 financial year. It reflects the indicators from our Strategic Plan. We created our report with input and ideas from management, staff, participants and the Board to provide a detailed reflection about our service, our impacts and our role in the communities we serve.

Theme

Extraordinary and Exceptional!

Our theme this year reflects the extraordinary circumstances under which the Victorian community, families and participants, and our organisation had to operate during the ongoing COVID pandemic. This included four Victorian lockdowns and continuing restrictions throughout 2020-2021. Despite these circumstances, Distinctive Options provided a safe environment for all participants and staff, provided quality, innovative supports offering choice, we delivered services in a variety of ways and mediums, and we developed new growth paths. An exceptional performance in a very trying year!

Indigenous acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Audience

This report has been written for the following stakeholders: participants, their families and supporters, federal and state government partners, our local communities and partners and the Distinctive Options Directors and staff members who share and deliver our collective vision and mission.

Feedback

We welcome and appreciate all feedback on this report. You can provide feedback via the contact details on the back cover of this report.

Accessibility

This report has been optimised for screen readers and other assistive devices used by people with a disability. The report is available in PDF on our website or in other alternative formats on request to Head Office.

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MISSION

We offer real life choices for people with disabilities, their families and supporters.

VISION

We assist people to fulfil their potential and gain equality in the community.

VALUES

We provide quality services for people with disabilities to practice choice and control over their lives. We provide a unique experience through respect, flexibility and genuine intention. We are distinctive and innovative by helping people live the life they want and by being the best in all we do.

We apply these to all our interactions.

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Site Profiles

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About Us

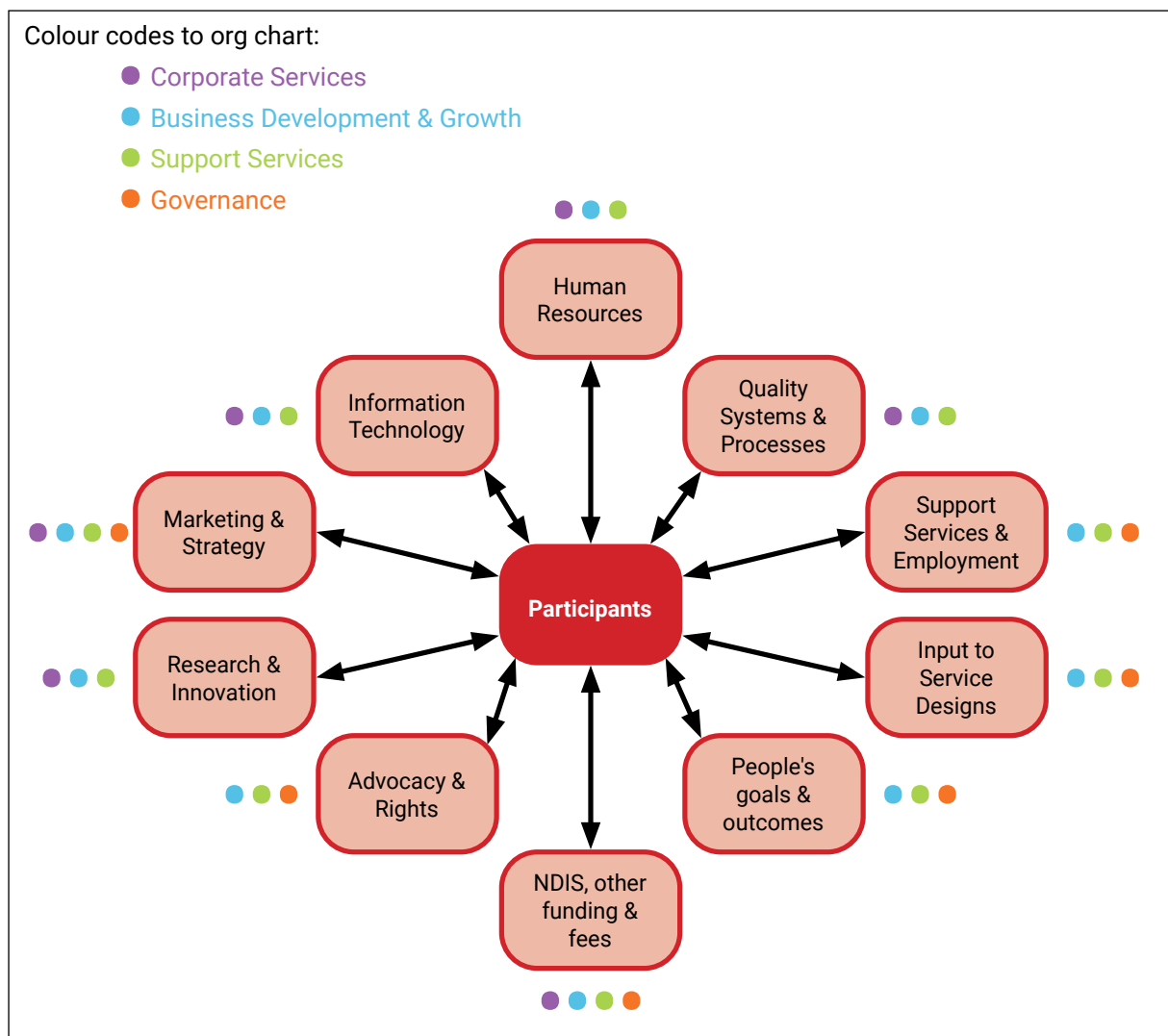
Participants enjoying exploring during a local community excursion



Organisation Overview

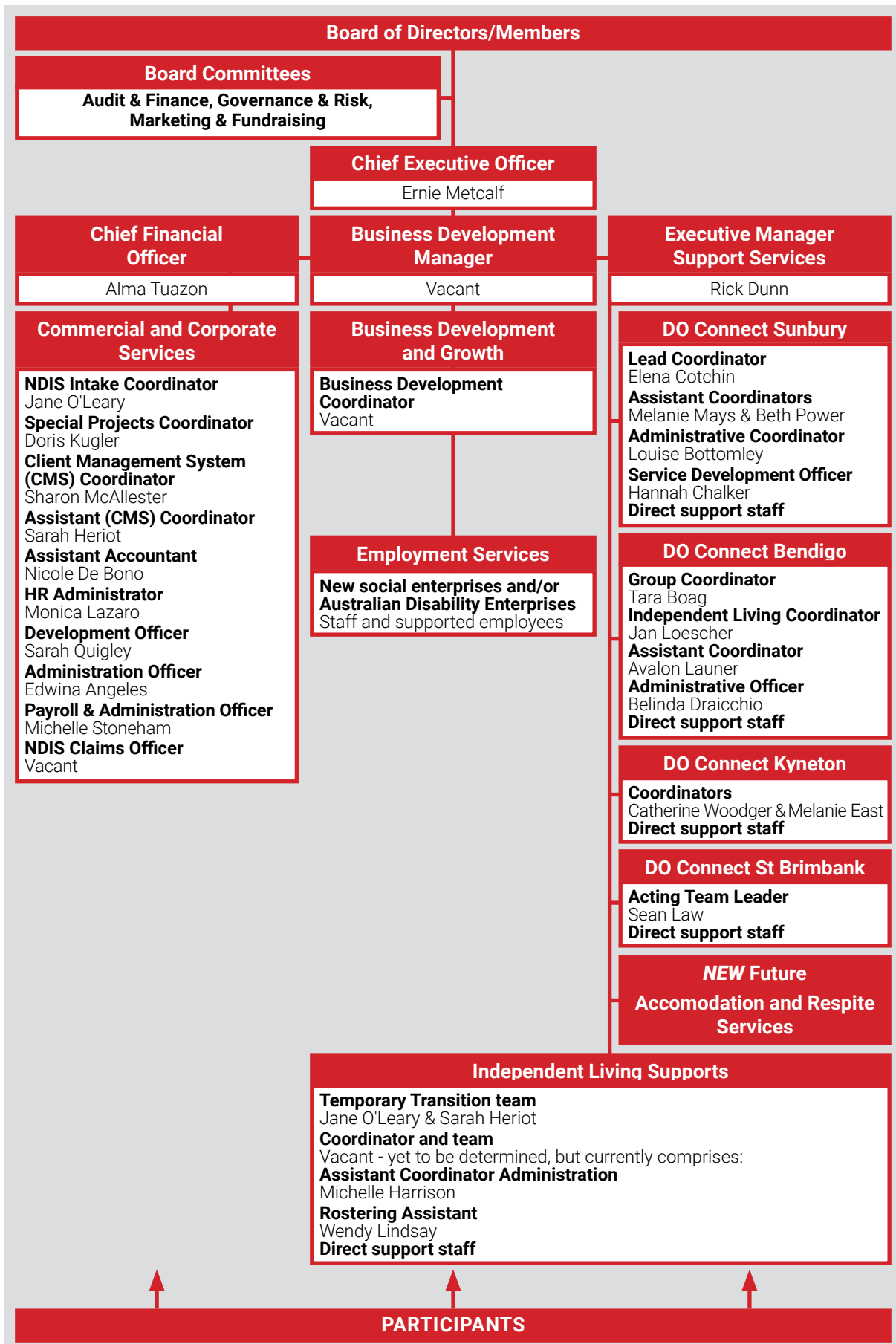
Who We Are

Officially, Distinctive Options is a registered not-for-profit endorsed deductible gift recipient charity. Because of commercial pressures placed on registered service providers under the NDIS, we see ourselves more importantly as a profit-for-purpose provider, so we can re-invest and grow service options for our participants. Established in 1985, we provide services to children and adults with a range of group and individual support options available. Distinctive Options has 194 employees and over 300 participants, operating from six individual sites across the north-central-west region of Victoria.

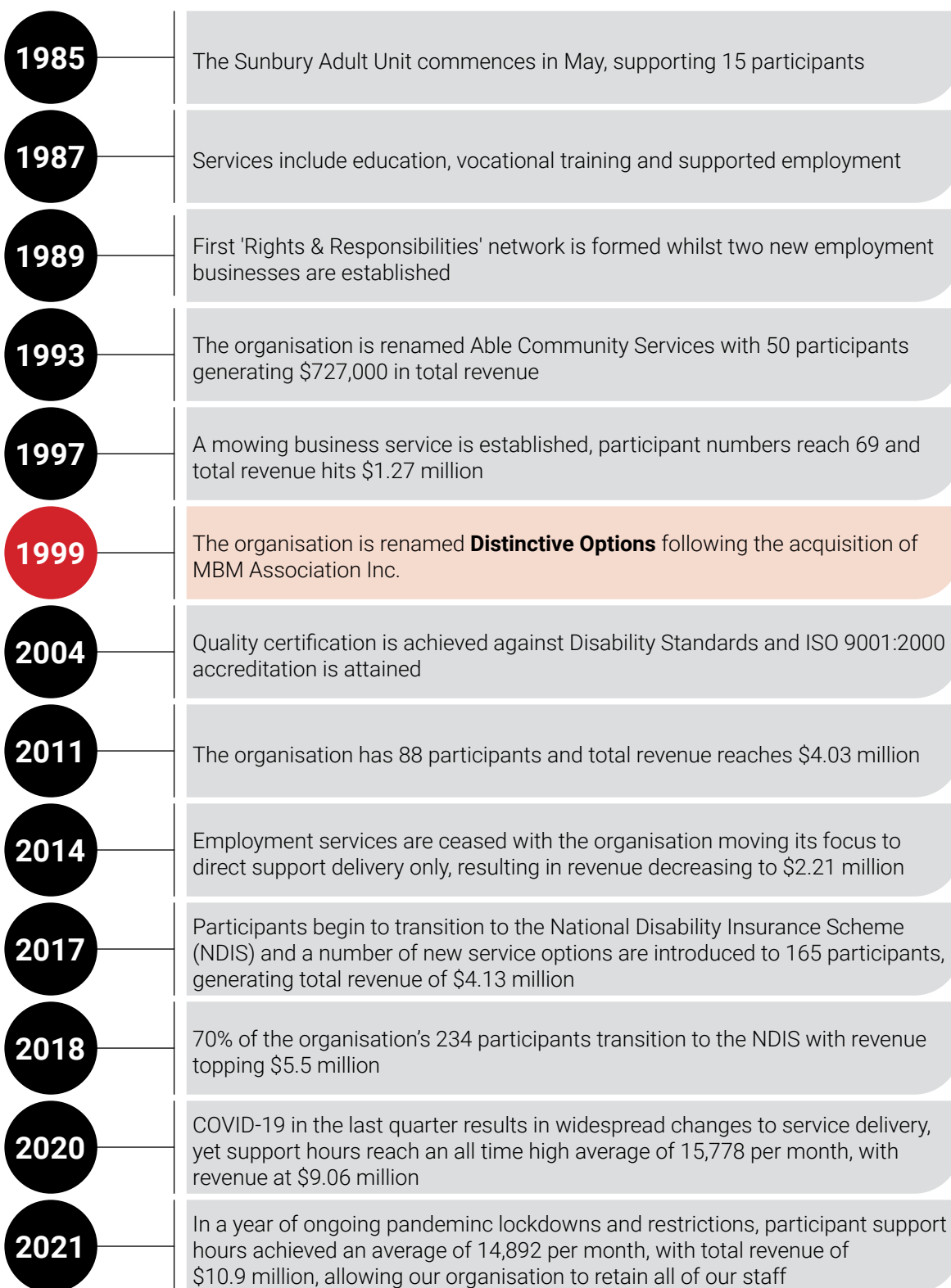


Our organisational chart was developed and established using the participant centric model, summarised above.

Organisation Chart



In December 1999, our organisation created Distinctive Options as a completely new entity, being a charity, and a company limited by guarantee. This followed merger discussions between two smaller disability service providers, Able Community Services, our former organisation, and the MBM Association, based in Melton, St Albans and Bacchus Marsh. Rather than a formal merger between the two organisations, both Able and MBM were wound up, transferring all of their assets and liabilities to the new company and registered charity, Distinctive Options. This change was an important 'fork in the road' for our organisation. A new vision was born!



Leading our organisation

As an Incorporated Association

Date from	Date to	Committee of Management President	Date from	Date to	
May-1985	Dec-1987	Gary Warner	May-1985	Dec-1991	Freda Watkin (<i>Director</i>)
Jan-1988	Dec-1989	Peter Tarr			
Jan-1990	Nov-1996	Alan McKie	Jan-1992	Jun-1992	Mary Wilson (<i>Acting Director</i>)
Nov-1996	Nov-1998	Gary Warner	Jul-1992	Mar-1998	Mary Wilson (<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>)
Nov-1998	Dec-1999	Bruce Palamountain	Jun-1998		Alan Huddle (<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>)

As a Company limited by guarantee

Date from	Date to	Board Chairperson	Date from	Date to	Chief Executive Officer
Dec-1999	Nov-2011	Maureen Judd		Jan-2001	Alan Huddle
Nov-2011	Nov-2012	Bruce Palamountain	Jan-2001	Feb-2013	Michael Donnelly
Nov-2012	Nov-2015	Anthony Kiley	Feb-2013	Jun-2014	Michael Hrvating (<i>General Manager</i>)
			Jun-2014	Nov-2016	Murray Dawson-Smith
Nov-2015	Nov-2020	Anthony Aboud	Nov-2016		Ernie Metcalf
Nov-2020		Simon McKenzie			

And in memory

Former Board Chairperson Maureen Judd sadly passed away in 2011. In recognition of her long service and leadership as Board Chair, the Board honoured her memory by naming rooms used by participants at the 36 Macedon Street, Sunbury site, the "Maureen Judd Centre".

Former Director Michael Hines sadly passed away in 2012. To honour the contribution made by Michael to Distinctive Options, particularly over the period 2003 to 2011, the Board approved in September 2012 a "Michael J Hines Award" that included a cash prize to participants who show they best embody 'dignity in adversity'.

Strategic Objectives

At Distinctive Options, we aim to grow our services to assist and empower those we support, helping each of our participants to gain equality and inclusion in the community. Everything we do is built around four key strategic objectives.

Be Resilient Our systems and processes help us grow strategically and sustainably.

Be Distinctive We attract the best staff, Management and Board by investing in and supporting them to perform at their best.

Be Sustainable We are financially sustainable with a focus on profit for purpose.

Be Progressive We effectively utilise our systems and processes under the NDIS.

A summary of our progress towards each of these objectives as detailed on Page 27.

Stakeholders

Stakeholder	We engage with them by...
Our participants and their supporters	Meetings, newsletters, surveys, memos, website, social media, plain English resources, Annual Report, invitation to Annual General Meeting
Our Board, staff and volunteers	Meetings, workshops, surveys, reference groups, committees, Annual Report, invitation to Annual General Meeting
Government regulators and funders	Data submission, reports, emails, site visits, participation in external audits
Sponsors and donors	Emails, private and public acknowledgments, Annual Report, invitation to Annual General Meeting
Local communities	Website, social media, advertising (radio and print), Annual Report, invitation to Annual General Meeting
The media	Invitations to events, emails, press releases
Informal partners	Emails, social media, public acknowledgments, meetings, invitation to Annual General Meeting
Contractors and suppliers	Emails, meetings, reviews

Feedback

Feedback plays an important role in service provision at Distinctive Options. It informs the supports we provide, the way we run our organisation and continuous improvements to our services. People can provide feedback to us in various ways, including:

- Using a Participant Feedback Form (provided to all participants when they commence and regularly throughout the year)
- Annual surveys, including the Participant Survey, Supporter Survey and Staff Survey
- Via our Facebook page
- Via email to info@d-o.com.au
- Through the Contact Us page on our website
- In person at any service to any member of staff



Pictured from left to right is our DO tennis team practicing: Participants Dean, Shane, Caitlin, Dom, Sarah and Stefan.

Some of the great compliments received from across our services, recorded in our Compliments Register this year included:

- "...Cooking program video - thumbs up for an option which can be cooked by individuals from beginning to end, thumbs up for a healthy option and thumbs up for supporting individuals who may still be wearing masks! 🍷"
- I cannot express how much we appreciate your professional take and willingness to assist. Kindest regard and what a treasure you are to your organisation.
- She was thrilled to hear how Anthony went with the youth group and delighted that it will be continuing. We discussed how much he likes coming to DO Bendigo to use the computer and what you girls' think of him. The response was 'He can feel the love'.
- Emma and I are eternally grateful for the support you guys give us - thank you again. 😊😊
- Thank you, Distinctive Options actually cares and provides a great service.
- Mavis spoke to Doris and said what a great job DO does and Brittany has grown so much since coming back this year into groups..."



Chairperson's Message

I am pleased to introduce our annual report, which details another strong year for Distinctive Options. It has been challenging for Victorians as we cope in our own ways with restrictions, rules and the need to provide a safe workplace for our staff and continue to deliver high quality services for our participants.

From a financial perspective, the Distinctive Options Board put great focus on managing our assets in a conservative way during the uncertainty of COVID and ensuring that management was supported while exploring new options for growth and new service offerings. Funding from NDIS fluctuated during periods of lockdown affecting participants and their demand for services. Job Keeper payments were accessed and helped to maintain our connection with staff during the year. It is a significant achievement by all concerned to deliver an operating surplus (profit) for the year, which sees equity increase.

Support hours for 2020-2021 during COVID lockdowns and restrictions equated to 14,892 per month, which were only 5.6% lower than the previous record year.

The safety of all participants and staff has remained at the top of our priorities, and it is a great relief to report that as at the time of writing, there have been no reported cases of COVID or exposure sites linked to Distinctive Options operations. At the earliest stage, the organisation adopted a COVID Safe Plan in accordance with public health requirements and has since developed a COVID Policy to meet organisational needs during the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

In terms of governance, the Board conducted all of its scheduled meetings via Zoom video conferencing, and all Board Committees continued to function using this medium. While no-one could have predicted that meeting remotely would become the norm, it has been pleasing to see how seamlessly the organisation has adapted to operate flexibly and achieve business continuity despite not being able to meet in person. I sincerely hope that in the near future there will be opportunity to meet in person and to welcome staff and participants to our Annual General Meeting.

During the year, the Board commissioned Davidson Executive to assist in a search for new Directors to strengthen and broaden the skillset of the Board. The Board was delighted to welcome the appointment of Alistair Lloyd, John Papatheohari and Skev Seremetis as Directors. During the year, two Directors retired from the Board, and are acknowledged below. The Board reviewed its Charter and developed a more contemporary document, which expanded on the Board's role and responsibilities to create a more comprehensive policy direction.

Strategic direction

Distinctive Options was due to review the Strategic Plan in 2020, but decided to defer the formulation of a new 3 year plan until the Board and Management had more time to understand the far-reaching implications of the COVID Pandemic. Interim COVID and COVID Recovery plans spanning 2 years were developed and adopted by the Board to provide guidance

and support to management. The Board will revisit the longer-term strategic plan in 2022, revisiting the pillars and current direction outlined in pages 27 to 31.

Organisational Review

The Distinctive Options Board was pleased to receive the findings and recommendations of an organisational review delivered in April 2021. In summary, the review found that the organisation had much to be proud of in its achievements in developing a thriving organisation. It is a financially sound organisation with stable staffing and highly satisfied program participants. The Board was recognised as having moved from 'non-profit' thinking and towards 'for-purpose' thinking, thus achieving profit and retained earnings each year to reinvest in the business to better serve people with disabilities.

The review has re-focussed our thinking on the type of organisation that we will need to become to meet the needs of our existing and future participants and their supporters and will feed into the Board and management's strategic planning for growth and innovation in the coming years.

Acknowledgements

During the year, as COVID restrictions were lifted then lockdowns loomed again, the Board was keen to ensure that Distinctive Options remained a viable business while maintaining a safe workplace for staff and continued to provide services to our participants. I would like to thank the staff of Distinctive Options who deliver our mission to participants every day in a professional and innovative way. I would like to thank our management team led by CEO Ernie Metcalf for its proactive and responsible approach to navigating the challenges raised throughout the year by COVID and the complexities of business as usual.

During the year, Director Terry Rodrigues retired from the Board after a term of over 8 years serving on various committees and holding the office of Deputy Chair. Terry provided invaluable insight and was a well-respected voice at all Board meetings,

demonstrating the values of Distinctive Options and putting the interests of the company and our participants and staff at the forefront of every decision he considered. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Terry for his part in the success of Distinctive Options.

Director Darren Quigley also left the Board after 7 years' service, including 6 years in the office-bearer role of Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. Darren's unwavering commitment to ensuring the responsible management of resources and finances was of enormous value to the Board, and ultimately to the benefit of our participants. I thank Darren for his significant contribution to Distinctive Options.

At the time of writing, Director Anthony About is coming to the end of his third term (9 years) as a Director, including 5 years as Chair. I would like to thank Anthony for his tireless service, his passion for the interests of our participants and his drive to improve the governance and skills supporting the Board. As a first-year Chair, I also thank Anthony on a personal note, for his generosity with his time and counsel, helping with a smooth transition of office bearers and new Directors.

On a final note, I would like to acknowledge and thank our participants and their families and networks that have continued to choose Distinctive Options as their preferred service offering. As Chair, I am committed, as is the Board, to ensuring that we remain safe and sustainable, grow, innovate and thrive through and beyond the return to more familiar times post COVID.

Simon McKenzie

Board Chairperson



CEO's Message

What an Extraordinary Year for People in Victoria

Whilst we cannot ignore the ongoing effects of the COVID pandemic on our communities, families and participants, plus on our organisation and staff, I think the 'new-normal' is living with it and managing it as best we can, whilst trying not to overstress about 'what ifs'. Everyone adheres to our COVID-Safe Plan and Pandemic Policy to ensure a safe workplace and environment for our staff and the people who we support. Since the commencement of this international outbreak in early 2020, our organisation has recorded zero COVID cases for both participants and staff. This strong focus on individuals and safety has always been a cornerstone of Distinctive Options' service philosophy.

What an Exceptional Performance by Distinctive Options

Support Services

Throughout these testing times, our staff have been exceptional. Distinctive Options could not deliver quality, disability support services to people in an array of settings without having really committed teams. Whilst in some people's eyes we may not have always been perfect in our service for a variety of reasons, including because of those restrictions imposed externally on Distinctive Options, we consistently maintained our services throughout the year. This is a testament to the dedication and quality of our service coordinators and their support staff across all operations provided by Distinctive Options.

To put this disability support into perspective I provide the following from our service delivery data. In the last financial year not affected by COVID, being 2018-2019, support hours to 301 participants averaged 14,261 per month. For 2019-2020, support hours averaged a record high of 15,778 per month to 309 participants, with only the last quarter affected by pandemic restrictions. This year has been fully under restrictions and some lockdowns. Yet support hours to a similar number of participants still averaged an impressive 14,892 per month. Given the impact of imposed pandemic restrictions and lockdowns across Victoria, this level of constant safe service provision is a fantastic achievement by all those who were involved in providing supports. Rick and his support services team have delivered in a year that has been anything but normal.

Our family and participant survey results during the year recorded an impressive 98.3% satisfaction rate, which indicates a very high level of appreciation for the quality and variety of services delivered. There is always room to improve, and always room to grow via the expansion of options.

Back of House - Corporate Services

Service provision is only one-half of our organisation's key activities under the requirements imposed by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Alma and her corporate services team have been dynamic in providing systems that support disability services, through a client management system, a HR/payroll system, the financial system, and others.

These systems and back of house operations have ensured our income remained positive and our expenses were contained, noting that government business subsidies allowed Distinctive Options to maintain its staff pool during often trying circumstances for individuals. Job Keeper subsidies finished for our organisation at the end of December 2020, so operations received no government pandemic subsidies after this time. The financial result for the year has been exceptional, and it provides a launching pad for investments into new areas of service expansion and other innovations. For more details on financial results, please refer to the audited financial statements later in this report.

Transparency for Key Stakeholders

For a number of years' prior to 2017, Distinctive Options was producing small four-page annual reports that provided minimal information for key stakeholders and others. In 2017, we set about delivering more reporting transparency, backed up with specific information for key stakeholders and others. That is, Distinctive Options was striving to provide a document that kept people better informed in order to make important choices.

Management chose to follow a reporting model developed by the Australasian Reporting Awards (ARA), which allows stakeholders to monitor an organisation's progress toward achieving its vision and key strategic objectives. ARA also provides a great opportunity for organisations to benchmark their annual reports against world best practice criteria.



At Distinctive Options first attempt to improve our reporting to stakeholders and to meet the ARA requirements, we achieved a Bronze Award for our 2017 Annual Report. For the following two years, Distinctive Options strived for better reporting, receiving Silver Awards for our 2018 and

2019 Annual Reports. A Silver award is issued to organisations if a report provides quality coverage of most of the ARA criteria, has satisfactory disclosure of key aspects of its business, and it has an outstanding disclosure in at least one major area.



This year, for our 2020 Annual Report, it reached the pinnacle in report writing, winning our first Gold award. As ARA advised, "...to receive a Gold Award a report must demonstrate overall excellence in annual reporting. It should provide high quality coverage of most aspects of the ARA criteria and full disclosure of key aspects of the organisation's core business. A Gold Award report is a model report for similar organisations to follow..." This is an exceptional achievement.

To the best of our knowledge, no other disability organisation in Australia has ever achieved better than silver. As one ARA auditor commented, he believed Distinctive Options is one of the smallest organisations to achieve Gold. Staff member Sarah Quigley has embraced the need for providing transparent information to our key stakeholders, whilst delivering a very easy to read annual report.

Congratulations Sarah on such a significant achievement professionally, and for our organisation.

The Future

Innovations and New Developments

Part of the feedback from surveys, as well as from key participant groups like Rights and Responsibilities, is that they provide ideas and concepts for management to consider in relation to any service expansion and innovation suggestions. It is not surprising that both families and participants would like to see Distinctive Options develop some new accommodation services, or some new employment services that provide enhanced pathways for people. This is similar to feedback from others, such as from Specialist Schools, as well as from external NDIS Support Coordinators, who seek the best options to meet people's needs and funding.

I am pleased to announce that Distinctive Options is pursuing both of these service expansions.

Following the organisation's successful completion of a quality audit against the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's national disability standards, the Commission approved Distinctive Options' NDIS Scope of Registration to include 'specialist supported employment'.

New Employment Options

Work is underway to establish the organisation's first business for many years to provide future employment options and pathways. Distinctive Options is looking to establish a new Bee Keeping business in Sunbury that will pay competitive award wage rates to supported employees.

New Accommodation Options

Additionally, management has been in productive discussions with the Sunbury based Rosenthal property developers. Work progresses with Rosenthal to develop new houses to provide specialist disability accommodation in Sunbury. At the same time, Alma's team is working on the policies and procedures that will support a request to the Commission, via an interim quality

audit, to include accommodation services in our organisation's scope of registration.

This Sunbury partnership may also deliver in the near future a new respite option, as well as another employment option. I thank the Rosenthal developers, particularly Paul Millett, for their sincere generosity and foresight. A number of people will greatly appreciate these new service options for many, many years.

Families and participants should discuss their funding options to access employment or accommodation services with our NDIS Intake Coordinator as these new options progress.

New Virtual Reality Options

On a very different tack, management is also working with a virtual reality company, Start Beyond, to develop specific systems and software for use by people with a disability, as well as a training system for our staff. This is a significant step into the digital world, which has endless uses and provides some incredible learning platforms. I would also like to make a very special thankyou to Coles Supermarkets/Cadburys for recognising Distinctive Options as a recipient for a \$10k donation. The Coles donation will go towards purchasing the virtual reality equipment and software.

Internal Capacity and Capabilities

In early 2021, Distinctive Options undertook an independent, external Organisational Review. This review examined our structure, capacity and capabilities to manage new or expanded service options. As part of the process, it considered other providers that were maximising growth opportunities, comparing their structures and capacity in comparison to Distinctive Options' structure. The review identified our organisation as having a very lean management team structure with a stretched capacity to take on new growth opportunities. This structural limitation identified by the reviewer is a potential impediment to achieving strategic organisational growth objectives. Following this review and a business case, the Board approved an expanded organisational structure to include a new

Business Development Manager. The Business Development Manager and their small team will oversee growth strategies and opportunities. Please refer the updated organisational chart provided in the annual report.

In reflection, it was only four years ago that Distinctive Options generated total income of \$3m with fluctuating profitability, and it had much lower cash reserves to re-invest in service development. Today, the business generates just under \$11m in total revenue and is on the threshold of service expansion that will offer a range of new options to people with a disability through its increased cash reserves.

It could not be a more exciting time to be involved in such a dynamic and growing, disability support organisation.

Thank You

I need to make a special thank you to long-term Director Anthony Aboud. Anthony was the Chair during most of my time as CEO, and he stood down from this role at the last AGM. I have really appreciated his support, advice and professional friendship over my time as CEO. Thank you Anthony.

To Simon, the new Chair, I thank you for your insights, support and Board leadership during this extraordinary year. I also thank the rest of the Board of Directors for their support during the year and willingness to take on new or different opportunities.

From a business perspective, I particularly need to thank Hume City Council, the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, plus a number of external NDIS Support Coordinators, for their proactive partnerships. In closing, I thank all of our other business partners across the region. Without your continued support and networking, Distinctive Options would be the poorer.

Ernie Metcalf

Chief Executive Officer



Executive Manager's Report

Continuing to Deliver Support Services throughout the Pandemic

During the first state imposed lockdown providers were directed to cease Group Supports for a relatively short period of time only. It was acknowledged at the very start of the pandemic that disability supports were a critical enabler of the continued health and wellbeing of people with a disability. Consequently, the NDIS, DHHS, Commonwealth and State Health Departments determined that disability services were essential services.

Many providers chose to suspend or entirely shutdown their Group Services not just during periods of lockdown, but for the duration of the ongoing pandemic. In doing so, these providers removed from people with disability the right to exercise their own judgement concerning the long-held principle of Dignity of Risk. The idea underpinning Dignity of Risk is that the ability for individuals, or their loved ones, to make choices about their life is more important than avoiding risks at all costs.

Distinctive Options determined to maintain Group Services throughout, albeit with significantly diminished capacity, so that participants could exercise their right to make important decisions on their own behalf. We accepted the responsibility by ensuring the implementation of all recommended health and safety measures. They included, additional staff training, provision of all necessary PPE, increased cleaning frequency and infection controls, internal social distancing, and other measures. Distinctive Options invested

heavily in these additional measures to ensure we maintained critical supports for as many participants as possible and will continue to do so.

There are now emerging concerns from disability advocates that the closure of some "Day Programs" has caused serious long-term harm to the mental health of people with disability. According to noted psychologist Karen Knight, "...A person with disability losing access to what could often be their only social interaction could be devastating..." There were also real concerns emerging that skill maintenance and development will not just stagnate, but regress for some people with disability, where unnecessarily disruptions to Group Supports occurred. One parent of a participant, who had Group Supports terminated, observed that, "...The closure was quite abrupt, with the family given less than 24 hours' notice. Matthieu is a man who needs structure and routine so it has caused a lot of anxiety, combined with being socially isolated. He is missing his friends and he's been miserable without it. He feels very frustrated, anxious and he's lost..." [Source: 6/8/2021 ABC - "COVID-19 restrictions could have long-term effects for people with disabilities, advocates say"].

From a management perspective, Distinctive Options could have avoided risks posed by the ongoing pandemic by simply locking the doors, thereby avoiding all risk. The consequences, had we chosen this course of action, would have been entirely visited on participants, their families and supporters and on our staff. It is no small thing to impose decisions

on people with the aim of protecting an organisation at the expense of its people and to remove from them the right to make their own decisions where possible. Surely, this is the very essence of “Choice & Control”!

Support Service highlights of note over the previous year include:

- Bendigo Film Making Society
- Delivered 1,982.7 hours of additional Extended Group Supports and Activities on evenings and weekends
- Delivered 5,133.2 hours of additional ZOOM/On-Line Activities
- 100% Compliance with all external reporting requirements and obligations including the NDIA and NDIS Commission, Disability Services Commissioner and Office of the Senior Practitioner.
- Completely reviewed all Policies, Procedures and processes to ensure, not just compliance with requirements but excellence in delivering best practice.
- Transitioned from the former VIC DHHS ‘Continuity of Support’ program’ to the Commonwealth Department of Health ‘Disability Support for Older Australians’ program, maintaining supports for people with disability aged 65+.
- Established new Community Connect Bendigo location at Albion Street.
- Established new Children’s Social Interactions Program at Bendigo
- Implemented additional systems and support protections for people with disability who live alone or are otherwise vulnerable due to isolation
- Implemented an external Employee Assistance Program to provide staff with additional and specialised debriefing, counselling and support
- Renewed service leadership through the appointment of personnel to key leadership roles: Bendigo - Tara Boag; Kyneton - Catherine Woodger & Melanie East; St Albans - Sean Law; Independent Living Skills (formerly IS) - Sarah Heriot.
- Delivering the third & final year of the “Enhanced Pathways to Family Violence Work” Project designed to better inform

disability practice and staff awareness.

- Presented at nine Post School Options Expo’s to speak directly with students and parents on all that DO has to offer
- Formed new partnerships to deliver participant outcomes at: Salesian College Sunbury (Gardening Project); Kyneton Community House; Jacaranda Nursery (Bendigo); Nacho Station (Bendigo); 3NRG Sunbury Community Radio; Golden Square Aquatic Centre; True Connections (St Albans); Lifeful (St Albans); FishCare Australia; Cute & Cuddly Ponies; Vine Hotel (Bendigo); Sound System Studios (Sunbury); St Kilda Twilight Fishing Club; Access Training (Bendigo); Sunbury Secondary College; Woodend Pet Haven; Travellers Aid Network; Crown Stables (Mickleham); Castlemaine Circus.

In closing, I warmly acknowledge the tireless efforts of our Board of Directors and senior management team whose commitment and support creates an environment where our shared vision and passion can be so well realised. Our Service Leaders continue to thrive in this most challenging environment and demonstrate extraordinary professionalism and boundless resilience and creativity while our Support Workers continue to astound with their drive, skill, knowledge and determination. You are all truly ‘essential’ in the continued success of Distinctive Options.

Rick Dunn

Executive Manager Support Services



Chief Financial Officer's Report

Corporate Services Overview

Corporate Services are the activities that combine or consolidate organisation-wide needed service supports. Corporate Services popularly known as the "Back of House" cover a wide range of traditional administrative functions, such as Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Payroll Administration, Billings and Claims, Procurement, Assets management, Quality management and Operations-related function such as Intake and Client Data Management. Supports provided are based on specialised knowledge, best practice, regulation compliance and technology to serve both the internal Distinctive Options community and business partners. The Corporate Services team is under the leadership of the Chief Financial Officer, Alma Tuazon.

Development of the Team

The Corporate Team evolved in the last two financial years as a result of organisational restructure to create the "back of house" with the objective to consolidate the different service functions that supports the Operations team in order to meet best practice standards and prepare the organisation into its growth stage. Since the appointment of the Chief Financial Officer in 2018, positions have been appointed to cater for growth in participation numbers. The original team was composed of the Bookkeeper, NDIS Intake Coordinator, Client Manager Systems Coordinator, the NDIS Billings & Claims Officer, the Development Officer and the Payroll & Administration Officer. As the organisation grew, the demand for specialised knowledge have

increased and in 2021 year, the Human Resources Administrator, the Assistant Accountant (replacing the Bookkeeper) and the Accounts Officer were appointed.



Pictured from left (front to back) Edwina, Monica, Sarah H, Jane, then from right (back to front): Michelle, Alma, Nicole and Doris (Sarah Q was on maternity leave). Sharon (inset)

Big Leaps in Billings

Cash has been a significant pressure for the business with considerable delays in manual billing and spiralling outstanding debtors in 2018. This has led to the automation of the Billings process by extracting Support hours from SupportAbility into Zed Axis and generating invoice from Reckon, the accounting software. The efficiency gains achieved, brought on by this automation, were with the change in billings frequency from monthly in arrears to fortnightly, delivering immediate cash flow into the bank.

The improved Invoice provided visibility for participants to clearly identify the items that they were being billed for. Automation also allowed time to focus on debtor recovery, which saw a significant drop in outstanding debts with consequent increases in Cash Reserves. Improved internal commercial practices ensured billings matched with support hours, which drew significant gains to the business that translated into a successful financial result.

Payroll & Human Resources Systems Development



As the organization transitioned to the NDIS environment, the Accounting and Payroll Systems as well as the hardware infrastructure had not caught up with the phase and growth of the business. Distinctive Options was using antiquated systems and processes, which required major investment in new systems. The most risky and vulnerable system that required immediate change was the Reckon System that housed both the Payroll and Accounting functions. The Payroll was highly manualised and was susceptible to significant errors. In September 2019, Management commenced the project work for the installation of hr3, an integrated Payroll and Human Resources (Software) as a service solution. The project was completely operational in March 2020, which was timely when COVID-19 hit the nation. It was a steep learning curve for staff, who were required to record their hours electronically compared to completing a manual timesheet. The first fortnight pay uncovered the faults in the manual system and already have recorded savings in payroll cost apart from significant efficiency gained in completing the payroll process. The system also provided visibility in payroll items, staff have access to their leave entitlements, input work hours that were consistent with support hours provided in SupportAbility as well as significant savings in stationery cost. The approval process, consistent with the Delegations Policy, were built into the system in line with the organisational hierarchy to manage leave applications, training requests and timesheet entries.

The build-up of Human Resources module within hr3 enabled the electronic storage of employee information including contracts, skills, qualifications, staff training, performance evaluation, employee tasks, assets issued and emergency contacts. The database build up project was completed in March 2021 and is maintained by the Human Resources Administrator.

NDIS registration

Previous block-funding arrangement through the Department of Human Services required Distinctive Options to comply with Department guidelines. However, as the business fully transitioned into the NDIS environment, the company was required to comply with the NDIS Legislation. Community Audits Australia was appointed to undertake an independent review of Distinctive Option's compliance with the regulations. Community Audits provided an audit clearance to Distinctive Options in November 2020.

Microsoft Dynamics Business Central goes LIVE

Reckon is an accounting system built specially for small business. Distinctive Options used Reckon for its Payroll and Accounting Systems for a number of years. Payroll was migrated to hr3 in March 2020. The migration to Microsoft Dynamics Business Central commenced in April 2021. Distinctive Options engaged Digital Armour, a Microsoft Business partner to assist with the migration. A dedicated team of 4 Corporate Services staff embarked on this project to convert the chart of accounts into an industry approved coding system patterned after the Standard Chart of Accounts (University of Queensland). The project also included the set-up of a new Fixed Assets Module to record all assets owned and leased by the business as well as automate the depreciation charge monthly. The project established the automatic download of invoices from SupportAbility to Business Central replacing Reckon, which almost reached its maximum capacity. The integration with hr3 enabled the seamless download of payroll information to Business Central. The effective design and great collaboration work between the three

cloud-based solutions, Digital Armour and Distinctive Options Project Team have taken Accounting to the digital arena producing significant productivity and efficiency gains in processing time and provision of accurate data. The customised reporting has also reduced the month-end process to a considerable degree enabling more time spent on analysis. Business Central successfully went live in August 2021.

Technology Business Partners



Mentoring success

The successful implementation of a number of systems project in 2021 has increased the capability and confidence of the Corporate Services Team who worked harmoniously throughout the year in different projects to improve operational efficiency and achieve best practice standards similar to that in a commercial environment. The Team was not afraid to take risks and take challenging roles in order to embrace change and were unanimous in working together to continue to develop and further enhance their capabilities. Effective mentoring, training and collaboration have been the major catalysts to team success and cohesiveness.

The outlook remains relatively positive

With the current state of Coronavirus spread within Victoria, the situation remains volatile. Coming out of the latest lockdown and with the state opening up, the organisation faces more risks of snap lockdowns as positive cases emerge in the community. There are inherent ongoing risks that the company will continue to face with reduced participation hours, consequent reduction in revenue and the impact on our vulnerable participants who cannot access supports from Distinctive Options. Despite a series

of lockdowns, the company will continue to thrive in this environment providing continuous supports on both one-on-one settings and group programs. Although it can be argued that Job Keeper has underwritten the reduction in revenue, the gradual re-engagement of participants as confidence is strengthened will see the return to core operations. The outlook remains positive for the organisation with the following initiatives being implemented in the new financial year.

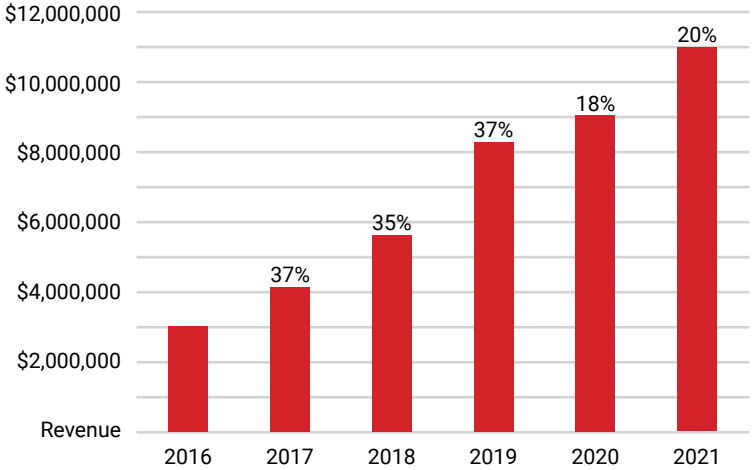
- The introduction of new Virtual Reality technology that will enable participants to experience activities and see places that they could not otherwise reach or do
- Launch of a new Distinctive Options website that is rich in content, enhance the brand, provide access to information and connect with internal and external environments
- The replacement of the current server to a hosted server set-up in the Data Centre for security and data management purposes
- Introduction of new fraction pricing in July 2022
- The roll-out of the On-Boarding module for new staff that integrates with hr3
- The roll-out of Work Health and Safety Module for management of risks and incidents
- The relocation of Corporate Services and Management Team to the former Hume Customer Service Centre to free up space for more group activities
- The relocation of Connect sites including St Albans, Bendigo and Kyneton for branding and in preparation for expanded services
- New Business Development Manager to implement the marketing and fundraising strategy that will yield new business opportunities for Distinctive Options
- The centralisation of Rostering function for effective roster management, better coverage on after hours and weekend shifts, matching staff to participants and address service gaps

Financial Overview

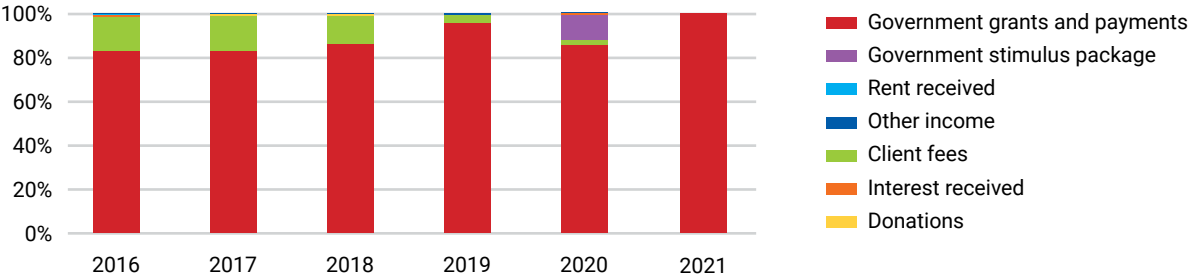
Revenue

Revenue is the income that Distinctive Options generated from all its activities, including participant funding, activity fees, grants and donations. Revenue received during the financial year include NDIS for support hours rendered to participants, Activity Fees from participants, returns on investments, Job Keeper subsidy, Cash flow boost and grants from state and local governments. Distinctive Options experienced a reduction in operations revenue due to the temporary withdrawal of participants resulting from several lockdowns during the year because of COVID-19. The extension of the government stimulus packages continued to provide a lifeline to enable Distinctive Options to maintain operations in an otherwise challenging year. A comparison of income over the past six years shows significant growth in government grants. The growth in participant numbers underpins the growth in revenue.

Revenue Growth 2016-2021



Revenue Breakdown Comparison

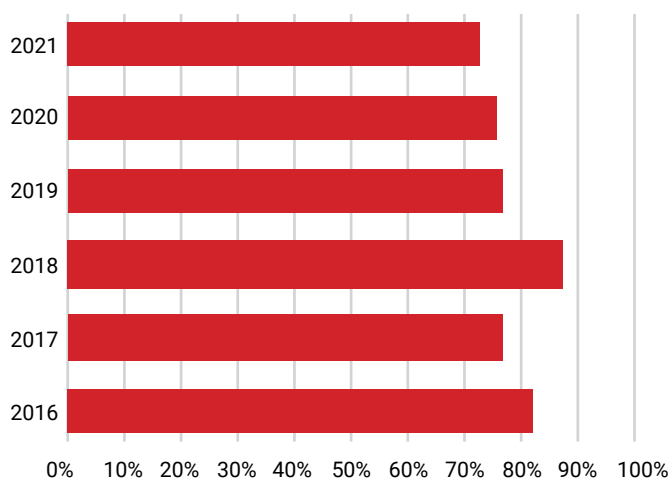


Expenses

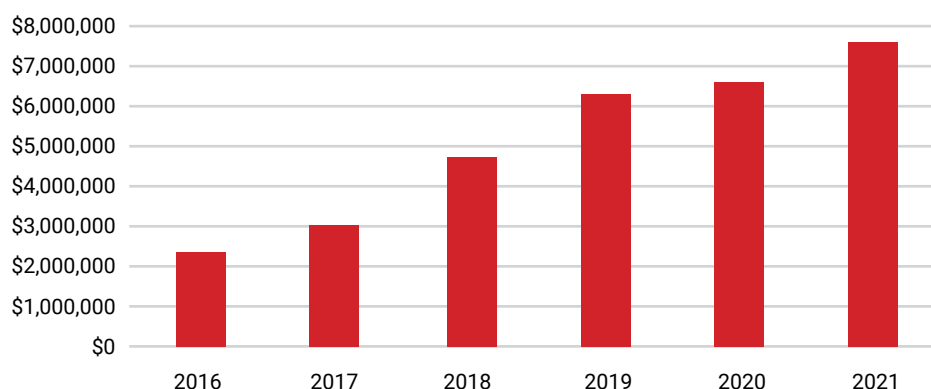
Expenses are all of the costs associated with operating the business. As Distinctive Options is predominantly a service business, a significant proportion of Expenditure relates to Employee Benefits Expenses. Salary costs have grown in 6 years from 2016, which reflects the growth in participant numbers and the former OSHC program in FY 2018.

The increase in employee benefits expenses is directly proportional to the increase in support hours. As a percentage of total revenue, the 2021 year achieved the most cost effective salary to income ratio amounting to 72.7% of total revenue. The increase in revenue with the consequent reduction in staffing hours due to intermittent lockdowns in the past financial year has improved this ratio. The application of the new Leasing Standards, which regards leased assets as Finance Leases, gave rise to the Right to Use Assets and Lease Liability in the Statement of Financial Position and an increase in Amortisation Expense of \$156,255 and Interest Paid of \$21,279 with the consequent reduction in Rental Expenses in the Statement of Financial Performance. Although Management adopted an effective cost minimisation strategy, the increase in Occupational Health & Safety costs brought by deep cleaning and acquisition of personal protective equipment for staff and participants were not avoidable. It remains the objective of management to maintain a cost-sustainable operation.

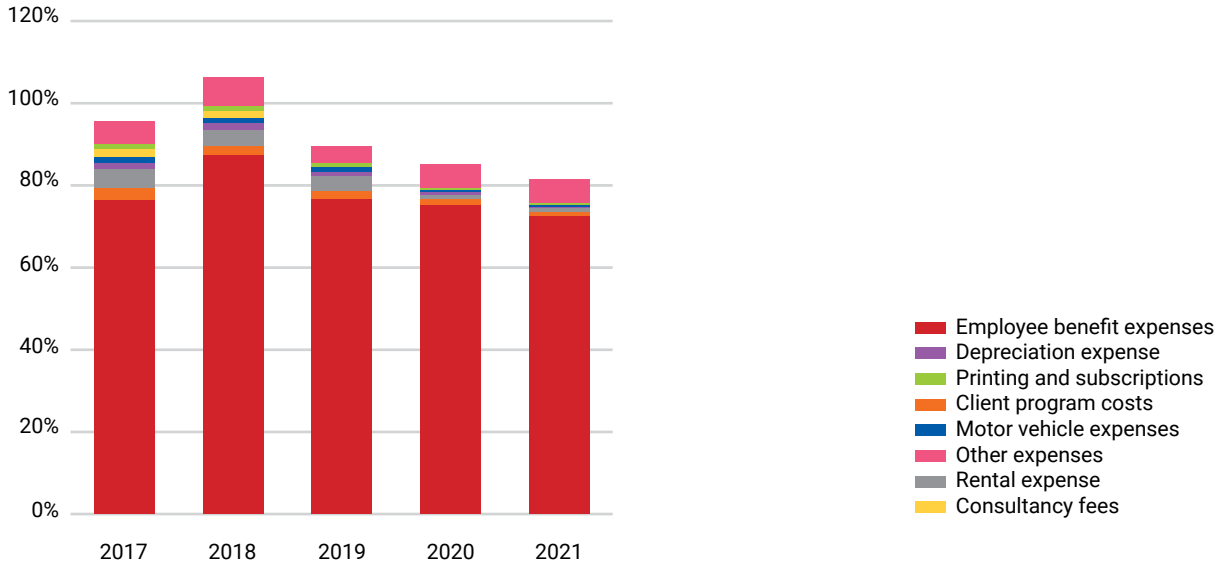
Employee Benefits Expenses as a % of Total Revenue



Employee Benefits Expenses



Expenses as a % of Total Revenue



Surplus/Deficit

The surplus/deficit tells us how much money remains after all expenses are deducted from the revenue. Distinctive Options has achieved a significant operating surplus of \$2.025 million during the year. The Operating Surplus / (Deficit) comparison chart depicts the trend in operating results for Distinctive Options in the last six years. Despite the reduction in revenue caused by intermittent lockdowns of Group Programs during the year, the core operations, which include Individualised Supports in the local community, remained solid contributing up to \$479k in profits for the year. Having benefitted from the receipt of the government stimulus package, which formed part of the surplus for the year, the directive to close the Group programs as a result of the Public Health Order, hampered the company's ability to generate more profits from core operations.

The implementation of the strategic financial objectives and the achievement of financial outcomes are attributable to close scrutiny and monitoring of the performance achieved in Distinctive Options' Balanced Scorecard.

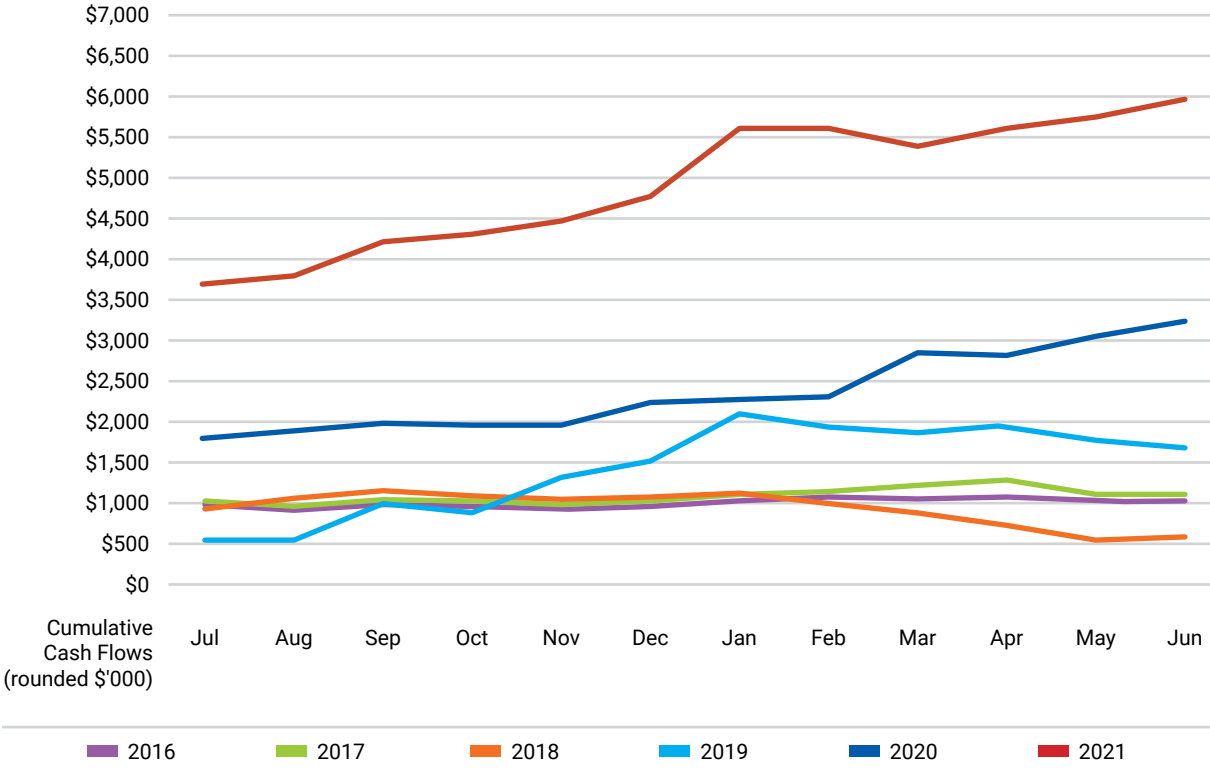
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)



Cash

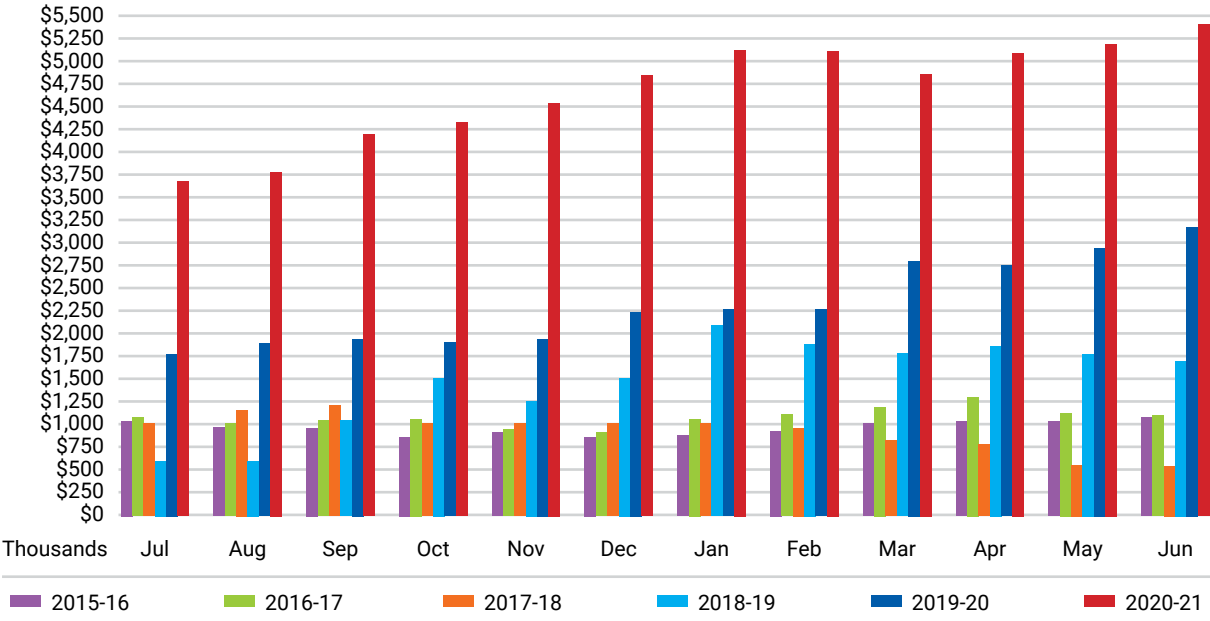
Cash tells us the movement of money in and out of the business. The money that comes into the business as a result of services rendered and activities provided to participants are commonly referred to as "inflow". The money that goes out of the business for payment of goods and services are referred to as "outflow". Cash reserves tell us how much of that cash can be saved, or get to keep.

Cash Flows - 2016 to 2021



Cash Reserves achieved its highest balance with \$5,418,081 at the end of the year, which has increased by \$2,221,059, a jump of 69% from \$3,197,022 at the beginning of the year. Cash Reserves include \$2,056,754 in net Job Keeper payments. The graph illustrates cash reserves over the last six years with 2020-2021 drawing the highest balance, with contributions from the government stimulus package. The growth in participant numbers along with the automation of debtor invoicing, billings and rigorous recovery of outstanding accounts, all contribute to stronger cash position over the year.

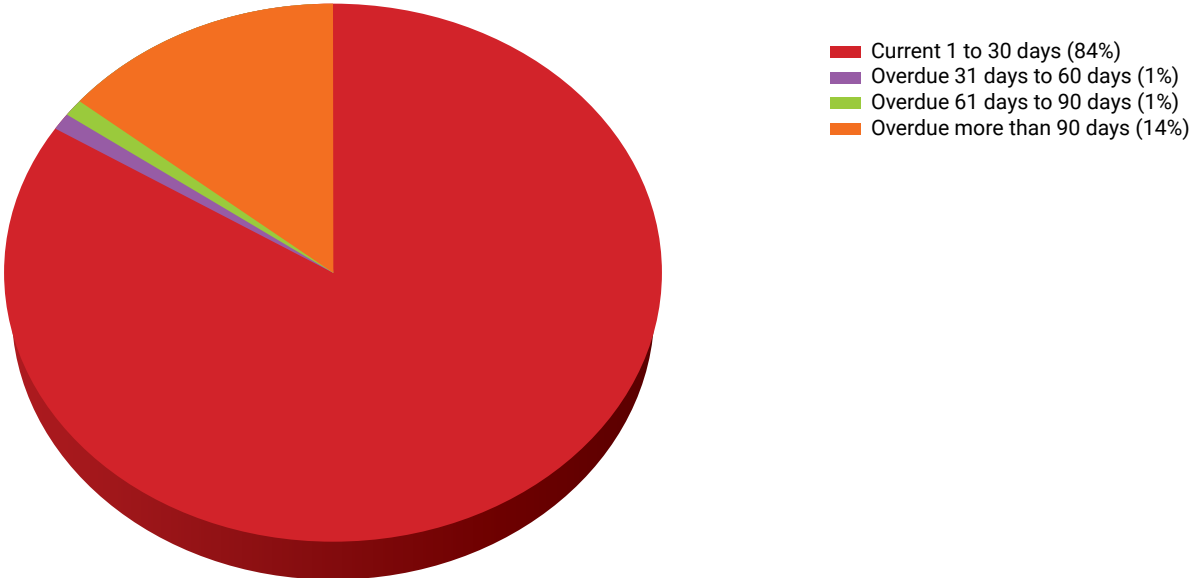
Cash Reserves - 6 Year Comparison



Debtors

Debtors are the money that is owed to Distinctive Options that has not yet been paid. Debtor balances which are mainly in 0-30 day make up for 86% of the total amount outstanding. Billings were averaging at \$450K each fortnight billing period pre-COVID-19 lockdown, to a below average of \$230k post-COVID-19 up until the end of June. This is an average reduction of 35% in each billing period due to participants' temporary withdrawal in response to COVID-19. Distinctive Options adopted a new debtor management policy ensuring that all debtor recovery are periodically monitored and followed up promptly with the participants and financial intermediaries.

Debtors 30 June 2021



Alma Tuazon

Chief Financial Officer

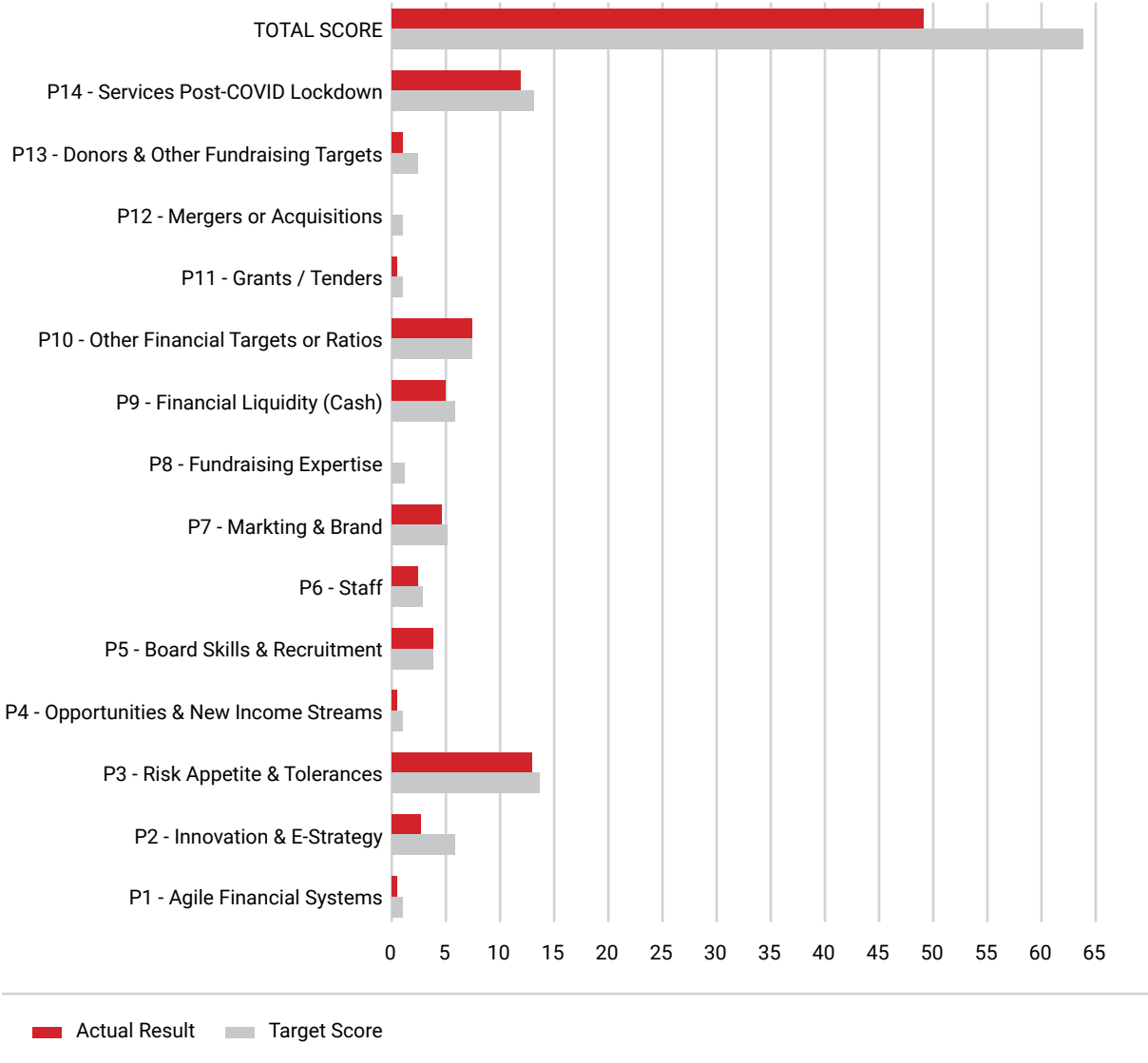
Year in Review

July	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinctive Options successfully passes first external quality audit against new NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission Standards. Auditors recommend quality certification for Distinctive Options to the new standards with no 'non-conformities'.
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board adopts an updated Strategic Plan for 2020-2022 to cover the current period of COVID-19's impact on services and service providers, and post the pandemic.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Board approves staff benefits paid as a reward and acknowledgement of their performances during the 2019-2020 financial year that included the impact of the pandemic.
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board commences work to use a Director Recruiting Firm to fill current and expected Board vacancies.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinctive Options receives a \$10k donation from Coles Supermarkets/ Cadburys.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinctive Options secures a free Practera/UNSW grant to provide a student team to undertake IT research into virtual reality for use by participants.• Hume City Council approves a third year's grant to Distinctive Options for the community based performing arts project.• Hosted an event to celebrate International Day of People with a Disability. 'A Million Dreams Key Word Sign' video was published on the Facebook page, reaching over 3,000 people.
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• External Organisational Review commences.• New partnership formed with the Centre for Digital Business, creator of the disability artificial intelligence "NADIA".
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board adopts management's business case and approves a bid for the potential purchase of property at 1 Barkly Street, Sunbury.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CEO reaches out to worldwide disability community via the International Initiative for Disability Leadership to gain feedback and advice on virtual reality systems for participant use.• Partnership discussions continue with the Rosenthal Estate owners around potential new supported disability accommodation, new respite and a new social enterprise business.
April	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinctive Options wins a Gold Australasian Reporting Award for the organisation's 2020 Annual Report.• The NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission approves Distinctive Options quality audit and the organisation's scope of registration now includes 'specialised supported employment'.

Strategic Performance

The updated 2020-2022 Strategic Plan describes the goals and direction of Distinctive Options during and post COVID’s impact. The revised Plan supports the organisation to expand in line with our mission, vision and values. It includes specific outcomes for four key objectives, described on Page 7. A Balanced Scorecard measures our performance against our Strategic goals. This tool allows the organisation to measure outcomes throughout the year, with updates made every month and provided to the Board for oversight. The graph below highlights the results. Distinctive Options successfully achieved 84.5% of its short-term strategic priorities for 2020-2021. An excellent result. The Board adopted a total Scorecard achievement target of equal to or greater than 72% for a satisfactory performance, whilst acknowledging that attaining 100% means the targets would be far too easy to achieve.

Governance Balanced Scorecard - Short Term Strategic Priorities Status



The next section provides a detailed overview of our specific strategic goal results. Successful outcomes have a green dot to indicate the result, whilst partially achieved have an orange dot. Outcomes not achieved have a red dot.

Be Resilient

Measures	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
P1 - Agile financial systems				
New financial software operational that delivers profit and cash flow forecasting reporting	30-Jun-21	new	12-Jul-21	■
P2 - Innovation & E-Strategy				
Number of monthly support hours delivered by electronic or digital services during lockdowns	> 600 hours	new	686.5	■
Average monthly billable participant hours	> \$640k	\$659.9k	\$724.90	■
Average monthly participant support hours	> 13,400 hours	15,778	14,892	■
HR3 human resources integrated system onboarding data fully in operation	31-Jan-21	new	Ongoing	■
Virtual reality equipment and software evaluated	28-Feb-21	new	Progressing	■
Virtual reality equipment and software purchased	30-Apr-21	new	Not Yet	■
P3 - Risk Appetite & Tolerances				
Board reviews set risk appetites and tolerances contained in the Risk Management Policy	15-Nov-20	new	17-Feb-21	■
Governance policies are reviewed	100%	100%	100%	■
Compliance with funding body reporting	100%	100%	100%	■
Compliance with ACNC charity reporting data fully in operation	31-Jan-21	29-Nov-19	02-Dec-20	■
Company ACNC details are up to date evaluated	15-Nov-20	25-Jul-19	25-May-21	■
Company responsible persons checked via ASIC purchased	1-Nov-20	25-Jul-19	05-Mar-21	■
Participant and family satisfaction survey results	> 85%	90.0%	98.3%	■
Number of complaints received & Number of compliments received	< 10 > 30	6 36	10 48	■
NDIS Quality Framework accreditation achieved & Number of non-conformities from audit	31-Jul-20 < 2	new	22-Jul-20 0	■
NDIS issues the Board should be aware of	> 25	30	29	■
Review of Governance Balanced Scorecard results for last year	31-Aug-20	03-Sep-19	25-Aug-20	■
Review and adoption of Governance Balanced Scorecard for current year	30-Sep-20	24-Sep-19	29-Sep-20	■

We achieved 81.5% of the 'Be Resilient' targets set. The Virtual Reality objectives have moved into 2021-2022 because the scoping project for using this digital medium is much broader, that is, not just for participants.

Be Distinctive

Measures	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
P4 - Opportunities & new income streams				
New business partnerships or alliances to grow services	>1	1	2	■
New income streams from partnerships	>1	new	0	■
P5 - Board skills & recruitment				
Recruit new Directors to fill vacancies	2	0	3	■
Key Director roles filled for 2021	30-Nov-20	10-Dec-19	22-Dec-20	■
Directors' median attendance at Board meeting	> 66%	100%	100.0%	■
Review and adoption of annual financial audit management report	31-Oct-20	20-Oct-19	22-Oct-20	■
Board completes review of director skill matrix to assess skills required for vacancies	1-Nov-20	new	29-Sep-20	■
P6 - Staff				
Board completes CEO's annual performance review	4-Nov-20	10-Dec-19	22-Dec-20	■
Number of lost hours from reportable WorkCover injuries	< 1,000	570	0.00	■
Staff turnover ratio	< 12%	6.9%	12.2%	■
P7 - Marketing & Brand				
Number of media & social media articles published	> 300	331	464	■
Strategic Marketing Plan is reviewed	31-Aug-20	Deferred	20-Aug-20	■
Function held or mailout to local solicitors to secure future bequests and or donations	28-Feb-21	new	24-May-21	■
Annual Reporting Award achieved	> Silver	Silver	Gold	■
P8 - Fundraising expertise				
Recruit new expertise in fundraising and marketing	Nov-Dec 2020	new	Deferred	■
Recruit a high profile patron	Feb-Jun 2021	24-Sep-19	Deferred	■

Achieved 85.7% of the 'Be Distinctive' targets set. No new income streams, but these will occur through the new partnerships. Staff turnover ratio was higher than target due to a couple of redundancies from realigned service roles and one 65+ aged retirement. Deferred the fundraising expertise targets as part of the 2021-2022 recruitment of a new Business Development team.

Be Sustainable

Measures	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
P9 - Financial Liquidity (Cash)				
Preserved operating cash reserve established	15-Nov-20	new	29-Jun-21	■
Growth in cash reserves and cash flow	> \$3.778m	\$3.197.0m	\$5.418m	■
Current Ratio (liquidity)	> \$2.70 to \$1	\$3.06	\$3.93	■
P10 - Other Financial Targets and Ratios				
Number of days cash is available	> 75 days	135	237	■
Debt collection: 61 to 90+ day debtors	< 10%	12.7%	13.2%	■
Underlying Result Ratio (profit margin)	> 5.1%	14.7%	18.4%	■
Return on Assets	> 5%	27.0%	28.2%	■
Debt Ratio	< 0.30	0.40	0.30	■
Number of successful financial or legal claims for more than \$5k against organisation	< 1	0	0	■
Unforeseen financial risks indentified > \$20k affecting current budget	< 2	0	0	■
Employee Benefits as a % of total revenue	<78%	75.8%	72.7%	■
Total Profit or Loss	\$389,188	\$1,328,725	\$2,000,025	■
P11 - Grants / Tenders				
Successful grant applications & successful tenders	> 2 > 1	2 0	6 0	■
P12 - Mergers or Acquisitions				
Mergers or acquisitions considered	if any	0	0	■
P13 - Donors & other fundraising targets				
Fund raising activities generate a return	> 25%	0.0%	none held	■
Number of donations or bequests	> 5 or > 1	2 & 0	3 & 0	■
Cash generated from fund raising, donations, bequests and grants	> \$30.5k	\$23.7k	\$45.9k	■

Another strong performance achieving 82.4% of the 'Be Sustainable' targets set. Debt recovery is more of a timing issue, rather than potential bad debts. Under pandemic community restrictions, there were no fundraising activities undertaken during the year.

Some of the financial indicators under normal operating circumstances could indicate a 'lazy balance sheet'. That is, they show an accumulation of funds. In the uncertain world of COVID and its potential financial impacts, organisations that have surplus funds are more able to remain financially viable allowing them to meet service demands, growth strategies and retain their pool of staff. A new Investment Policy was adopted in June 2021 to ensure the best returns on surplus funds, for now and into the future, in line with Distinctive Options' accepted risk tolerances and appetite.

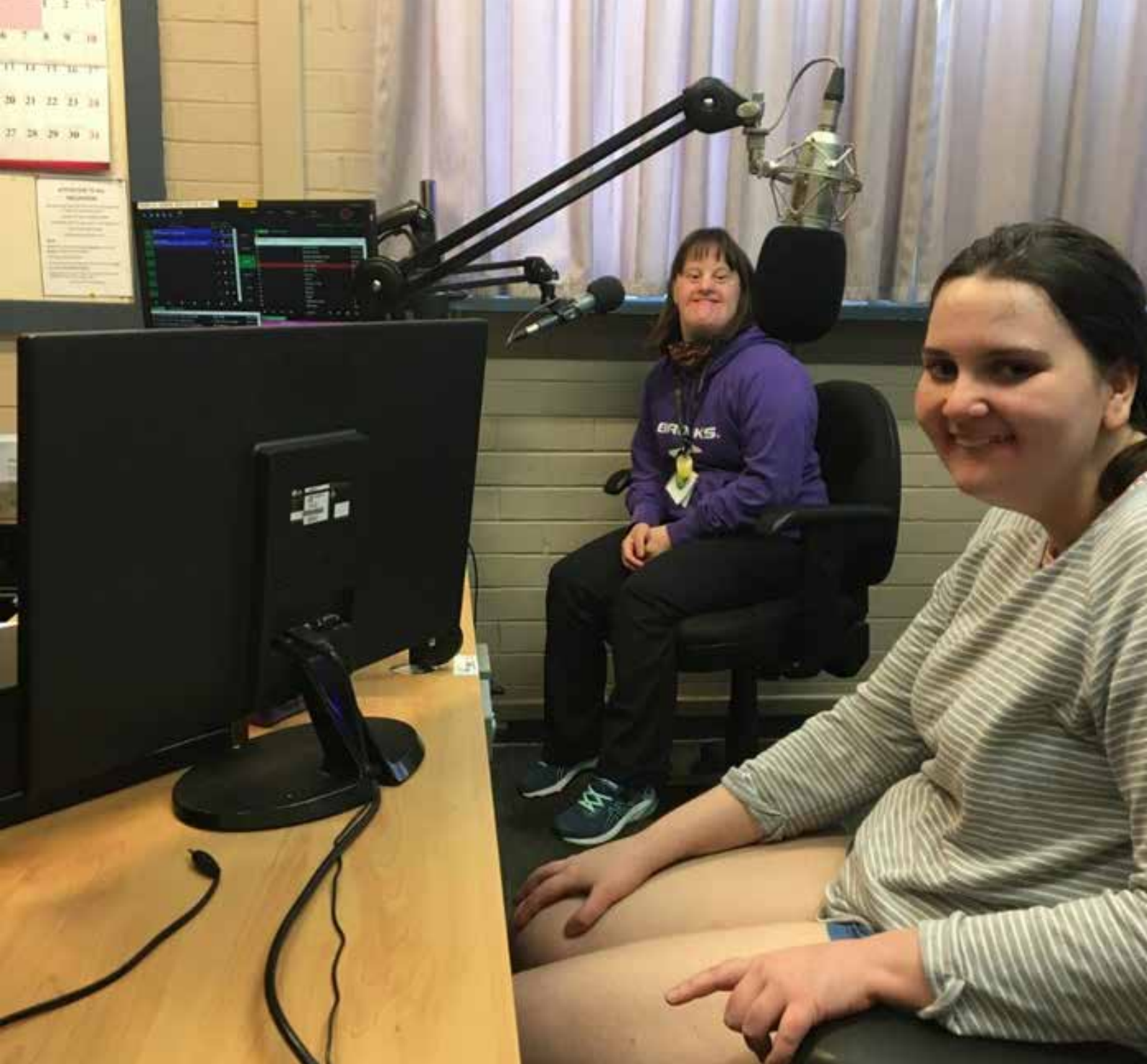
Be Progressive

Measures	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
P14 - Services Post COVID lockdown				
Number of people accessing services pre COVID lockdown compared to post lockdown	> 309	309	300	■
Number of new people accessing services during and post COVID lockdown	> 6	new	52	■
Organisational review delivers new, forward looking structure with ability to take on new ventures or opportunities	31-Mar-21	new	27-Apr-21	■

Rounding out the overall performance, this part of the Scorecard achieved 90.8% of the 'Be Progressive' targets set. Total participant numbers for people accessing services has remained constant, but more importantly service support hours were strong. In considering just the number of participants at any point in time, it is worth noting that in June 2021 Victoria was in again another lockdown that restricted access in groups.



Pictured is participant Talisha, out-and-about through her Individualised Support and Group services. This sort of participant support ensured DO was able to maintain engagement with its participants during pandemic restrictions. How awesome is her social distancing on the train!



Services

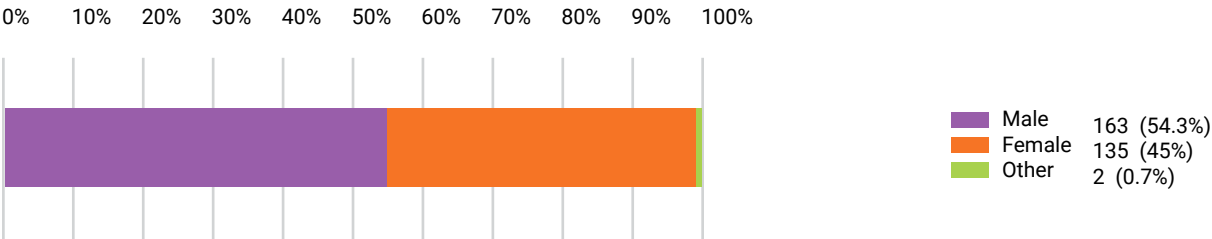
Participants working on their weekly Bendigo Radio Show

Participants

Participant numbers remained constant throughout 2020-2021 similar to the previous year, but because of lockdowns and restrictions numbers varied on a day-to-day basis depending on community and individual circumstances. Whilst a number count provides a guide, it is really the level of support hours provided, that drives services and the quality of supports provided. This data is under 'Service Delivery' and shows a consistency in the average monthly hours of support provided before COVID and during the ongoing pandemic restrictions.

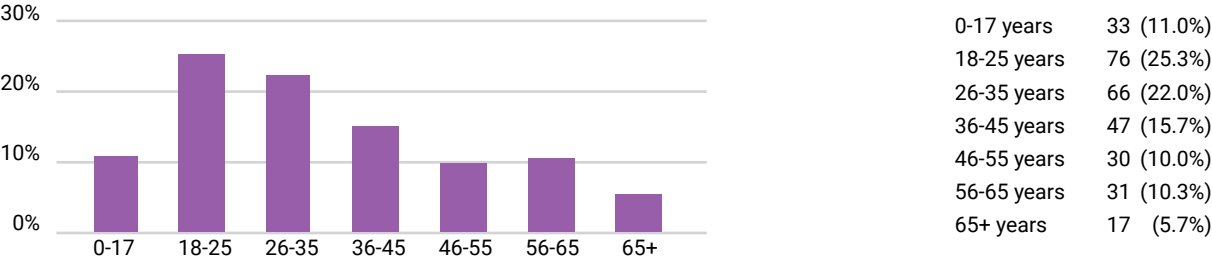
Gender

Continuing the previous year's trend, Distinctive Options has more male participants than females, with a couple of people identifying as "other".



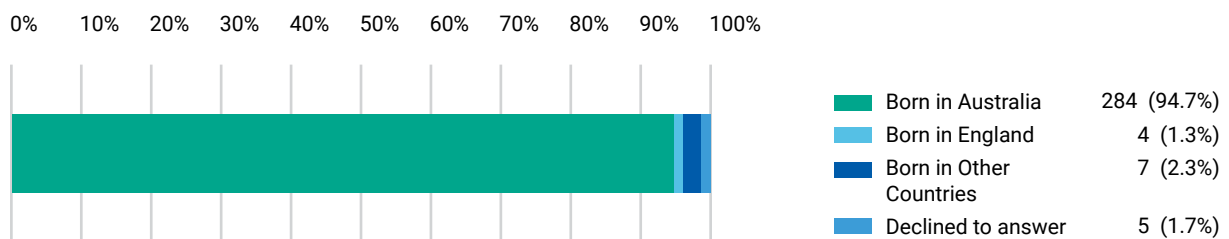
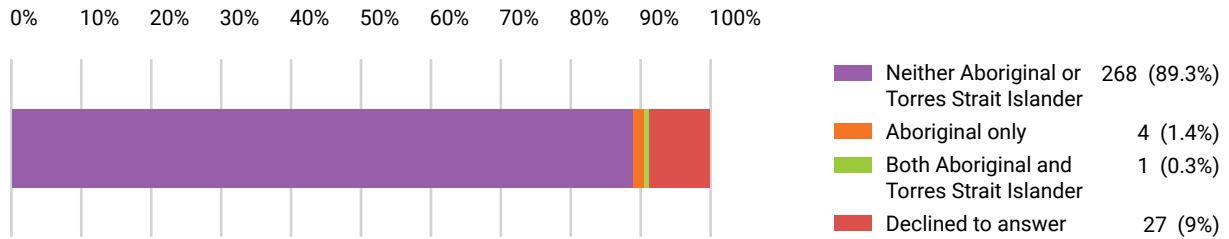
Age Distribution

Age distribution fluctuated slightly across age groups as new people entered our services and others left because of the pandemic and imposed Victorian Government restrictions.



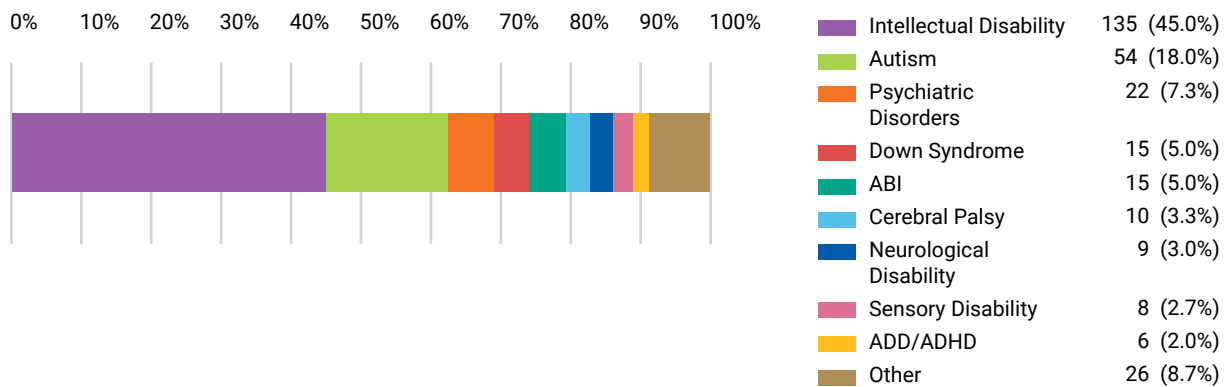
Cultural Identity

We continued to see similar cultural identity to last year, with a slight decrease in the number of participants identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander this year. Data for country of birth also remained consistent with last year's results.



Primary Disability

Similar to previous years, the most common primary disability for our participants is Intellectual Disability, followed by Autism and Psychiatric Disorders. Other disabilities include, Down Syndrome, Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and Cerebral Palsy.



Vale

Gone, but not forgotten.



Vassiliki R, pictured, who sadly passed away in July 2020 aged 60. Vassi had been with us in Sunbury since the very beginning in 1985.

Michael R, pictured, supported in our Sunbury services. He sadly passed away in April 2021.



Stanley S, pictured, started receiving support services from us in Sunbury 26 years ago. Sadly he passed away in January 2021, aged 91.

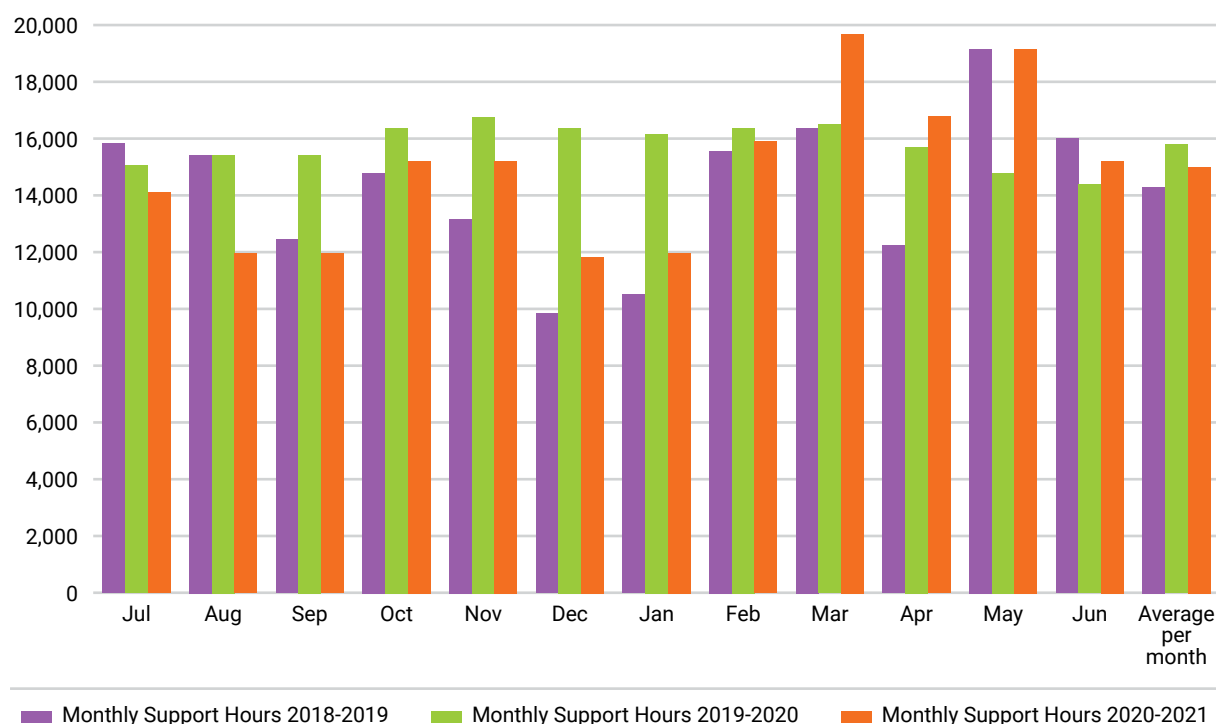


Service Delivery

Support Delivery Hours

Victorian COVID lockdowns two to four, plus ongoing service restrictions, occurred during 2020-2021. These pressures directly affected the organisation's ability to deliver service support hours, particularly for people in groups. Although a comparison with previous years is useful, the real indicator is how successful Distinctive Options was in delivering support hours under pandemic affected conditions. The graph below highlights that our organisation was very effective in maintaining services to participants.

Participant Support Hours



The impact of the second long-term Victorian community lockdown that overflowed into the start of the financial year is apparent in the graph above, over July to September. Once restrictions eased, support hours grew considerably, particularly in the second half of the year. By the end of June 2021, average monthly support hours were only 5.6% lower than the previous record year, noting lockdowns three and four occurred in February and June. Many participants in our group services opted to take up 1-on-1 services during lockdowns and restrictions to maintain their supports.

Service	2018-2019 Hours	2019-2020 Hours	2020-2021 Hours	%
Independent Living Supports	43,549	56,785	46,490	26.0%
DO Connect Sunbury	97,651	83,063	78,061	43.8%
DO Connect Bendigo	20,615	30,280	29,845	16.7%
DO Connect Kyneton	3,914	13,287	16,108	9.0%
DO Connect Brimbank (formerly St Albans)	5,409	5,924	8,194	4.5%
ANNUAL HOURS TOTALS	171,138	189,339	178,698	
Average monthly support hours	14,261	15,778	14,892	

Service Distribution

Many participants access multiple services. For this reason, the total number of participants accessing each service is only a guide. Additionally during June 2021, Victoria was again in another enforced short community lockdown that affected participant numbers. DO Connect Sunbury remains the largest Distinctive Options service both in participant numbers and support hours provided.

Surveys

Distinctive Options conducted annual Participant and Family Surveys in October 2020. Feedback from both surveys were very positive, generating a high satisfaction rating of 98.3%. These results help reassure us that our services are delivering high quality, responsive supports to our participants.

Human Rights

Distinctive Options is committed to supporting participants to be empowered about their rights and wellbeing. We design each of our services and supports to ensure high quality service provision that ensures human rights are respected at all times. Our organisation believes that the more informed our participants are about their rights, the greater the likelihood that they will be empowered to make informed choices and decisions. Measures we take include providing accessible information to participants about their rights and responsibilities, being aware of cultural and communication needs, assisting people to exercise their rights at all times and ensuring comprehensive systems are in place to identify and address any potential human rights breaches. There were no breaches to human rights identified in the previous twelve months.

Michael J Hines Award

Daniel W demonstrated strength and dignity in the face of adversity, enabling him to start to live independently during the COVID pandemic. What a fantastic effort by Daniel under very trying community circumstances. He is the seventh recipient of the Michael J Hines Award.

Pictured from left to right: Daniel holding his Award and cash prize, presented by the CEO at the Sunbury end of year December breakup function for participants.



Rights and Responsibilities (R&R) Networks

Distinctive Options is committed to ensuring that individuals both understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities. The more informed the individual is regarding their rights, the greater the likelihood they will be empowered to make informed choices and decisions.

Our organisation has three R&R network groups that run weekly advocacy sessions. Locations include Bendigo, Kyneton and Sunbury. First launched in 1998, the groups give participants the opportunity to express their views and ideas, as well as raise and problem-solve any issues they have.

Agendas are tabled and minutes taken each week. The participants are responsible for running each meeting along with actioning any items raised. Regular agenda items include networking, community events, health and wellbeing, safety and personal business. R&R members also provide feedback on organisational issues, including document review and strategic planning. Guest presenters from within the community also attend meetings to give participants the opportunity to ask questions and be educated on what is happening within their local communities. Some achievements throughout the year were:

- Group members organised a raffle in order to raise funds for the Good Friday Appeal. It was a great experience for participants to work with the local community seeking donations. The group were overwhelmed by the generosity from the many business donations that were used for the raffle prizes. They raised a whopping amount of \$2,000 for the Good Friday Appeal and had great delight presenting their donation on live TV at the Appeal, as pictured.
- R&R took the opportunity to fight against the possible new NDIS Independent Assessments. Feedback was that they were able to have a greater understanding about what the assessments would mean if the NDIS adopted the assessments. The group became involved through corresponding via email and staying informed. R&R members expressed their happiness when hearing that it would not go ahead.
- Featured in an article in the local Star Weekly newspaper regarding pedestrian safety and working with our local councillor Jarrod Bell. Creating safer crossings within the community. Our voices were heard at a local council meeting.
- Currently in the process of organising an event that raises money towards CMV (cytomegalovirus).



Having a Say Conference

Participants from Distinctive Options have been attending the 'Having a Say' conference for many years, predominantly being members from our R&R groups. The 'Having a Say' conference supports individuals to find their voice, to speak up, to be heard, and to be respected.

People enjoy attending the conference for a range of reasons. Some are keen advocates for people with disability and want to debate about issues, whilst others find the whole environment empowering. This year a group were planning towards organising their own 'Having a Say' Day. The event was going to have special guest speakers, stalls and fun activities. However, Victoria went into lockdown a week before the annual February event.

Following the onset of lockdown, the 'Having a Say' conference for 2021 was ultimately postponed.

However the organisers, VALID, organised a two-day online conference event. The theme for the online event was "We Can't Be Beaten!"

Distinctive Options provides a number of service newsletters to participants, families or carers, and to external NDIS Support Coordinators and the Specialist Schools. The following are some examples.





DISTINCTIVE OPTIONS

Sunbury Group and Individualised Services

Leaving school in 2021? Thinking about what's next?

Come along to an information session!





-  Thursday, 10th June, 7:00pm via Zoom
-  Monday, 12th July, 4:30pm
A meet and greet with coordinators and chat with Moe Life Skills about their Cert 1 in Work Education course.
-  Please contact Elena on 9740 7244 or elena.cotchin@d-o.com.au to RSVP.
-  Check out more photos on our Facebook page.



Independent Living

Distinctive Options established its Independent Living Support (ILS) in 2013. This is a regional service that provides various 1-on-1 independent living support activities to participants who do not access other Distinctive Options support services. ILS services can include independent daily living skills, community access, social support, personal care, a range of physical activities, online support delivery options, cooking and more.

A Year at Independent Living

Both Support Coordinators, Melanie East and Sarah Heriot commenced maternity leave in 2020. This left a big hole in the then Individualised Support (IS) coordination team. We employed Shelby and Tammey to cover the maternity leave positions. Whilst they were able to maintain services, each faced their own challenges in the roles. IS services were constantly evolving and changing based on participant demands and the needs of our organisation.



Pictured is participant Travis, honing his independent living cooking skills at home with support from staff.

Mel and Sarah both returned to work, but not in their former positions. Mel took up a Coordinator role in Kyneton, while Sarah has proven what an asset she is in our corporate department as the Assistant CMS Coordinator. Tammey and Shelby both finished their maternity leave positions.

As an interim measure, the dynamic duo of Jane and Sarah stepped back into the Coordinator positions, with the assistance of Michelle. Part of the process undertaken by Sarah and Jane as a Temporary Transition Team, is to streamline and make supports accessible as well as to reconfigure the operational structure of this service. Jane, as fierce as ever, stepped back into the role of IS Coordinator guiding and mentoring staff around her. With her cool, calm and collective nature, she has led the IS team into a bigger and brighter future. Alongside her trusty sidekick Sarah, who shuffled Distinctive Options systems, creating more opportunities for both participants and staff.

Part of the interim transition arrangements, included rebranding the name from IS to Independent Living Supports (ILS). The name rebranding was to better delineate these supports from those provided by the DO Connect sites. Through the new rebranding, we have structured an after-hours service arm to assist us with rostering for our participants. Our rostering masters Melissa and Wendy have rejuvenated our rostering processes, helping our participants receive quality supports. Both pride themselves on matching the right staff member for a participant's needs. Michelle has whipped into shape Distinctive Options paper work so that it is compliant with our quality management system and for future audit requirements. With her wealth of knowledge in this administrative function, she is an asset to the team.

The Temporary Transition Team found that we have the most outstanding staff who are brilliant, adaptive, dedicated and loyal. The flexibility of our staff members under the COVID-19 situation, and the extra lengths that staff had gone through to provide quality services has left us in awe. During the lockdowns, we have had to be adaptable with the way we have provided services, and we thank our wonderful staff who took it in their stride, and our families who have also had to adapt to the changes. Sometimes these changes occur with little or not much notice.

The future looks bright for Independent Living Supports. As the Temporary Transition Team, we look forward to the recruitment of a new ILS team based on the new structure, along with their support staff and families over the coming 12 months.

DO Connect

DO Connect Sunbury was established in 1985; DO Connect Brimbank (St Albans) in 2015; DO Connect Bendigo in 2016; and DO Connect Kyneton in 2017. These services provide a range of supports including:

- Various group activities and individualised supports, including home skills and independent living skills, sport and recreation, photography, art, literacy and numeracy, rights and responsibilities, advocacy, travel training, community access, radio shows, on-line services, physical fitness, survival skills, communication, social skills, extended hours and after hours, supported holidays, volunteering and more!

A Year at DO Connect Sunbury

Continuing into our 'COVID-normal day-to-day lives', DO Connect Sunbury have managed to adapt and provide quality supports to all participants. During lockdown 4, we were able to have staff participate in training, try their hand at administration and complete planning towards the remainder of 2021. "It was good to have different type of work to what we usually do and a good opportunity to see what the coordinators get up to. I enjoyed trying new tasks and learning new skills" (from staff member Sophie).

We rolled out the use of an Application (App); OWNA has become a place to hear about events, products and companies who cater for people with disabilities, such as:

- the Disability Gateway website
- Down Syndrome Victoria's Family Fun Day
- The aquatics Aquatic Equipment
- Nike Fly ease shoes
- adaptive clothing

We also post weekly minutes from the R&R Network and all extended hours activities. We are currently looking into how we can best use this app to give updates on individual participants working towards their NDIS goals.

Here is a glimpse into some services/activities we offer here at Sunbury connect:

- We have begun facilitating 'Community Leader's', a group of participants who plan to tell their stories to students at school about overcoming barriers and sharing advice on networking with organisations and getting around the community independently.
- We have continued to deliver online services to those that have reduced their in person days or simply are isolating at home.
- **Volunteering at St Vincent's-** Each Thursday, a group of participants meet at St Vincent De Paul's Op Shop in Sunbury for a day of volunteering, supported by staff member, Sarah Thomas. Tasks include operating the cash register, money handling, and sorting and organising toys, clothing and household items. It is a great opportunity for participants to obtain and maintain vocational skills. Skills they acquire include social, literacy, numeracy, fine and gross motor skills and communication. This volunteering opportunity gives participants a chance to make connections and contribute to their local community. They enjoy interacting and engaging with local community members that also donate their time to St Vincent's, as well as those who visit the shop. "We volunteer at St Vinnies. I really like it. We learn new things and I have been learning to use the cash register. You can pay with cash or card. In the volunteer's area out the back, we sort the clothes out. If they are clean, we put them on a coat hanger and hang them up on a clothes rack. The other volunteers are really nice, I really love it." (Savannah)



- Extended hours timetable, activities include ladies night out at the wine bar, hanging out with the 'boyz' at the local football club, regular movie nights and much more.
- Students from Salesian College applied for a grant and received \$2,000 to go towards their project of creating a garden with DO participants. Since the project was interrupted by COVID-19 restrictions, the College students chose to send us some activities to complete for the garden, seedlings to grow and birdhouses to decorate, and adult colouring books just for fun.



A year at DO Connect Bendigo

Bendigo Group Supports

DO Connect Bendigo Group services has seen quite a few changes over the course of 2021. Bendigo has welcomed new office staff, relocated from Maple St to Albion St and we made some changes to group programs. We were excited to welcome new participants who have joined our group support programs during the course of 2021.

Whilst the impact of COVID has presented many hurdles for Bendigo group support services, the group team have shown their ability to align with Distinctive Options Values statement – 'We are distinctive and innovative by offering choice and control, by providing unique experiences, by helping people live the life they want, and by being the best in all we do'

Even though COVID restrictions and lockdowns hampered some services, they did not deter participants and staff's determination to reach for goals. Group supports have been innovative by providing online opportunities such as learning about local wildlife through online live tours, working with Sunbury to provide online opportunities to Bendigo participants and finding new pathways to community access programs and community access opportunities. Through this innovation, Bendigo groups have been involved in several community access opportunities throughout 2021, which included a Community access project lead by Golden Square Community Pool in conjunction with Nacho Station and other community groups. Participants and support workers from the Art, Rights and Responsibilities and Film group programs and office staff all worked together in a great team effort to assist bringing this project to life. Participants have been involved in the Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU) advocacy group providing their views and opinions on matters that are important to their daily lives along with learning self-advocacy skills.



Pictured from left to right: Kyarne and Steph planting seedlings at DO Connect Bendigo.

Staff and participants approached local businesses and organisations to collaborate and find different ways to provide the programs that participants requested and which enables participants to reach their goals. Creation of a group to support participants to participate in Balloon Football, Zumba in the park started and was a great hit, as was the tennis, which is run by a professional tennis coach.

New programs have started which provide the opportunity to learn skills and reach goals. The new programs have had positive feedback.

- Bendigo new Men's Tool Shed which started in June 2020 and continues to grow. The group have been creating garden beds and tables.
- Communication groups to support participants to meet communication needs, goals and assist with communication aids within group supports.
- Out of Hours Kids Youth Social Interactions program has started and runs once per fortnight.
- A Social Night program was started and will run again in the new learning block.



Pictured from left to right: Alyssa, Heidi and Cailee participating in the chef workshop at the Vine Hotel in Bendigo.

Bendigo has had a few changes to the office and office staff, including myself Tara, who management appointed as the new Group Support Coordinator. Participants, families, supporters and staff have all made me feel welcome and have been very supportive. Bendigo has a new Administration Officer Belinda who brings a wealth of knowledge to the role, plus the new role of Bendigo Assistant Coordinator was created and Avalon Launer was appointed. Finally, there are a number of new staff who were employed during the year for our group support programs.

A very big appreciation and thankyou to all participants, families, supporters, staff and head office for all your support and assistance during this 'roller-coaster' of a year 2021.

Bendigo Individualised Supports

Individualised Supports held high hopes of COVID-19 being a distant memory by the time we farewelled 2020 and greeted 2021, alas, that was not to be. In spite of intermittent lockdowns and restrictions, which have limited participant's access to some community venues and seen other participants choose to limit their supports, Individual Supports in Bendigo have continued to grow at a steady pace.

We currently have about 50 to 55 participants receiving various levels of support. Many of the existing participants have increased the hours of support they receive throughout the week and we have welcomed new participants to the service.

In spite of a staff shortage across the disability sector, we have managed to recruit a number of excellent new support workers who bring with them many skills, which they can share with participants, along with a fresh approach and great enthusiasm for providing the best support possible. At the other end of the scale, we have some loyal, long-standing workers who offer a wealth of experience and wisdom.

A number of participants are in the process of transitioning from home to supported accommodation and Distinctive Options has been heavily involved in helping these participants develop their independent living skills and adapting to new routines and lifestyles. Whilst COVID-19 has placed some restrictions on the supports we have been able to provide, there were still plenty of highlights throughout the year.

Jason's trip to Portarlington in February for the first real holiday he has had in years was a great success. He had two nights gazing at the sea and relaxing in a nice cabin and was already planning his next holiday in the car on the way home.

Tara continues to enjoy living in her own home and increasing her independence. With support from Distinctive Options, Tara has learnt to shop, cook, organise herself for the day and perform household tasks.

Developing skills and confidence enabled James to explore employment options with the assistance of Jason. James is now undertaking work experience at Connecting Australia and is in the process of transitioning to paid employment there.

Tara has been volunteering at an opportunity Shop with the support of Kim, developing great relationships with the other volunteers and is a valued member of the team.

Dave has been cooking up a storm on Monday and Friday nights under the direction of Andrew who is a qualified chef. Dave is so proud of his achievements.

Many other participants have made progress towards achieving their goals large and small. We eagerly look forward to the coming year so we can help more participants achieve personal goals and access the community free of lockdowns and restrictions.

Pictured is Matthew enjoying 1:1 support visiting the Great Stupa Bendigo.



A year at DO Connect Kyneton

DO Connect Kyneton supports NDIS participants across a wide geographical area within the Macedon Ranges, which encompasses larger townships and numerous rural locations. The traditional owners of the Macedon Ranges area are the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples.

According to the Shire Council, about 35 per cent of people in the Macedon Ranges live outside a town boundary in a rural setting and this is reflected in the participants we support – from Gisborne in the south to Malmsbury in the north, from Glenlyon in the west, to Lancefield in the east. We supported participants to live independently in town or on their rural block, our Individualised Support workers travel far and wide. They may spend the early hours of the morning supporting you at your farm property, and then provide transport for another participant to attend a medical appointment in Melbourne.

Pictured is participant Ross enjoying a game of bowls in Kyneton.



On the rare occasion, as happened during the storms in June this year, supports may be impacted due to road closures and power failures. Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have led to intermittent closure of services, notably those that involve participation in community activities. It is important to retain social connections throughout these times and our group support programs continued to provide a range of activities. Tuesday's travel program builds skills in using public transport to access activities chosen by participants.

Places visited include Bendigo's Science Centre, swimming, Ten-pin bowling, Parkour classes with Castlemaine Circus, ACMI in Melbourne, or just fish and chips at St Kilda beach. On Thursday's our well-being group are building their fitness through a dedicated gym program, mindfulness and yoga classes. Fridays' focus continues to be independent living skills in the home, incorporating cooking, DIY and gardening. Once a month our participants run a self-advocacy meeting where they suggest areas for improvement, and discuss issues in the wider community. Let's not forget the Friday night socials when we have a meal out and enjoy live music when possible.

Pictured is participant Alex, volunteering at Kyneton's Rescue Dog Program with Rufus.



Future plans include running a vocational skills training program for DO participants with trainers from Kyneton Community House. It will provide an opportunity for participants to re-imagine their employment goals, build skills and confidence in preparing for the workforce and incorporate work placement in chosen settings. Whether you are interested in hospitality, administration, arts, horticulture or something else, the Community House trainers will connect you with a work setting that you are passionate about.

In early 2021, Coordinators (Melanie East and Catherine Woodger) started working together across both Individualised Supports and Group supports to ensure a more streamlined service. You will no longer need to know which Coordinator to talk to depending on whether you're having 1:1, 1:2 or 1:3 support – both of us are working across all areas and remain committed to communicating openly and effectively with you. We are grateful to our dedicated support workers for their resilience and dedication throughout the year and thank participants and carers for entrusting us to provide the supports you need.

A Year at DO Connect Brimbank

As with most DO Connects, Brimbank (or St Albans) has had to be innovative over the past 12 months. Group services returned after an extended stint of closure due to the pandemic. Participants received 1:1 supports and zoom services for several months during pandemic restrictions. These 1:1 supports helped participants keep social links and get outside for some exercise, which was essential as ever in the lockdown. Eventually, we were able to return to group services in September 2020.

On site, there were some un-mowed lawns, a little bit of dust around the service, but it was nice to be back to our home in St Albans. The service went back to operating five days a week and Saturday social game nights became a regular occurrence too.

As the New Year came around things became more stable, and we have been able to take things like extended hours into the wider community again. For example, participants took a camping holiday away and attended some weekend events like AFL Footy at the MCG. These little things helped bring back that sense of normality into participants' lives, being again able to experience things that the pandemic had taken away.



Pictured are some of the St Albans participants enjoying a bush walk.

The back and forth between lockdowns have admittedly been challenging given that the St Albans service thrives best when able to access the wider community. However, staff and participants have found many ways to still have meaningful days filled with learning and personal growth whilst also keeping things fun. Some examples of lockdown activities have included participants building a new vegetable garden, building a mini-golf course, creating a few short films, completing plenty of puzzles and paintings, and cooking some wonderful meals.



Pictured is participant Nam keeping fit by working out in a local Gym.

An exciting part of the last few months has also been two of the services participants finding their first job, along with being supported by our staff at their jobs. They have done exceptionally well and have worked hard each day to ensure they get their work completed. It has been very rewarding to see their growth over the years, leading to their current employment.



Employees

Key personnel outside DO Connect Sunbury



Our Executive Management Team

The Executive Management Team provides leadership and direction to Distinctive Options. They ensure the organisation works towards the goals of the Strategic Plan and monitor our budget and risks.



Ernie Metcalf

Ernie Metcalf – Chief Executive Officer

Ernie has led Distinctive Options for five years, guiding the organisation firstly through the NDIS transition and now the impact of the global pandemic. He holds a Master of Business Management, a Graduate Diploma in Accounting, plus qualifications in total quality management and internal auditing. Ernie has over 17 years of experience in the disability sector. Additionally, he has many years of management experience in local government, the water industry and in the for-profit business sector. In his role as CEO, Ernie is responsible for the organisation's entire operations and reports directly to the Chairperson and Board of Directors. He oversees business development and growth, strategic planning and leadership. Ernie holds membership to the International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL), National Disability Services (NDS), the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and is an Associated Member of the Institute of Community Directors Australia (AMICDA). He is also a founding member of a Disability Services CEO Best Practice Network.



Alma Tuazon

Alma Tuazon – Chief Financial Officer

Alma became Distinctive Options' first CFO 3 years ago. She provides financial guidance including monitoring the ever changing NDIS funding model. Her role not only analyses and reviews financial data, reporting on financial performance, preparing budgets and monitoring expenditure and costs, but she also delivers a range of other corporate service operations. Alma provides financial information to the Board and other stakeholders, ensuring the organisation's financial health and security. She holds a Bachelor in Accounting and a Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Finance and Investments and has worked in the industry for over 30 years. She also has experience in quality and risk management, marketing, IT and business development.



Rick Dunn

Rick Dunn – Executive Manager Support Services

Rick has worked for Distinctive Options for over 21 years, providing significant expertise about disability issues and best practice service provision. He holds qualifications in business, education, human resources and project management and is responsible for a variety of key management tasks at Distinctive Options, including operations management, strategic advising and general oversight of each of the service areas of the organisation. Rick acts as the Authorised Reporting Officer for NDIS issues at Distinctive Options. He is a member of the NDS - NDIS Issues and Sector Reform Committee.

Key Personnel

Featured are individual 'pen picture' profiles of some of our key personnel.

Corporate Services



Monica Lazaro – HR Administrator

Graduate Degree in Business & a Double Diploma in HR and Management

Driving growth is the cornerstone for what motivates Monica. Growth in terms of self-development, coupled with growth achieved by employees, in turn benefits the organisation. This focus on growth initiatives provides opportunity to enrich everyone's current position and development. It underpins Distinctive Options reputation as a quality service provider.

Monica believes that there is no uniform or correct approach to growth as it depends on the individual, participant and organisation responses. Monica's genuine desire and compassionate skill to listen to staff empowers them to reach their full potential. These skills enable her to identify staff and the organisation's HR needs, thereby creating the right mix to generate results for Distinctive Options.

Monica leverages off over 20 years of commercial, recruitment and strategic planning experience across a range of sectors, including oil and gas, logistics and supply chain, construction, engineering and now disability.

Monica joined Distinctive Options in November 2020. She has a Graduate Degree in Business and a Double Diploma in HR and Management. Monica is currently completing her MBA. In her current role she looks after the entire employee lifecycle from recruitment, on boarding, wellness, learning and development, performance management systems, and employee relations. Monica oversees our quality management systems, ensuring that resources, policies and procedures are current and reviewed regularly in a timely manner.



Jane O'Leary – NDIS Intake Coordinator

Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management

Jane commenced her journey with Distinctive Options in July 2005, employed as an Administration Assistant in the DO Connect Sunbury service. Working in the disability field was a new concept for Jane, but she soon realized her desire to establish a career in this sector.

Through the years, Jane has changed roles at Distinctive Options and this has been a great experience for both her personal and professional growth. Through the endorsement of Management, the "Outreach" service was established. It started as a service for Sunbury participants, but over time, we realized that there was a great demand for one-on-one supports, which led to the expansion of the Outreach program into Bendigo and Kyneton.

Bendigo was one of the first areas to have access to the NDIS during the transition. This was beneficial to Distinctive Options as it gave us a taste of what lies ahead. The growth of our Bendigo services was robust, especially with the closing of the former Radius services.

The rapid expansion in Bendigo led to the recruitment of the local coordinator who assisted Jane in running the program. Jane travelled a lot between Bendigo and Sunbury, as well as spending a lot of time on the road meeting new families and external NDIS support coordinators.

In 2019, an organizational restructure occurred at Distinctive Options. Jane successfully moved into the NDIS Intake Coordinator role. Jane reports that she considers her new role is great, but challenging at times. She continues to enjoy the connection she has with participants and families. Jane believes the challenge for this sector is the ongoing rapid change in regulations and a non-competitive price guide.

Distinctive Options is expanding services into other program areas, in particular Supported Employment and Supported Disability Accommodation. This will push the organization into different territory, which again challenges our way of thinking. Jane says she embraces these challenges and looks forward to a new journey ahead.



Sharon McAllester – CMS (SupportAbility) Coordinator
Nursing Qualification

Sharon commenced her career in disability at the age of 17 years old, in St. Nicholas Hospital in Carlton. She completed her Mental Retardation Nursing at St. Nicks, which was the first institution in Victoria to be de-institutionalized. Sharon started her working life in Sunbury, appointed as a House Supervisor, at the first Community Residential Unit in Sunbury at Ross Court.

After working at Ross Court Community Resource Unit (CRU) for many happy years, Sharon then applied for a job with Able Community Services (now known as Distinctive Options), where she continued to support the beloved residents of Ross Court at their day service. At Distinctive Options, Sharon was encouraged to learn many new skills. She took every training opportunity available to enhance her ability to work with participants with high support needs. Sharon has had the opportunity to work in many roles within the organization.

She is currently working in the Corporate Services Team, coordinating the Client Software package, SupportAbility, and overseeing the batching of support hours for billing purposes. Sharon, as part of the billing team, plays a very important role to ensure that participant billing is in accordance within support services rendered. In turn, this ensures the ongoing financial sustainability of Distinctive Options.

DO Connect Bendigo



Tara Boag – Group Coordinator
Diploma in Community Services

Tara started her career in business and administration doing a traineeship while she worked as an Administration/Customer Service Officer/Personal Assistant for a very large franchise of BP Australia. She has worked for a few companies, but her favourite role previously was as a Schedule Officer for Telstra. Tara thoroughly enjoyed that role and she then tried sales, but that was not for her!

Her life then took a different turn after she became a mother. During this time at home, she undertook further studies as she wanted to try a different field of work. Tara started in Cert III in Aged Care then gained a job in residential care. With an interest in Autism, she decided to work in the disability field. So back to study she went and did her Cert IV in Disability, finding work in the Aged/ Disability area. Once in the disability field, Tara then completed a Diploma in Community Services and she started a placement at Distinctive Options in August 2017. She enjoyed being a support worker for Bendigo and loved the team she worked with. Tara thrived on being busy and challenged, so she decided it was time for more and applied for the internal project position in the Enhanced Pathways to Family Violence Work. Rick appointed Tara as the project officer for the Family Violence Project.

Tara has been at Distinctive Options for almost four years. In mid-2020 she became DO Connect Bendigo's Group Support Coordinator.



Jan Loescher – Individualised Supports Coordinator
Bachelor Degree in Behavioural Science (Psychology)

Jan has a Bachelor's Degree in Behavioural Science and she previously worked at Radius Disability Services. Her initial role at Radius was conducting a research project into the needs of Adults on the Autism Spectrum in Northern Victoria.

She continued to work at Radius for many years undertaking numerous roles including support worker, a trainer in the supported employment department, as a team leader, whilst other projects were helping older adults in supported employment transition to retirement, and another on the situation of elderly parents still caring for their adult children. In 2013, Jan completed a Graduate Certificate in Family Therapy.

When Radius became insolvent and closed down in October 2016, Jan obtained a contract position as a case manager at DHHS. As this was the transition period from DHHS to NDIS, the role involved helping families write submissions to obtain support so they could access the NDIS.

Jan came to work for Distinctive Options in June 2017, as a Support Worker and then as an Assistant Coordinator. She is now the Individualised Supports Coordinator for 1-on-1 services in Bendigo.

Jan says her current Coordinator role is varied and encompasses all manner of duties, the main ones being to ensure participants receive the best possible supports by finding support workers who are best matched to their needs, mentoring support workers, liaising with other services and generally trying her best to enhance Distinctive Options reputation as a quality service.

DO Connect Kyneton



Catherine Woodger – Coordinator

BA, a Graduate Diploma in Education (English and Drama).

Catherine joined DO in June 2011 after moving to Victoria from NSW where she worked as a performer, teacher and creative producer for numerous community, government and corporate events. Initially employed as a support worker at DO Connect Sunbury, Catherine enjoyed the opportunity to learn from experienced professionals in the field. It proved to be a natural progression from the arts, as she saw an opportunity to support participants to express themselves creatively and share their unique stories and experiences with others. She ran drama, photography and film making activities, with participants' short films screened at The Other Film Festival and Twilight Cinema. She also collaborated on Speak Up, a self-advocacy film presented at the 'Having a Say' conference in Geelong. Speak Up features role-play scenarios enacted by participants on matters such as financial, emotional and physical abuse. The making of the film was a self-advocacy activity in itself, with participants learning to operate the cameras, direct a scene and apply basic editing techniques.

Catherine became the Coordinator for Group activity services at Wills Street in Bendigo in late 2016, following the closure of another local provider, Radius. As Bendigo services grew, DO leased a second site at Maple Street, in Bendigo. We supported participants to develop independent living skills in the Maple Street house, where they chose the furniture. This was their place to setup how they wished, a model approach first started by DO in St Albans. Bendigo participants contributed their skills and knowledge with local organisations including Foodbank, Phoenix FM, Communications Access Network, Bendigo Community Garden and City of Greater Bendigo Council.

Now a coordinator for DO Connect Kyneton, Catherine shares the role with colleague Melanie East, both overseeing individualised and group supports in this locale. Catherine and Melanie place great value on listening to the needs of participants and carers, many of whom live in rural areas outside of town and valuing staff with the essential work they do.



Melanie East - Coordinator
Certificate IV in Disability

Melanie commenced working with Distinctive Options in March 2013. She has held various positions within the organisation. Each new role has given her the opportunity to develop new skills and she thoroughly enjoys the challenges and variety this brings.

Melanie was initially employed as a Support Worker at DO Connect Sunbury, mainly working in Individualised Supports. She completed her Certificate 4 in Disability concurrently and enjoyed putting her learnings into practice. Additionally, she received mentoring from some fantastic instructors, who had many years' of experience in the field. Melanie supported participants mainly in the High Support area. This included taking individuals swimming or to their Occupational Therapy sessions, all the while focusing on their specific hydro / exercise programs. She also supported participants with community access, including going to cafes, completing their personal shopping and assisting them with their communication, daily living and independence skills. Melanie is passionate about working with individuals to meet their goals, assisting them to engage in meaningful day-to-day activities to make independent choices, concentrating on areas such as communication development.

In early 2016, Melanie stepped into the Communication Coordinator role covering a maternity leave placement. Melanie enjoyed working alongside qualified Speech therapists in a networking program to complete participants' speech assessments and communication profiles. She identified where participants needed extra communication support in order to be as independent as possible. This led to her creating new communication aids for many participants. Melanie supported individuals to attend group programs, which further enabled them to put their communication strategies and recommendations into practice. Through this, she was able to identify who would benefit from communication plans.

Melanie stepped up and became the Acting Client Services Manager in Sunbury for several months while the manager was on extended leave. This role gave Melanie an insight into the challenges and pressures of running a group service for over one hundred participants, including day-to-day issues that arise and learning leadership skills. Melanie felt she developed better time management skills, learning how to prioritise tasks and manage a team of staff.

Melanie accepted the new role of NDIS Coordinator, her third role during 2016, assisting families and participants to understand and manage the new funding scheme. Her experience with communication supports enabled her to understand and advocate for what supports, aids, services and equipment participants needed.

An organisational restructure occurred in May 2019, which led to some new roles. Melanie accepted the role of Individualised Supports Coordinator for Sunbury and surrounding areas. Melanie was in this role for one and a half years, growing the service through providing consistent and meaningful supports to participants.

In 2020, Melanie went on maternity leave. She returned in 2021 to a part time job share role with Catherine Woodger, coordinating Kyneton Groups and Individualised Supports within the Macedon Ranges. Catherine and Melanie are very participant and goal orientated and aim to ensure the delivery of our Kyneton services are of the best quality. Melanie has been with the company for seven and half years now and looks forward to being a part of the continual growth of the organisation with all its future endeavours.

DO Connect Sunbury



Elena Cotchin – Lead Coordinator
Certificate IV in Disability

Elena is the Lead Coordinator for DO Connect Sunbury Groups and Individual Services and has been in this role since July 2019. With the NDIS and COVID-19 being introduced at the start of her career as the Sunbury Coordinator, it is not to say that it hasn't been a challenge! Elena has had great support from her amazing team and staff. Within her current role, she has tackled numerous lockdowns and is still aiming to provide quality services with releasing a communication application so that participants are able to see the same information that their families/supports are seeing, offering 1:1 intensive interaction and communication services.

Acknowledged and respected as a highly competent agent for change, Elena has climbed the ladder with great success. Some of Elena's previous roles at Distinctive Options have been in employment, coordinating participant's volunteering and work experience, as a Coordinator for young adults, assisting with the transition from school into adulthood, plus coordinating and opening a smaller service for young adults to increase their independence.

Previous careers Elena has had included hairdressing, ski and snowboard fitter, personal trainer/CrossFit instructor running CrossFit style training sessions designed for people with disabilities.

Elena has worked at Distinctive Options for the past 12 years and has adapted to the motto of calling it the "family business". She is passionate about seeking great outcomes for her participants using the NDIS to its capacity. With her amazing team by her side and her supportive management team above, this is something that is achievable for the participants and staff of Distinctive Options Connect Group Services and Individualised Supports Sunbury.

Workforce

We acknowledge the important contribution that our employees make to Distinctive Options and recognise that they are one of our greatest assets and resources. Our staff are a significant point of difference between us and other service providers. They are passionate and creative, showing tremendous flexibility and positivity in response to the COVID pandemic. The staff culture at Distinctive Options is welcoming, friendly and supportive. The work can be challenging but our staff are adaptable, innovative and progressive. This culture has been ingrained throughout the organisation for decades, but it is the dedication of Management and Coordinators that ensures it continues year after year. As we move into the future, we will work hard at supporting our employees to adapt to the new world of disability service delivery, with a particularly strong focus on staff development.

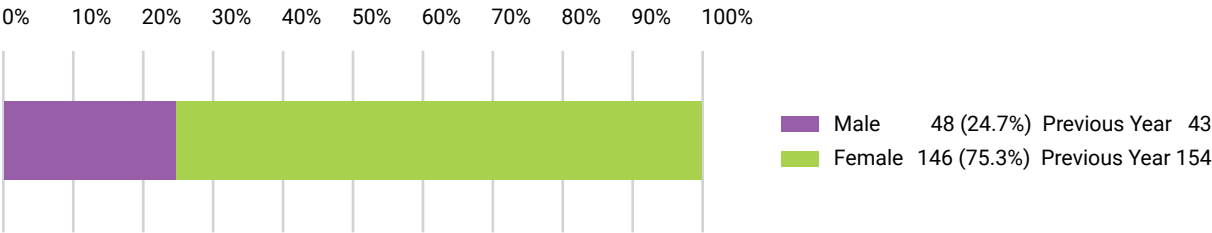
Staff Profile

We concluded the year with 194 employees, similar to last years' number. As at 30 June 2021, our full time equivalent employees equated to 94.4. This was similar to the pre-COVID February 2020 result of 93.8, indicating that Distinctive Options has largely retained its workforce. The staff turnover ratio for permanent employees in 2021 shown in the Scorecard data is still lower than the disability sector's turnover rate in excess of 20%.

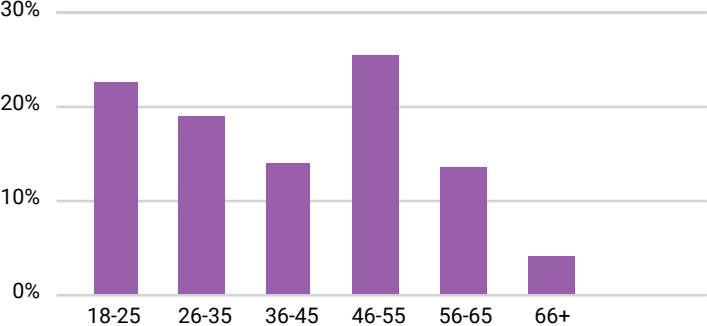
Staff Demographics

The majority of our staff are female, but this year male staff numbers grew by 11.6% compared to last year. Distinctive Options program of having more permanent staff than casuals continued in 2020-2021. This push is to ensure the quality of services and stability in the workforce, with permanent numbers increasing by 10.7%. The median age of our staff ranges across 26 to 35 year olds and the 36 to 45 year olds, which indicates we are attracting younger staff to our organisation. This is borne out by the median years of service ranging from 1 to 2 years to 3 to 5 years in 2020-2021.

Gender

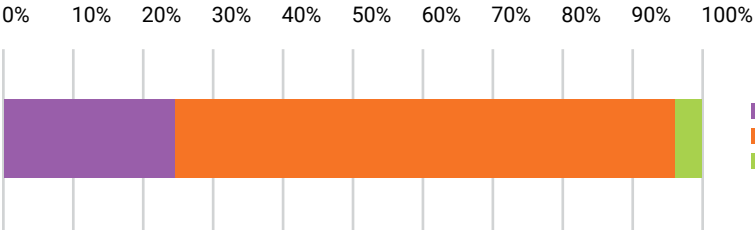


Age



18-25 years	45 (23.2%)	Previous Year	44
26-35 years	37 (19.1%)	Previous Year	39
36-45 years	28 (14.4%)	Previous Year	32
46-55 years	50 (25.8%)	Previous Year	48
56-65 years	27 (13.9%)	Previous Year	25
66+ years	7 (3.6%)	Previous Year	9

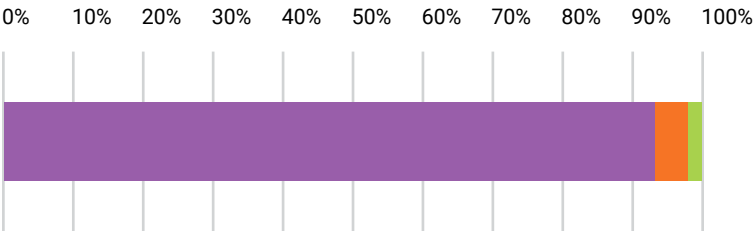
Employment Status



Casual	48 (24.7%)	Previous Year	66
Part Time	139 (71.7%)	Previous Year	119
Full Time	7 (3.6%)	Previous Year	12

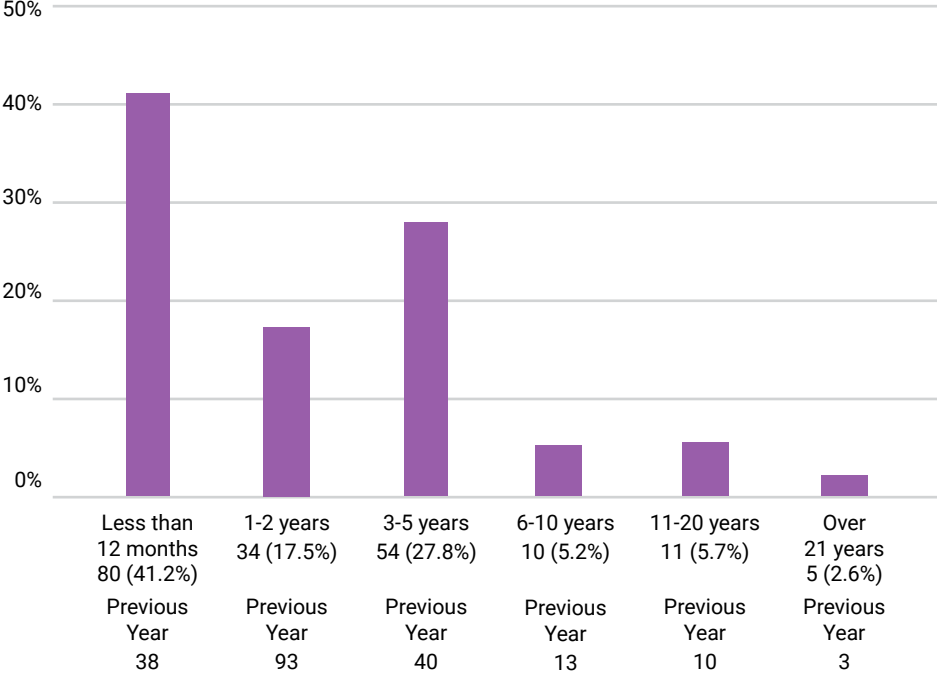
Primary Work Types

Because staff can work across a range of sites, individual site data is meaningless and has not been included this year. The breakup between staff working in support services and corporate services is:



Support Services - all sites	180 (92.8%)	Previous Year	184
Corporate Services	11 (5.7%)	Previous Year	10
Cleaners	3 (1.5%)	Previous Year	3

Years of Service



Staff Milestones

The following employees reached a milestone this year:

Lesley Carbis	15 years
Catherine Woodger	10 years
Leesa Reaburn	10 years
Maureen Mansfield	10 years
Amy Dinsdale	10 years
Louise Bottomley	10 years

We congratulate them on their milestone and express our thanks for their dedication and commitment to the organisation.

Financial Information

The modern *Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHADS)* covers all staff (except for the CEO and management team who are on personal contracts). All staff pay rates are as per this Award. Salary rates increased twice throughout 2020-2021 for employees under the SCHADS Award, in line with the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) and indexation. Fair Work Australia's ERO determination commenced back in 2012. After eight years of two annual Award increases, the final ERO increase ended in December 2020.

Distinctive Options' eligibility for the Australian Job Keeper wage subsidy, supporting businesses because of the financial impact of the pandemic, finished at the end of December 2020.

Distinctive Options pays Superannuation at 9.5% on salaries as per legislation. Distinctive Options is under the Victorian Portable Long Service Leave (PLSL) Scheme and pays into the Scheme each quarter. The PLSL Scheme allows staff to take their long service leave entitlements with them if they change jobs but remain in the community services industry. Salary sacrifice is available to all permanent staff according to Fringe Benefits guidelines for charities. AccessPay externally administers all approved not-for-profit charitable sector salary sacrifices.

Volunteers

Distinctive Options is grateful to the involvement of volunteers who support our organisation in continuing to provide high quality services. Volunteer roles include Board membership and program support with participants. Screening of all volunteers, including Board members, occurs before they commence. We provide structured induction programs to all volunteers. Distinctive Options has nine volunteers who support our organisation, being all volunteer Directors. Pandemic restrictions continue to impact on volunteer numbers within groups.

If you would like to volunteer in any capacity, please contact our head office for more details.

Probity

Distinctive Options is required to undertake a number of probity checks to ensure the safety of all participants. New NDIS screening compliance requirements under the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission standards are now in place for all employees, management and the Board.

Policies and Procedures

Distinctive Options has a Quality Management System (QMS) in place that holds all of our policies and procedures, as well as relevant forms and resources. These documents address a range of issues affecting the organisation, including human resources, fleet management, finance, governance, operations and more. The organisation conducts regular internal reviews of our policies and procedures, which are subject to external audits.

Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment

Distinctive Options is committed to providing a workplace free from discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying. Clear information and processes around reporting and responding to these are provided to all employees within the Human Resources Policy and Procedure. Behaviour that constitutes discrimination, harassment or bullying will never be tolerated at Distinctive Options and any person found to have engaged in these behaviours will face disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

Equal Employment

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

Professional Development

Distinctive Options is committed to offer the best ongoing learning and development to all staff in order for them to gain or strengthen their skills to carry out the various employment roles with confidence. We are currently offering ongoing internal training on policies and procedures and cover a variety of topics from 'discrimination' to 'having difficult conversations'. We are also boosting external training on essential qualifications (including First Aid and CPR) creating a skilled workforce.

Some of the professional development accessed by staff this year included:

- Mental Health First Aid
- Person-Centred Care and Empowerment
- Communication Aid training
- Escalation and Physical Disengagement
- Supporting People at Mealtimes

- Working With People With Mental Health Issues
- How to Write Journals and work towards NDIS Goals
- Medication Assistance
- Epilepsy Management
- Manual Handling
- Positive Behaviour Support
- COVID-19 Infection Control

Staff are encouraged to apply for external training opportunities that interest them and are relevant to their role. The organisation also encourages support staff to complete a Certificate IV or higher in disability by subsidising the cost of training in most cases and offering opportunities for student placements. The annual training budget ensures staff can access multiple professional development opportunities, promoting and encouraging Distinctive Options as an employer of choice.

Staff and Volunteer Induction and Orientation

Distinctive Options offers a structured induction and orientation program to all new employees and volunteers. This helps to ensure a seamless transition into the organisation and aims to provide a robust introduction into our workplace practices and structures.

The induction and orientation process includes learning about OHS, our client management system software, several Codes of Conduct, Zero Tolerance, incident management and much more. All new staff, managers and Directors, also have to complete the NDIS Module 'Quality, Safety and You' as part of their induction. This is a requirement of the NDIS Commission and provides an engaging explanation of responsibilities under the NDIS Code of Conduct.

Supervision and Mentoring

Supervision and mentoring is an essential component of our employee performance management framework. These practices ensure that employees have ongoing opportunities to discuss their workplace performance and any issues or challenges that they are facing. Supervision and monitoring occurs both formally and informally, either directly with the line manager or in a group setting.



Pictured from left to right: Stefan G meeting with staff trainee Neville who is learning to review participant's support needs.

Staff Survey and Other Feedback

All employees were invited to participate in a voluntary and confidential survey between March and April 2021, which collected demographic data and gathered feedback on employee satisfaction and engagement. This year we had a slightly lower response compared to 92 in 2020, but it was still much higher than the 46 in 2019. 78 staff participated in the survey. Each of the questions were optional. Some of the results from the staff survey included:

Staff Diversity

- We have great range of diversity in countries of birth. Although the majority are born in Australia, we have people born in India, Iraq, Turkey, Germany, USA, UK, the Netherlands and the Philippines.

- Our staff are also diverse in religion with 41.3% identifying as religious, 4.2% reporting a disability and ages ranging from 18 years to past 65+ years.

Other Comments

- 55.4% of staff surveyed stated that they are happy while at work.
- Staff have reported that they need ongoing training in OH&S, HR3, Supportability, policies and procedures.
- 80% of our staff feel that they are making a positive difference in other people's lives. 58% feel that the work they do at DO is challenging, stimulating and rewarding.
- Some of the staff commented that Distinctive Options is professional, offers flexibility, has good positive team culture, DO is creating opportunities for participants, and the organisation possesses high values.
- Staff, particularly in support services, expressed needs for more staff meetings, more direction and leadership, more staff inclusion in service decision-making processes, more support for staff, staff training, and effective communication.

In response to this feedback, Management continues to budget for increased training for all staff in the 2021-2022 financial year, as well as maintaining improvements to facilities and infrastructure. A broader management team structure should also improve communication, mentoring and circulation of staff ideas.

Organisational Review Feedback

An external consultant delivered Distinctive Options' organisational review. Some of the rich feedback from this review included the following internal and external comments:

- "...There is a communication culture, it exists across all spectrums, between families and us, between staff, cooperation between services and linkages within our team
- We are responsive and have a diverse service offering

- Staff are engaged in our Mission and feel valued – that means they are safe to challenge managers – they can speak about their ideas, issues, and are heard – people go the extra mile
- There are new ideas, innovations and people are willing to try stuff
- Innovative and experienced leaders have been in place – ready to experiment and try anything
- We have access to experienced staff who mentor others and act as role models
- The Board has challenging and robust conversations – there is a healthy level of debate between the Board and management
- Training and development is encouraged
- We spread expertise and capacity beyond the executive managers and grow teams through investing in their development
- Management cares about us
- Lift our gaze above the current operation to develop innovations and be known for big thinking
- A good place to work
- Genuinely care for participants – we go above and beyond for our participants, this includes the executive team
- Board papers are comprehensive, and we think about things so we have healthy discussions
- All capable people seem to be promoted upwards to coordinators, and that can cause a vacuum at the service level
- It's time to lock in success for the future
- Increase our risk tolerance around new ideas, then experiment
- Delivery staff might have good ideas that aren't always captured
- Business development is about new horizons for our participants..."

Staff Newsletters

Distinctive Options issues quarterly staff newsletters using MailChimp. The newsletters provide important information to staff across the organisation, helping to keep staff up to date.

Some of the key topics this year included: 2020 staff survey findings; an update on the Portable Long Service Leave Scheme; CEO's review of last year's organisational performance; Job Keeper updates; COVID updates; AGM update and the 2020 Annual Report; new NDIS Worker Screening; Licences and other staff checks; IT updates; marketing and fundraising update; and staff professional development opportunities.

Flexible Work Practices

Flexible working arrangements are available to employees, including flexible hours, the possibility of working from home, the opportunity to move from full time to part time employment and any other reasonable arrangement. These flexible work arrangements were particularly important this year during lockdowns and ongoing service restrictions.

Gender Issues

Distinctive Options demonstrates its commitment to equality in the workplace with a number of women holding key roles. This includes the CFO position, as well a majority of Coordinator roles across services. Equally important, this year Distinctive Options had a slightly higher male gender balance than last year. Gender diversity is also actively encouraged on the Board. Our Human Resources processes ensure that staff are paid according to role responsibilities and individual qualifications and experience and in line with the Modern Award.



Operations

Participant Alex from Kyneton preparing for his journey

Operating Environment

Accreditations and Government Issues/Policies

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) provides the majority of funding for participants. Other participant funding comes from the Commonwealth Government's Department of Health, for a Continuity of Support program for people with disability aged 65+. Distinctive Options is compliant with all funding bodies. The management team works diligently throughout the year to ensure that the organisation is compliant with legislation. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation takes place through regular internal reviews and audits. These activities ensure that we are able to meet legislative requirements at all times.

Distinctive Options is required to comply with standards, service delivery contracts and legislative obligations from both state and federal bodies. In respect to the pandemic, our organisation needs to abide with State regulations for disability service providers. For NDIS requirements, Distinctive Options must adhere to the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission's standards. Distinctive Options continues to undertake the required quality assurance processes through regular independent audits against national disability standards.

Further guidance for the organisation is by legislation, regulation and standards regarding child protection, participant welfare, privacy and confidentiality, health and safety, industrial relations and records management. As a registered charity, Distinctive Options also meets the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), including submission of an Annual Information Statement and other documentation. Financial reporting and accounting matters are further subject to the requirements of the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Accounting Standards.

In July 2020, Distinctive Options successfully undertook and completed its first audit against the new NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission standards conducted by external, independent auditors, Community Audits Australia. The audit found "...evidence ... provided through the review of operational policies and documents, management, staff and participant interviews and review of staff and participant files that confirmed compliance with the NDIS Practice Standards...". In March 2021, the NDIS Commission adopted the audit findings, which included increasing Distinctive Options NDIS Scope of Registration to operate 'specialised supported employment'.



Continuous Improvement

Important components of our Quality Management System (QMS) are regular audits and ongoing continuous improvements. We conducted twelve internal audits this year in a range of areas including quality management, participant safety, risk management, incidents, complaints and staff inductions, along with having two external audits. Each found potential improvements to be made which were discussed with senior management and implemented across the organisation. Continuous improvements identified are communicated to staff via email, through the staff newsletter or at staff meetings.

Additionally, as a registered NDIS service provider, the NDIS from time to time audits our billing functions to ensure compliance with the price guide. Each random NDIS audit conducted confirmed Distinctive Options is compliant against the funding price guide.

Privacy Issues

Distinctive Options is compliant with the following privacy legislation: Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), Information Privacy Act 2000, Health Records Act 2001 and the Australian Privacy Principles 2014. We also act according to the Notifiable Data Breaches scheme and NDIS requirements including the Code of Conduct and the Practice Standards. We treat all individuals with dignity and respect, maintaining the confidentiality of all employee, volunteer and participant information at all times. No privacy breaches occurred this year.

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 implemented at Distinctive Options are:

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

Research and Development

Distinctive Options actively participates in a variety of partnerships and networks that contribute to our research and development. These opportunities allow us to stay well informed of the latest updates occurring across the disability sector throughout Australia and internationally.

The CEO is an active member in the *International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL)*, a forum that brings together leaders from across the world to discuss best practice models and innovations. The CEO used this forum and network to assess virtual reality usage in disability and health services around the world.

Ernie also has a close, active relationship with our peak body, *National Disability Services*, related to specific sector issues. From a governance continuous improvement perspective, his membership with *AICD* and through the *ACNC* provides further research and development opportunities via best practice developments for the Board to consider. Additionally, the CEO is a member of the *Harvard Business Review Advisory Council*. The HBR Advisory Council brings leaders together to share their opinions on current management, business issues and best practice research findings.

The Executive Manager Support Services is a member of the *NDS* – via the *NDIS Issues and Sector Reform Committee*.

The CFO is an active member of *CPA Australia* and she is a member on one of the *CPA Panels* with her peers. Alma keeps up to date on all financial matters current and emerging through this network and through working closely with financial auditors, *Saward Dawson*.



Risk Management

Risk management is a key component of the quality disability services provided by Distinctive Options, which includes governance risks related to broader organisational operations. Each year the Board and management reviews the effectiveness of the systems of risk management and internal controls, conducting a robust assessment of the principal risks affecting the organisation in line with the organisation's Risk Appetite Statement. The aim of the Risk Appetite Statement is to determine the risks that we should be willing to take, as well as those which are unacceptable. The statement includes a series of risk assertions, aligned to our strategy, together with the risk parameters within which we expect our people to work.



Risks are assessed and quantified, in terms of impact and likelihood of occurrence, both before and after control mitigation. Assessing the gross risk before control mitigation allows our organisation to review the relative impact of the existing controls by comparing the gross and net risk assessment. It means we can avoid wasting resources on mitigating controls and actions, which have a negligible impact on the risk assessments.

Risk Appetite Statement

Distinctive Options is well positioned in the disability market, with good long-term growth prospects. Risk appetite is the level of risk that the organisation is prepared to take in pursuit of its objectives. Delivery of core functions and business strategy involves risks, and the risk appetite is the level of risk the Board and management are willing to accept in order to achieve these objectives. The risk appetite, including a quantifiable risk tolerance level and risk controls in place, provides guidance to managers making risk management decisions that are expected to achieve a reasonable level of control over risks. Underpinning Distinctive Options' risk decisions is an expected requirement to allocate scarce resources prudently and efficiently to its various functions whilst accepting accountability to various stakeholders. This is an important risk appetite consideration.

Distinctive Options acknowledges and recognises that its appetite for risks varies according to the activity or opportunity undertaken. Our acceptance of risk is subject to always ensuring that the potential benefits and risks are fully understood before developments are authorised. Understanding and defining our risk appetite assists in decision making across the organisation. Distinctive Options' risk appetite relates to the following classes of risks.

STRATEGIC Risks

Distinctive Options has a ● **High Risk Appetite:** For innovations, which can be through service expansion and development, or to maintain and grow the organisation's competitive advantage. This includes an injection of cash from reserves to pursue these innovations.

FINANCIAL Risks

Distinctive Options needs to remain competitive, efficient and a financially sustainable organisation in order to ensure long-term viability under an NDIS environment. As such, the organisation takes a conservative approach to investments, or a ● **Low Risk Appetite:** For investment risks.

OPERATIONAL Risks

● **Moderate Risk Appetite:** For fundraising that contributes to brand awareness or grows cash reserves. ● **Low risk appetite:** For any activity that does not support regulatory compliance, quality accreditation, or NDIS provider registration; for activities that may compromise its

reputation, ethics, brand, or credibility; and for non-availability of systems, including cyber security to limit or mitigate system hacking.

✘ ZERO Risk appetite

For bribery, or other forms of corruption, or fraud by individuals, in systems and processes. The organisation has no appetite for the misuse of its information.

Occupational Health and Safety

Distinctive Options is committed to providing a safe environment for all staff, participants and visitors, in alignment with the Commonwealth's Work Health and Safety Act 2011. Our HR Administrator oversees Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) coordination, to ensure ongoing OHS compliance across the organisation. The HR Administrator works closely with all OHS Officers at each service area, ensuring dedicated attention to each location's safety needs.

A Schedule outlines the OHS practices of the organisation, including meetings, electrical test and tag, emergency evacuation drills and first aid/spill kit checks. Strict processes are in place for fleet management and machine use, and first aid training is provided to staff across the organisation as required. Staff, again, were encouraged to access free Flu and COVID vaccinations. Privacy dictates that Distinctive Options is not privy to know how many staff have taken up these vaccinations, but feedback indicates it has been a significant number. Management and HR continue to promote staff awareness of the importance of vaccination and protecting participants from communicable diseases.

OHS Measure	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Lost time	26 hours	738 hours	570 hours	zero hours
Lost-time injuries	1	1	1	0
Reportable WorkCover injuries	0	1	6	4
Serious injuries	0	0	0	0
Manual handling injuries	0	0	0	0
Hazards or near misses	not recorded	10	12	38

Greater monitoring of potential hazards or near misses meant Distinctive Options was able to keep on top of any OHS issue to ensure workplace injuries were minimised. Included in the hazards or near misses is known data relating to staff COVID tests that all proved to be negative, but were required in line with our organisation's COVID Safe Plan – hence the significant increase in numbers.

Keeping participants and staff up to date on hygiene and safety is often a serious matter, but sometimes a bit of light-hearted fun can convey a message even better!



Pictured from left to right: DO Connect Sunbury Assistant Coordinator Melanie Mays in full PPE gear, watched on by laughing participant David N as the Lead Coordinator, Elena Cotchin, pretends to threaten to disinfect Melanie!

COVID-19



COVID-19 continued to be a significant risk during the year. Vigilant enforcement of our COVID-19 Policy and government-mandated COVID Safe Plan ensured a safe workplace and service environments. We regularly update these documents as guidelines from the State government change, ensuring they continuously reflected best practice in preventing COVID-19 in disability services. We purchased Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and distributed PPE across the service to keep staff and participants safe. The organisation was compliant with

government directions at all times. Hand sanitiser stations are located and used at each service site, with daily digital thermometer temperature checks mandatory for all staff and participants. Staff undertook online modules in infection control and the use of PPE. We enforced physical distancing and room occupancy limits, with continued extra cleaning services. Staff and participants adjusted to these changes seamlessly, helping to protect one another from COVID-19. As at June 30, there were no cases of COVID-19 at Distinctive Options.

Strategic and Business Planning

Detailed reporting processes from management to the Board occur monthly, quarterly and annually as part of the risk management process. These reports focus on performance towards strategic objectives and the budget, ensuring that any potential risks can be identified and managed at the earliest opportunity.

Internal Auditing

Internal auditing processes are in place to ensure that the organisation is compliant with all quality requirements, including the NDIS Practice Standards and the Child Safe Standards. Audits are prioritised according to risk and are conducted across all areas of the organisation, including governance, finance, operations, systems, processes and controls. More information about internal auditing is provided under Continuous Improvements on Page 64.

Marketing and Fundraising

Acknowledging the impact of the pandemic on marketing activities in general, the organisation still needed to review and update its Strategic Marketing Plan, overseen by the Marketing & Fundraising Committee. The Committee completed this review in August 2020. The Strategic Marketing Plan links directly to Distinctive Options' Strategic Plan, with key priorities for each strategic area.

Marketing Activities

Marketing activities that could still be undertaken during the pandemic included Facebook posts, website updates, minimal fleet advertising, newspaper articles and advertisements, working with local external NDIS Planners or Support Coordinators, with local schools, and attendance at expos where or if possible. Direct marketing by the CEO to local solicitors in May 2021 regarding potential bequests and donations to Distinctive Options was a new option taken up. Word of mouth reputation remains our strongest marketing tool. We continue to work on increasing our brand awareness in our local communities through printed and online material, video production and attendance at events where possible.

Fundraising

Distinctive Options maintained its registration as a fundraiser organisation in Victoria, with Consumer Affairs Victoria. Because of ongoing pandemic community restrictions, the organisation did not undertake any active fundraising activities in 2020-2021. Despite this, Coles Supermarkets/Cadburys chose Distinctive Options for a very generous \$10k donation. Distinctive Options was very privileged to be one of only eighteen recipients Australia wide to receive a donation from Coles Supermarkets/Cadburys in 2021.



Pictured from left to right: Coles' employee Aki, DO CEO Ernie Metcalf, Cadburys' Representative Doreen, DO Support Worker Sharon Purcell, and Sunbury Coles Store Manager Mark Turner, handing over the \$10k donation cheque outside the Coles Supermarket, Sunbury.

We also received four other small, but important, donations during the year. One community donation came directly to Distinctive Options, and the others occurred via our PayPal Giving Fund option on the website. These four donations totalled \$865.

On the grants front, Distinctive Options secured a final year's grant for Victoria's Department of Health and Human Services Family Violence Project, along with a third year of funding for Hume City Council's Performing Arts Project. Other non-cash grants related two free donations of PPE, and a free Practera/UNSW student team to help Distinctive Options initially review virtual reality systems and options.

Social Media

Distinctive Options actively uses Facebook to provide information about our services and participants, with around five posts added per week. Staff volunteer their time to contribute to the page and to respond to the messages and comments left by the public. We are extremely grateful for those that give their time to raise awareness of our organisation. Facebook 'likes' continued to increase, from 1,575 two years' ago, to 1,724 last year and 1,884 this year. Average reach (the total number of people seeing our posts on their newsfeeds) was an average of 397 per day, down from 441 last year. An explanation in part for this reduced daily average might be because of all the online sessions held during lockdowns and restrictions.

Age data and gender of those engaged in our Facebook posts this year were:

Gender - Female 85.8% Male 14.2%

Age Groups	Female	Male
18 to 24 years	4.9%	1.3%
25 to 34 years	17.5%	3.9%
35 to 44 years	22.0%	2.5%
45 to 54 years	22.9%	3.2%
55 to 64 years	14.1%	2.4%
65+ years	4.4%	0.9%



Governance

Our Sunbury Rights and Responsibilities Group meeting with a Hume City Councillor

Board of Directors

In line with best practice principles, Distinctive Options' Board Charter includes clauses relating to independent Directors. To meet this requirement, Distinctive Options' Board comprises at least a majority of independent directors. The Australian Institute of Company Directors defines an independent director as someone who can be broadly defined as a non-executive director, who is not a member of management and who is free from any business or other relationship that could materially interfere (or could reasonably be perceived to materially interfere) with the independent exercise of that director's judgment.



Simon McKenzie

Simon McKenzie [BCom, JD, GAICD]
Board Chairperson, Simon is an independent Director and a member of the Governance & Risk and Audit & Finance Committees.

Simon is an admitted lawyer with a commerce degree and a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Simon is the Public Transport Ombudsman. His department helps people resolve disputes about public transport issues including accessibility. He brings solid experience in dispute resolution, stakeholder engagement, customer advocacy, company operations and regulatory affairs. He has a proven record of accomplishment in team management and leadership through organisational change.



Kalma Rathouski

Kalma Rathouski [MSocSc]
Deputy Chairperson, Kalma is an independent Director and is Chair of the Governance & Risk Committee.

Kalma holds a Masters in Social Science and 15 years' experience at the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, where she gained experience in conflict resolution, investigations, stakeholder management and communications. Kalma went on to work as an Executive Officer for a community bank and currently works in local government in a career change as a Town Planner. She has a keen passion for disability having experienced life in a wheelchair for a short time, following an accident. Currently in her third term, Kalma is honoured to have served Distinctive Options and to have seen it mature into the organisation it is today.



Anthony Aboud

Anthony Aboud [MBA]
Anthony is an independent Director and he is a former Board Chairperson who served five years in this role. He is a member of Audit & Finance Committee.

Now in his final year as a Director, Anthony brings over twenty years of experience in banking and financial services to the board. He has held a number of senior leadership roles spanning strategy, operations, process improvement, sales, transformational change and customer experience. Anthony holds a Masters of Business Administration and a Six Sigma Black Belt. He is currently working as General Manager Business Process Transformation at the National Australia Bank, utilising his financial services and change management background.



Derek Jones

Derek Jones [FCPA]

Derek is an independent Director who is the Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee.

Derek is a retired finance professional who has been a Director with Distinctive Options for over five years. He 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. Derek's areas of expertise include financial reporting, risk management, strategic planning, governance and compliance.



Graham Holt

Graham Holt [Dip Bus Mgt]

Member of the Marketing and Fundraising Committee

Graham brings over 30 years of national and international experience in customer service, marketing and communications, project delivery, change management and organisational capacity building. He is currently employed as the General Manager Operations and Delivery Systems at Greater Western Water where he is responsible for managing customer support programs, community engagement, network operations and water supply management. Graham has a strong understanding of occupational health and safety, the impact of culture and the implementation of KPIs.



Nancy Peat

Nancy Peat [AdvDip (FinPlan)]

Nancy is an independent Director and Chair of the Marketing & Fundraising Committee.

Nancy has extensive experience in financial services, previously employed with Mercer Australia Shadforth Financial Group, and Macquarie. Joining the Board to give back to the community and gain valuable experience, Nancy brings valuable skills in business development, relationship building, financial management and marketing capabilities. She is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is a nationally accredited mediator, registered through NMAS. Nancy has a personal connection to the disability sector, with a grandson who has Autism Spectrum Disorder and a previous foster son with a mild intellectual disability. She participates in a variety of volunteering opportunities, including assisting the homeless and raising money for research into juvenile diabetes.



Alistair Lloyd

Alistair Lloyd [MBA BComp (Info Sys) MAICD]

Alistair is an independent Director and member of the Governance & Risk Committee.

Alistair has extensive information systems, program delivery and strategy implementation experience. With over three decades in corporate and public sector roles – including with National Foods, the Department of Education, and as an Executive Director with ESTA – Alistair now leads his own technology and business practice. He is passionate about transformation and change, service design, people leadership and creativity.



**John
Papatheohari**

John Papatheohari [BBus, CA, CHCIO]

John is an independent Director and member of the Audit & Finance Committee.

John has eleven years' experience as an IT and digital transformation executive across private and public health. He has assumed Chief Information Officer roles over the past six years, having previously led the Health Shared Services entity for the Victorian Department of Health. John made the transition to industry after 26 years as a Management Consultant, leading regional practices and having spent over 12 years in various overseas postings. He is a Board member of both Benalla Health and Mallee Track Health & Community Service, a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is a Chisholm Institute Board Sub-Committee member. John is currently General Manager IT & Digital for the College of Intensive Care Medicine. He brings enthusiasm for governance, financial management, risk management and digital adoption.

**Skev
Seremetis**

Skev Seremetis

Skev was an independent Director from March 2021. She formally resigned in October 2021.

Former Directors who retired or resigned during 2020-2021:



**Terry
Rodrigues**

Terry Rodrigues

Terry Rodrigues finished his final three year term of office at the November 2020 Annual General Meeting. Terry was an independent Director from 4 June 2012 to 20 November 2020 and held the position of Deputy Board Chair from December 2012 to November 2017.



**Darren
Quigley**

Darren Quigley

Darren Quigley retired as a non-independent Director on 12 February 2021 after serving just under 7 years, from 9 June 2014. Darren was the Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee from December 2014 until his retirement in 2021.

Corporate Governance

Distinctive Options is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 and registered as a charity under the Australian and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Act 2012. Ultimate responsibility for the organisation rests with the Board of Directors. The Board reviews and updates the organisation's Constitution at least every five years through guidance, advice and expertise from our legal representatives. The next review is due in August 2022.

The Role of the Board

The Board's task is to ensure Distinctive Options achieves its objectives whilst mitigating risks. As a group, the Board provides strategic leadership and goals for the organisation, monitoring business activities and financial position, assessing whether all actions are achievable, implemented and delivered appropriately. A Board Charter is in place that describes the Board's responsibilities and accountabilities, which each member takes very seriously.

Board Committees

The Board operates three committees that are dedicated to specific areas of the business. Each Committee has Terms of Reference, reviewed annually. They meet regularly to discuss relevant issues and provide recommendations to the Board for consideration. Management and Corporate Services staff also attend Committee meetings where appropriate. A description of these Committees and their 2020-2021 activities are provided on Page 78. Because of COVID restrictions, the Board also operated a Strategic Planning Committee for a short duration in order to determine an outline and direction for the next Strategic Plan review day.

Board Meetings

The Board holds a minimum of 9 meetings per year, with no scheduled meetings for the month of January. Additional meetings are held as required. The Board met 12 times during 2020-2021, usually monthly over February to December, including a couple of special meetings. The CEO and CFO attend all Board meetings, along with the EMSS, allowing them to present operational and financial information to the Board as required. The CEO develops the Board agenda in consultation with the Chairperson. The CFO takes and disseminates the minutes.

Attendance at Board Meetings

Director	Eligible	Attended	Rate
Simon McKenzie	12	10	83.3%
Kalma Rathouski	12	12	100%
Anthony Aboud	12	10	83.3%
Derek Jones	12	11	91.7%
Graham Holt	12	11	91.7%
Nancy Peat	12	12	100%
Alistair Lloyd	3	3	100%
John Papatheohari	3	3	100%
Skev Seremetis (with a leave of absence)	3	1	33.3%
Terry Rodrigues	4	4	100%
Darren Quigley	6	6	100%
CEO / Company Secretary	12	11	

Board Members

Each Board member volunteers their time to Distinctive Options. They receive no remuneration for their services, but may receive reimbursement for reasonable costs incurred due to Board activities. The Constitution provides an indemnity to the Directors and specifies that:

- There must be a minimum of five members and to be eligible as a member, all membership fees must be paid annually

Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Members	7	8	8	8	9

- No employees, including the CEO, can be a director of the company
- Directors are appointed for up to three terms of three years each
- Membership expires at the ninth Annual General Meeting (AGM) following their appointment to the Board

Expected Board meeting attendance is a minimum of 67% of Board meetings per annum, except when an individual Director has an approved leave of absence.

Current Director Terms

The names of each Board member, their appointment date and their maximum term expiry are:

Director	Appointment Date	Maximum Term Expires
Anthony Aboud	4th June 2012	AGM 2021
Kalma Rathouski	16 March 2015	AGM 2023
Derek Jones	23 February 2016	AGM 2024
Graham Holt	27 February 2018	AGM 2026
Simon McKenzie	27 March 2018	AGM 2026
Nancy Peat	24 April 2018	AGM 2026
Alistair Lloyd	23 March 2021	AGM 2030
John Papatheohari	23 March 2021	AGM 2030
Skev Seremetis	23 March 2021	Resigned in Oct 2021

Director Renominations

No Director renominations took place in November at the AGM and consequently, the Board recruited three new Directors to fill vacancies.

The Chairperson

The Board annually elects the Chairperson at its first meeting following the AGM. The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that the Board provides high quality governance and vision to Distinctive Options, that meetings are effective, that members are skilled, and that matters are considered in a timely and transparent manner. This years' Board Chairperson is Simon McKenzie.

Accountability

As the governing body, the Board is accountable to:

- The members of Distinctive Options
- The community
- Relevant government funding bodies, including the National Disability Insurance Agency and the Commonwealth Government's Department of Health
- The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
- The laws (as amended) relating to the Charities Act, Corporations Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Disability Services Act, Disability Discrimination Act, Privacy Act and industrial relations

Board Charter

Board members are required to comply with the relevant laws and codes of conduct. They must act with integrity, good faith, fairness and honesty at all times. They are required to be diligent, attend meetings and devote sufficient time to preparing for meetings. Each Director is aware of the Board Charter that describes ethical practice, conflicts of interest, code of conduct and confidentiality. Conflicts of interest are a standing agenda item and must be declared, recorded and responded to in accordance with the Charter. The CEO as Company Secretary maintains a register of conflicts of interest. Directors are also required to complete a Confidentiality Agreement as part of their induction to the Board. There were no identified breaches or corruption this year.

Independent Advice

The Board accesses independent advice from a number of sources and for a variety of reasons.

- For financial matters and accounting standard changes, advice from our financial auditors.
- For insurance matters, advice from VMIA, our WorkCover insurers, and from other insurers.
- For industrial relations and legal, advice from Workplace Legal and Moores Legal Service.
- For risk management, advice from Saward Dawson.

For the external Organisational Review, advice was sought from management consultant Maree McPherson, trading as *The Grass Ceiling Pty Ltd*.

Board Review and Development

The Board periodically reviews its own performance for its development and quality assurance. This included reviewing the Board's skill matrix to assess any gaps in the skills required to bring in new Directors to the organisation. Ongoing governance reviews such as the annual ACNC's "Self-evaluation for charities – meeting your obligations as a registered charity" is also part of the review and development processes. Another source of review is keeping up to date on Board related issues, particularly for not-for-profits, as advised by the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Management Responsibility

The Board formally delegates responsibility for daily operations to the CEO and the Management Team (refer to Page 5 of this Annual Report for more information). The CEO is the Board appointed Company Secretary/Public Officer for Distinctive Options.

Board Committees

Audit and Finance Committee

Derek Jones (Chair)	7/8
Anthony Aboud	5/6
Simon McKenzie	4/4
John Papatheohari	3/3
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	8/8
Alma Tuazon (CFO)	8/8
Darren Quigley	3/3
Terry Rodrigues	3/3

The core roles of the Audit & Finance Committee are to monitor and review (a) the organisation's financial performance and financial risks, (b) the annual financial audit, including liaising with the financial auditors, and (c) the organisation's investment strategy.

The Committee reports monthly to the Board and works closely with the CFO to ensure appropriate financial management throughout the organisation.

Governance and Risk Committee

Kalma Rathouski (Chair)	2/2
Simon McKenzie	4/4
Anthony Aboud	2/2
Alistair Lloyd	1/1
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	4/4

The Governance & Risk Committee is responsible for reviewing governance and risk documents, overseeing the appointment and recruitment of Directors, holding the CEO accountable for implementing risk and business plans, ensuring the Board has a succession plan in place, ensuring regular evaluations of Board performance and reviewing external quality assurance reports and findings. They report to the Board after each meeting.

Marketing and Fundraising Committee

Nancy Peat (Chair)	4/4
Graham Holt	4/4
Kalma Rathouski	2/2
Skev Seremetis	1/1
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	4/4
Rick Dunn (EMSS)	3/4
Alma Tuazon (CFO)	3/4
Sarah Quigley (Development Officer)	2/3

The Marketing & Fundraising Committee is responsible for reviewing marketing and fundraising strategies and plans, reviewing and acting upon participant and supporter feedback surveys and monitoring the Strategic Marketing Plan. The Committee includes the Management Team and the Development Officer. They report to the Board after each meeting.

Strategic Planning Committee

Simon McKenzie (Chair)	1/1
Anthony Aboud	1/1
Kalma Rathouski	1/1
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	1/1

This Committee was established to review the Strategic Plan during and post COVID. It developed a new Strategic Plan for 2020-22, driving short-term performance during these challenging times. The Committee comprised the Board Chair and Committee chairs, along with the CEO. The Committee reports to the Board after each meeting. The meeting in 2020-2021 was to set the parameters for a formal Strategic Plan review day.

The Board then disbanded this Committee.



Finances

Our staff and participant band at work entertaining at the Sounds Systems studio

Independent Audit Report



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 2021, 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 2021 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.

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Independent Audit Report



Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

Independent Audit Report to the members of Distinctive Options Ltd

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Company to cease to continue as a going concern.

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Independent Audit Report



Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

Independent Audit Report to the members of Distinctive Options Ltd

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Saward Dawson
Saward Dawson

Jeffrey Tulk
Jeffrey Tulk

Blackburn VIC

Dated: 27 October 2021

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Profit or Loss

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
Revenue	3	10,868,103	9,062,736
Employee benefit expenses		(7,898,894)	(6,869,693)
Client program costs		(68,341)	(74,203)
Rental expense		(106,553)	(87,444)
Depreciation expense		(57,388)	(53,938)
Motor vehicle expenses		(39,194)	(73,582)
Telephone costs		(24,019)	(39,258)
Computer expenses		(157,767)	(100,868)
Consultancy fees		(40,118)	-
Interest Expense	8	(21,279)	(25,799)
Training		(30,065)	(35,716)
Repairs and Maintenance		(15,130)	(24,613)
Printing		(22,907)	(18,414)
Subscriptions		(18,458)	(15,361)
Equipment Leases		(7,396)	(7,517)
Board of Management Costs		(3,405)	(3,199)
Amortisation expenses	8	(156,255)	(149,847)
Other expenses		(199,819)	(141,098)
Waste Disposal		(1,090)	-
Surplus / (Deficit) for the year		2,000,025	1,342,186
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		2,000,025	1,342,186

The full financial information and accompanying notes can be viewed online at <https://www.distinctiveoptions.com.au/about-us/publications/>

Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position

As At 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	2,970,074	2,254,399
Trade and other receivables	5	653,463	851,264
Financial assets	6	2,448,007	942,624
Other assets	7	61,870	25,828
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		6,133,414	4,074,115
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Right of Use Assets	8	569,568	655,302
Plant and equipment	9	388,946	230,739
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		958,514	886,041
TOTAL ASSETS		7,091,928	4,960,156
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	8	137,731	152,068
Trade and other payables	10	646,846	684,523
Provisions	11	642,879	488,079
Other liabilities	12	133,417	45,823
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,560,873	1,370,493
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	8	447,824	512,434
Provisions	11	92,465	86,488
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		540,289	598,922
TOTAL LIABILITIES		2,101,162	1,969,415
NET ASSETS		4,990,766	2,990,741
EQUITY			
Retained earnings		4,990,766	2,990,741
TOTAL EQUITY		4,990,766	2,990,741

The full financial information and accompanying notes can be viewed online at <https://www.distinctiveoptions.com.au/about-us/publications/>

Equity and Cash Flows

Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year Ended 30 June 2021

2021

	Retained Earnings	Total
	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2020	2,990,741	2,990,741
Surplus for the year	2,000,025	2,000,025
Balance at 30 June 2021	<u>4,990,766</u>	<u>4,990,766</u>

2020

	Retained Earnings	Total
	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2019	1,648,555	1,648,555
Surplus for the year	1,342,186	1,342,186
Balance at 30 June 2020	<u>2,990,741</u>	<u>2,990,741</u>

The full financial information and accompanying notes can be viewed online at <https://www.distinctiveoptions.com.au/about-us/publications/>

Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
Note	\$	\$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:		
Receipts from customers, government and other funding	11,220,839	8,701,200
Payments to suppliers and employees	(8,621,604)	(7,098,132)
Interest received	8,165	22,987
Interest paid	(21,279)	-
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	19 2,586,121	1,626,055
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:		
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment	-	16,804
Payment for property, plant and equipment	(215,595)	(27,039)
Redemption/(Placement) of term deposits	(1,505,383)	(53,112)
Net cash used by investing activities	(1,720,978)	(63,347)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:		
Lease payments	(149,468)	(140,647)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities	(149,468)	(140,647)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held	715,675	1,422,061
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	2,254,399	832,338
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	4 2,970,074	2,254,399

The full financial information and accompanying notes can be viewed online at <https://www.distinctiveoptions.com.au/about-us/publications/>

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 centre on the strategic intent to grow our services to assist and empower those we support, helping them to achieve their potential to gain equality and inclusion in the community.

Strategy for Achieving the Objectives

Distinctive Options' strategy for achieving the objectives are contained within the organisation's Strategic Plan around four key pillars: Be Resilient, Be Distinctive, Be Sustainable and Be Progressive. Distinctive Options has key strategic objectives, which underpin these pillars.

Performance Measures

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

Members' Guarantee

Distinctive Options 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 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 2021, the collective liability of members was \$180 (2020: \$160).

Board of Directors

Details and skills relating to each Director are included in the Annual Report in the Governance section.

Other Items

The CEO is the appointed company secretary and public officer for Distinctive Options.

Meetings of Directors

During the 2020-2021 financial year, the Board held 29 meetings of Directors (including Committee meetings). Each Director's attendance rate at meetings is in the Governance section of the Annual Report. Board meetings are on the final Tuesday of each month, commencing at 6:30pm. During 2020-2021, all Board meetings were on-line via ZOOM.

Auditor's Independence Declaration

The lead auditor's independence declaration for the year ended 30 June 2021 is on Page 89.

Director's Declaration

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 2021 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 

Director 

Dated this 26th day of October 2021

Auditor's Independence Declaration



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 2021 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.


Saward Dawson



Jeffrey Tulk
Partner

Blackburn
Dated: 27 October 2021

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Glossary

Accreditation	Validation that an organisation meets quality standards
Balanced scorecard	Framework for measuring performance against strategic goals
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction for which a response or resolution is expected
Continuous improvement	A structured ongoing effort to improve processes and services
Governance	The system by which an organisation is controlled, operates and is held to account
Incident	Acts, omissions or events that occur in connection with support delivery that have or could have caused harm
NDIA	The organisation who implements the NDIS
NDIS	The funding provided by the Australian Government to people with a significant and permanent disability
Participant	A person who received disability supports
Provider	A person or organisation that provides supports to people with disability under the NDIS
Risk management	A process used to identify, assess and treat risks to the organisation
Sector	The organisations providing disability supports and the peak bodies that represent them
Standards	Specific requirements about how an organisation should function
Strategy	An organisation's plan for achieving its vision
Worker	Employees, contractors and volunteers engaged by a provider

Abbreviations

ABN	Australian Business Number
ACN	Australian Company Number
ACNC	Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
AICD	Australian Institute of Company Directors
AGM	Annual General Meeting
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDS	National Disability Services – the Australian Disability sector's peak body
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
QMS	Quality Management System
R&R	Rights and Responsibilities

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Thank You

Government Funders

National Disability Insurance Agency for all NDIS funding

Australian Government's Department of Health for all 65+ aged participant's disability continuity of support program

Grant Providers

Hume City Council; The Victorian Government's Department of Health and Human Services; Practera/UNSW

Donors

Coles Supermarkets/Cadburys; Carolyn Den Brinker; the Bendigo Bank; and Terry Rodrigues.

In Kind Supporters

Bunnings; Fishcare Australia; Jacaranda Nursery, Bendigo; Kyneton Community House; Kyneton Football Club; Golden Square Aquatic Centre/Nacho Station; Phoenix Radio Station, Bendigo; St Vincent De Paul's Sunbury Op Shop; Sunbury Radio; Vine Hotel, Bendigo; Wild Action Zoo, Macedon; Woodend Nursery; and Woodend Pet Haven.

Get Involved

Donate

Every donation we receive is an investment in providing great services to people with disability. As a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) organisation, all donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Donations can be made through our Giving Fund at: www.paypal.com/au/fundraiser/charity/3500192

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. Call us today on 03 9740 7100 for more information or contact your local solicitor.

Volunteer

Distinctive Options values the contributions of volunteers to support the work that we do. You can play a significant role in improving the lives of people with a disability by sharing your time and skills. We are always seeking volunteers to work directly with our participants and to support our community and fundraising activities.

Work With Us

Distinctive Options offers staff exceptional opportunities to develop their career in the disability sector and to gain problem solving skills, people management skills and innovative practice experience. We offer a supportive team environment and flexible work hours.

Spread the Word

If you like what you read in this report, please let other people know about us, and the services that we provide.

Site Locations



DO Connect Sunbury

Located at 24 Macedon Street, Sunbury 3429

For more information and details, contact the Lead Coordinator on (03) 9740 7244

Participants also use rooms located at the 36 Macedon St, Sunbury (Head Office) site as part of this service.



DO Connect Bendigo

Main site located at 125 Wills Street, Bendigo 3551

For more information and details, contact the Coordinators on (03) 8798 0108

A secondary site is located at 9 Albion Street, Kennington 3550



DO Connect Kyneton

Located at 11 Jennings Street, Kyneton 3444

For more information and details, contact the Coordinators on (03) 8798 0160



DO Connect Brimbank

Located at 12 Lester Avenue, St Albans 3021

For more information and details, contact the Acting Team Leader on (03) 8798 0140



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