



DistinctiveOptions
In Life

2023 Annual Report



Star Weekly | Sunbury and Brimbank editions online

Disability Services Providers to Merge

Zoe Moffatt – 23/08/2023

Local disability service provider Distinctive Options will merge with East Gippsland-based provider Noweyung, to provide service and support for people from Bendigo to Bairnsdale.

The merger was announced on August 17, following two months of discussions and due diligence, after Noweyung approached Distinctive Options earlier in the year.

Theme

Sustainable growth opportunities that deliver people with disabilities more life options and choices, both to support achieving their individual goals and for community inclusion, are at the centre of what Distinctive Options does. Growth pathways can occur from organic growth, such as broadening existing service or employment opportunities, or via inorganic growth through expansion in the disability sector market. These strategic themes are core elements of our organisation's philosophy.

The acquisition of Bairnsdale-based service provider, Noweyung Ltd, delivers on all the elements mentioned above. In what is often described as a thin rural market, this acquisition provides people and their families real choice and control over their options for services. For Distinctive Options, it delivers another positive step in our expanding local communities as we look to enhance and grow quality support and employment services in East Gippsland.

About this report

This Report provides information about our activities, operations, highlights, and performance on objectives for the 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.

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 and present.

Audience

This report is for the following stakeholders: Participants, their families and supporters, federal and local government partners, our local communities, and other business partners, along with 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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PURPOSE

Offering people with disabilities real life choices to reach their potential and gain equality in the community.

VISION

Enhancing life choices for people with disability by enriching life's journey.

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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Introduction & Performance Overview

Bairnsdale Advertiser

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Noweyung's Fresh Start

Noweyung, East Gippsland's independent disability service provider since 1954, has joined with Distinctive Options based at Bendigo.

This comes with great news for Noweyung and the local community as the chief executive officer of Distinctive Options is Ernie Metcalf, the head of Noweyung from 2003 to 2016, a man who has the welfare of Noweyung at heart.

Since the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) started and the parameters for providing services changed that allowed anyone with an ABN to compete to supply services in the disability arena, Noweyung has lost clients and economies of scale have made management difficult.

Continued page 3



Chairperson's Message

Kalma Rathouski



This is my last report as Chair of Distinctive Options. As I head to my ninth Annual General Meeting, I see out my third term as Board member. It has been an honour to serve this organisation. I have seen it grow considerably in the time that I have been here, initially through organic growth that saw us expand to Bendigo. As our name became known, we were invited to bring our services to the Brimbank local government area. This year the Board unanimously agreed to acquire Noweyung of Bairnsdale, a service which provides similar supports and enables us to expand other service offerings to our existing clients. It was a decision we came to after a thorough due diligence process. We will have an extensive geographical footprint throughout Victoria, as well as a significant increase in size.

I want to pay special mention to the Directors who volunteered additional time to form a temporary project control committee that would enable them to share their knowledge and experience with mergers and acquisitions and provide exceptional guidance to management on the due diligence process. These Directors, Alistair Lloyd, Alicia Kokocinski and John Papatheohari, engaged in a significant task that we had not previously undergone as an organisation. While we continued business as usual, these Directors gave up significant time, often meeting with the management team weekly, on top of their other Board committee duties. We thank them for their service.

A second board committee was formed to recruit new Directors that would cover the two that stepped down last year and the two that are stepping down this year (myself included). The Director Recruitment Committee worked with Davidson to shortlist and interview candidates. This temporary committee comprised the Committee Chairs, Derek Jones, Alistair Lloyd and Alicia Kokocinski. The Board welcomes four new Directors at our upcoming 2023 AGM. They are Tanya Khan, Natalie Frazer, Areeb Ovais and Rebecca Senior. With all that we have achieved, I am truly satisfied that we have the right people on the Board with an excellent set of diverse skills.

Sadly, we say goodbye to Derek Jones who has served since February 2016 on the Board. He joined us at a time that our financial situation was challenging and served as a member of the Governance and Risk Committee. Later he took on the role as Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee where he initiated excellent decisions such as the investment of cash into Koda Capital Finance. Derek's prudence led our organisation to a state of comfort amongst us other Directors. We thank Derek for his commitment and significant contribution to Distinctive Options and we hope he enjoys his retirement.

This year has been very busy with the integration of two organisations underway as I write this. We warmly welcome all new staff joining the Distinctive Options brand, bringing

their unique Noweyung history and identity. The future is bright, and we are honoured to be on this journey together, to further grow quality supports and programs with the aim of inclusion, independence and the dignity of our participants at the centre of our approach.

My reason for joining Distinctive Options as a Board member was due entirely to its mission statement. Our mission, the reason we exist, is to offer people with disabilities real life choices to reach their potential and to gain equality in the community. I have always remembered that the participants of this organisation are the reason we are here; that we serve

them. I truly feel very much that everything we have done as an organisation in my time at Distinctive Options has been true to our mission statement.

As Derek and I step down from the Board and new members join, it feels as though a new era is dawning for Distinctive Options. As the outgoing Chair, I congratulate everyone for your contribution to this tremendous organisation and I wish each of our participants and their families all the best.



CEO's Message

Ernie Metcalf



A theme of investment and growth has underpinned a year of organisational development at Distinctive Options. Investments were made in our staff, services and sites to deliver organic growth opportunities, along with inorganic growth discussed in more detail below from a service provider acquisition.

While no one likes an operating loss as reported in the financial statements, these investments should provide a platform to generate considerable returns moving forward. Because Distinctive Options was able to previously grow its financial reserves, we had the opportunity to re-invest back into the organisation. The significant investments included staff development and training, as

well as numerous site upgrades incorporating new equipment for participants, necessary refurbishments, in addition to other general site improvements. None of this is funded by the NDIS. Expansion costs occurred with a new site at Brimbank City Council's Aquatic and Wellness Centre in Keilor East, along with a new corporate office space located at 40 Macedon Street, Sunbury. Some costs were operational expenses, while others were capital works.

Noweyung Acquisition

We achieved considerable inorganic growth from Distinctive Options' acquisition of Noweyung Ltd.

Noweyung was a stand-alone \$5m+ disability

BAIRNSDALEADVERTISER.COM.AU / WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2023

Pushing ahead under Metcalfe's guidance

From page 1

"The increasingly competitive NDIS environment meant that Noweyung had to merger to survive," current board chair of Noweyung, Bruce Hammond, said.

"The current board and our community and their families are extremely supportive of the move to combine with Distinctive Options. We are confident that under the innovative and committed leadership and management of Ernie Metcalf, back with more experience and expert knowledge of the NDIS, that Noweyung will have a fresh start and offer a wider range of services to the area.

"We are here for the future."

Noweyung currently has 80 participants. This number was over double prior to the NDIS being actioned. Distinctive Options also serves communities in Sunbury and Kilmore.

The NDIS has put many service providers like Noweyung into loss making situations unsustainable, often because of the draining accountability process required to meet government regulations.

The current Federal Minister for NDIS, Bill Shorten, has publicly said he wishes to reform the NDIS after years of suffering under the Liberal Government.



New chief executive officer of Noweyung, Ernie Metcalf, and board chair, Bruce Hammond, with Noweyung support worker, Julie Titira, and participant, Nathan George.

service provider which has operated since 1954. The acquisition will be formally completed in the new financial year following mutual agreement by both parties in July. The Noweyung acquisition represents a significant milestone in Distinctive Options' history, providing a sizeable additional base to enhance our existing operations. The acquired Bairnsdale operations will be officially known as Distinctive Options Noweyung to retain a rich history in the East Gippsland region, while acknowledging the parent entity post-acquisition. We welcome and embrace Noweyung staff who have joined our organisation as part of an expanded Distinctive Options.

It would be inappropriate to just talk about the positive aspects relating to the acquisition of Noweyung without providing some insight into why their Board sought out an acquisition by another like-minded organisation. Data sourced from ACNC audited financial statements show Noweyung last recorded a profit in the year ended June 2018. At this time, they held just on \$2.4m in cash reserves. For the four years ended June 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022, Noweyung recorded combined losses of over \$2.5m. By June 2022, their cash reserves had dropped by 74%, sitting at just \$622k. The Board reported in the 2022 notes to their financial statements: *"Should the company not meet its budget, which includes the sale of a property, then there is a material uncertainty that may cast doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern"*.

While Distinctive Options was not privy to the inner workings of Noweyung, the management team and the Board of Directors conducted a thorough due diligence review. This review identified the inability of Noweyung to manage change as the key factor that compounded the organisation's financial results and impacted on their ability to navigate a way out as a stand-alone entity.

Changes in key senior management resulted in the loss of other experienced managers and corporate staff, including the loss of sector knowledge and business acumen to manage sweeping industry changes. While not unusual following CEO changes, it is apparent during a significant period of industry change this loss of skill and experience was not adequately renewed or developed through new management and business staff replacements. Additionally, the organisation discontinued using a balanced scorecard or any similar monitoring system to measure actual operational performance against strategic objectives. Without an adequate governance tool, the Board was not provided with mechanisms to monitor or gain insights into key organisational data, issues and trends that were driving the financial results.

Losing a lucrative government contract was a significant warning sign for the organisation. In around 2008, Noweyung had secured a State Government Director of Housing contract to deliver garden maintenance services across a region stretching from West Gippsland, the Latrobe Valley, and into East Gippsland. Every three years Noweyung had to re-tender for the contract. In approximately 2019-2020, during a re-tender, the CEO of the day allowed an overly inflated quote to price themselves out of contention. As a result, Noweyung lost this long-standing and profitable contract worth approximately \$775,000 to another Gippsland provider. The contract loss had significant and spiralling impacts on organisational finances already under stress. It eventually led to the end of all ACE Total Maintenance Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) operations. With ACE wound up, Noweyung also lost revenue from their other ACE customers, along with NDIS funding for approximately 20 supported employees.

The organisation struggled to successfully manage the move from State Government disability support block funding- paid monthly

in advance, to NDIS funding paid after service delivery. East Gippsland was one of the last regions in Victoria for the rollout of the NDIS, commencing from 2019. There was a lot of industry knowledge from other regions and the sector's peak body that was readily available to the organisation. The change from block funding to NDIS funding was a fundamental business change needing appropriate strategies and systems to ensure income levels were maintained and to achieve cash flow requirements. From our review, matters identified that drained Noweyung's cash reserves post the introduction of the NDIS included charging participants less than the prescribed pricing rules and allowing unfunded and unchecked growth in corporate operations or other staff hours without understanding the importance of covering these costs from profit margins. Poor billing strategies resulted in a slow uptake in the NDIS billing process that impacted the organisation's cash flow, increasing the risk of bad debts.

The effect of COVID increased the stress on the management of finances during the pandemic. Most service providers, including Noweyung, received JobKeeper subsidies to support disability organisations throughout the pandemic. These subsidies were designed to allow organisations to maintain their pool of staff and to ensure financial viability under difficult circumstances caused by State-imposed closures of services during COVID. For Noweyung, JobKeeper subsidies were not enough, as the organisation's financial reports show they still recorded losses in the two subsidised years. To provide industry insight into the significance of these losses, our research of ACNC records shows that in 2020-2021, only 11.4% of providers operating in Victoria, or 9 out of 79, recorded a loss. Of this 9, 5 including Noweyung were already recording losses prior to COVID. Reported losses in 2020-2021 were not the norm for the sector because of the subsidies, and none of the other Gippsland-based

services recorded a loss that year.

While increased competition is an everyday part of life for the disability sector, as Noweyung floundered under financial constraints, local competition from both registered and unregistered flourished. This led to some participants and families moving to other local providers, causing a further reduction in revenue that was not necessarily matched by cost savings from cutting staff levels.

Distinctive Options has thrived and grown in a competitive NDIS marketplace. For our organisation to acquire Noweyung, not having a top-heavy stand-alone management structure and corporate services operation in Bairnsdale means our organisation is confident and comfortable that it can grow and reinvigorate viable, high-quality disability services and employment options in East Gippsland.

A special thank you goes to long-time colleague Pam Fraser who stepped up and filled in as temporary CEO at Noweyung during Distinctive Options' due diligence process. She had to make a few hard calls during her time in the role, but these have provided long term benefits moving forward. I sincerely thank Distinctive Options senior staff members Jackson Hetherington and Jane O'Leary for providing onsite management leadership at Noweyung during a time of need. I also give thanks to Noweyung Board Chair Bruce Hammond and Deputy Chair Chris Barry for their assistance, including filling in as acting CEO after Pam completed her time. I thank all those loyal Noweyung staff members who stayed with us post-acquisition. Lastly, a big thank you goes to Kellie Brandenburg (NDIA Assistant Director – Provider Engagement & Practice Branch) for her support to ensure a seamless acquisition for Noweyung participants and families. Her assistance and knowledge throughout the process was greatly

appreciated.

Management Changes

Internally, our management team also underwent a major change. In January, our CFO Alma Tuazon announced she had accepted a new position outside of Distinctive Options. Alma successfully managed our corporate service operations since September 2018. Her enthusiasm and drive initiated many important operational changes and we sincerely appreciate her dedication to our organisation over this period. Her role and functions evolved over time, allowing a realignment of this role to deliver expected outcomes.

Christine Meilak was recruited in March as our new Manager Corporate Services. She joined us from the commercial world, quickly learning about the sector to meet the constantly moving NDIS mandatory pricing that impacts all not-for-profit service providers. Christine has embraced the challenges and, more importantly, ensured delivery of high-quality corporate functions to support the rest of the organisation. Her commercial acumen and experience are important valued assets for our organisation. She has fitted in seamlessly into the management team and organisation.

Gold Reporting Award

Reporting transparency is a high priority for all our stakeholders. Distinctive Options achieved its third Gold Award from the Australasian Reporting Awards (ARA). This represents a significant continuing achievement in the standard of reporting.

The ARA states that 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."

Evolution of Distinctive Options

From an organisational perspective, the evolution of Distinctive Options as a quality disability service provider is a continuous process as highlighted by the following observations.

Our partnership with local Rosenthal developers in Sunbury is driving new change. Two houses are being purpose built by Rosenthal for accommodation services. The estimated completion date is around June/July next year for donation to Distinctive Options. We thank the Millett family for their generosity and ongoing support to Distinctive Options and the community services we provide.

Business development has expanded its operations to ensure growth paths for supported employees, in the present and moving forward. The café in Gisborne is about to complete its first full year of operation, plus the beekeeping-honey business and others are evolving and growing.

Distinctive Options is currently considering opening its own local Financial Plan Management service. Noweyung already provides Financial Plan Management services in East Gippsland. This is another way of supporting families to manage their complex NDIS funding packages.

For our staff, work progresses to develop a new Distinctive Options enterprise agreement, rather than relying on the complicated and sometimes confusing multiple awards currently in use across the sector.

Distinctive Options remains open to other inorganic growth opportunities, provided the culture and fit is right for our organisation. We do not want to damage our organisation's reputation and culture by taking on a service provider that does not fit in with our ethos.

Thank You

In another very demanding but rewarding year, I thank the Board Chair, each of the Committee Chairs, and all Directors for their support. I particularly thank the members of the Project Control Group Committee for their proactive direction and positive support. My management team has achieved great results for the organisation and for the people who we support. I thank each of them and their leading senior staff for their dedication and tireless efforts to find and promote better ways. Of course, none of this could be achieved without our driven staff members who deliver support services, employment and/or travel options, plus back of house corporate functions. Congratulations on all your hard work during the year.

Vision, Purpose, and Values

Vision

Enhancing life choices for people with disability by enriching life's journey.

Purpose

Offering people with disabilities real life choices to reach their potential and gain equality in the community.

Values

The guiding principles which underpin and inform who we are and how achieve our mission:

- Partnership and Co-Design
- Respect and Dignity
- Integrity and Accountability
- Safety and Trust
- Active and Responsive

Our Strategic Plan's four key pillars to achieve our vision are based on:

TARGETED GROWTH

Increase the scope and scale of services provided by Distinctive Options to further our mission to participants and families, improve the quality of life for our communities and provide opportunities for our people

INDUSTRY EXEMPLAR

Be seen as an industry leading example

ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Continually adapt and develop our relationships with participants, families, service partners, industry bodies, communities, and government

VALUES AND PURPOSE

Provide our staff with valuable, meaningful work where they have a strong link to purpose, and feel safe, secure, and listened to

The Board and management team revise the organisation's strategic plan annually. This was most recently undertaken in March 2023.

Our Performance












Strategic Review – Balanced Scorecard Performance

Distinctive Options' Balanced Scorecard measures operational performance against strategic objectives. For 2022-2023 Distinctive Options achieved 69.7% of the objectives set for the year. While this is not as high as other recent years for a variety of reasons and internal decisions, it still represents a satisfactory performance based on the targets.

Strong performance was achieved in providing quality assured services, staff training and development, service feedback and participant safety, along with positive results relating to expansion of participant support services and pathways, and support usage and participant satisfaction.

Scorecard Legend: Successful or appropriate outcomes have a green square  to indicate the result, whilst partially achieved have an orange square . Outcomes not achieved have a red square .

For the Scorecard section on **Our Participants**, Distinctive Options achieved a positive result, recording a score of 78.5% for these targets.

OUR PARTICIPANTS	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
A. Support Usage and Participant Satisfaction				
1. Average monthly support hours provided	> 16,936	15,538	18,576	
2. Number of participants supported by DO	> 285	269	266	
3. Participant satisfaction with service supports	> 93%	92.9%	95.9%	
4. Number of participant / family surveys completed	> 2	1	2	
5. Specialist disability accommodations services operational	16-Jun-23	New	Progressing	
B. Service Feedback and Participant Safety				
1. Number of compliments received	> 90	82	167	
2. Number of complaints received	< 10	6	3	
3. Number of complaints requiring remedial action	< 5	New	0	
4. Number of service reports on participant injuries	< 9	New	0	
5. Number of Committee meetings attend by R&R participants	> 2	New	1	
6. Number of reported cases of abuse or neglect for participants	0	New	0	

Regarding the Scorecard's **Our Capabilities** section, Distinctive Options achieved 56.6% of the targets due to the following matters. Although no supported employees transitioned to open employment, it is only Distinctive Options first year offering supported employment in our pathway services. This is a longer-term goal to see supported employees progress to open employment if that is what they are seeking. Distinctive Options also pays a supported employee hourly rate that is much higher than the average sector rate, meaning a move to open employment may not be as high on the agenda for these people.

Expansion of in-house services related to developing specialist speech/occupational therapist services did not progress as this is outside of Distinctive Options' current scope of registration as a NDIS provider, hence the review and result.

Once an appropriate fundraising strategy is developed, identifying who/how/when/what can be determined. Currently, there is no spare capacity in the organisation structure for ad-hoc fundraising.

OUR CAPABILITIES	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
C. Expansion of participant support services or pathways				
1. Number of expressions of interest for new accommodation services	> 4	New	3	■
2. Number of people working as supported employees	> 18	7	18	■
3. Number of participants using DO Travel services	> 6	New	17	■
4. Number of DO Travel promotions marketed to participants	> 5	New	3	■
5. Number of supported employees who transition into open employment	> 1	New	0	■
6. New partnerships to develop new support/employment options	> 3	3	2	■
D. Expansion of in-house services provided				
1. Expression of interests to recruit Speech or Occupational Therapists	1	New	Reviewed	■
2. Number of participants interested in DO Therapists	< 6	New	Reviewed	■
E. Expansion of Fundraising and Marketing				
1. Fundraising goal for Year 1 of Strategic Plan	< \$50k	New	\$92k	■
2. Develop a fundraising profile to attract potential donors	30-Nov-23	New	Deferred	■
3. Recruit a high profile patron(s) or ambassador(s)	30-Apr-23	Deferred	Deferred	■
4. Follow up with local solicitors regarding donations and bequests	31-Mar-23	Deferred	Deferred	■
5. Marketing strategy to families re new NDIS apportioned pricing	31-Mar-23	New	28-Feb-23	■

For **Our People** Scorecard targets, Distinctive Options achieved 64.2% of these. WorkCover premium rates are increasing well above CPI, placing a financial burden on not-for-profit disability service providers. These high increases continued into the new year despite only minimal claims lodged. Staff numbers remain in line with participant numbers, despite a slight reduction. A sector-wide difficulty in recruiting support staff is a continuing legacy that stemmed from COVID.

Regarding sick leave hours, the target this year was a 'best guess' leading out of two years of COVID lockdowns and following little or no influenza. Although the actual results were higher than the target, they are not dissimilar to pre-COVID numbers.

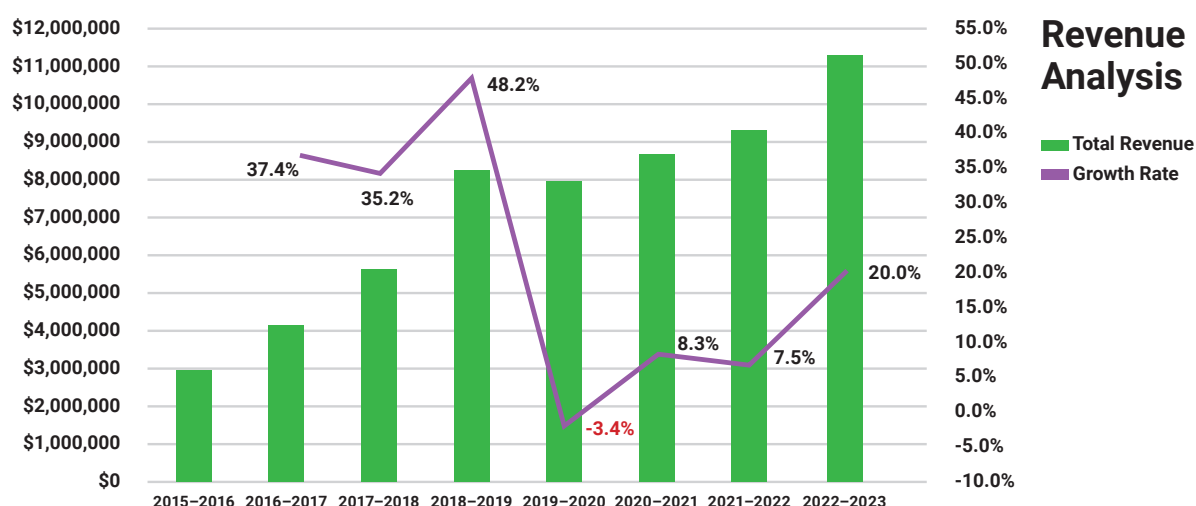
OUR PEOPLE	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
F. Staff Retention, Safety and Culture				
1. Staff turnover ratio	< 15%	23.3%	11.8%	■
2. Staff satisfaction from employment surveys	> 90%	New	73.5%	■
3. WorkCover Premium rate remains lower than industry rate	> 5% lower	8.65%	-20.05%	■
4. Total staff numbers increase to support growth in participant numbers	> 5%	New	-0.5%	■
5. Number of lost staff hours from reportable WorkCover injuries	< 250 hours	0.00	61.00	■
6. Number of sick leave hours taken by staff per annum	< 4,300 hours	4,546	5,292	■
7. Board completes CEO's annual review	01-Dec-22	08-Dec-21	10-Nov-22	■
G. Staff Training and Development				
1. Percentage of staff undertaking training or development courses	> 70%	64.5%	88.1%	■
2. Percentage of supported employees trained	100%	New	100%	■

Lower than forecast financial viability and sustainability results did not materially affect the total Scorecard result for **Our Assurance**, which achieved 73.9% of the targets. This is a satisfactory performance, while noting impacts on cash included a significant investment in staff training and development, service improvements, site improvements and a new corporate headquarters. A re-investment of funds back into operations should generate positive returns moving forward, following growth in funds over the past few years.

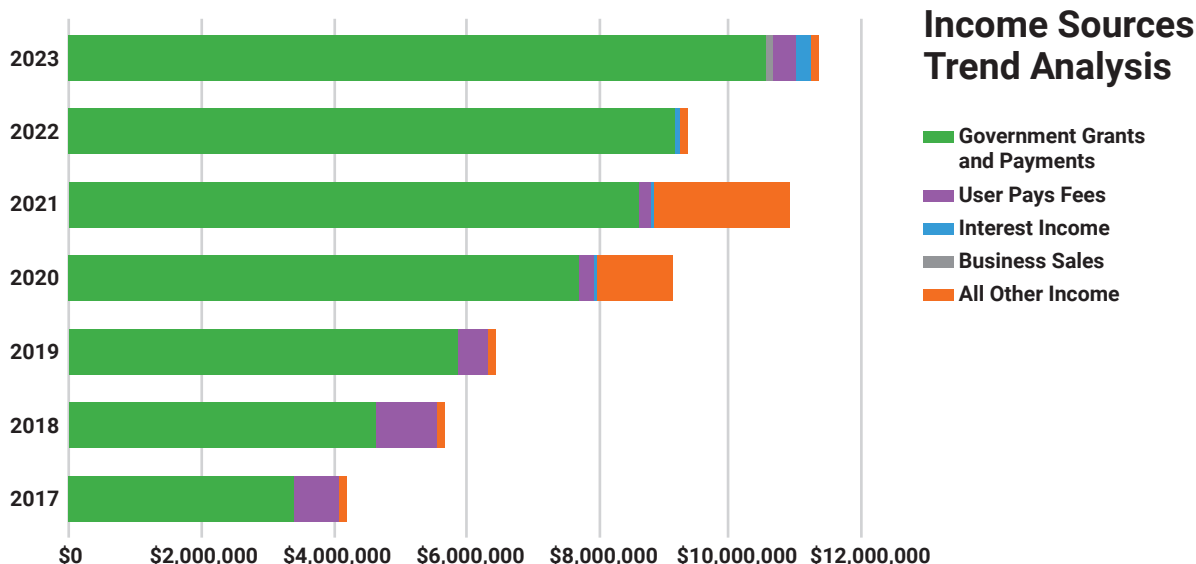
OUR ASSURANCE	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
H. Financial Viability and Sustainability				
1. Growth in long-term fund managed investments	> 5%	-6.8%	10.4%	■
2. Operating cash and cash equivalents	> \$2.778m	\$2.678m	\$2.371m	■
3. Number of days operating cash is available	> 110 days	105	73	■
4. Current Ratio (liquidity)	> \$2.20 to \$1	\$2.71 to \$1	\$2.08 to \$1	■
5. Annual profitability achieved compared to budget	> \$181,819	\$277,017	-\$259,024	■
6. Profit margin	> 1.9%	3.0%	-2.3%	■
7. 60+ or more days debtors as a % of total debtors	< 15%	18.0%	25.2%	■
8. Annual review and adoption of financial audit management report	31-Oct-22	26-Oct-21	18-Oct-22	■
9. Number of financial or legal claims greater than \$20k	< 1	0	0	■
I. Quality Assured Service Provider				
1. Achieve conformity with all external quality audits	> Rating 2	n/a	Rating 2	■
2. Annual Report assessment from Australasian Reporting Awards	Gold	Gold	Gold	■
3. Completion of annual Director's performance review	30-Nov-22	New	21-Nov-22	■
4. Director's median attendance at Board meetings	> 66%	92.3%	88.5%	■
5. Director's median attendance at all Committee meetings	> 66%	100.0%	88.3%	■
6. Succession planning review for CEO	28-Feb-23	New	Progressing	■
7. Board and management annual review of risk tolerances and appetites	31-Mar-23	07-Mar-22	27-Jun-23	■
8. Compliance with annual ACNC reporting requirements	31-Jan-23	24-Nov-21	30-Nov-22	■
9. Charity ACNC details are updated annually	15-Dec-22	24-Nov-21	30-Nov-22	■
10. Annual review of charity's Responsible Officers via ASIC data	30-Sep-22	19-Nov-21	28-Nov-22	■
11. Governance documents due for review are reviewed	> 90%	85.0%	100.0%	■
12. Number of NDIS/sector issues reported to the Board	> 36	40	31	■
13. External Policy Framework Review completed	31-Mar-23	New	15-Mar-23	■

Financial Performance Analysis

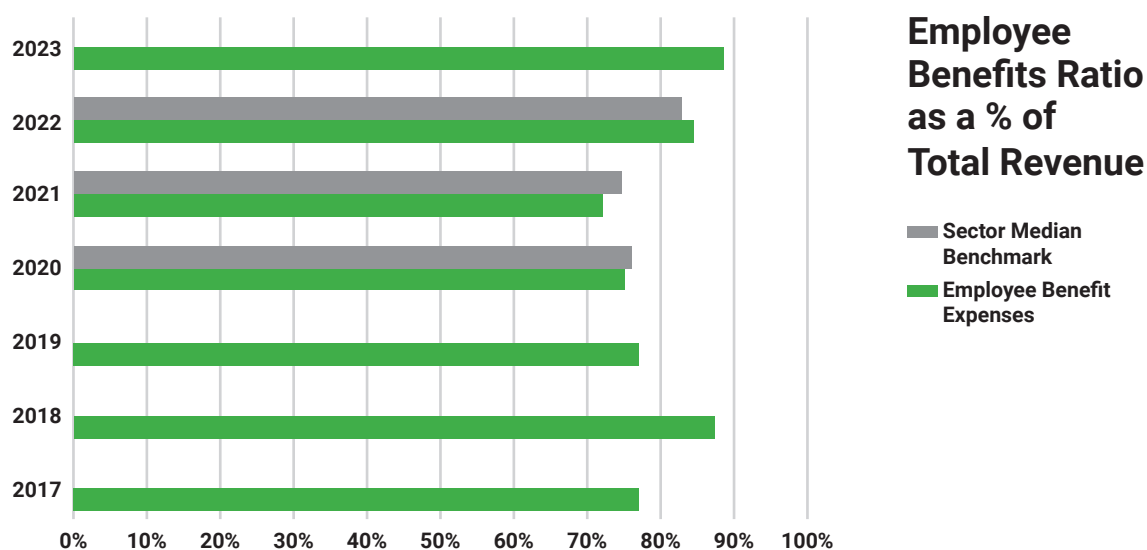
In support of the audited financial statements, management provides the following overview of Distinctive Options' financial performance for the year. Revenue growth in the following graph shows the only downturn was caused by the impact of the COVID pandemic in 2020. For the two years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, revenue in the graph does not include any JobKeeper subsidies received during the pandemic.



As with previous years, the major source of operating income comes from individual participant's NDIS funding agreements. A new category, Business Sales, comes from new employment pathway operations generating sales income. This is its first year of operation. Excluding COVID affected years (2020 and 2021 with subsidies shown in purple), the organisation's sources of funding have remained consistent post the introduction of the NDIS for Distinctive Options.



As a service industry, the major expenditure for disability providers is always employee salaries and oncosts (employee benefits). Oncosts include WorkCover premiums which continue to spiral upwards for service providers. The next chart shows the relevant data relating to Distinctive Options employee benefits ratio.

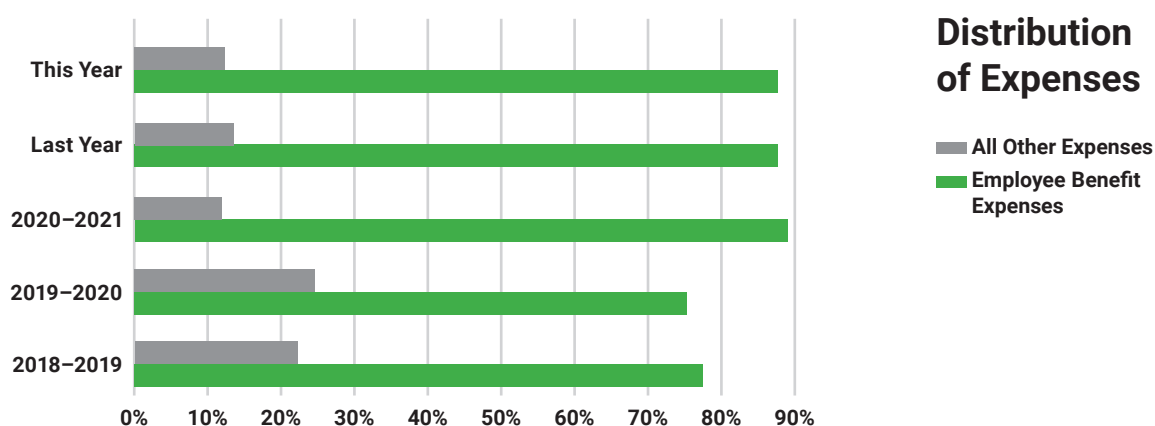


With an investment in staff training and development during the year, increased costs in training wages meant this ratio was higher than last year. Training and development of staff is not funded by the NDIS, so no income is received to ensure a highly qualified pool of staff is available to deliver quality supports. This is one of the fundamental flaws under mandatory NDIS pricing.

There is no data available yet for the sector's median benchmark for this ratio. We anticipate that the sector will be similar or higher than last year based on initial advice from our peak body National Disability Services (NDS).

The distribution of expenses shows a consistent dissection to previous years. Post-NDIS rollout, employee benefits increased sector wide to meet the additional demands on service providers for NDIS funding and quality assurance mandatory compliance. This year saw a decrease in other

expenses. There was a significant investment in training and development costs, WorkCover premiums continued increasing beyond CPI, and Distinctive Options expanded its sites which included site upgrade costs.

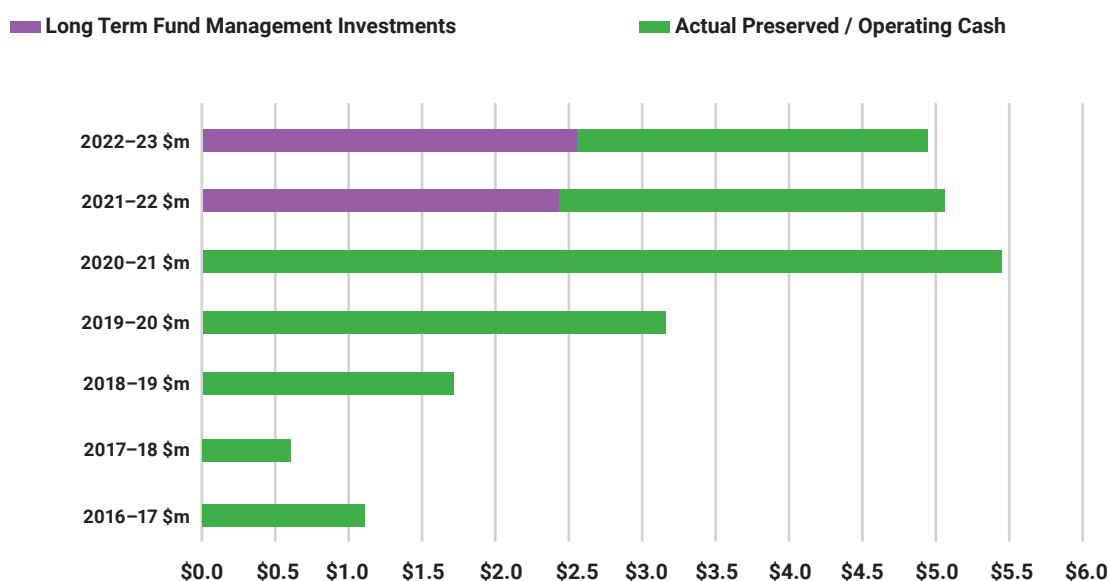


After a decline in financial markets at the start of the year, the value of managed fund investments stabilised by years' end. Reporting by the Fund Manager, Koda Capital, indicates a positive trend in our investments to date. In line with our values and purpose, Distinctive Options only invests in ethical investments.

Cash used to support growth and development of the organisation's operational activities has not significantly impacted on the level of operating cash retained by Distinctive Options.

These cash results are positive signs and provide a solid platform for future investments in both organic and inorganic growth opportunities. Cash liquidity shows Distinctive Options' Current Ratio remains strong at \$2.08 to \$1.

Operating Cash & Long-Term Fund Investments



NEWS starweekly.com.au



Supported employees Laura Grabham, Lochlan Baillie and Jessica Opie are excited for the DO Food Project's cafe to relaunch.
[Damjan Janevski] 297148_01

Exciting Cafe Relaunch

People with disability will be central to the relaunch of the beloved DO Food Project's new cafe in Gisborne this November.

Operated by Distinctive Options (DO), a local organisation supporting people with disability, the project will be operated within the Macedon Ranges Health building on Neal Street.

Distinctive Options' employment branch DO Pathways has partnered with Macedon Ranges Health to offer nutritious, delicious and affordable food to the community.

DO Pathways development manager Paul Pearman said the organisation was "delighted" Macedon Ranges Health had invited them to revitalise the eatery.

"The cafe will be a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone," he said.

"Preparations are well under way and there's a buzz of anticipation within our crew. We're currently designing the menus in consultation with a nutritionist. The whole vibe will be fresh, modern and tasty."

Staffed by up to four supported employees, the cafe is the start of a bigger plan to empower and educate change in food habits for people with disability.

DO supported employee Laura Grabham can't wait, and said she would "learn so many more skills like making coffee and handling money".

Fellow supported employees Lochlan Baillie and Jessica Opie are stoked too, excited to meet new people through the project.

The cafe is set to provide the much-needed, healthier dine-in or takeaway options in town, while locals have the satisfaction of knowing they are supporting a not-for-profit business.

The DO Food Project cafe will open in early November, open from Monday to Friday, 9am to 3pm. The official opening day and cafe name will be announced soon.

Elsie Lange



Leadership Insights

Manager Corporate Services – Christine Meilak



Corporate services is an integral part of the support structure of the organisation. It is strategically positioned to enable Distinctive Options to achieve the best possible outcomes for both internal and external stakeholders. Leading the team since March 2023, my role has been to manage and oversee business functions to ensure the Corporate Services Team's accuracy, timeliness and efficiency. My team supports the following functions: finance, human resources, payroll, information technology, quality and assurance, billing and claims, and administration. The Corporate Services Team helps standardise reoccurring tasks and procedures, resulting in more streamlined operations and mitigating risks. We provide timely reporting of financials and information in accordance with Australian accounting and government standards.

The team currently consists of: Edwina Angeles, Beth Balsamo, Katrene Eales, Melanie East, Sarah Heriot, Megan Lazaro, Melanie Mays, Sharon McAllester, Roxanne McKerral, Colleen Moffat, Michelle Stoneham, Amanda Sutton, Samantha Trovato and Sarah Wright

We have invested in both our people and technology, and the results are already apparent. We have witnessed improved productivity, efficiency and infrastructure, making work smoother and faster. Additionally, we have reduced our security risks and minimised the risk of accidental losses. With new projects in progress and a focus on

streamlining processes, Distinctive Options is in an excellent position.

Key outcomes this year included:

- Streamlining of processes and consolidation of efficiencies
- New external IT Support for our accounting system
- Cybersecurity assessments and improvements
- Integration and rollout of software systems
- A new app for our internal HR System
- Financial analysis of Noweyung
- Financial reporting overviews
- Phone system integration
- An introduction to apportioned pricing under the NDIS
- Training and development with staff
- An automatic email signature rollout
- All computers added to one domain



Upcoming Projects

It has been a busy start to my time at Distinctive Options. The Corporate Services Team is central to our internal transformation, where we continue to reshape our foundations and reimagine the ways we operate so that our systems, functions and accountabilities are transparent and streamlined.

Our upcoming projects include:

- The launch of a staff Intranet in September
- Apportioned pricing beginning in October
- Financial Plan Management to be introduced to participants
- The relocation of Individual Living Supports to a new building
- A new lease to help DO Connect Sunbury to provide more activities
- The movement of all processes and systems currently in Noweyung to Distinctive Options
- The implementation of Microsoft SharePoint
- A cloud backup storage upgrade
- The integration of Accounts Payable and an Expense Management System
- A change in the primary domain for all emails and logins from @d-o.com.au to @distinctiveoptions.com.au





Leadership Insights

Business Development Manager – Paul Pearman



In the spirit of unwavering commitment to our vision, 2022/23 was a transformative year for Distinctive Options Pathways. As we delve into the narratives of impact, it becomes evident that our journey over the past financial year has been nothing short of inspiring. From early beginnings setting up our warehouse hub in McDougall Road, Sunbury, in May 2022, to our first honey harvest and opening a new café space. The year brought challenges, accomplishments and a transformation for people working within Distinctive Options Pathways Enterprises.

Empowering Lives through DO Honey

The inception of DO Honey marked more than just the commencement of a beekeeping enterprise – it symbolised the sweet taste of empowerment. Our buzzing hives produce honey and cultivate opportunities for individuals with a disability to thrive in an open workplace environment. We started the year with eight supported employees learning the art of beekeeping through our partnership with Bee Responsible. As we harvested our first honey in early February 2023, we also harvested confidence, independence and a sense of purpose, laying the foundation for a community that believes in the boundless potential of each individual. In June 2023, Distinctive Options purchased new hives, taking our total number to thirty-two across Sunbury and Wildwood. The DO Honey crew are looking forward to an even greater 2023/24 as we tend to more hives whilst creating additional opportunities for people of all abilities to enhance their love of the environment within an open workplace enterprise.

A Culinary Haven of Inclusivity at the DO Food Project Café

The aroma of freshly brewed coffee mingles with the sense of inclusivity at the DO Food Project Café. It's not merely a culinary establishment – it's a testament to the extraordinary abilities of our diverse team. The clinking of dishes echoes the harmonious collaboration of talents, creating a space where abilities shine brighter than any Michelin star. In this café, we serve not just meals but dignity, respect and the belief that everyone has a place at the table. In August 2022, Distinctive Options Pathways had the opportunity to tender for the operation of a café space in the Macedon Ranges Health building in Gisborne. As a result, our first foray into hospitality opened in late November. We began by supporting seven people with diverse abilities, which by year-end had grown to nine. Our customer base has expanded, and the DO Food Project has ventured into the catering space as we look forward to the arrival of our food trailer. This will further empower inclusivity within the community in an open workplace dedicated to hospitality within the Sunbury and Macedon Ranges region.

Cultivating Pride, Hard Work and Beauty with The Goodwill Gardener

The Goodwill Gardener has transformed landscapes and sown seeds of pride and accomplishment. When Distinctive Options Pathways reached out to the community in early 2022 about our first enterprise, DO Honey, it was quickly apparent there was a need for a garden maintenance enterprise to give interested individuals a pathway into

open employment. As a result, the Goodwill Gardener was born, with our first gardens maintained in April 2023. The Goodwill Gardener's impact has extended beyond well-manicured lawns – it has proven the transformative power of meaningful work and the blossoming potential within each team member. Of all our enterprises, the Goodwill Gardener has had the most extensive support amongst the community. All of the work the team delivers is completed within the community, for the community.

Partnerships

Through all of our work within Distinctive Options Pathways, we aimed to foster mutually beneficial collaborations. These alliances were designed to create a positive impact, not only on our business but also on the communities we serve. By actively engaging with local organisations, we strengthened our commitment to social responsibility and contributed to the overall wellbeing of the regions in which we operate. This focus was quite evident in the work that Chris King and his team of Goodwill Gardeners achieved with the following local groups in the Sunbury and Macedon Ranges regions:

- Sunbury Baptist Church
- Sunbury Probus Group
- Rosenthal Estate

Our relationship with the Sunbury Probus Group led to many opportunities for gardening and, most importantly, opportunities for our supported employees to present to Probus Groups the important work they have been completing within the community.

Another significant partnership that led to many opportunities within the community was our work with Winslow Constructors. This relationship started in early 2022, however the partnership ramped up this year, seeing us deliver more than 30,000 brochures, work over 1,800 hours and travel over 1,200km. This work saw Distinctive Options Pathways at the precipice of community information, providing much-needed information to the public about the Sunbury Road Project. Our work led to a warehouse visit from our local MP, Josh Bull, which was highlighted in the Victorian Parliament. In addition, the DO Food Project Café has provided catering for

Winslow Constructors and the Sunbury Road Project numerous times, for which we are very grateful.

Philanthropy and Fundraising

As part of our social responsibility initiatives, we undertook philanthropic endeavours in the 2022/23 period. Through targeted fundraising efforts, we raised substantial resources to support causes aligned with our mission and vision. We provided DO Connect Bendigo with a much-needed vehicle to transport participants throughout the Greater Bendigo community. In addition, we successfully sourced a \$20,000 grant to upgrade the kitchen facilities at DO Connect Sunbury, which will see completion in the next financial year. Distinctive Options also received a local Partnerships Grant with Hume City Council for delivering a community honeybee foraging and Bush Tucker Garden. Further, a regional partnership grant was pursued with Brimbank City Council for creating and constructing a local Disability Music Program with the community. These projects have begun, and we look forward to their completion in the coming financial year.

Looking Forward

Recognising the importance of inclusion, we have concentrated on initiatives to enhance opportunities for individuals with disabilities. By fostering an inclusive workplace culture and creating multiple pathways to employment, we aimed to break down barriers and empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to the workforce. The 2022/23 year was marked by impactful community partnerships, the beginnings of social enterprises, the creation of pathways for people with disabilities into employment, and resonating our commitment to social responsibility whilst contributing to the organisation's sustainable growth. As we look forward to 2023/24, a significant focus is on our mind: at what point does employment cease to become supported employment? The answer to that question is it never ceases. Distinctive Options Pathways is looking forward to creating further opportunities for people with diverse abilities, not only in the enterprises which Distinctive Options operates, but with other community organisations. After all, the true measure of our success is where disability is not celebrated. It is just another difference within the workplace.



Leadership Insights

Executive Manager Support Services – Rick Dunn



This Annual Report references the myriad of achievements and highlights occurring across all service areas in what continues to be a highly volatile and challenging environment for disability services and service providers.

Our Mission, Vision and Values continue to act as our compass as we strive to be the best in all that we do and all that we deliver to people with disability, their families and supporters. I continue to be assured and inspired by the obvious pride, passion, skill and resilience of our dedicated support workers who bring their best selves to work each and every day and are single-minded in their shared determination to support participants to live their best life. I commend to you also our Service Leaders and their respective teams who are relentless in their determination to achieve great things with and for our participants and often in the face of continuous change, challenge and complexity. Great support does not happen by accident and our Service Leaders work tirelessly and daily to make this aspiration a reality.

NDIS Mid-Term Audit

NDIS Registered Service Providers such as Distinctive Options are required have their policies, procedures and practices independently monitored and assessed to ensure that services are being delivered safely and according to NDIS quality standards and benchmarks. Non-registered providers, including independent disability support workers, are not subject to such ongoing

scrutiny - a precarious disparity in regulation and oversight highlighted by the Disability Royal Commission.

In February 2023, auditors highlighted the following as some outstanding examples of how Distinctive Options clearly demonstrates 'best practice' in delivering real 'choice and control' to participants and the extent to which we genuinely engage with and incorporate ongoing feedback:

- Annual participant satisfaction survey
- Annual family member and supporter satisfaction survey
- Annual staff satisfaction survey
- A range of complaint and feedback mechanisms
- Activity and support change request processes
- Support review meetings
- Rights & Responsibilities Networks and meetings
- Regular participant training in "How to Make a Complaint"
- A commitment to communicate with participants according to their preferred methods and a range of communication tools developed in-house specifically for this purpose
- The integration and expansion of NDIS goals into all activities and supports

Auditors found that staff enjoyed working for the organisation, reporting a supportive culture with good opportunities for accessing extra training and career progression.

Feedback from participants was similarly positive with auditors finding that they were happy and engaged in a range of activities suited to their ability to achieve success and were proud of their ongoing progress and achievements.

NDIS Introduction of Apportioned Pricing for Group Supports

The NDIA first announced its decision to impose Apportioned Pricing on “Group” service providers, and therefore on Group participants also, in June of 2020. That decision was subsequently deferred given the woefully inadequate timeframes demanded to effect such fundamental change and the ensuing disruption caused by COVID.

Ultimately this change imposes significant additional administrative complexity and cost to the delivery of Group Supports while necessarily diverting already stretched personnel, time and resources away from front line services. Providers were once again left to explain and justify an NDIA decision to participants and supporters as if it were our own. To be clear – this is a NDIS mandated change.

While ostensibly providing greater ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’, Apportioned Pricing increases the burden of administration for both provider and participant, with no tangible increase to participant funding or hours of support.

Distinctive Options has implemented Apportioned Pricing across all Group Supports as required and will continue to monitor this closely over the coming months with a view to maintaining both financial viability and appropriately high-quality disability support.

Royal Commission

Over four years, through 32 public hearings, 1785 private sessions, and more than 8000 submissions, Commissioners heard extensive evidence of a system in crisis. The instances of abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect unveiled throughout this inquiry are absolutely unacceptable. The Commission’s findings and 222 recommendations stress the importance of human rights-informed policies and processes for providers, including managing risk, incidents and complaints.

Cumulatively, these recommendations underscore the multifaceted reform efforts the Royal Commission believes are required to improve the quality, safety and human rights protection for people with disability.

They place substantial responsibilities upon the NDIS Commission to realise these important changes, with potentially wide-ranging implications for service providers.

Distinctive Options is supportive of any change or measures which preserve and promote the human rights, health and safety of people with disability.

Organisation Overview

Who We Are

Established in 1985, Distinctive Options provides services to children and adults with a range of group and individual support options available. Services were expanded this year to include employment options.

As at June 30, Distinctive Options had 183 employees operating from sites and community bases across the north-central-west region of Victoria, including Keilor East, Sunbury, Gisborne, Macedon Ranges and Bendigo. Post-June 2023, our services will include group participant supports, individual supports, supported employment and accommodation services in Bairnsdale, along with Financial Plan Management services.

Distinctive Options is a registered not-for-profit charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). As a registered charity, Distinctive Options is a deductible gift recipient, endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office, and the organisation is a company limited by guarantee. We see ourselves as a profit-for-purpose disability service provider, so we can re-invest and grow service options for our participants..



Our History

1985	The Sunbury Adult Unit commences in May, supporting 15 participants
1989	First 'Rights & Responsibilities' network is formed, whilst two new employment businesses are established
1993	The organisation is renamed Able Community Services with 50 participants, generating \$727k in total revenue
1997	A mowing business service is established, participant numbers reach 69 and total revenue hits \$1.27M
1999	The organisation is renamed Distinctive Options following the acquisition of <i>MBM Association Inc</i>
2004	Quality certification is achieved against Disability Standards and ISO 9001:2000 accreditation is attained
2011	The organisation has 88 participants and total revenue reaches \$4.03M
2014	Employment services are ceased, with the organisation moving its focus to direct support delivery only, resulting in revenue decreasing to \$2.21M
2018	70% of the organisation's 234 participants transition to the NDIS with revenue topping \$5.5M
2020	COVID-19 results in widespread changes to service delivery, yet support hours reach an all time high average of 15,778 per month, with revenue at \$9.06M
2021	In a year of ongoing pandemic lockdowns and restrictions, participant support hours achieved an average of 14,892 per month, with total revenue topping \$10.9M, including COVID subsidies, allowing our organisation to retain all of our staff
2022	COVID subsidies are withdrawn, however service interruptions due to the pandemic continue. Participant support hours averaged 15,538 per month to 269 people by June 30th. Total revenue generated finished at \$9.3M
2023	Distinctive Options total revenue tops a record \$11.2M. Support hours also reach a record, averaging 18,856 per month for 266 participants. Acquisition of Noweyung Ltd, a Bairnsdale based service provider with total revenue of \$5M+

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

Volunteers

Distinctive Options has eleven volunteers who support our organisation, being 8 volunteer Directors, 1 volunteer Committee member, and 2 service volunteers. In the prior year, Distinctive Options had 9 volunteers. Screening of all volunteers, including Board members, occurs before people commence volunteering and we provide structured induction programs. Distinctive Options is grateful for the involvement of volunteers who support our organisation. Their impact cannot be underestimated. Since the outbreak of the COVID pandemic in early 2020, our number of volunteers in supports significantly declined. Moving forward, the organisation hopes volunteer numbers will again increase.

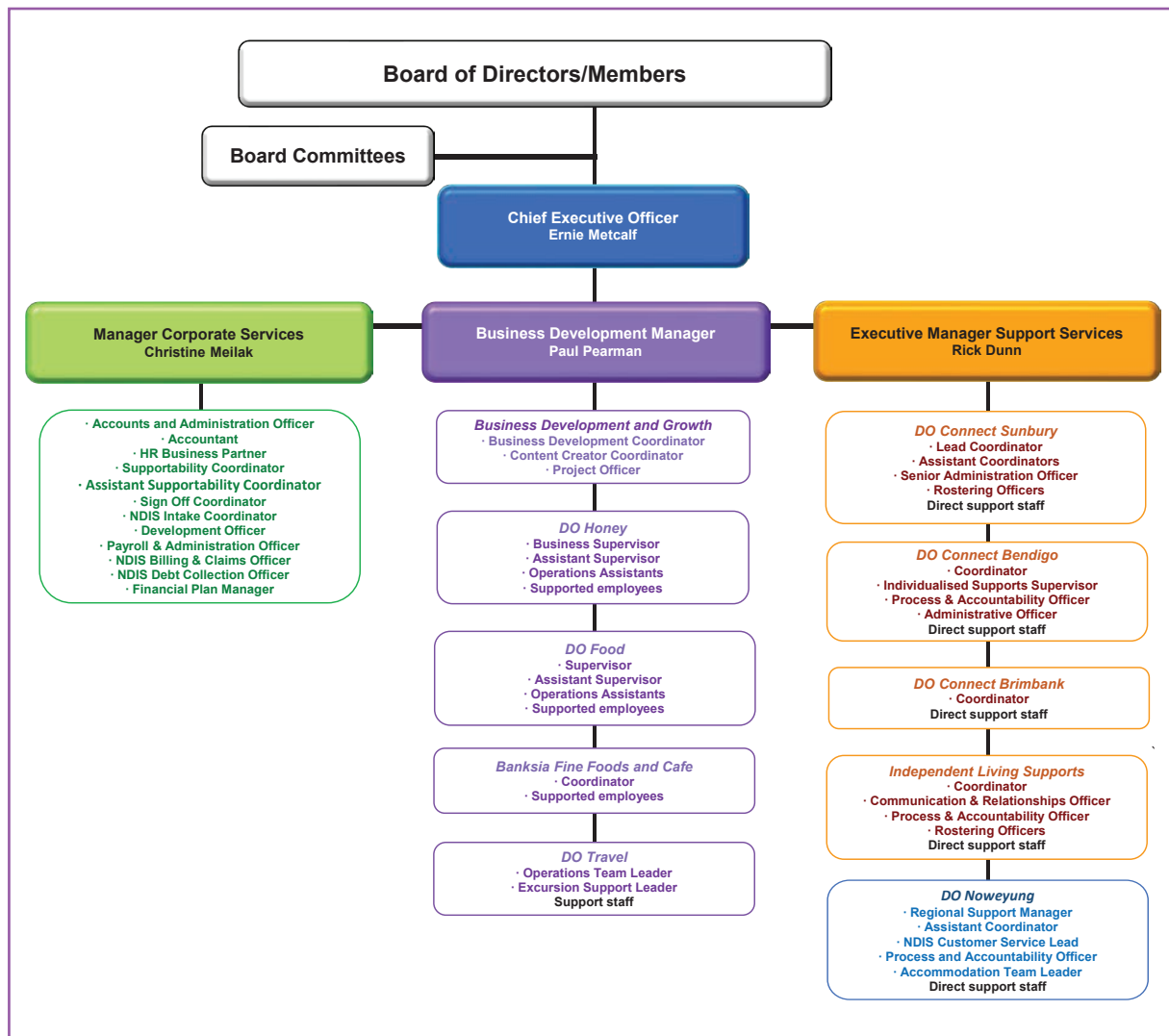
Compliments

We are so grateful to receive many compliments each year from our participants, their support networks, local area coordinators, other organisations and our staff. They provide validation we are meeting our mission and vision, and help build a positive culture in the workplace.

This year, some of the compliments we received included:

- *Thanks so much for being so informative and listening to what I have to say. I really appreciate the communication and hard work that you do.*
- *You did such a fantastic job matching your staff with our participant.*
- *I love what you guys do at Distinctive Options. I'm looking forward to working more with Distinctive Options in the future.*
- *I'd like to commend Distinctive Options on the brilliant opportunities and activities that are being offered. Fantastic!*
- *When everyone else turned us away, you gave us a chance. Thank you so much. You and the team are wonderful. We really appreciate all that you do.*
- *It's good to talk to someone who understands.*
- *My son just loves it at Distinctive Options. He is always happy when I talk to him on the phone about it.*
- *Thank you for your amazing staff and management.*
- *I would just like to thank everyone for your hard work and dedication in working with my family.*
- *I listen to the DO Radio Show whenever I can. Such a great initiative.*
- *This place has a great vibe. We love it. We think we have found our people.*
- *It is an absolute pleasure to be working alongside such a passionate and supportive team!*
- *My daughter loves coming to Distinctive Options and always talks about her program.*
- *We all agree Distinctive Options provides the best opportunities. The communication from you is outstanding.*

Organisation Chart



Year in Review

2022

- July**
- Distinctive Options receives a one-off NDIS payment for 2021-2022 in acknowledgement of the additional cost to ensure a safe environment for participants and staff during the pandemic.
- August**
- Distinctive Options wins a tender to operate café at 5 Neal Street, Gisborne, as a supported employment business.
 - Distinctive Options revises and develops a new Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025.
- September**
- Board Chair and staff attend the official opening of the new Brimbank Aquatic & Wellness Centre in Keilor Downs.
 - Skev Seremetis joins the Development & Fundraising Committee as an external, independent member.
 - The Board Chair and CEO sign a new lease for a site located in the Brimbank Aquatic & Wellness Centre.
- October**
- Distinctive Options secures a \$20,000 grant under the State's Living Local Fund – Suburban Stream. The grant will be used to upgrade kitchen facilities at 24 Macedon Street, Sunbury.
- November**
- Distinctive Options secures a \$10,000 Hume City Council partnership grant for an inclusive bushfood and honeybee garden project.
 - Distinctive Options secures a \$10,000 Brimbank City Council partnership grant for a music program.
- December**
- Generous \$50,000 donation received from a local resident in Bendigo for Distinctive Options to purchase a new support vehicle.

2023

- February**
- Noweyung's Board Chair contacts the CEO with a view to potentially acquiring Noweyung Ltd.
- March**
- Christine Meilak joins Distinctive Options as the new Manager Corporate Services, replacing the former CFO role.
- April**
- Project Control Group Committee formed to monitor and review the potential acquisition of Noweyung Ltd in Bairnsdale.
- May**
- The management team attends a members and stakeholders information meeting in Bairnsdale about the potential acquisition.
- June**
- State MP Josh Bull advised the Premier and Minister for Transport announced in parliament pamphlet delivery work performed by Distinctive Options to support the construction company upgrading Bulla Road.

A Message from Noweyung's Board

Bruce Hammond (Chair) and Chris Barry (Deputy Chair)

Due to the financial challenges of operating within the NDIS environment, Noweyung had no alternative but to sell an Orbost property and restructure Café operations during the year. The major and ongoing financial challenge for our stand-alone organisation was the cost of business support services to sustain operations. Despite significant effort over past years to rationalise operations and optimise efficiencies, it was evident that the costs related to business support services are not effectively funded by the NDIS for a business of Noweyung's size, operating within a wide geographic rural catchment. Consequently, a strategic decision was made to explore the potential of merging with a similar organisation.

With the endorsement of Noweyung members and following extensive research of potential partner organisations, the Board approached and commenced engagement with Distinctive Options. Both organisations undertook due diligence evaluations of an acquisition option during the year. The decision received support at an Extraordinary General Meeting of Noweyung members in June 2023, with a formal Memorandum of Understanding executed during July 2023 by both organisations.

Noweyung is nothing without its participants, families and carers, and their ongoing support through what has been a challenging time of change is appreciated. The acquisition process is a pivotal time for Noweyung operations and Distinctive Options as the ongoing entity. It is an exciting opportunity, with significant potential to grow and expand disability services within the East Gippsland region. We look forward to ongoing success into the distant future.

We recognise the assistance provided, first by Brenda Peterson and then Pam Fraser, in taking on the role of Acting Chief Executive Officer during the year. Their support at a pivotal time as we explored the potential acquisition was very much appreciated. To Noweyung staff and volunteers, it has been a year full of challenges and a level of uncertainty. Your dedication and commitment is greatly appreciated. It provides a foundation for ongoing success post-acquisition by Distinctive Options.

As Noweyung Ltd is voluntarily wound up following the acquisition, the Board and families celebrate the significant contributions made by Noweyung's Life Members over this journey.

For those no longer with us:

1957	William Grose	<i>Founding member and President of Noweyung.</i>
1958	Freda Hinde and Florence Peters	<i>Founding members. Peters Court is named after Florence.</i>
1988	Lorna Cormack	<i>Former Vice President/Committee member from 1958 to 1988.</i>
	Violet Stewart	<i>Former Treasurer 1962 to 1978 and fundraiser.</i>
	Cora Gilsenan-Waters	<i>Noweyung's longest serving President from 1957 to 1986.</i>
1990	Mavis Brennan	<i>One of the many Fundraising champions, served as Treasurer.</i>
	Shirley Stokes	<i>Fundraiser, President and Secretary.</i>
1991	Slim Dusty (Fundraiser)	<i>Slim Dusty House is named after the country music legend.</i>
1996	Norma Ward	<i>Fundraising champion and Treasurer from 1978 to 1988.</i>
2007	Lorraine Layton and Bert Rodd	<i>Former Committee member; volunteer and fundraising champions.</i>

For those still with us:

1992	Tony Graham	<i>Melbourne-based professional services advisor.</i>
2005	Kaye Thurbon	<i>Transformational Board Chair, Director, and history author.</i>
2011	Liz and John Hansen	<i>Committee and Board members for many years.</i>
2015	Grace Jobling	<i>President, Vice President, and fundraising champion.</i>
	Christopher Dean	<i>Board Chair from 2004 to 2019 and long serving Director.</i>

Participants & Supported Employees



Council delivers world class aquatic and wellness centre – now open!

Co-located tenant partner services

On board at the centre over the coming weeks are tenant partner services with community support agencies Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand and National Disability Insurance Scheme provider Distinctive Options delivering integrated services aimed at improving the lives of residents in Melbourne's west.

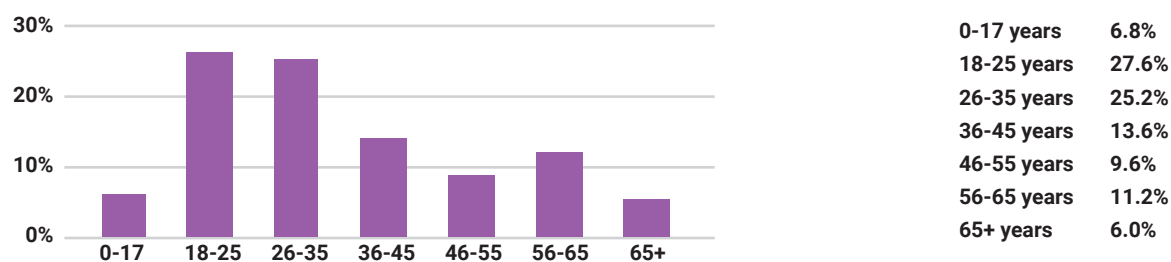
At the official opening of the new Aquatic & Wellness Centre in Keilor Downs, pictured is Council's Mayor, along with Distinctive Options representatives (from right to left, Chair Kalma Rathouski, staff members Jackson Hetherington, Jane O'Leary, Paul Pearman and Brimbank Mayor), plus other community service partners.

Participants

Participant numbers remained stable throughout year. While a number count provides a guide, it is really the number of support hours provided that drives services and the quality of supports provided. For this data, see the Support Delivery Outcomes section.

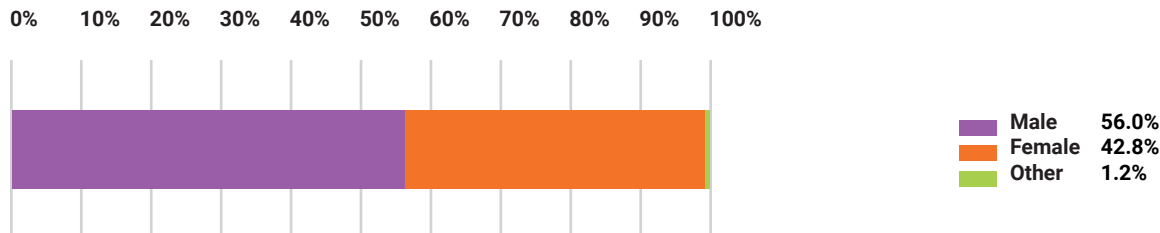
Age Distribution

Age distribution stayed steady with minor fluctuations throughout the year. 59.6% of participants were aged 35 or younger.



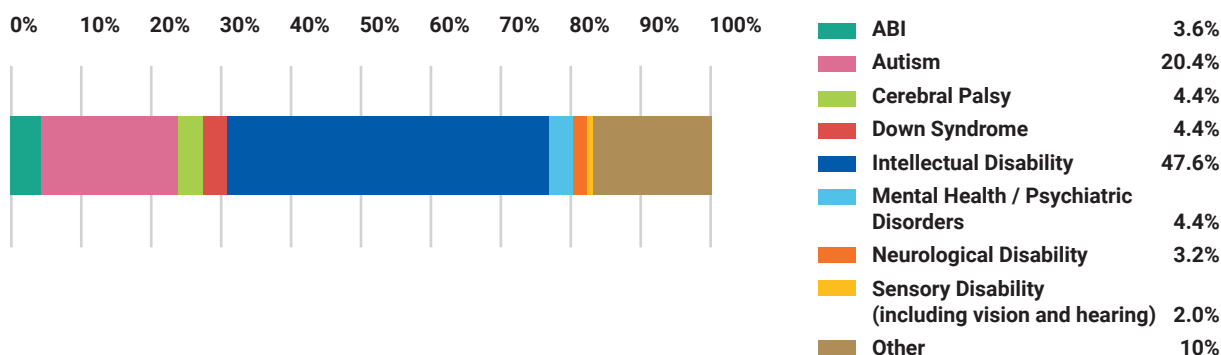
Gender

Gender balances remained consistent with previous years, with Distinctive Options having more male than female participants.



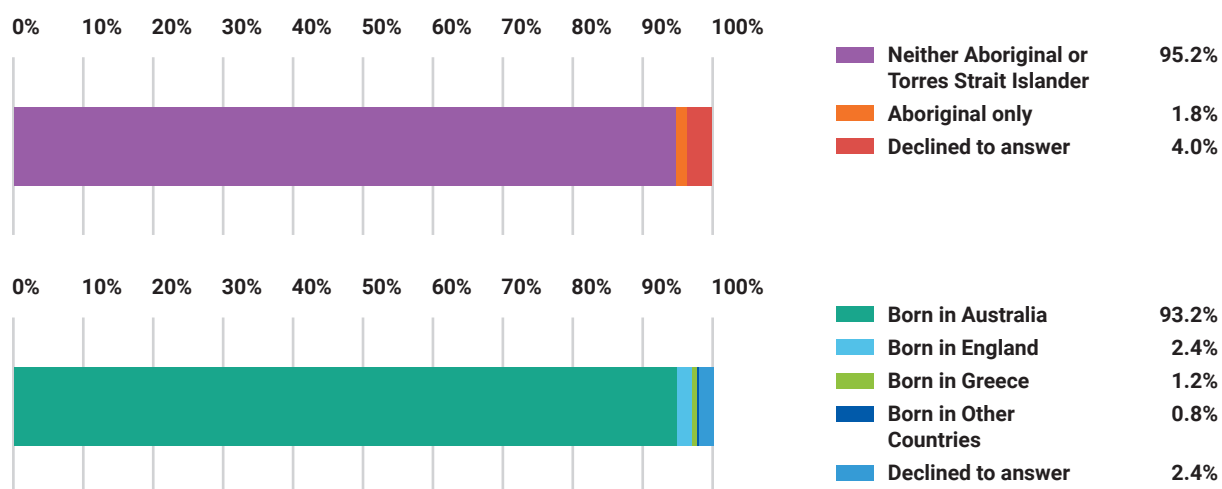
Primary Disability

The primary disability for our participants is Intellectual Disability, followed by Autism.



Cultural Identity

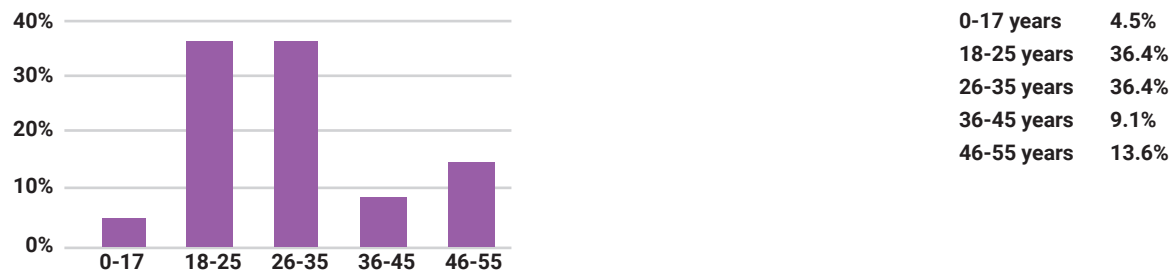
We continued to see a similar profile for cultural identity to last year. Data for country of birth also remained consistent with last year's results.



Supported Employees

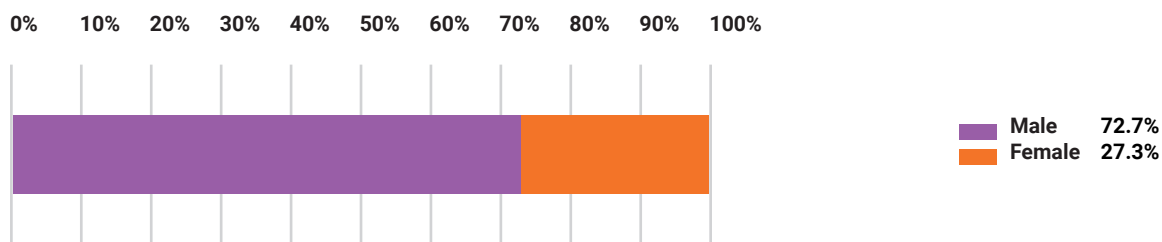
Age Distribution

Age distribution for supported employees in Distinctive Options' Employment Pathway businesses were:



Gender

In comparison to the general participant cohort, we have found that significantly more males than females are taking up supported employment options.



Business Operations Providing Supported Employment

The business operations delivered by supported employees this year were:

- DO Honey
- The DO Food Project Café
- The Goodwill Gardener
- DO Trade Services

Award and Wage Assessments

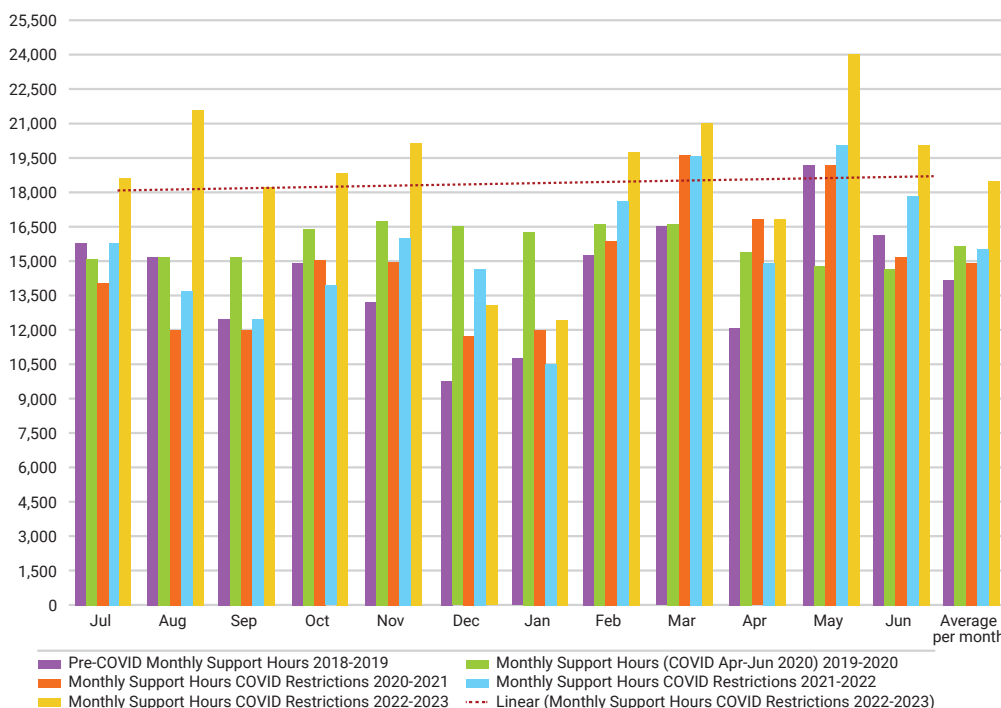
All supported employees are employed under the Supported Employment Services Award (SES) 2020. The minimum hourly wage rate paid by Distinctive Options is \$12.00 per hour, well above the minimums set by the SES. Independent, external, accredited wage assessors are used to determine the level of wages for each supported employee in accordance with the conditions in the SES and in relation to Fair Work Australia legislation. Any individuals assessed by a wage assessor at a higher rate than the minimum paid by Distinctive Options are paid according to the assessment calculation. These arrangements guarantee a fair pay rate for a fair day's work.

Support Delivery Outcomes

Support and Employment Delivery Hours

Our major function is to provide a range of support services to individuals. Distinctive Options recorded its highest hours of support in 2022-2023, as illustrated in the following graph.

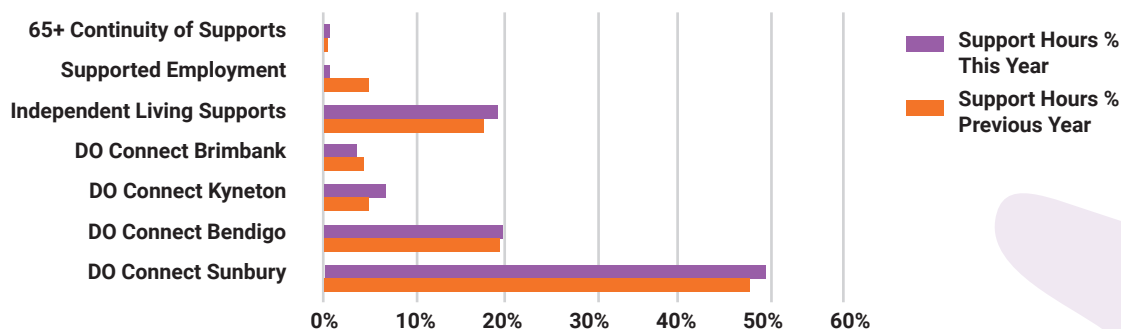
Participant / Supported Employee – Support Hours



An analysis of the distribution of support hours shows consistency across operational areas, with Sunbury services still by far the largest operation. Under the NDIS, participants can come and go from services as they choose. This consistency suggests that participants are very happy with the Sunbury service.

Brimbank operations have shown growth since a site move to the new Brimbank Aquatic & Wellness Centre in Keilor East. Supported employment also grew significantly during its first full year of operation. Bendigo supports remain strong in a very competitive market.

Distribution of Support Hours Provided



Quality, Safety & Operations

MIDLAND
Express



Bees mean business

Supported employees are pictured being trained in apiculture by Rebecca Light from Bee Responsible, all wearing their protective safety gear.

Operating Environment

Legislation and Standards

The NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission imposes a range of standards on registered disability service providers. The NDIS Practice Standards consist of a core module and several supplementary modules that may apply according to the types of supports and services NDIS providers deliver.



The core module covers:

- Rights and responsibilities
- Provider governance and operational management
- Provision of supports
- Provision of supports environment

The supplementary modules that apply to Distinctive Options are:

- High intensity daily personal activities
- Implementing behaviour support plans
- Specialist disability accommodation

Distinctive Options is also subject to the Victorian Child Safe Standards required by the Commission for Children and Young People. These aim to protect children through the implementation of processes that prevent child abuse and ensure organisations effectively respond to and report allegations of child abuse. Distinctive Options completed a full review of its policies, procedures and processes in July when the standards were expanded from 7 to 11.



Government Issues/Policies

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) provides funding for participants through its insurance scheme. A small percentage of 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 has service agreements with all supported individuals, as opposed to funding bodies, and our organisation is compliant with all funding requirements. The organisation undertakes regular monitoring and evaluation, including through internal reviews and audits. The management team works diligently throughout the year to ensure that the organisation is compliant and meets all legislative requirements.

During the acquisition process, Distinctive Options worked collaboratively with NDIA's Provider Engagement and Practice Branch to ensure a smooth transition for all Noweyung participants.

Accreditations

Distinctive Options is required to comply with standards, service delivery contracts and legislative obligations from federal bodies. For NDIS requirements, Distinctive Options must adhere to the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission's practice standards. Distinctive Options continues to undertake



the required quality assurance processes through regular independent audits conducted by Community Audits Australia against these practice standards. An out-of-sequence audit occurred in July 2022 to expand our Scope of Registration. Our last compliance audit was completed in February 2023. Both audits were highly successful, with Distinctive Options achieving the result of 'Rating 2 - Conformity' for both audits, as well as achieving 'Rating 3 – Best Practice' for some standards. The registration groups that we are in scope to deliver are:

Accommodation/Tenancy	Spec Support Employ	Participate Community
Assist–Personal Activities	Assist Access/Maintain Employ	Assist–Life Stage, Transition
Development–Life Skills	Assist–Travel/Transport	Daily Tasks/Shared Living
Group/Centre Activities	High Intensity Daily Activities	Household Tasks
		Spec Disability Accommodation

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

Continuous Improvement, Research and Development

Important components of our Quality Management System (QMS) are regular audits and ongoing continuous improvements. 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 conducted across all areas of the organisation, including governance, finance, operations, systems, processes, and controls.

We conducted 18 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 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.

During the year, Distinctive Options engaged Disability Services Consulting to undertake a thorough Policy Framework Review. This has delivered a more streamlined approach to our QMS.

Members of the executive management team actively participate 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.



From a governance perspective, membership with Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) provide further research and development

opportunities via best practices for the Board to consider and discuss. As Company Secretary/Public Officer, the CEO is Distinctive Options' registered representative for the ACNC and AICD. Directors are also members of AICD.



**Harvard
Business
Review**

Membership with the Harvard Business Review Advisory Council brings leaders together to share their opinions on current management, business issues and best practice research findings. The CEO is a member of this Council.



IIDL
International Initiative
for Disability Leadership

The International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL) is a forum that brings together leaders from across the world to discuss best practice models and innovations. Member IIDL countries include Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, Sweden, and the USA. Managers are members of the IIDL.



**National
Disability
Services**

An active relationship with our peak body, National Disability Services, allows management to discuss and review specific sector issues with our peers. The CEO is Distinctive Options' nominated representative and the EMSS is a member on some of the NDS sector committees.



Disability Services Consulting

The EMSS is also an active member of Disability Services Consulting (DSC). DSC provides an alternative perspective on a range of sector issues for members as an independent service.

Privacy

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 around privacy and confidentiality. We treat all individuals with dignity and respect, maintaining the confidentiality of all employee, volunteer, and participant information. No privacy breaches occurred this year.

Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability

We have a goal to integrate sustainable development into all our activities. This means 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 our participants to act in an environmentally responsible manner
- Investing in only ethical and environment safe investments

Risk Management

Risk management is a key component for delivering quality disability services provided by Distinctive Options. It includes governance risks related to broader organisational operations. The Board monitors core strategic risks monthly, and at least annually they review with management 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 Distinctive Options to review the relative impact of the existing controls by comparing the gross and net risk assessment. This means we can avoid wasting resources on mitigating controls and actions which have a negligible impact on risk management.

Risk Appetite

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 risk, and the risk appetite is the level of risk the Board and management are willing to accept 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 classes of risks listed on the following page.

ENVIRONMENT

● **Moderate Risk Appetite** for new providers that offer more, or more innovative, services than Distinctive Options under a mandatory NDIS pricing model.

● **Low Risk Appetite** for adverse media or public communications, poor outcomes for service participants and supported employees, breaches of privacy, assaults by participants against members of the public., participants going missing, lost participant and staff records, and for cybersecurity risks.

✗ **Zero Risk Appetite** for abuse or neglect of participants.

GOVERNMENT

● **Low Risk Appetite** for mandatory NDIS funding not keeping pace with organisational costs, losing either charity or NDIS registration, and taking a stance/position on key social/political topics that could impact the organisation's reputation.

INDUSTRY

● **Moderate Risk Appetite** for NDIS regulation and compliance costs not being funded or increasing higher than CPI, and for the outcomes or recommendations from the Royal Commission findings.

● **Low Risk Appetite** for staff injuries at work, infection and pandemic outbreaks, participants assaulted by other participants, bullying or harassment by participants to other participants, participants and staff injured in vehicle accidents, and significant OH&S breaches.

CHANGE

● **Moderate Risk Appetite** for the Board having sufficient numbers or skills, participant numbers increasing beyond capacity of services, and an inability to retain and grow the organisation's workforce.

● **Low Risk Appetite** for a lack of management or Board capacity to respond to alerts or change risks are not managed effectively, and for losing key managers and staff that cannot be replaced.

ECONOMIC

● **Moderate Risk Appetite** for new acquisitions or businesses not delivering short-term viable results, and if or when NDIS funding becomes deregulated and is determined by market forces.

✗ **Zero Risk Appetite** for financial mismanagement, theft or fraud.

Occupational Health and Safety

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

A Schedule outlines the OH&S 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 members are encouraged to access reimbursement for eligible vaccinations. Management and HR continue to promote staff awareness of the importance of vaccination, infection control and protecting participants from communicable diseases.

OHS Measure	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023
Lost time	570 hours	zero hours	zero hours	61 hours
Lost-time injuries	1	0	0	1
Reportable work cover injuries	6	4	1	3
Serious injuries	0	0	0	0
Manual handling injuries	0	0	0	2
Hazards or near misses	12	38	22	19

Greater monitoring of potential hazards or near misses meant Distinctive Options was able to keep on top of OH&S issues to ensure workplace injuries were minimised.

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 relating to governance and oversight of the organisation are identified and managed at the earliest opportunity.

Operations

Human Rights

Distinctive Options is committed to supporting participants to be empowered, recognising and preserving their rights and wellbeing. We design each of our services and supports to ensure high quality service provision upholds human rights, and these rights are always respected. Our approach is to empower participants through information, support, and education so they are in the best position possible to understand their rights and options 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 always exercise their rights, 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.

Rights and Responsibilities (R&R) Networks

Distinctive Options is committed to ensuring that individuals understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities. This is in line with our commitment and approach to preserving human rights and dignity for all our participants as outlined in the previous section.

Our organisation has three R&R Network groups that run weekly or monthly advocacy sessions. These take place in Bendigo, Kyneton and Sunbury. First launched in 1998, the groups provide participants the opportunity to express their views and ideas, as well as to raise and problem-solve any issues they identify. The participants are responsible for managing each meeting and 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 reviews and strategic planning. Guest presenters from the community may attend meetings to create opportunities for participants to ask questions and explore what is happening within their local communities.

A formal structure is in place to provide a conduit to the Board through R&R representatives meeting with members of the Development & Fundraising Committee. This, along with surveys, is an important structure to ensure a voice for participants at the highest organisational level. For the year, R&R provided advice to the Committee on one occasion and interviewed the Committee Chair once during the year.

Michael J Hines Award

The Board established the Michael J Hines Award in September 2012 following the sad passing of former Director Michael Hines. This Award, in his honour provides a cash incentive prize to participants or supported employees who show they best embody dignity in adversity. This year, we congratulate the following recipients:

- Edward A – Brimbank
- Jacqueline W – Bendigo
- Jessica P – Sunbury
- Jonty N – Pathways
- Joshua S – Independent Living Supports

DO Connect Bendigo

DO Connect Bendigo continue to provide Group and Individualised Supports across the region. The Bendigo area has seen a lot of growth during and after covid which has created a lot of other disability providers to begin providing supports in the Bendigo area. These providers consist of larger organisations and many various Independent Support providers. DO Connect Bendigo have been able to ensure the viability of supports provided by ensuring we remain innovative, continue to provide high quality care and collaborate with various stakeholders. The Bendigo Coordinator and IS Supervisor, along with various stakeholders, including local support coordinators, participants and supporters, have been able to come up with ideas for new areas of supports. The latest services that have been implemented are our STA Respite services, new group programs, monthly extended hours activities, before and after support programs and transport shifts to and from group programs.

Group Supports

The group supports have now settled into the new location and are going strong. We have welcomed new participants to group supports services with each participant bringing their own views and voices to Bendigo programs.

DO Connect Bendigo had received a very generous financial donation, which went towards purchasing a new people mover for Bendigo participants. Everyone at Bendigo was very excited about the vehicle once it arrived and it has been getting used weekly to reach some of the least accessible locations to attend community activities. We thank the anonymous donor for their very generous donation, and we are all very grateful and lucky to have such wonderful members of our community.

Our staff support our participants to develop

activity ideas to ensure that programs are planned around everyone's goals, interests and support needs. DO Connect is one big team that all support each other. Staff and participants are very proud of our culture and outcomes here in Bendigo.

Group supports run a range of activities in-house and Community Connection programs. This year, our Community Connection programs included:

- Participation in the Bendigo R&R Network group. Participants also attend the SARU advocacy group providing their views and opinions on matters that are important to their daily lives along with learning self-advocacy skills. These meetings are run at the Bendigo library each week.
- Event planning for International Day People with Disability (IDPwD). Participants were excited to be able to plan our DO Connect IDPwD stall. This was a great opportunity for participants to have their say about the stall and undertake responsibility and tasks which assists them to reach their goals.
- Attending the Men's Health Group which started at the start of June 2020 and continues to grow. The group volunteer at the Long Gully Community Garden and attend monthly DIY classes at Bunnings in Kangaroo Flat.
- Undertaking dance classes at the Gurri Waanyarra Health Centre. Gurri Waanyarra are a great connection for DO Connect Bendigo and are very welcoming and collaborative with staff and participants.
- Recording content for Radio Phoenix FM. This year, two groups were created for radio presentation. When the groups are not at the station, they are working hard on a new podcast for DO Connect Bendigo which will be cast via Spotify.

- Attendance at fortnightly lawn bowling at Eaglehawk Bowls Club and basketball/netball at Red Energy Arena in Bendigo.
- Working hard with two local op shops (RSPCA and Victory) to source materials for the creation of dog and cat toys so that funds and toys can be donated to local animal welfare charities.

Extended hours have been provided and we have had positive feedback from participants and supporters. There are 3 to 4 extended hours activities offered each month. We are glad we can now offer these opportunities for participants. Some events we attended throughout the past 12 months were:

- Steam train ride to Castlemaine
- Holey Moley Melbourne
- White Night Bendigo
- DFO Melbourne
- Myer Windows Melbourne
- Spellbound Magician Bendigo
- Kyabram Fauna Park
- Cover band performances for Meatloaf, P!nk and AC/DC
- Melbourne Zoo
- Forever 80's Night Bendigo
- Movie and pizza nights

Individualised Supports (IS)

Following an internal restructure in 2021, the IS team have been able to deliver more support hours. This has increased the reliability for participants as short notice shift cancellations are now more easily filled with suitable staff. Bendigo IS services remain steady in regards to the number of support hours provided. Bendigo IS participants have started engaging in extra supports, including extended hours activities and the newly provided STA options.

Participants have been supported to travel out

of state for events and to visit family. Some were supported to visit Melbourne for events or Hepburn Springs for wellbeing retreats.

The IS team worked closely with the Business Development Manager to run an information session on Bendigo supports and DO Travel supports for local support coordinators. This created a very good networking opportunity and has developed collaborative relationships with local area coordinators.

We would like to give a big thank you to all participants, families, supporters, staff and corporate employees for your support and assistance throughout the year.

DO Connect Brimbank

This year was very exciting for Distinctive Options Brimbank services, with a well-deserved upgrade to our service. We moved to the brand new Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre, situated in the heart of the west. Previously known as St Albans Connect, we have expanded to support the broader Brimbank area, addressing the need for a safe, inclusive and welcoming space for more individuals living with disability to be supported to achieve their NDIS goals and live a fulfilling life.

With various new programs, activities and social experiences offered this year, our participants have had a huge impact on the growth of this service, providing creative and innovative feedback regarding new programs and activities for us to offer. This year, we placed an emphasis on participants telling us what they want and offering exactly that! With movie nights, gamers clubs, billiards sessions and much more, participants in the Brimbank area were encouraged and supported to take control of their own lives and participate in activities of their choosing. With many more new ideas and opportunities in the mix for the Brimbank crew, it's a very exciting time to be with Distinctive Options in the Western suburbs of Melbourne.

We also had the opportunity for our participants to network with various organisations and local businesses in the broader Brimbank area, allowing us to increase community engagement and expose our participants to the world around them. Collaborative relationships were established with various entities such as Reclink Sports Australia, Brimbank City Council, Cultivating Communities, Salvation Army, Community+, Good Shepherd, Bunnings, Sound System Studios, The Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, Specialist Hoops, Point Perfect and many more.



DO Connect Brimbank saw a multitude of participant achievements this year, from supporting participants to work on their employability skills to then acquire a job, supporting a participant to practice his responsible driving skills which eventually led to getting his driver's license, and everything in between.



This year saw DO Connect Brimbank almost triple in the number of participants supported since 2021. We are very excited to see where the next financial year will take us in reaching an even greater number of individuals in the community and providing even more opportunities and choice to our participants.



DO Connect Sunbury

DO Connect Sunbury has had a year full of exciting times, stability and steadiness which has been great for service and participant outcomes. We have continued to undergo some cosmetic facelifts to our main centre. Adding on to last years' painting and new signage, we have expanded our art area, installed new storage spaces, purchased new chairs for every room and landed a grant from Hume City Council's Living Local Fund for \$20,000 to contribute towards the installation of a commercial-style kitchen.

Distinctive Options also reviewed the group service vehicles and purchased two new people movers to continue to assist our participants to access community venues with reliable transport. Family connections, support delivery and community inclusion continue to be a big focus for the service.



Perhaps our most notable event was the first Master Chef presentation night. Participants spent months learning culinary skills from our Head Chef, Zak Obeid, which can provide future opportunities for further study and employment in the hospitality field. Families and friends were treated to a delicious 3 course menu.

"It was one of the nicest nights I've had in a while! Everything was presented so professionally and the food tasted amazing. It was lovely to see the way the staff worked with the participants. I enjoyed meeting other

parents as well." – Parent



Other instances included a basketball tournament which was well attended by families and friends, preparing food to hand over to the Winter Night Shelter, the Radio Chat crew interviewing locals including MP Josh Bull, being involved with Reclink sports, connecting with a local school to perform handyman tasks, and having the dance crew perform at an International Day of People with Disability event. The Film Project crew, supported by Jason Mills, had their 2022 short film 'Can You?' shown at the Melbourne screening of the Focus on Ability Film Festival and proudly presented the film at the Having A Say conference in Geelong.



Participants of the Community Leaders program visited Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School to meet current students and talk about their experience with Distinctive Options. The presentation featured long time participants such as Stefan Guymer, who has been with Distinctive Options for 18 years, and

Aiden Bryan, who joined Distinctive Options this year.

DO Sunbury Connect also ran its last ever internal supported holidays, giving participants the opportunity to attend the Tri State Games and Having a Say conference. The organisation of these holidays has now been passed onto DO Travel to Pathways who have been offering some amazing holiday opportunities, including a trip to Queensland.



The Rights and Responsibilities Network (R&R), run by Blair Hayes and Jamie-Lee Wilson, continued to meet weekly and organised events, fundraisers, celebrations, and guest speakers. The annual Easter raffle took 6 weeks of planning and collaborating with local businesses and raised funds for the Good Friday Appeal, whilst the Big Freeze fundraiser raised money through a morning tea, although the main event of the day was the ice bucket challenge taken on by six brave staff members!



Hannah Chalker ran internal training sessions on Key Word Sign and the use of communication aids. The Key Word Sign sessions gave staff the skills to use 40 signs relevant to their work with participants.



"I found the workshop to be very useful toward my learning of different communication aids. I found the content to be helpful and comprehensive without becoming overwhelming for a novice such as myself." – Support worker.

Extended hours events continued to shine as an exceptional part of our service, with 115 event opportunities available throughout the year to participants. These included theatre musicals, Disney on Ice, AFL matches, karaoke and discos.

This year was a truly exciting time to be part of the service for positive change and growth.

Independent Living Supports



Our year has been busy, with service delivery back at full capacity and growing at a steady pace. We relocated to 36C Macedon Street, Sunbury, which has provided us with a space better aligned with our needs and the needs of those who we support. The ILS leadership team has undergone some significant changes, with the previous ILS Coordinator Sarah Heriot taking maternity leave. Deborah Ford stepped up into the Coordinator role, and Taryn Schneider moved from the Kyneton Team Leader role into the Communication and Relationship Officer role. Michelle Harrison remains our trusted Process and Accountability Officer. The team now manages the whole Sunbury and Macedon Ranges area for ILS supports.

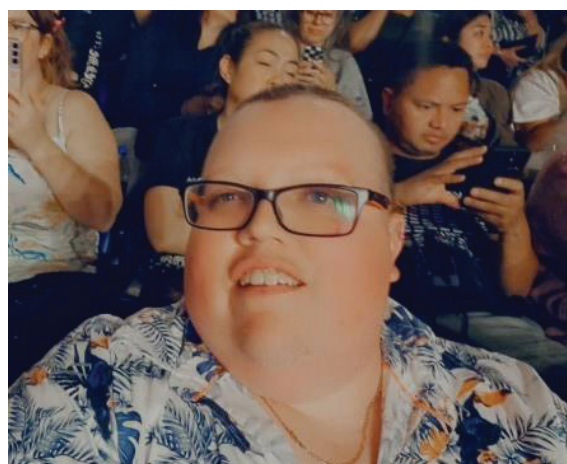
In May this year, Ranudi Jayawardana and Tatyana Madume began in rostering positions and have been doing a wonderful job. They will now be taking on more administrative tasks for the ILS department.

Here are some snippets and special moments from our participants for the past year.

This year, Neville and Carolyn celebrated their wedding in style, with support from our wonderful support worker Gabby.



Matt had the time of his life at the Backstreet Boys concert, supported by Colleen.



Sue was supported by Angela to attend bingo, including a special visit from Taryn.



Ross went on a holiday to the Gold Coast and had an absolute ball with his trusted support worker Johnny.



Distinctive Options – Noweyung

Within a very uncertain financial situation this year, the dedicated staff at Noweyung ensured the continuation of support services and employment options. The centre in Goold Street is the hub for a wide range of activities that cater to all levels of support and span a broad range of participant goals. Social inclusion and independent living skills are prioritised, with programs being participant-driven and community focused while remaining mindful of the health and wellbeing for our participants. Creativity is nurtured in studio facilities for the Colour Gang, craft, music and performance activities.



Noweyung provides opportunities to gain real life experience, attain qualifications and learn trade skills with access to mechanical, electrical, carpentry, mowing, maintenance and horticulture programs.



Participants are encouraged to have a presence and a voice through our digital media, photography and IT activities. The Yakety-Yak Radio produces a program in our on-site recording studio which is aired on community radio every week.



Noweung Café and Fine Foods is a fully operational café and commercial kitchen that offers skill development and employment opportunities for participants interested in the hospitality industry.

In 2019, Noweung added Financial Plan Management (FPM) to our list of services on offer with our experienced, knowledgeable team on hand to assist and support our participants and families to manage their NDIS funding.



Noweung has a proud history supporting people living with disability in East Gippsland and we believe there are exciting times ahead as we move forward with Distinctive Options.



Pathways

This year saw Distinctive Options Pathways grow exponentially with numerous social enterprise beginnings occurring throughout the year. At years end, Distinctive Options Pathways had successfully created and started to operate the following enterprise pathways for people with diverse abilities:

- DO Honey – A beekeeping enterprise based in the Sunbury region.
- The DO Food Project Cafe - A cafe kiosk in the Macedon Ranges Health Centre in Gisborne, Victoria.
- The Goodwill Gardener – A garden maintenance business providing garden-related services to organisations and the community throughout the Sunbury/Macedon Ranges Region.
- DO Trade – A trade enterprise that provides brochures delivering services or trade-related services to other organisations within the community.

For a more detailed report on the above services, refer to the Business Development Manager's Report.



BEHIND THE NEWS STARWEEKLY.COM.AU

Radio with a distinctive voice

With every new voice on community radio, a listener who may never have thought themselves a communicator or radio personality is given someone to look - or listen - up to. DO show in Sunbury is doing just that, elevating the voices of people with disability and making them centre stage, as Elsie Lange reports

Lochie Baillie from Distinctive Options (DO) in Sunbury is thrilled to present a show on the local community radio station, Sunbury Radio, every Friday morning. The DO Show airs weekly, and is a vibrant, music-packed segment filled with interviews, news, the weather, shout outs and songs, all curated and presented by participants of DO, an organisation supporting people with disability.

"We're a part of the community and they're a part of the community, they are entitled to it just like anyone else"

"I love Sunbury Radio so much. They are amazing people, they are all amazing staff on the radio - they are just unreal," Lochie says.

"I love doing this program so much. It helps me to speak clearly and nicely. '[I like] talking about the songs and the music, all different sorts, from Guy Sebastian to One Direction [and more].'"

The radio program started about two years ago, when a former Distinctive Options disability support worker got in touch with the station to explore the idea. It was then that Steve Tyers,



DO Show presenters Jessica Opie, Lochie Baillie and Corinne Morgan with Sunbury Radio studio technician Steve Tyers. (Damjan Janevski) 294950_05

a Sunbury Radio volunteer and technician, got involved.

"I thought here's an opportunity to get these guys on air," Steve says.

"We're a part of the community and they're a part of the community, they are entitled to it just like anyone else."

DO disability support worker Tamara Collins now helps with the program,

and says all the presenters "absolutely love Steve".

"They can't wait to see him, which is really great, and he's been teaching them about the radio, it's such a great opportunity for them," Tamara says.

About every fourth Friday, the participants take a break and go out to get their interviews for their upcoming shows.

They chat to interesting locals - Sunbury MP Josh Bull even made an appearance.

"It was fantastic to sit down with Jess, Lochlan and Robert recently who asked some important, hard-hitting questions about our local community and my role as the member of parliament," Josh says.

"I was extremely honoured to be asked to be a guest on the show. 'Listening to the experiences of people with disability and showing up are a fundamental part of making Victoria the most inclusive and accessible state.'"

All the participants have a go at presenting, with one of the presenters also operating the control panel and the microphones on their own.

From producing, to interviewing, to back announcing - they're learning the ropes of it all.

Participant Jessica Opie says it's been great to meet compelling people as they put their shows together, as well as "listening to different music". Corrine Morgan also fronts the program, and says she loves presenting the weather, "like Livinia [Nixon]", the Channel 9 weather presenter.

"I do my own songs, my own shout outs," Corrine says.

"Sometimes I do Imagine Dragons, sometimes I do One Direction ... or U2."

Executive Management Team

Ernie Metcalf – Chief Executive Officer

Ernie holds a Master of Business Management from Monash University, a Graduate Diploma in Accounting, an AICD Foundations of Directorship Certificate, plus qualifications in total quality management and internal auditing.

Ernie brought a wealth of skills and experience following his appointment to Distinctive Options in November 2016, being a CEO of successful disability service providers since 2003. Additionally, he brings business acumen developed from other commercial and business experience, including working as a General Manager and an independent business consultant, along with many years employed in senior management roles within the water industry and local government. From a governance perspective, Ernie has held positions on, or worked with, boards, councils, and audit committees across different and diverse sectors. He has successfully steered the organisation through significant changes and challenges faced by service providers. Ernie and his senior team have ensured our organisation's growth and stability.

As CEO, Ernie is responsible for the organisation's entire operations and reports directly to the Chairperson and Board of Directors. He oversees development and growth, strategic planning and leadership. Ernie is a member of the International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL), National Disability Services (NDS), the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and Harvard Business Review. He is also a founding member and former Chair of a Disability Services CEO Best Practice Network. This network, now an informal one, is still in use today sharing ideas and best practices

across the disability sector.

Representing the company and for reporting purposes, Ernie is the appointed Company Secretary/Public Officer for Distinctive Options

Rick Dunn – Executive Manager Support Services

Rick has worked for Distinctive Options since November 1998, providing significant expertise on disability issues and best practice service provision. He holds a Bachelor of Education, Master of Education (Psychology), Diploma of Business Management (Community Services) and Advanced Diplomas in Project Management and Human Resource Management.

Rick 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. He acts as the Authorised Reporting Officer for NDIS issues at Distinctive Options. Rick is directly accountable to the CEO for the performance of support services. He is a member of our peak body's NDIS Issues and Sector Reform Committee, NDS National Quality and Safeguarding Community of Practice, Disability Day Services Community of Practice and Victorian In-Home Supports Providers Community of Practice. He is also the Community Co-opted Member of School Council for Sunbury & Macedon Ranges Special Development School.

Christine Meilak – Manager Corporate Services

Christine joined Distinctive Options in March 2023 as Manager Corporate Services. She brings a wealth of experience from managing teams over the past 19 years. Christine specialises in delivering high-quality leadership and oversight in evaluating, allocating and managing human, physical and financial resources. Christine is responsible for cultivating and strengthening strong relationships with key stakeholders and providing informed recommendations for system advancements, coaching and training on all business systems. She leads the development and deployment of a comprehensive strategic business plan aligned to financial and organisational objectives.

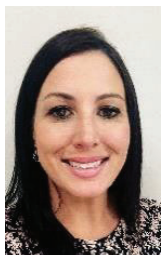
Paul Pearman – Business Development Manager

Appointed in October 2021, Paul joined Distinctive Options as the organisation's first Business Development Manager. Paul oversees all new social enterprise business initiatives within Distinctive Options Pathways options. In addition, he is directly responsible for the organisation's brand positioning, presentation, partnerships, donations, grants and bequests. A people-driven, values-based leader, Paul has a wealth of experience leading small to large businesses for over twenty years across multiple industries. Paul holds a postgraduate certificate in Cybersecurity Management. He is an advocate for the community and a purpose-driven collaborator. He is directly accountable to the CEO for the performance of business development.

Staff Profiles

Featured are individual profiles of some of our key staff.

Deborah Ford – Independent Living Supports (ILS) Coordinator



I began working for Distinctive Options in November 2021 as the ILS Communications and Relationships Officer. Following organisation changes in May, I successfully assumed the role of ILS Coordinator.

Prior to working for Distinctive Options, I worked as a Forensic Case Manager, working with pre-and-post-prison release participants, assisting them with integrating back into the community. I also worked as a Disability Support Worker during this time.

Before embarking on a career in community services, I had gained qualifications in and worked in sales, lending and client relationship roles in financial institutions, insurance organisations and brokerage firms. These roles allowed me to gain experience in various business processes, as well as being people and community focused.

I am committed to empowering the lives of vulnerable people in the community. I am currently studying a Diploma of Leadership in Disability Services and really enjoy my role at Distinctive Options. I hope to learn and expand my knowledge of all aspects of disability, whilst contributing to the growth of the business and working collaboratively with the fantastic ILS team and Distinctive Options as a whole.

Jenny Horton – Distinctive Options Noweyung Regional Support Manager



I joined the team at Noweyung in March 2019, working across all areas of support including 1:1 community inclusion, skill centre programs and program development. I enjoyed building connections with participants

and staff and developing programs that were successfully supporting participants to achieve their individual goals.

In September 2019, I had an opportunity to step into NDIS administration. I thrived in this person-centered role and became the first point of contact for new and existing participants and their supporters to understand the contents of their NDIS plans. I learned how these plans could help achieve an individual's goals. While undertaking this role, I developed systems and processes for implementing and maintaining participant service agreements and financial plan management, while also training and mentoring other highly motivated staff that joined the team.

In June 2021, I moved into the role of Service Manager. I am passionate about my work with participants, families and staff members. I enjoy identifying and developing programs of support and bringing them to life by building networks that support these programs, creating inclusion and achieving individual goals.

I am excited about the possibilities for participants with Distinctive Options. I believe it will bring wonderful new opportunities and experiences for people living with a disability in the East Gippsland region.

Roxanne McKerral – HR Business Partner



I commenced working at Distinctive Options in January as the HR Business Partner. I am a passionate HR specialist with over 6 years of experience in human resource-related roles,

over 10 years of Local Government experience, and considerable leadership experience in service-related roles.

I joined Distinctive Options ready to take on a new challenge in the disability sector. I was looking for a role that had a community focus where I could use my skills and experience to benefit others, whilst at the same time working closer to home to better support my own family life. I have three children who each go to school locally.

Since starting my role, my focus has been on building positive relationships with staff and gaining a strong understanding of the current policies, procedures, awards and Enterprise Agreement conditions. Into the future, my goal is to continue sharing my skills and experience to support Distinctive Options as we grow as an organisation.

Colleen Moffat – NDIS Billing & Claims Officer



Joining Distinctive Options in 2022, I brought almost of decade of industry experience, having worked directly with the NDIS and other service provider organisations across Victoria.

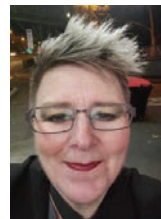
Starting my career in the environmental science field, while being introduced to the disability sector through family circumstance, I realised that my skills and effort were better placed in the community services industry.

I love seeing participants achieve their goals and receive empowering and meaningful life

experiences. I strive to provide timely and accurate advice and process to the finance and leadership teams. I love learning! I am a sponge for new information and new experiences in life. I'm passionate about innovation and creating a world of continuous improvement for myself and my employment. I love socialising and having a good laugh.

I hope to continue my personal and professional development journey with Distinctive Options and can't wait to see what exciting opportunities lie ahead.

Lisa McNeil – Disability Support Worker



I have been working for Distinctive Options for nearly seven years. I previously worked in Before and After School Care and Holiday Programs for 22 years which included providing support to children with

additional needs.

I enjoy supporting my participants to work towards their goals and helping them to enjoy life. It's rewarding to help participants to think outside of the box, to try something new and to extend on their abilities and knowledge. I also enjoy the things that my participants teach me. I learn something new each day about them, my job and my abilities.

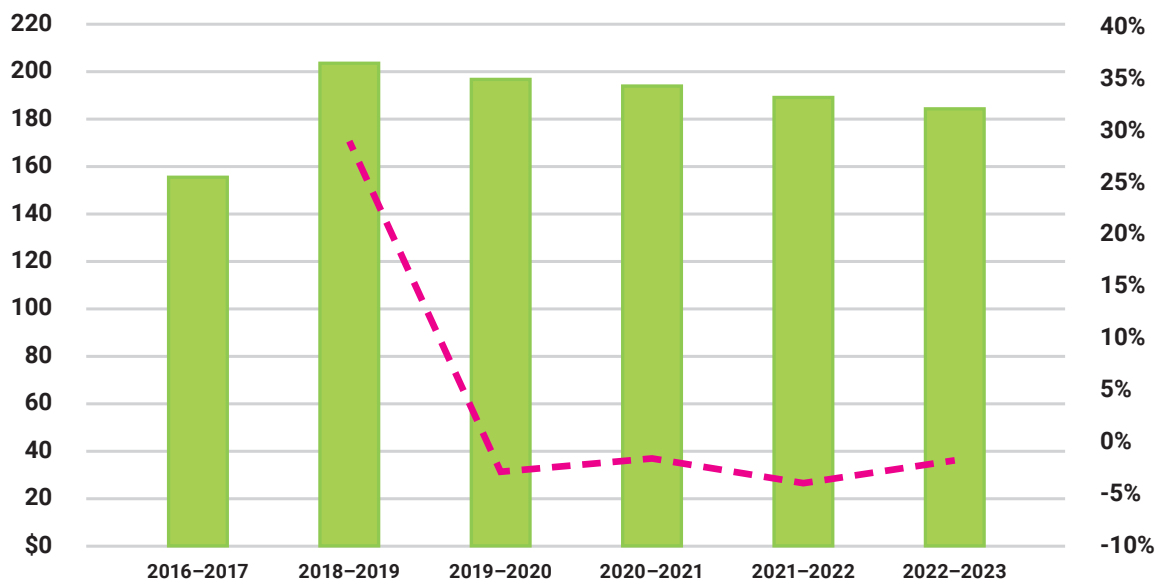
Workforce Profile & Culture

Culture is the character and personality of an organisation. It is what makes Distinctive Options unique and is the sum of our values, traditions, beliefs, interactions, behaviours and attitudes. Positive workplace culture attracts talent, drives engagement, impacts happiness and satisfaction, and affects performance. The personality of our business is influenced by everything - leadership, management, workplace practices, policies, people and more.

Staff Profile

Distinctive Options employed 183 staff, a similar number to last year. This equated to a full time equivalent of 78.0 as at the end of June. An ongoing side effect from the pandemic is the difficulty in staff recruitment across the sector. While there is no industry data currently available to benchmark our performance against, a recent NDS annual Workforce Census Report stated that *"...the snapshot of the disability workforce for 2022 showed that worsening conditions of previous years have stabilised. But with an undersupply of workers and high turnover, the situation remains precarious."* Retention of our staff is a core requirement to assist our quality services and growth. This year saw a consolidation of staff post the pandemic, with signs of growth later in the year.

Staff Numbers



Staff Demographics

Staff statistics relating to gender, age and years of service provide an indicator of the balance in Distinctive Options' workforce. The range of staff ages continues to align with our participant age groups.

Gender

Previous Year	Gender	Numbers	Percent
47	Male	48	26.2%
139	Female	135	77.8%

Age

Previous Year	Age range	Numbers	Percent
33	18 – 25 years	27	14.7%
47	26 – 35 years	49	26.8%
33	36 – 45 years	30	16.4%
46	46 – 55 years	42	23.0%
21	56 – 65 years	27	14.7%
46	66+ years	8	4.4%

Employment Status

Previous Year	Classification	Numbers	Percent
47	Casual	52	28.4%
127	Part Time	112	61.2%
12	Full Time	19	10.4%

Primary Work Types:

Previous Year	Site	Numbers	Percent
167	Support Services	164	89.6%
17	Corporate Services	17	9.3%
2	Cleaners	2	1.1%

Years of Service

Previous Year	Service range	Numbers	Percent
34	Less than 12 months	36	19.7%
74	1 to 2 years	72	39.3%
55	3 to 5 years	39	21.3%
6	6 to 10 years	18	9.8%
13	11 to 20 years	14	7.7%
4	Over 21 years	4	2.2%

Staff Milestones

The following employees reached a milestone this year:

- **Melanie East** **10 years**

We congratulate Melanie on her milestone and express our thanks for her dedication, versatility, adaptability and commitment to delivering quality services for the organisation.

Staff Retirements

Doris Kluger, part of our corporate services team since December 2019, retired in September 2022. We wish her well in her retirement.

Employment Conditions

The modern Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award (SCHADS) 2010 covers all staff (except for the management team who are on personal contracts and staff working in supported employment businesses). Salary rates for employees under the SCHADS Award increased in line with an annual Fair Work Australia determination. Supported employment staff conditions are as per the Supported Employment Services Award (SES) 2020.

Distinctive Options paid Superannuation at 10.5% on salaries as per legislation. Our organisation falls 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 for Distinctive Options.

Working conditions include the opportunity to move from full time to part time employment, plus any other reasonable arrangement that benefits both the organisation and individual. Flexible working arrangements are available to employees, including flexible hours and the possibility of working from home.

Probity

Distinctive Options undertakes probity checks to ensure the safety of all participants. NDIS screening compliance requirements under the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission standards are in place for all employees, management team and the Board of Directors. All employees who provide support to participants under the age of 18 must also hold a Working With Children's Check.

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 further subject to regular external audits by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

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 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 offering the best ongoing learning and development to all staff for them to gain or strengthen their skills to deliver their roles with confidence. One hundred and sixty-three, or 88.1%, of staff members undertook training during the year. Our organisation continues to offer external training on essential qualifications, such as First Aid and CPR, to maintain a skilled workforce. The professional development undertaken by staff this year included: Cert IV in Disability, Child Abuse and Neglect, Company Directors Course, CPR Accreditation, Diabetes, Diploma of Leadership, Dysphagia, Epilepsy Essentials, Epilepsy Midazolam, First Aid, Foundations Directorship Course, Infection Control, Manual Handling and Medication Administration.

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 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 OH&S, our client management system software, several Codes of Conduct, Zero Tolerance, incident management and much more. All new staff, managers and Directors need 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

An essential component of our employee performance management framework is through supervision and mentoring. These practices ensure that employees have ongoing opportunities to discuss their workplace performance and any issues or challenges that they are facing. Formal and informal supervision and monitoring occurs either directly with the line manager or in a group setting.

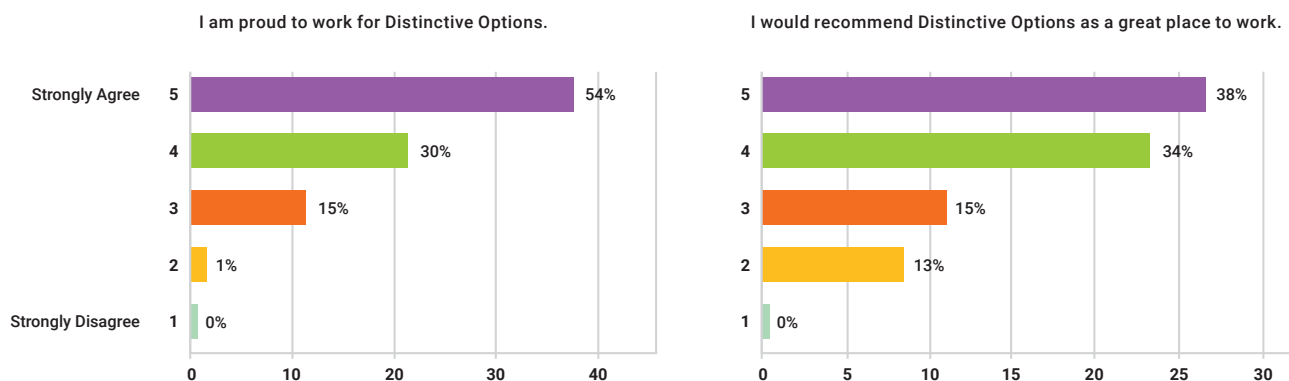
Staff Survey and Other Feedback

In May 2023, all employees were invited to participate in a voluntary and confidential survey. The survey this year put forward a new range of questions to employees, seeking to gauge satisfaction with culture, engagement, training, and leadership. All of these contribute to how well we consider we deliver services and support to our participants.

The number of responses received indicated a slight reduction in participation, with 40.12% of staff taking the opportunity to respond. The responses provided valuable insights into areas Distinctive Options excels at, whilst highlighting opportunities for improvement and growth.

INSIGHTS

- Questions relating to Culture, Engagement and Leadership show a high level of satisfaction within Distinctive Options. Overwhelmingly, staff are proud to work at Distinctive Options, they feel a sense of accomplishment as they go about their work and they would recommend Distinctive Options as a good place to work.
- Responses to the training-related questions show that whilst we received high levels of satisfaction in this area, there are also some areas we could improve on in supporting our staff to deliver services. More extensive staff inductions, internal training opportunities and more professional development have been noted for future consideration and improvement.
- Staff indicated that Distinctive Options has the best interests of its participants in mind, and this is reflected in the decisions and actions taken by the leadership group.



WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Feedback provided via the survey, and other sources such as annual performance reviews and general comments and suggestions from staff, help shape the way Distinctive Options operates and delivers services into the future. Upcoming areas of focus include:

- Technology improvements to help us work more efficiently and more effectively across our sites, including the implementation of Microsoft 365, removing the need for staff to access the network while working in the office, and the implementation of a new intranet to provide easy access to resources, tools and communication.
- Development and implementation of an e-Learning package, accessible to all staff, with modules relating to skills development and mandatory training.
- The delivery of more development opportunities through internal advertising and investment in staff.

Governance



Board of Directors

Kalma Rathouski [MSocSc] – Board Chairperson



Kalma is an independent Director and an *ex officio* member of all Committees.

Kalma holds a Master of Social Science and 16 years of 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 with social services agency CatholicCare Victoria where she is responsible for stakeholder engagement throughout the state. She has a keen passion for disability having experienced life in a wheelchair for a short time following an accident. Commencing in March 2015, her final 3-year term as a Board Director officially expires at 2023 AGM in November.

Alistair Lloyd [MBA BComp (Info Sys) MAICD] – Deputy Chairperson



Alistair is an independent Director and Chair 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 and the Department of Education. He also acted as an Executive Director with ESTA. Alistair now leads his own technology and business practice and is a founding Director of a digital medical services business. He is passionate about transformation and change, service design, people leadership and creativity.

Derek Jones [FCPA]



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

Derek is a retired finance professional who is in his third term as a Director with Distinctive Options. He has had a significant career in both the public and private sectors, including 15 years as a Finance Manager and Chief Financial Officer of Sustainability Victoria. Derek's areas of expertise include financial reporting, risk management, strategic planning, governance and compliance. He joined as a Director in February 2016 and has decided to retire in the second year of his final 3-year term at the 2023 AGM.

Alicia Kokocinski [BA, Dip PR]



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

Originally a journalist, Alicia is the General Manager of Marketing and Communications at Equity Trustees, Australia's leading trustee company. She has a proven track record in media, digital marketing, communications and market research, especially in complex and highly regulated environments as well as government and social justice campaigns. She has previously managed her own successful consulting business specialising largely in the legal sector where she worked with peak bodies and associations, the courts and leading law firms. Alicia has also worked in the not-for-profit sector on complex education and behaviour change campaigns which have focused on homelessness, cancer, safe sex, illicit drug use, nutrition and volunteering.

Simon McKenzie [BCom, JD, GAICD]



Simon is a former Board Chair who is an independent Director and member of the Governance & Risk Committee.

Simon is an admitted lawyer with a commerce degree and is a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Simon is the former Public Transport Ombudsman, a role which helps people resolve disputes about public transport issues including accessibility. He is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Victoria's Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. He brings solid experience in dispute resolution, stakeholder engagement, customer advocacy, company operations and regulatory affairs. He has a record of accomplishment in team management and leadership through organisational change.

John Papatheohari [BBus, CA, CHCIO]



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

John has eleven years of 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 the private 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.

Sunayana Tonks [LLB, RMIA, MBA, BA, GradCertIA]



Sunayana is a non-independent Director and member of the Governance & Risk Committee.

Sunayana is a highly qualified compliance, risk and internal auditor with over 15 years of broad experience in managing and advising on compliance and risk obligations across various organisations. She is passionate about ensuring regulatory obligations and risks are considered in everyday decision making.

Sunayana has a Bachelor of Law which included learning on disability and NDIS law. She is also a Board advisor of an independent school. She brings her own personal experience as a mother to child with Autism.

Mark [MBA; BBus (Marketing)]



Mark is an independent Director and member of the Business Development & Fundraising Committee.

Mark is a strategic marketing and fundraising executive with close to 26 years of experience in leading wholesale, consumer and not-for-profit organisations. As a frontline fundraiser, he has delivered more than \$100 million in fundraising income for the charities he served. His fundraising expertise includes management of the Regular Giving program at Save the Children, the Brotherhood of St Laurence fundraising program, the development and implementation of the fundraising strategy for the Alannah & Madeline Foundation, and leadership of the Direct Response Team at the Stroke Foundation.

Mark has a Business Analytics Certificate from Wharton School of Business. He is the Founder and Director of Fundraising Logic, a joint venture with Precision Fundraising, and he is also Head of Fundraising, Data Strategy & Insights for Precision Fundraising.

Former Directors

Graham Holt joined the Board in February 2018 and resigned at the 2022 AGM. He served as the Chair on one of the Committees during his time in office and proactively assisted the organisation's move into supported employment.

Nancy Peat joined the Board in April 2018 and resigned at the 2022 AGM. She served as the Chair on one of the Committees during her time as a Board Director. Nancy is passionate about Distinctive Options' services, participants and growth opportunities.

The Board thanks both former Directors for their contributions to Distinctive Options.

Corporate Governance

Distinctive Options is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001*, and a registered charity under the Australian Charities 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 Constitution was updated and revised in March 2023.

For registered charities under the ACNC, they must comply with these Governance Standards:

Standard 1: Purpose and not-for-profit nature

Standard 2: Accountability to members

Standard 3: Compliance with Australian laws

Standard 4: Suitability of Responsible People

Standard 5: Duties of Responsible People

Standard 6: Maintaining and enhancing public trust and confidence in the Australian Not-for-profit sector

Compliance to **Standard 1** is through Distinctive Options' Constitution, outlining the organisation's purpose and not-for-profit nature. As part of our processes to enhance people's lives, Distinctive Options continues to expand its range of support services and employment options to people who have a disability.

For **Standard 2**, Distinctive Options is accountable to its members and stakeholders through transparent, high-quality reporting, through inclusive strategic planning sessions, through our AGM or any other member/stakeholder forums, and through a range of other mechanisms used from time to time.

Ensuring there are no breaches reported or investigated against relevant Australian laws associated with the organisation's operations provides assurance Distinctive Options meets **Standard 3**. The Company Secretary completes annual compliance to mandatory ACNC reporting requirements on behalf of the Board.

Compliance with **Standard 4** is achieved through all Directors being screened by an external recruiting firm, then each new candidate must apply for and meet NDIS Worker Screening requirements. The Company Secretary undertakes another annual screening process for Directors through ASIC's company register to ensure no candidate is listed as a banned or a disqualified person. In line with company law, all Directors must have a current Director Identification Number to hold a Board position, provided through the *Australian Business Registry Services* via an application and screening process. For key management listed as Responsible People with the ACNC, appropriate probity checks are completed by the Board for the CEO and by the CEO for other managers. Additionally, NDIS Worker Screening proof, or a valid Working with Children Check, is required. External quality auditors regularly review this information to ensure compliance against the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's standards.

To ensure compliance with **Standard 5**, and to meet accepted best practice, Director's roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are specified in the organisation's Governance Charter and as per Distinctive Options' Constitution. Key management roles are responsible and accountable as per their position descriptions, Balanced Scorecard targets, and the organisation's Delegations Policy. Additionally, the Board Chair conducts regular reviews of Director effectiveness.

To enhance public trust and confidence as per **Standard 6**, Distinctive Options prides itself on the excellent reputation it has developed and maintained over many years. The organisation consciously strives to achieve this through its quality annual reporting, by growing and enhancing its reputation both in the community and with our partners for our level of quality services and employment options, as well as from regular feedback and information provided by key stakeholders.

As a company limited by guarantee, Distinctive Options monitors governance requirements listed by the *Australian Institute of Company Directors'* not-for-profit Governance Principles. These ten principles closely align against the ACNC standards.

Current Director Terms

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

Director	Appointment Date	Max Term Expires
Retired Directors		
Graham Holt	27 February 2018	Retired at 2022 AGM (Into second term)
Nancy Peat	24 April 2018	Retired at 2022 AGM (Into second term)
Retiring Directors		
Kalma Rathouski	16 March 2015	Retires at 2023 AGM (Final term)
Derek Jones	23 February 2016	Retiring at 2023 AGM (Into final term)
Simon McKenzie	27 March 2018	AGM 2026
Alistair Lloyd	23 March 2021	AGM 2030
John Papatheohari	23 March 2021	AGM 2030
Alicia Kokocinski	12 April 2022	AGM 2031
Sunayana Tonks	12 April 2022	AGM 2031
Mark Wiegerink	26 April 2022	AGM 2031

Board Meetings

Under the Constitution, the Board must hold a minimum of 9 meetings per year. Usually, no Board meetings are scheduled in January or July, with additional meetings held as required. The Board met 13 times during the year, including three special meetings in August, March and May. The CEO and management team attend Board meetings, allowing them to present operational and financial information to the Board as required. Board agendas are developed by the CEO/Company Secretary in consultation with the Chairperson. Management disseminates the minutes, generally within a week of meetings being held.

Attendance at Board Meetings

Director	Eligible	Attended	Rate
Kalma Rathouski	13	13	100.0%
Alistair Lloyd	13	13	100.0%
Graham Holt (<i>retired at the Nov 22 AGM</i>)	6	6	100.0%
Derek Jones	13	11	84.6%
Alicia Kokocinski	13	10	76.9%
Simon McKenzie	13	11	84.6%
John Papatheohari	13	10	76.9%
Nancy Peat (<i>retired at the Nov 22 AGM</i>)	2	2	100.0%
Sunayana Tonks	13	12	92.3%
Mark Wiegerink	13	8	61.5%
CEO / Company Secretary	13	12	92.3%

The median attendance by Directors at Board meetings was 88.5%, in line with best practice. Board meeting attendance is expected to be a minimum of 67% per annum, except when an individual Director has approved leave.

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 Board Directors, and each Director must be eligible to be a member. All membership fees must be paid annually.
- 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.

Years	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023
Member	8	8	9	10	8

In line with best practice principles, Distinctive Options' Board is comprised by a majority of independent directors. An independent director is 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 be perceived to materially interfere) with the independent exercise of that director's judgment. The Board actively encourages gender diversity for all Director appointments.

Director Renominations

No Director terms were due to expire at the 2022 AGM. No additional recruitment of Directors was made to fill the two vacancies following the early retirements at the 2022 AGM. The three newest Directors, all appointed by the Board early in 2022, formally had their first 3-year terms ratified by members at the November 2022 AGM.

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. The Board elected Kalma Rathouski as Board Chairperson at the 2022 AGM for a second term. At the 2023 AGM the Board will elect a new Chair.

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

Governance Charter

As part of the Constitution review in 2023, the Board adopted a new Governance Charter to replace the former Board Charter.

Board members must comply with all relevant laws and codes of conduct. They must act with integrity, good faith, fairness and honesty. They are required to be diligent, attend meetings and devote sufficient time to preparing for meetings. Each Director is aware of the Governance 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 must also complete a Confidentiality Agreement as part of their induction to the Board. There were no identified breaches or corruption reported or investigated this year.

External quality auditors regularly review this information to ensure compliance against the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's standards.

Independent Advice

The Board accesses independent advice from several sources and for a variety of reasons:

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

Board Review and Development

The Board periodically reviews its own performance for its development and quality assurance, including a review of the Board's skills matrix to assess any gaps and to inform the process for identifying new Directors to bring into the organisation. Ongoing governance reviews, including the ACNC's annual Self-Evaluation for Charities, may also form 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. The CEO is the Board-appointed Company Secretary and Public Officer for Distinctive Options.

Board Committees

The Board operates Committees that concentrate on and develop expertise in specific areas, ensuring that the full board can concentrate on big picture issues. Each Committee has a Terms of Reference, reviewed annually. They meet regularly to discuss relevant issues and provide recommendations to the Board for consideration. Management also attends Committee meetings where appropriate. Detailed below are a description of these Committees, their members and their activities for 2022-2023.

Audit & Finance Committee		<p>The core roles of the Audit & Finance Committee are to monitor and review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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. <p>The Committee reports monthly to the Board and works closely with the MCS to ensure proper financial management throughout the organisation.</p>
Derek Jones (Chair)	11 out of 11	
John Papatheohari	10 out of 11	
Kalma Rathouski	4 out of 11	
Alicia Kokocinski	10 out of 11	
Sunayana Tonks	2 out of 5	
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	11 out of 11	
Alma Tuazon (CFO) / Christine Meilak (MCS)	9 out of 11	
Paul Pearman (BDM)	3 out of 3	

Governance & Risk Committee		<p>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.</p> <p>The Committee report to the Board after each meeting.</p>
Alistair Lloyd (Chair)	4 out of 4	
Simon McKenzie	3 out of 4	
Kalma Rathouski	3 out of 4	
Sunayana Tonks	3 out of 4	
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	4 out of 4	
Paul Pearman (BDM)	1 out of 1	
Christine Meilak (MCS)	1 out of 1	

Development & Fundraising Committee		<p>The Development & Fundraising Committee is responsible for reviewing business, marketing and fundraising strategies and plans, reviewing and acting upon participant and supporter feedback surveys and monitoring the Strategic Marketing Plan.</p> <p>The Committee reports to the Board after each meeting.</p>
Alicia Kokocinski (Chair)	4 out of 6	
Mark Wiegerink	6 out of 7	
Skev Seremetis (Independent External Member)	4 out of 6	
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	3 out of 4	
Rick Dunn (EMSS)	4 out of 4	
Alma Tuazon (CFO)	3 out of 4	
Paul Pearman (BDM)	3 out of 4	

Project Control Group Committee		<p>The temporary Project Control Group Committee was charged with developing a comprehensive due diligence report with management on the possible acquisition of Noweyung Ltd in Bairnsdale.</p> <p>This is in line with Distinctive Options Strategic Plan relating to inorganic growth.</p>
John Papatheohari (Chair)	6 out of 6	
Alistair Lloyd	6 out of 6	
Alicia Kokocinski	5 out of 6	
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	6 out of 6	
Rick Dunn (EMSS)	2 out of 2	
Christine Meilak (MCS)	5 out of 5	
Paul Pearman (BDM)	1 out of 2	

Buzz about this business venture

By Elsie Lange

Life's looking pretty sweet for Sunbury's Distinctive Options (DO) Pathways program participants, who have started their own honey business in town.

A diverse-abilities employment enterprise, DO Honey is a beekeeping and honey production business which kicked off in July as part of the DO Food Project, providing opportunities for people to develop happier, healthier lives through food education, production and supply.

The DO Project has engaged 10 supported employees to be trained in apiculture by Bee Responsible's Rebecca Light, with suits provided by Kyneton's Waggle and Forage, and the six hives placed in a semi-rural location provided by Greater Western Water.

Participant Jonty Norris said DO had given the group great support in line with what they needed to become beekeepers.

"They are really understanding and if we need a time out that's ok," Jonty said.

Jessica Opie said she loved seeing the bees up close, while Daniel Wright said he liked the bee suits.

The group expect the first honey harvest in August next year, and within five years, the number of hives will have increased from six to 50 with an annual honey production of 1500 tonnes.

Products produced by DO Honey will feature on the menu of DO Food Project's own cafes.



DO support coaches Sarah Travers, Daniel Clayton, Jessica Opie, Andrew Milnes, Ryan Goinich, Jonty Norris, Nicholas Dearth and DO support coaches Glen King.



Ryan Goinich, Mark Penney, Andrew Milnes and Glen King with a honeycomb.



Independent Audit Report



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 2023 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

Matthew Crouch
Partner

Blackburn
Dated: 17 November 2023

20 Albert St, Blackburn VIC 3130
T +61 3 9894 2500 F +61 3 9894 1622
contact@sawarddawson.com.au
sawarddawson.com.au



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Member of Russell Bedford International



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 - simplified disclosure financial report of Distinctive Options Ltd, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, 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 Directors' Declaration.

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 2023 and of its financial performance for the year ended; and
- (ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosure Standard and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2022*.

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 - Simplified Disclosure Standard 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.

20 Albert St, Blackburn VIC 3130
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contact@sawarddawson.com.au
sawarddawson.com.au



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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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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

Matthew Crouch
Matthew Crouch

Blackburn VIC

Dated: 17 November 2023

20 Albert St, Blackburn VIC 3130
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Directors' 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 service supports to assist and empower people with disabilities, 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: targeted growth, industry exemplar, engagement model, and values and purpose.

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 \$20 for members, subject to the provisions of the company's constitution. At 30 June 2023, the collective liability of members was \$160 for 8 members (2022: \$200).

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 2022-2023 financial year, the Board held 41 meetings of Directors (including Special and Committee meetings). Each Director's attendance at meetings is recorded in the Governance section of the Annual Report. Board meetings are on the final Tuesday of each month, commencing at 6:30pm. Most Board meetings were conducted online via Zoom.

Auditor's Independence Declaration

The lead auditor's independence declaration for the year ended 30 June 2023 is included.

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 2023 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
 - ii) Complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosure Standard (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

[Signature]

Director

[Signature]

Dated this 16th day of November 2023

Audited Financial Statements

Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Operating Activities			
Revenue and other income	3	11,176,656	9,310,804
Cost of sales		(4,836)	-
Employee benefit expenses		(10,120,943)	(7,838,169)
Client program costs		(176,285)	(80,821)
Rental expense		(91,804)	(77,005)
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(176,713)	(91,972)
Motor vehicle expenses		(65,062)	(49,545)
Telephone costs		(37,863)	(23,515)
Computer expenses		(229,101)	(172,741)
Consultancy fees		(12,860)	(6,600)
Interest expense - leases		(68,991)	(20,156)
Training		(91,543)	(36,232)
Repairs and maintenance		(20,303)	(32,115)
Printing		(17,316)	(11,287)
Subscriptions		(31,011)	(24,539)
Equipment leases		(14,132)	(7,396)
Board of management costs		(3,712)	(29,932)
Amortisation expenses - leases	10	(360,613)	(212,082)
Other expenses		(410,474)	(209,562)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year from operations		(756,906)	387,135
Investing activities			
Investing revenue	3	253,210	(110,118)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year from investments		253,210	(110,118)
Total surplus/(deficit) for the year		(503,696)	277,017
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		(503,696)	277,017

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

Statement of Financial Position As At 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Assets			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	1,700,723	1,988,825
Trade and other receivables	7	817,439	1,130,339
Financial assets	8	3,211,881	3,017,575
Other assets	9	17,236	85,191
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		5,747,279	6,221,930
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Right of Use Assets	10	1,169,084	1,335,955
Plant and equipment	11	765,333	318,713
Intangible assets	12	118,112	168,112
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		2,052,529	1,822,780
TOTAL ASSETS		7,799,808	8,044,710
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	10	335,702	170,491
Trade and other payables	13	922,159	619,688
Provisions	14	802,364	758,730
Other liabilities	15	-	9,950
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		2,060,225	1,558,859
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	10	948,417	1,193,443
Provisions	14	27,078	24,625
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		975,495	1,218,068
TOTAL LIABILITIES		3,035,720	2,776,927
NET ASSETS		4,764,088	5,267,783
EQUITY			
Retained earnings		4,764,088	5,267,783
TOTAL EQUITY		4,764,088	5,267,783

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

Statement of Changes in Equity For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

2023

	Retained Earnings \$	Total \$
Balance at 1 July 2022	5,267,783	5,267,783
Deficit for the year	(503,696)	(503,696)
Balance at 30 June 2023	4,764,088	4,764,088

2022

	Retained Earnings \$	Total \$
Balance at 1 July 2021	4,990,766	4,990,766
Surplus for the year	277,017	277,017
Balance at 30 June 2022	5,267,783	5,267,783

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

Statement of Cash Flows For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:			
Receipts from customers, government and other funding		11,614,344	9,027,224
Payments to suppliers and employees		(11,027,197)	(8,874,467)
Interest received		3,279	4,571
Dividends received		149,626	2,696
Interest paid		(68,991)	(20,156)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	21	671,061	139,868
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		89,269	
Payment for plant, equipment and computer software		(602,966)	(189,851)
Redemption/(Placement) of term deposits		(629)	1,759,246
Net purchase of investments		(103,086)	(2,490,422)
Net cash used by investing activities		(617,412)	(921,027)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:			
Lease payments		(341,751)	(200,090)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities		(341,751)	(200,090)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held		(288,102)	(981,249)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		1,988,825	2,970,074
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	6	1,700,723	1,988,825

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Appendices

Glossary

Accreditation	Validation that an organisation meets NDIS quality and safeguards standards
ACNC	The governing body for all registered charities
Balanced Scorecard	A 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 scheme delivered by the Australian Government to people with a significant and permanent disability
NDS	The Australian disability sector's peak body
Participant	A person who receives 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
R&R Network	A group who aims to develop and promote individual rights and responsibilities

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
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDS	National Disability Services
OH&S	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 NDIS funding
Department of Health for Continuity of Support Program funding

Grant Providers

Brimbank City Council Hume City Council

Donors and In-Kind Supporters

3NRG Sunbury Radio	Jakhard Labels	Salvation Army Long Gully Op Shop
Angus Robertson (Volunteer)	Jarrold Bell (Councillor)	SES Sunbury Unit
Bendigo City Council	Josh Bull (MP)	Sound Systems Studios Sunbury
Bendigo TAFE	Kaye Beal (Volunteer)	South Gisborne Tennis Club
Brian Millet – Sunbury Triathlon Club	Kim Hart – Gurri Wanyarra Heath Centre	St Albans Library
Brimbank City Council	Kyneton Bowling Club	St Marys Anglican Church Sunbury
Bunnings Kangaroo Flat	Kyneton Caring Community Foodbank	St Vinnies Sunbury
Bunnings Sunbury	Kyneton Community House	Sunbury Aquatic Centre
Cameron's Coffee House	Kyneton Community Kitchen	Sunbury Bowling Club
Careworks Sunbury	Kyneton Library	Sunbury Cobaw Community Health
Church on the Hill Bendigo	Kyneton Sports & Aquatic Centre	Sunbury Football Club
Community Plus	Limitless Fitness	Sunbury Men's Shed
Cultivating Community Melbourne	Long Gully Community Garden	Sunbury Pony Club
Eagle Pizza Bendigo	Parks Victoria	Sunbury Primary School
Eaglehawk Bowling Club	Paul Millet – TF & A Millet Pty Ltd (Rosenthal developers)	Sunbury Tennis Club
Eaglehawk Community Garden	Pheonix FM	Sunspec Citizens Advocay
Every Australian Counts	PJT Test & Tag	The Vine Hotel Bendigo
Gisborne Men's Shed	Public Transport Victoria	The Zone Bendigo
Golden Square Football Club	Reclink	Tip Top Painting
Good Shepherd	Red Energy Arena Bendigo	Trelly's Outdoor Bendigo
Great Supa Bendigo	Robert Burke (Electrician)	Victorian Electoral Commission
Headspace Bendigo	Rotary Club Sunbury	Wildlife Rescue & Rehab
Highlands FM Radio	RSPCA Bendigo	Woodend Library
Hume City Council	Salesian College Sunbury	Woodend Nursery
Hume Sunbury Library		Woolworths Bendigo
IDance		

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.distinctiveoptions.com.au/get-involved/make-a-donation

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.

Apply to volunteer at www.distinctiveoptions.com.au/volunteer-application-form

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.

Register your interest to work with us at www.distinctiveoptions.com.au/get-involved/work-with-us

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 Bendigo

Based at 56-60 King Street, Bendigo 3551.

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

DO Connect Brimbank

Based in Brimbank Council's Aquatic & Wellness Centre, 90 Taylors Road, Keilor Downs 3038.

For more information and details, contact the team on 0429 482 543.

DO Connect Sunbury

Based at 24 Macedon Street, Sunbury 3429.

For more information and details, contact the team on (03) 9740 7244.

Individualised Living Supports

Based at 36C Macedon Street, Sunbury 3429.

For more information and details, contact the team on (03) 9740 7100.

Pathways

Based at 50 McDougall Road, Sunbury 3429.

For more information and details, contact the team on (03) 8798 0105.



Head Office: 40 Macedon Street, Sunbury VIC 3429
Post: PO Box 41, Sunbury VIC 3429
Phone: 03 9740 7100
Email: info@d-o.com.au
Website: www.distinctiveoptions.com.au

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