



2022

Annual Review

ability first
AUSTRALIA



Our cover girl: Mia's story – a warning for parents

For Montrose client, Mia, her life changed in 2017. After developing sickness and flu-like symptoms she was initially sent home from hospital to rest. As her symptoms worsened, her parents rushed Mia back to hospital where it was discovered she was suffering from Sepsis, her body's immune response to Influenza A, Influenza B, Respiratory Syncytial Virus and an invasive Streptococcal A bacterial infection. During treatment, her heart stopped and everyone feared the worst.

Thankfully, Mia pulled through but extensive damage had been done to her hands and feet. A bone scan showed that there was no blood circulating past Mia's mid-forearm and mid-calf. In November 2017, Mia had her arms amputated below the elbow and, on in January 2018, Mia had her legs amputated below the knee.

The family have been determined to help prevent other parents going through the same trauma. They have featured on television and in print to tell their story and make people more aware of sepsis. In particular:

- Sepsis happens very, very fast!!!
- Symptoms look like gastro or flu.
- Go to hospital if you are worried and ask "Could It Be Sepsis?"
Return to hospital if your gut tells you this isn't right.

You can read more about the dangers of sepsis and read the full story of Mia's illness and recovery at <https://movementformia.org/> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MovementForMia>



Image supplied with thanks to Ability WA
Cover image supplied with thanks to Montrose

About Ability First Australia

Ability First Australia is one of the largest not for profit strategic alliances between 14 of Australia's leading disability service providers. Our organisation represents the interests of around \$1.6 billion worth of support services to over 92,000 people with disability, their families and carers.

Ability First is a national body of leading disability service providers with member organisations in all states and territories. Our members have a long and trusted history, having supported people with disability for between 50 and 85 years.

Each member delivers services to people with disability independently. Ability First provides a national brand for promotion, awareness raising, cost efficiencies, strategic alliances both domestically and globally and advocacy. Our member organisations share information and best practice, benefit from economies of scale and are involved in research and learnings that benefit people with disability.



VISION

An Australia that puts ability first and ensures inclusion for all.



MISSION

To support members to be the first choice for people with disabilities and their families.



VALUES

Inclusion – We understand that diversity is a strength. We will particularly ensure that the thoughts and aspirations of people with disability, and their families, underpin everything that we do.

Collaboration – We achieve the best outcomes by working together constructively and by striving for consensus.

Generosity – We bring a spirit of willingness to our work and actively consider how we as individuals and organisations can add value to the lives of Australians with disability, and their families, through the work of Ability First Australia.

Innovation – We are keenly focused on finding better, smarter ways to do things.

Respect – Our decisions are stronger when we listen closely and when we acknowledge and take into account the different views and circumstances of others.

Integrity – We are open and honest in our communication and operate according to the highest ethical standards.



Chairman and CEO Report



Andrew Rowley
CEO

Phil Cave AM
Chairman

Despite the continuing COVID-19 pandemic in the tail end of 2021, and other complex global issues, Ability First Australia has achieved a year of growth, through collaboration amongst our members, our strong partnerships with Government and involvement in national initiatives.

Ability First has always sought to work constructively with the incumbent government to advocate for our members, the sector and the lives and outcomes of people with disability. We continued our government engagement strategy with the change in government earlier this year; welcoming The Hon Bill Shorten MP, Minister for the NDIS and Government Services, to our Executive Committee meetings and providing submissions at his request on a number of key issues facing the disability sector on behalf of the members. Forging strong partnerships early on within the new Ministry, as well as remaining an active participant on various industry reference groups has meant we are well-positioned to actively participate in critical reforms, as well as keep members updated regarding initiatives, strategic directions and changes that will impact their organisations.

Ability First continues to contribute to the broader progress of the sector through its involvement in a number of government funded projects. The Young People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC) Systems Coordinator program is focussed on supporting people with disability under the age of 65 to find appropriate accommodation, supporting them to move out of residential age care and hospitals. Due to the success of the program in its first 18 months the Department of Health recently extended the program through to December 2025. This requires extensive relationships across state and national governments, Department of Health and the NDIS.

Following the completion of the first phase of the Frontline Leadership project, a workforce initiative funded as part of the Department of Social Services Jobs and Market Fund, in June 2021, Ability First was further funded by the Department of Social Services to develop a diploma level qualification for leaders in the care and support workforce. We are extremely proud of the work we've done with University of

New England Partnerships (UNEP) on delivering the Diploma of Leadership in Disability Services, which received Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) accreditation in June 2022 and is now available for Registered Training Authorities (RTO's) to add to their scope.

Ability First has continued to invest in our consumer panel, the Ability Forum, which now sits at over 3000 panel members providing their voice and opinions on products, services, and policies. The panel has been well utilised this year by members and these surveys have been a valuable resource as part of our government engagement and advocacy efforts. Ability First members have decided to provide access to the Ability Forum to external organisations, irrespective of sector, who seek insights and opinions from people with disability.

With the Industry's need for good data Ability First's national benchmarking platform, the Ability Roundtable, has achieved a number of successes over the last 12 months. The Ability Roundtable membership has increased to 46 organisations and now houses three specific service improvement groups, for Allied Health, for Supported Independent Living, and for Attendant Care and Community Support. With membership now providing over \$6 billion of services every year, the Ability Roundtable has established itself as a true sector level 'designed by industry for industry' benchmarking vehicle.

Our not-for-profit housing fund, Ability First Australia Community Housing Limited, has acquired six properties since seed funding was secured last year. The first sites in WA are the product of a partnership with Ability First member, Ability WA and a leading local property developer, and comprise five two-bedroom apartments as part of the \$75 million redevelopment of state heritage-listed Victoria House in Shenton Park. The most recent acquisition, another Ability First partnership with Queensland member CPL, is in Coopers Plains. Thanks to CPL and Ability WA for identifying these important opportunities for the fund. We are also working closely with many of the members and other industry partners to support their new housing strategies

The past 12 months has seen stronger collaboration amongst Ability First members. Following the merger between Cootharinga North Queensland and CPL in July 2020, Montrose announced its merger with fellow Ability First member, Northcott, in 2022. It's an incredibly exciting time for Montrose and Northcott, both founding members of Ability First, as they work

together on drawing upon their collective expertise, resources and knowledge to achieve growth and change, and strive to deliver better services and support for clients across NSW and Queensland.

Ability First's whole-owned subsidiary, Cerebral Palsy Australia, together with a consortium of other cerebral palsy focused organisations, has successfully launched "My CP Guide", Australia's first national online platform for people with cerebral palsy, their families and wider circles of support. "My CP Guide" has been funded via the NDIS's Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program.

We have reengaged with EasterSeals, our US based partner. The impact of the pandemic on their organisations and a change in their executive leadership had led to a hiatus in some of our joint activities, such as the staff exchange program. However we will recommence our Exchange program in 2023. This program has provided valuable insights for scholarship winners to understand disability organisations in different environments and gain insights that they can utilise within an Australian context. We are also looking at global benchmarking opportunities in the US and UK.

The Board gained a new Independent Director this year, Geoff Lovell, who takes on the lead of our housing fund and Julie White, one of our inaugural Independent Directors, has retired. On behalf of the Board I'd like to welcome Geoff and say a special thank you to Julie for all her support throughout her tenure.

It has been a year of challenges and triumphs. We are so proud of the work that our members have delivered, which continues to support their customers and deliver material benefits to the disability sector as a whole.

Thank you as well to the Ability First Australia Board, our sponsors, corporate partners and generous donors for their continued support. We look forward to many more successes in the year ahead.

Current Position

Summary

Established in 2003, Ability First Australia is a not-for-profit strategic alliance of 14 leading disability service providers operating across Australia.

Our membership is responsible for the care and coordination of services to over 92,000 Australians every day, around 20% of the NDIS market.

Ability First members employ more than 20,000 staff and provide around \$1.6 billion worth of services each year, primarily with government funding.

Services are provided from ages 0-65+. They cover the whole range of Core Supports, Capital Supports and Capacity Building Supports outlined in the NDIS Price Guide, although this varies from member to member.

Our members specialise in services for people with multiple and complex disabilities.

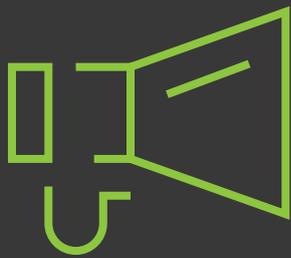
Ability First provides a national focus for our members and helps to build their collective capacity to maintain best practice services. We do this by providing platforms for shared problem solving and innovation, and developing strategic partnerships with relevant partners.

Ability First's purpose is to support members to be the first choice for people with disabilities and their families.

Ability First operates primarily without government funding, providing a return on investment on membership fees, with additional revenue streams through fee-for-service and commercial products.

Strategic Objectives

Ability First has three Strategic Pillars. While the overarching vision of each pillar remains consistent, the priorities under each are reviewed annually.



Partnerships

Shaping policy for NDIA and Government

The go-to organisation for information on complexity and intensity

Speak with one voice



Knowledge

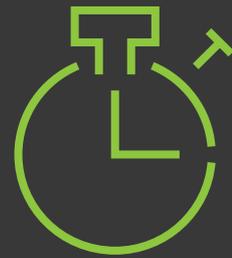
Best practice

Market research

NDIS

Benchmarking (productivity, innovation)

Shape the Future



Organisational Sustainability

Procurement

Shared service

Commercial opportunities

Work smarter



Image supplied with thanks to Cara

Member Services

Our members deliver the following adult and children's services:

- ✔ Support Coordination
 - ✔ Respite/Short Term Accommodation
 - ✔ Housing (Permanent or Long Term)
 - ✔ Transport
 - ✔ Personal Equipment/Technical Support (i.e. for self)
 - ✔ Assistive Technology
 - ✔ Therapy (including Behavioural)
 - ✔ In Home Care/Support (periodic)
 - ✔ Complex high needs care
 - ✔ School holiday programs
 - ✔ School Supports
 - ✔ Before and after school care
 - ✔ Community Activities
 - ✔ Centre Based Activities
 - ✔ Life Skills
 - ✔ Vocational Programs
 - ✔ Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE)
 - ✔ Disability Employment Services (DES)
 - ✔ Specialist/Allied Health Services (e.g podiatry)
 - ✔ Sexuality/Relationship Services
 - ✔ Partner in Community (ECEI)
-

Our Members



Ability WA has been supporting Western Australian families for more than 60 years. We are committed to providing our customers and their families the services and supports they need, from early infancy through to adulthood. Ability Centre has built its reputation as a leading disability services provider by providing excellent service, allowing our customers to thrive.

abilitywa.com.au



Annecto is a profit-for-purpose community-inclusion organisation. We're best at building relationships and creating connections; helping people define their own goals to realise their full potential. We do this by connecting older people, people with disabilities and their families and carers with others who will help them achieve what's important to them.

annecto.org.au



Cara is one of South Australia's leading disability service providers. We work in partnership with people living with disability, their families and the community, to create a better life. Our services include full-time supported accommodation, recreation and respite, with Home & Community Support and we have a dedicated Specialist Services team.

cara.org.au



For more than 66 years, Cootharinga North Queensland has been proudly supporting North Queenslanders with disability. We are committed to providing a range of tailored services that are relevant to the goals, choice and needs of our diverse and varied customers and to achieving our vision of "Building a better world with people of all abilities!"

cootharinga.org.au



CPL – Choice, Passion, Life is a profit-for-purpose organisation that works with people at every stage in their life, from early intervention and education, to personal growth, independence and employment. We're one of Queensland's only integrated service providers where, in all of our locations, our clients can access therapy, employment, home and community support services all from CPL.

cpl.org.au



LiveBetter is a provider of customer-focused aged and disability services in regional Australia, centred on support in the home and connections to the community. LiveBetter takes a person-centred approach, ensuring services provide practical assistance to help people live their best lives. They deliver over 80 programs from offices, homes and centres in more than 45 communities across regional NSW and Queensland.

livebetter.org.au



Montrose has 85 years of experience working with people with a disability. They provide psychology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy along with in-home care, respite and a Lifestyle & Leisure service. They are a profit for purpose organisation with any surpluses invested back into providing services for children and families.

montrose.org.au



Multicap is one of Queensland's largest disability service providers. We are focused on achieving one goal – a better quality of life for people with disability. Multicap's services including supported independent living, short term accommodation, in-home support, assisted employment, life skills development and recreational activities are delivered from over 100 different locations across Queensland and Northern New South Wales.

multicap.org.au



Northcott is a not-for-profit disability service provider that works with customers to realise their potential. As one of Australia's largest not-for-profit disability service organisations, we provide services from metropolitan and regional locations throughout NSW and the ACT, employing over 2,000 staff and providing empowering, personalised services to over 14,000 people with disability, their families and carers each year.

northcott.com.au



Novita is one of South Australia's largest community-based disability services organisations. Novita provides a range of high quality services including rehabilitation, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychology, speech pathology, diagnostic services and more. We also offer a range of programs including day options, group activities and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), and mobile services such as in-home support.

novita.org.au



Rocky Bay is a leading provider of disability services, offering choice and independence to thousands of people of all ages living with disability in Western Australia. With a focus on quality and service excellence, Rocky Bay works with people of all ages living with any disability, to deliver innovative therapies, leisure and learning programs, the latest equipment and technology and training and employment opportunities, in the home, at our centres and in the community.

rockybay.org.au



Scope is one of the largest not-for-profit disability service providers in Australia, supporting more than 6,000 people and their families, particularly those with complex needs. Our mission is to enable each person we support to live as an equal and empowered citizen, through a range of services including: Integrated therapy, supported independent living, short-term accommodation and assistance, lifestyle options for individuals and groups, communication access and support coordination.

scopeaust.org.au



St Giles Society Limited is a not for profit organisation who has been supporting Tasmanians living with disability since 1937. Based in Launceston with operations in Hobart, Devonport, Burnie and Penguin the organisation was formed to provide after care support to children with polio. Overtime it has developed to now provide therapy, accommodation and attendant care support to Tasmanians aged from birth to 65.

stgiles.org.au



Original Montrose home at Taringa

Spotlight on Montrose

Changing lives for ninety years

Ability First Australia member Montrose Therapy & Respite Services celebrated their 90th Anniversary in 2022. As part of the celebrations their Patron, the Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeanette Young AC PSM visited their Brisbane office and met past and current clients, staff and stakeholders.

The event celebrated their history and looked forward to how Montrose will continue to support Queenslanders living with disability for many years to come.

For over 90 years, tens of thousands of children and their families have come to Montrose to receive vital services in allied health, social work and short term respite. These supports have had a life changing impact for generations of Queensland families.

A long history of supporting those most in need

In 1932, the world was in the grip of a Polio epidemic. Those who survived were often left with severe physical disabilities, requiring ongoing care.

Brisbane Rotary arranged a public meeting at Brisbane City Hall to discuss how assistance for children could be provided. From this meeting the Queensland Society for Crippled Children was formed.

At the first public meeting in 1932 the Governor, Sir Leslie Wilson, agreed to be the Patron of the new Society – now known as Montrose Therapy & Respite Services.

In December 1933 the first Home for Crippled Children was opened in Taringa after George Marchant, a successful Queensland businessman, donated his home to the society. The original house was known as “Montrose” and the name was retained. The accommodation at Taringa was soon filled and amazingly, George Marchant bought a larger home for Montrose in 1937 at a site in Corinda, where they remained until 2014.

A bright future

In 2022, Montrose announced their merger with leading disability provider, and fellow Ability First member, Northcott. The two organisations share very similar beginnings and history – Northcott was originally known as The New South Wales Society for Crippled Children and both are founding members of Ability First. Already the organisations are working together to better services and support for clients across the states.



Governor and Professor Nimmo look at Montrose archive items



Montrose CEO Kerrie Mahon greets Governor of Queensland



Governor speaking at Montrose event

Partnerships

Ability First continues to be represented on a number of key advisory groups run by Government agencies and Department of Social Services (DSS) and has been an active consultation partner with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) on various initiatives.

We have developed a reputation as a valuable contributor to government policy, and this has allowed us to continue achieving progress in a range of areas:

- Consultation with the Agency on Pricing Reviews and Portal issues
- Representative on an Industry Reference Group for the NDIA, alongside National Disability Services and key peak organisations
- Representative on a Market Oversight Advisory Group for the Department of Social Services
- Representative on NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- Representative on Young People in Aged Care Stakeholder Reference Group

- Successful engagement with local and federal government MPs
- Co-chaired meetings between NDIA and Ability First Australia executive leadership teams

With the change in government this year we have already engaged with The Hon Bill Shorten, Minister for NDIS and Government Services, and collaborated on a number of submissions related to key issues facing the disability sector, including Supported Independent Living and Disability Supports for Older Australians.

Our continued engagement with Government has enabled us to play an active role in the policy process, which has been vital in developing initiatives, strategic directions and changes that will impact Ability First Australia member organisations.



Annecto CEO, Cheryl De Zilwa, Ability First Australia CEO, Andrew Rowley, and The Hon Bill Shorten

Ability First Australia Property Fund



Artist impression of Victoria House development, image supplied with thanks to Hesperia

Ability First Australia Community Housing Ltd (Ability First Housing) is wholly owned, managed, and governed by Ability First.

The Fund is Australia's first 100% not for profit housing fund designed to acquire and lease qualifying properties to people living with disability. With a strong social focus at its core, every surplus dollar will be reinvested back into the sector through service delivery and/or additional property investment.

The Fund operates through acquiring existing special disability accommodation (SDA) and developing new, high quality residences that people living with disability, particularly those with complex needs, can regard as 'their home' and receive all their required day-to-day supports.

Earlier this year, Ability First Housing made its first acquisition with a third-party developer, Hesperia, to acquire several new off the plan homes in Perth, in close collaboration with Ability First Australia member, Ability WA. The five residential apartments, currently under construction, are part of the \$75 million redevelopment of state heritage-listed Victoria House in Shenton Park and are anticipated to be finished in early 2023. The second acquisition, another Ability First partnership with Queensland member CPL, is in Coopers Plains.

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) is housing that has been purpose built for people who are unable to live in mainstream housing because of their extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. The SDA model aligns with the National Disability Insurance Scheme's core principles of choice and control: it aims to give people with disability more choice about where and who they live with, ultimately delivering better outcomes and greater quality of life.

Ability First Housing aims to provide security of tenure to people living with disability, empowering them to have greater choice and control about where they live. It also aligns well with the NDIS and its objective to mobilize investment from the private sector into housing.

Diploma of Leadership in Disability Services

The only accredited qualification designed for frontline leaders in the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Following the completion of the first phase of the Frontline Leadership project, an initiative funded as part of the Department of Social Services Jobs and Market Fund Ability First was further funded by the Department of Social Services to develop a diploma level qualification for leaders in the care and support workforce.

We are extremely proud of the work we've done with UNE Partnerships on delivering the Diploma of Leadership in Disability Services (11076NAT).

This is the only accredited qualification designed for Frontline and aspiring Frontline leaders in the National Disability Insurance Scheme to equip them with the skills and knowledge to lead a high performing team, deliver effective services to NDIS participants, and contribute to organisational growth.

The Diploma aims to support the career development of experienced and emerging leaders in the disability services sector and includes practical assessments and the opportunity to demonstrate skills in the workplace.

BUDGETS

Responsibly manage a budget within the competitive pressures of the disability sector

DECISIONS

Understand how decision making should align with business objectives and support improved customer outcomes.

COMPLIANCE

Comply with legislative, regulatory and procedural requirements of the NDIS and manage business risks.

COMMUNICATION

Facilitate clear communication to foster accountability, authenticity, and inclusion.

ADVOCACY

Advocate, negotiate and collaborate to promote the effective and strategic use of resources and improve customer outcomes.

LEADERSHIP

Lead, inspire and support frontline workers in the disability sector to deliver effective services.



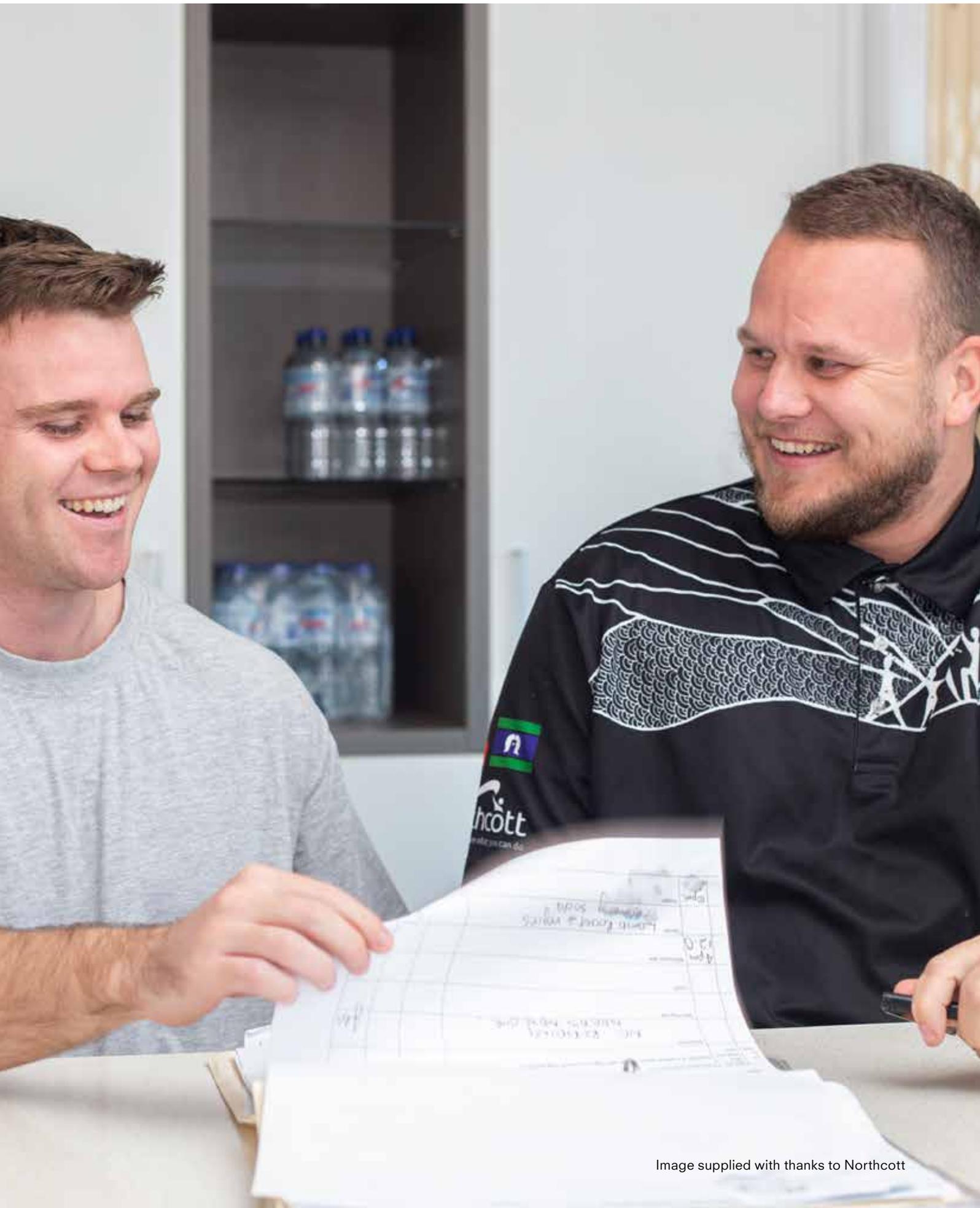


Image supplied with thanks to Northcott



Younger People In Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC) System Coordinator program

A national initiative funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care and operated by Ability First Australia.



The Program is designed to reduce the number of younger people at risk of entering and living in residential aged care. It aims to give younger people greater choice and control over where they live and what supports they need to either transition out of, or avoid entering, residential aged care.

Initially funded as an 18-month program to finish in December 2022, the program was granted an extension to continue operating until December 2025.

In addition to working with those who are not NDIS participants living in residential aged care, the program has broadened its focus to include responding to younger people under the age of 65 years who are at risk of entry into aged care.

Through its work, the program has successfully assisted over 180 people living in, or at risk of entering, residential age care gain a pathway for supports through the NDIS. It also established and completed a collaborative project between Ability First Australia and the NDIA to work with 27 individuals under the aged of 45 living in residential aged care to imagine and explore the options of living outside their current living arrangements.

Key milestones achieved since last year



Significant national reach and growth

in the program's workforce to 36 Systems Coordinators in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia.



Contact made

with over 350 Younger People in Residential Aged Care and over 220 consenting to join the program.



Responses to over 550 referrals

of younger people at risk of entering residential aged care through the establishment of an 1800 referral system.



A Research project, conducted

in collaboration with University of Melbourne and Scope, to complete all field work interviews and surveys and data analysis.

Benchmarking to drive sector-level innovation and best practice.

- ✔ Collects benchmark data to support sophisticated, real-time analysis of performance
- ✔ Promotes interstate collaboration and networking amongst disability service organisations
- ✔ Encourages innovation and shared problem solving to drive improvements across the sector

the
ability
roundtable

Ability First established the Ability Roundtable in 2013. The Roundtable fosters innovation and service improvement in the disability services sector by providing a confidential and trusted platform for disability service providers to benchmark their services across Australia. The opportunity for participating organisations to uncover and share innovations and service improvements through Roundtable communities of practice rapidly accelerates efficiency and effectiveness of services, leading to better service outcomes for customers. The Roundtable is governed by its own Board and supports a growing membership that includes many of Australia's leading disability service providers.

The Roundtable hosts benchmarking activities across different service types. This includes disability support services, allied health services, and shared independent living services. Each benchmarking activity collects, analyses, and publishes information comparing organisations to identify ways to improve operational practice.

Collection of deeply granular data enables powerful and nuanced analysis of service performance. The aggregate information is also beneficial for government policymakers, particularly the NDIA in its primary role as a market steward for the NDIS market. Roundtable data has already been provided to the NDIA and Department of Social Services to support pricing and market decisions.

We had a number of successes during the year. Highlights include:

Membership has grown to 54 organisations, who participate in one or more of our benchmarking groups - 30% growth from the previous year;

Still the only third-party benchmarking group approved by the National Disability Insurance Agency to submit data to its annual Financial and Workforce benchmarking activity;

Appointment of the Roundtable's first independent Chair, further strengthening its governance



Join our community. Have your say.



An online consumer panel which has the potential to gain real-time market insights from people with disability and carers.

Launched in 2019, Ability Forum is a world-first online community that disability service providers can use to seek consumer insights in real time to better target their services and products.

Putting consumers at the centre of service provider decision making, the Ability Forum aligns exceptionally well with the NDIS and its emphasis on consumer choice and control in a market context.

The Ability Forum runs regular surveys that allow us to better understand the views of people with disability and their carers on a range of subjects such as current services, possible new services and products, and even how implementation of the NDIS is going.

Since launching, Ability Forum has grown to over 3000 active panelists and has conducted over 30 surveys (with capacity to undertake up to 50 surveys each year).

Insights from Ability Forum surveys have played a critical role in influencing policy and organizational strategy, as well as providing unique opportunities for the voices of people with disability to be heard, both individually and collectively.

From late 2022, Ability Forum will be offered as a product to organisations beyond Ability First members on a commercial basis.

This expansion will support increased self-advocacy for people with disability and bring their voice and perspective to the centre of decision-making by a wider range of business and government stakeholders. It will extend the “nothing about me without me” ethos, which is inherent in the Ability Forum, in line with the National Disability Strategy, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the NDIA’s “choice and control” philosophy.



the national voice



Cerebral Palsy Australia a national voice for cerebral palsy awareness

Since 1952, Cerebral Palsy Australia (formerly known as CP Australia and the Australian Cerebral Palsy Association) has provided a national voice for cerebral palsy awareness.

Furthermore, Cerebral Palsy Australia has positively contributed to the community through research and service development for children and adults with cerebral palsy.

Cerebral Palsy Australia focuses on the promotion and advancement of the rights, interests, welfare and social inclusion for people with cerebral palsy by:

- Assisting in obtaining appropriate funding
- Supporting and encouraging innovation and improved service practices
- Encouraging, conducting and supporting research concerning cerebral palsy
- Working with governments in developing policies for services and support of organisations working with people with cerebral palsy and the people who support them

Cerebral Palsy Australia is operated by Ability First Australia.

A game changing strategy to improve outcomes for people with cerebral palsy

Ability First is a founding member of a national coalition which, together with Cerebral Palsy Alliance Research Institute, Australasian Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine and Cerebral Palsy New Zealand, has developed an Australian and New Zealand Cerebral Palsy Strategy.

This is the first comprehensive strategy designed to improve the quality of life of Australians with cerebral palsy.

Backed by an economic study by Deloitte on the impact of cerebral palsy in Australia, the strategy, which launched in March 2020, will provide a framework for key stakeholders, including governments, to improve the quality of life of people living with cerebral palsy through:

- Improving social and economic inclusion
- Improving health and disability support
- Increased funding, research and innovation



In developing this Strategy, our mission is to improve the quality of life for Australians and New Zealanders with cerebral palsy, and their families. Drawing on our vast experience, together we can make a real difference.”

Rhys Kennedy, Chair of Cerebral Palsy Australia

My CP Guide

Australia's first national online platform for people with cerebral palsy, their families and wider circles of support has been launched.

My CP Guide, a project led by Cerebral Palsy Australia, Ability First Australia, the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, and Cerebral Palsy Support Network, has focussed on authentically representing their members, clients and participants on the issues that are most important to people with cerebral palsy. Most significantly, the partnership between the organisations, and the project, has facilitated and embedded people with cerebral palsy at the very centre of its development and implementation.

Funded as part of an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) funding round, the platform:

- Increases the quality and consistency of information available to people with cerebral palsy, families, carers and relevant supports and services,
- Improves the capacity of people with cerebral palsy to exercise choice and control, and
- Enhances the ability of relevant supports and services to respond to the needs and expectations of people with cerebral palsy.

The platform design enables users to search via topics or by 'life stages' to help them navigate the information most relevant to them. Users can also create accounts to receive personalised content relevant to their needs.

We have also:

- Received Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WACG) AA Accreditation
- Uploaded core content for people aged 0 - 99 years
- Uploaded 675 unique information resources:
 - 107 information resources developed and authored by My CP Guide
 - 562 curated and evaluated information resources from third parties
 - 6 additional information resources to address significant information gaps developed and authored by My CP Guide
- Facilitated personal stories/contemporary content via a Blog section

Ongoing funded activities will enhance and maximise opportunities to increase the platform's reach and usage amongst the CP community and will include design refinement, improvement of personalisation of content, integrated newsletter bulletins, Easy English and LOTE options, more video content on housing, employment, education and assistive technology.

Based on user feedback we will also:

- Develop webinars and podcasts
- Foster aspects of community (facilitation of online community connections)

www.mycpguide.org.au





Better Start Early Days Workshops

Supporting over 2050 families in taking the first steps of the journey with their child with disability.

Cerebral Palsy Australia is the lead agency of the First Step Alliance, a consortium that has a national contract to deliver workshops to families and carers of children up to seven years with disabilities who are eligible for Better Start funding.

The Early Days Workshops are designed to orient families to the disability landscape. They provide families with information about funding, equip them with skills to get the best value from the supports they receive, provide them with tools to plan for the future and allow them an opportunity to build resilience and share experiences and lessons learnt.

We have offered workshops across Australia, in remote communities, regional centres and major cities. This broad reach is made possible by the extensive local networks of our member organisations who delivered the workshops. We have also run many webinars for people who are not able to make it to our workshops, extending our reach even further.



Image supplied with thanks to Montrose



Affiliation with Easterseals

- Ability First has a strategic alliance with the largest Disability Service provider in the United States, Easterseals.
- Easterseals offers a variety of services to help people with disabilities address life's challenges and achieve personal goals. Easterseals provides over \$2 billion worth of services to their clients through over 550 sites nationally.
- Ability First is the only global affiliate of Easterseals in the Asia Pacific region. Our members enjoy all of the membership entitlements of the Easterseals US based affiliates, at no cost to them.
- In 2014, Easterseals and Ability First established a Professional Staff Scholarship Exchange Program for its US and Australian based affiliates and member organisations. To date over 60 people have benefitted from this program.
- Ability First is represented on the Global Partners Committee of Easterseals. This Committee comprises of affiliates from Canada, the United States and Mexico. They regularly discuss issues relating to the United Nations, global fundraising initiatives and sharing information, research and best practice.



Easterseals President and CEO Kendra E. Davenport with Ability First CEO Andrew Rowley



Easterseals Southern California team, pictured with their President and CEO Mark Whitley and Ability First CEO Andrew Rowley



Fifth Annual Golf Day

On Thursday 14th July 2022 Ability First Australia's corporate partners participated in the Fifth Annual Golf Day fundraiser at the iconic Lakes Golf Club.

While the rain and wild weather conditions washed out most of the players, we still managed to raise over \$100,000, which supports our work in supporting young people with disability, who are in hospitals and aged care facilities, to find more appropriate housing.

Thank you to our major headline sponsor, Facilities First Australia, our MC Matt de Groot and to our guest speakers Granit Haliti and Gretta Serov from Northcott and all of our sponsors for their support.

We look forward to seeing everyone back next year.





Team O'Shea



MC Matt de Groot

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Board Members



Phillip Cave AM – Chairman

Phillip is a merchant banker beginning his career as an Executive Director of Macquarie Bank Limited. He is an accomplished Chief Executive Officer, Director, Chairman, and Board Member and has over thirty years experience with a proven track record in major corporate turnaround projects, structured finance and corporate advisory services within Australasia. Companies that Phillip has been a major shareholder in and either a Director or Chairman of include: Parbury Limited, Wormald, Sunbeam-Victa and Hygienic Lily. He was formerly Chairman of Golden Circle, Dick Smith Electronics Limited and Bisalloy Steel Group and is currently Chairman of Excelsia College, Solgen Energy Group, Scotts Refrigerated Logistics and Chairman and Founding Partner of Anchorage Capital Partners.

He has been involved in Disability Services for over 30 years and was Chairman of Northcott Disability Services for seven years. He has participated in 25 Variety 'bashes' and in 2006 was admitted into the Hall of Fame of Variety, for the Children's Charity. In 2007 Phillip was awarded by the Australian Government, a Member of the Order of Australia (A.M.) for service to the community, particularly through the provision of support services to Children and Young Adults with Disabilities and to business as a Company Director.



Andrew Rowley – Managing Director & CEO

Andrew joined Ability First Australia as Managing Director in 2012. Andrew comes with over 20 years' experience in the not-for-profit, education and commercial sectors. He has extensive experience in strategy and establishing and securing revenue streams. While being passionate about helping those less fortunate, he is focused on ensuring accountability and outcomes whilst maintaining core values and mission. Under Andrew's leadership, Ability First Australia has established itself as the only strategic alliance in the disability industry is playing a critical role in supporting 14 large service providers transition into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), one of Australia's largest social reforms since the introduction of Medicare in the 1980s. Andrew is a fellow of ADAPE Australia, a member of the CEO Circle and serves as the Chair of WeFlex.



Guy Cowan – Independent Director

Guy Cowan has been a non-executive Director for the past 10 years. He is currently Chairman of Queensland Sugar Limited and a Director of Santos Ltd. He is also a Director of two private companies. Previously he was a Director of Coffey International and Ludowici Limited. He was a Shell appointed alternative director of Woodside between 1992 and 1995. Guy had a 23 year career with Shell International in various senior commercial and financial roles. His last two roles were as CFO and Director of Shell Oil US and CFO of Shell Nigeria. Guy was CFO of Fonterra Co-operative Ltd between 2005 and 2009. He holds a BSc (Hons) Engineering from the University of Sussex and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.



Geoff Lovell – Independent Director

Geoff has more than 25 years of experience in the corporate and for-purpose sectors, across real estate, investment management, banking, risk management, corporate governance, education and Indigenous Australia.

Geoff is currently a Director of Sydney Community Housing Ltd, a senior executive with Citta Property Group and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Previously, Geoff has held senior executive roles at Lend Lease (1997-2001) and at Macquarie Group (2001-2015), where he was Chief Executive Officer of ASX-listed Macquarie ProLogis Trust and Head of Commercial Property Lending. In addition, Geoff has had extensive voluntary involvements in for-purpose enterprises, including as: Chairman of the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), Chairman of the Investment Committee of the Indigenous Real Estate Investment Trust (I-REIT), Chairman of the Council of St Paul's College, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore), and a member of the Investment Committee of the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC). Geoff holds first class honours degrees from the University of Sydney (in Civil Engineering) and the University of Oxford (in Philosophy, Politics and Economics), where he was the inaugural Bradman Scholar.

Geoff has recently been appointed as the inaugural Chairman of Ability First Australia Community Housing Ltd.



Julie White – Independent Director Resigned October 2022

Julie White has over 35 years' experience in the not-for-profit and corporate sectors, including her former role as head of the Macquarie Group Foundation. She is also the former CEO of Chief Executive Women, Chair of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia Australia, Chair of Reach Out Australia, Member of the Centre for Social Impact Advisory Council and a member of Chief Executive Women and the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Alongside her non-executive roles Julie is a strategic adviser on social investment to business and to not-for-profits in strategic planning, corporate governance and corporate and community engagement.

Julie was named as one of the Australian Financial Review BOSS Magazine's True Leaders in 2008 and was named in January 2009, by ABC Limelight magazine, as one of the top smart arts 09 executives. Julie was also named as a finalist in the Telstra Business Women's Awards for 2009. Previously, Julie has worked as a community social worker in local government in Australia and overseas, established state-wide community legal education programs for the NSW Government, and has worked in educational development and fundraising.



Liz Cohen – Director, Member Representative

Liz has led Cara through a period of significant change, transformation and celebrated organisational milestones since joining Cara in 2015. Under Liz's leadership, Cara has transformed from a block funded 'Not for Profit' to a values driven, commercially thinking 'Profit for Purpose' that is committed to providing high-quality services so that people with disabilities can lead fulfilling, everyday lives.

Cara now works alongside more than 700 children and adults with disability and employs more than 1000 staff, known as Possible People. Liz has led the organisation towards a new vision, business model, brand and promise, while welcoming record numbers of staff to the organisation, growing revenue and expanding Cara's services to new customers.

Liz has more than 30 years' experience in the disability, education and health sectors. In 2017, Liz was named a finalist in the SA Telstra Business Women's Awards. She is the Deputy Chair of the Health, Disability, Aged Care and Community Services Industry Skills Council SA. Liz has been elected to the board of Ability First Australia, which is a strategic alliance of leading disability service providers, and she is on the board of the YMCA of South Australia. Liz is also a member of the SA State Committee of National Disability Services (NDS).



Jo Jessop – Director, Member Representative

Jo has been the Chief Executive Officer of Multicap since 2006, leading organisational renewal and transformational change including transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

She has extensive senior management experience across a number of not-for-profit and commercial purpose driven sectors. She is a Director of both the Brisbane South Primary Health Network and National Disability Services.

Jo is passionate about providing high-quality human services outcomes and improved opportunities for vulnerable people, especially those living with disability.



Andrew Billing - Director, Member Representative

Andrew Billing has been Chief Executive of Tasmanian disability service, St Giles since May 2019.

St Giles has an annual turnover of close to \$40million and employs 400 Tasmanians and provides allied health, assistive technology, support and independent living services to 6000 Tasmanians from modern campuses in Hobart, Launceston (head office) and Burnie.

Andrew identified and implemented a successful restructure of the St Giles business model and organisational culture to accommodate the National Disability Insurance Scheme, while maintaining the organisation's strong and trusted 85-year reputation.

He is passionate about social enterprise and collaboration with like-purpose organisations.

Andrew is a strong presence in the Tasmanian not-for-profit sector, having previously held the role of Chief Executive Officer with the Tasmanian NFP The O Group for 14 years. Prior to his role at St Giles Andrew was Interim General Manager – Mission and Strategy at Baptcare (aged care, housing and community services) Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

Aggregated Financials

Group Financials of Ability First Members

INCOME STATEMENT	2021	2022
	\$'000	\$'000
Revenues		
- Government	1,405,623	1,512,776
- Fundraising	14,054	11,015
- Other	165,169	118,606
Total Revenues	<u>1,584,846</u>	<u>1,642,397</u>
Expenses	1,420,524	1,629,100
Surplus/ (deficit)	164,322	13,297
BALANCE SHEET		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	299,296	273,435
Trade and other receivables	113,492	161,870
Inventories	1,386	2,178
Other financial assets	161,716	185,035
Other	<u>34,371</u>	<u>33,475</u>
Total Current Assets	610,261	655,993
Non-Current Assets		
Other financial assets	207,765	213,310
Property, plant and equipment	238,660	263,669
Other	104,246	123,358
Total Non-Current Assets	<u>550,671</u>	<u>600,337</u>
Total Assets	<u>1,160,932</u>	<u>1,256,330</u>
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	82,939	102,881
Other financial liabilities	61,846	66,514
Borrowings	9,337	10,964
Provisions	107,066	124,404
Other	65,567	68,402
Total Current Liabilities	326,755	373,165
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provisions	35,947	44,497
Borrowings	102,716	131,403
Total Non-Current Liabilities	138,663	175,900
Total Liabilities	<u>465,418</u>	<u>549,065</u>
Net Assets	<u>695,514</u>	<u>707,265</u>
Members' Funds		
Retained Earnings	648,449	664,494
Reserves	47,065	42,771
Total Members' Funds	<u>695,514</u>	<u>707,265</u>

Governance

Background to Ability First Australia

Ability First Australia was incorporated in 2003 as a national company supporting seven of Australia's oldest and most respected disability NGOs. All were established from the 1920's onwards to support children living with the results of polio, cerebral palsy and related conditions.

Ability First Australia's establishment was an acknowledgement of the fact that the collective experience, knowledge and expertise of these NGOs acquired over a long period of time, would be enhanced even more if they were supported by strategies driven from a national office.

Today, Ability First Australia supports 14 of Australia's leading disability service providers who continuously provide innovative and responsive services aimed at meeting the needs of people living with a wide range of disabilities.

Ability First Australia's objectives are to build the capacity of its members by:

- Developing national strategies to raise funds in order to preserve the current level of service delivery across the nation, as well as to allow its members to engage in the creation of innovative service models
- Developing close working relationships between its members that will result in:
 - The professional training and development of staff and the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise
 - National benchmarking and development of best practice in service delivery
 - Securing full advantage of Ability First Australia's and its members' affiliation with Easter Seals in the USA
 - Supporting the members through their transition to the NDIS services exceeds \$1.6 billion per year of which approximately 80% is provided by State and Federal Governments

Our members provide these life changing services from 250 local sites to over 92,000 clients, their families and carers across all states and territories. These services range from early intervention, childhood and family support, independent living skills, respite and accommodation, leisure access and recreation and job training and open employment.

Ability First Australia Board

As of 1 July 2013 AFA's operating structure is as follows:

5 Independent Directors - "Independent Director" means a Director who:

- (a) is not part of the Group's day-to-day management;
- (b) is free of any business or other relationship that could materially interfere with – or could reasonably be perceived to interfere with – the independent exercise of their judgment; and
- (c) has not been an employee or office-holder of, or consultant to, a Member or a Related Body Corporate of a Member, for a period of 24 consecutive months or such other period determined by the Board;

3 Member Directors:

- (a) May be Board members or CEO's of the members.

International Affiliation

In recent years there has been growth in the relationship between Staff and Directors of Easterseals (USA) and Ability First Australia. There have been regular telephone conferences and face to face visits. On a number of occasions, staff from Australia have attended Easterseals Annual Training Conferences and some have even presented at these conferences.

The affiliation is valued highly by both Ability First Australia and Easterseals, recently this collaborative relationship has been strengthened by Easterseals Canada and CONFEX Mexico becoming global partners with Easter Seals and Ability First Australia.



Image supplied with thanks to Northcott.

Supporters

We gratefully acknowledge the support we have received from our donors, sponsors and supporters:

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Julian Harris

Your generosity allows us to work towards an Australia that puts ability first and ensures inclusion for all.

Thank you for your outstanding support.



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