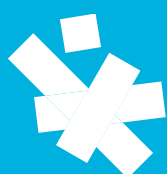


ANNUAL REPORT

2020–2021



CHALLENGE
Community Services



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Vision

We aim to create a world where everybody belongs and everybody grows.

Mission

To assist people to reach their potential through innovative and people-focused services.

Values





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Bill Warburton

When I addressed the annual meeting last November, alluding to the affect effect that the worldwide pandemic, COVID19COVID-19, was having on the operations of our organisation with particular emphasis on us constructing a strategic plan for moving forward, little did I expect our great organisation to be still confronted with the same problems as I write this report.

Rest assured we will emerge from the various lockdowns across our service areas with our enthusiasm towards our mission still intact.

As a lot of you will have noticed, Challenge Community Services has come into some social media, and other areas, criticism over the last several months with particular focus on the Tamworth Recycling business and the arrangements/contract with the Tamworth Regional Council. Uninformed statements by some in the community made recently in the media have not helped and I can confirm that we, in commercial confidence, are moving closer to a satisfactory arrangement that will ensure that all staff involved are looked after and this may have been able to be made public prior to the issue of this report.

We have, sadly, over the last year or so received some anonymous complaints that could have been submitted to us on a blank page as we have no way of responding. The Board has recently made it clear that if you have something to say, take the ownership of your convictions. Forensic examination of the letters recently directed to each Board member has been interesting with the results remaining confidential unless the specific threats made are carried out.

Winston Churchill said “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on”. That is true of social media in many instances, with one example being in relation to “Vax the Nation” where our country’s medical experts have pleaded with us not to follow some of the scare tactics displayed online. I am sure most will agree that in our business sector it is essential that we all roll up our sleeves and “take the jab” to protect not only ourselves but our frontline workers and clients along with our nearest and dearest. I have.

On a sadder note, Lesley Hood, who joined the Board back in 2009, has tendered her resignation due to health matters and we all, sincerely, thank her for her contribution to Challenge during the years until now and wish her all the very best going forward.

Lastly, may I sincerely thank all the Board members, our CEO Peter Maher, the General Managers and all our dedicated staff for their unselfish commitment to this grand organisation that is Challenge Community Services.



Thanks for your service Barry.
 Challenge Community Services CEO 1992–2020



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Peter Maher OAM

Challenge Community Services has over sixty years' experience in providing person-centred support to people with disability and their families. Challenge is passionate about promoting choice, inclusion, and independence to help people pursue their dreams and goals whilst playing an active role in our community.

Challenge is an organisation whose primary objective is to develop comprehensive services of excellence in the community which help people lead rewarding and purposeful lives.

Challenge is continuously growing and the skills, talents and contributions of all staff are integral to our success. I highly value team players, cooperation, and compassion. Commitment to these ideals is necessary for us to continue to provide outstanding and meaningful services to our community.

Our purpose is what drives us and keeps us going both now and into the future. At Challenge, we care about enriching every interaction, no matter how big or small, to make a positive difference in the lives of all members of our community. We do this because we are passionate about realising the potential of all people whom we support. This is our purpose – our reason for being.

Whenever we make a decision, we need to make sure it is in line with our Challenge values. Our values are **Integrity, Respect, Collaboration, Compassion, and People Focused**. Our values serve as our cultural foundation and act as our behavioural compass. I hope that we can all lead by example by ensuring each decision we make is aligned with these values.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Barry Murphy, the previous CEO, who, after twenty-eight years, has left a legacy throughout all of Challenge. Barry was a driving force in making Challenge what it is today. The organisation has grown from being a local Disability provider to be an organisation that stretches from Albury to Southeast Queensland. It now has over 1,000 employees and is actively involved in providing accommodation and day services for people with disability, employment activities for people with disability, foster care services and professional psychological and other human support services. Barry always had the interests of the people we assist at heart; he was very well respected by the employees at our various disability employment initiatives. I have heard on numerous occasions how Barry loved to go to our Forrest Road facility and work with the guys sorting the recycling materials.



As a new CEO, I am aware that there is going to be changes in the organisation and that some people will find difficult. I am also aware that there are similar organisations in the sector that are struggling to remain relevant and viable. I hope that my extensive work history and the skills that I bring to Challenge will assist the organisation to remain influential in the sector and continue to offer person-centred services in a financially viable way.

As we move into the future, we are not sure of the emerging priorities that await us. Yet, what we do know, to ensure our vibrant future, there will always be a need for men and women, young and old, to share the mission of our founding parents and remain innovative.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Board for their dedication to our wonderful organisation. Members have given so much of their time, skills and energies to ensure that the organisation never loses sight of its mission. I would also like to acknowledge the way that the staff have gone well beyond their normal responsibilities during a very challenging year with COVID-19. Your commitment and loyalty has really been appreciated. Challenge would not be what it is today without our wonderful Board, staff, our parents, and clients. You are all part of the Challenge Family.

“Through your daily interactions, you make things better and do a little good.”



HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Celebrating our staff and clients

Disability Start Up graduation

During July we celebrated the graduating participants of the first ever Start Up program, an 18-month entrepreneurial program supporting young people with intellectual disability to develop their own business.

The program participants worked incredibly hard to turn their innovative ideas into viable business plans, making their dreams of self-employment become a reality.

A key component of the event was the business pitches presented by three participants to family, friends, mentors, and supporters of the program, which demonstrated just how far they had come.

Well done to all participants on your achievements. We can't wait to see what you do next!

Congratulations to the Start Up team including Beth Innes, who developed the program, and Katie Butler, who wrote and delivered the course.



Employee milestone

Long-term employee Peter Shirdon celebrated 40 years of service with Challenge Recycling in mid-2020.

He has been there from the start of Challenge Recycling, working with Shelltam at the Patterson Street shed and Wirraway Enterprises, where he would go out on the truck to collect glass bottles from commercial sites.

"In those days the bottles we collected had to be packed into crates and sent back to the manufacturer to be sterilised before they were reused," Peter said.

Now, as a recycling assistant at the Challenge Material Recovery Facility Tamworth, Peter's role is to operate the large shredding machine destroying confidential paperwork before the paper is sent away for recycling.

Well done Peter, thank you for the hard-working efforts over the past 40 years!



Foster Care Pyjama Day

The Challenge Foster Care team is always keen to get involved in the community and support worthwhile causes.

In July, the team supported The Pyjama Foundation's Love of Learning Program through their National Pyjama Day. On Friday, the 17th, everyone came to work wearing their favourite PJs or onesie, in order to raise funds and awareness for The Pyjama Foundation's Love of Learning Program. The Love of Learning Program is a one-on-one mentoring scheme offered to children in foster care. A child or young person is matched with a "Pyjama Angel" who spends time each week focusing on educational-based games, reading, and writing.

A truly worthwhile cause and a great reason to stay in our PJs all day!



HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Celebrating our staff and clients

Happy 50th Koora Industries

Like many supported workshops, Koora started from a group of dedicated parents who wanted more for their children and the people within their community living with a disability.

Koora opened its doors in 1968 and was established in Muswellbrook as an activities centre for people with intellectual disability. Koora Industries currently employs 20 employees and although a lot of things have changed, one thing remains the same.

We supply the same survey pegs as we did all those years ago. This simple timber product has educated and empowered numerous people with disability in our community.

It has been the backbone of our service throughout the years and brought together an array of people who have made lifelong friendships.

So here's to the past 50 years of Koora Industries and may there be another 50 years to be celebrated for the future of Koora Industries.



Receiving the donated bus from the Rotary Club



First working day commences

The (art) show must go on!

Artists launched their imaginations in the 13th annual Challenge Community Services Art Competition in December.

People with disability and young people in foster care from all over NSW entered a total of 272 pieces, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, and photography pieces.

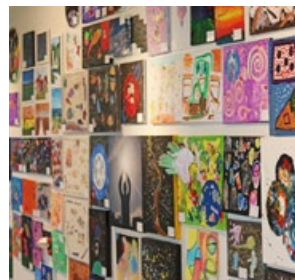
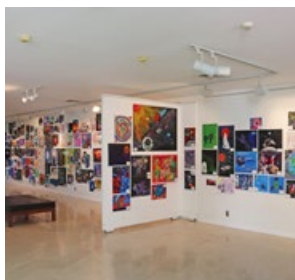
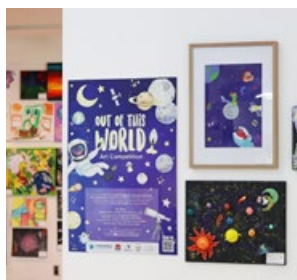
This year's theme was "Out of this World", and entries were filled with twinkling stars, mysterious aliens, soaring spaceships, adventurous astronauts, galactic landscapes, and even the coronavirus.

The competition and events were adapted to comply with COVID-19 restrictions, which included:

- digital gallery and online voting
- a virtual video tour of the exhibition
- live-streamed presentation day.

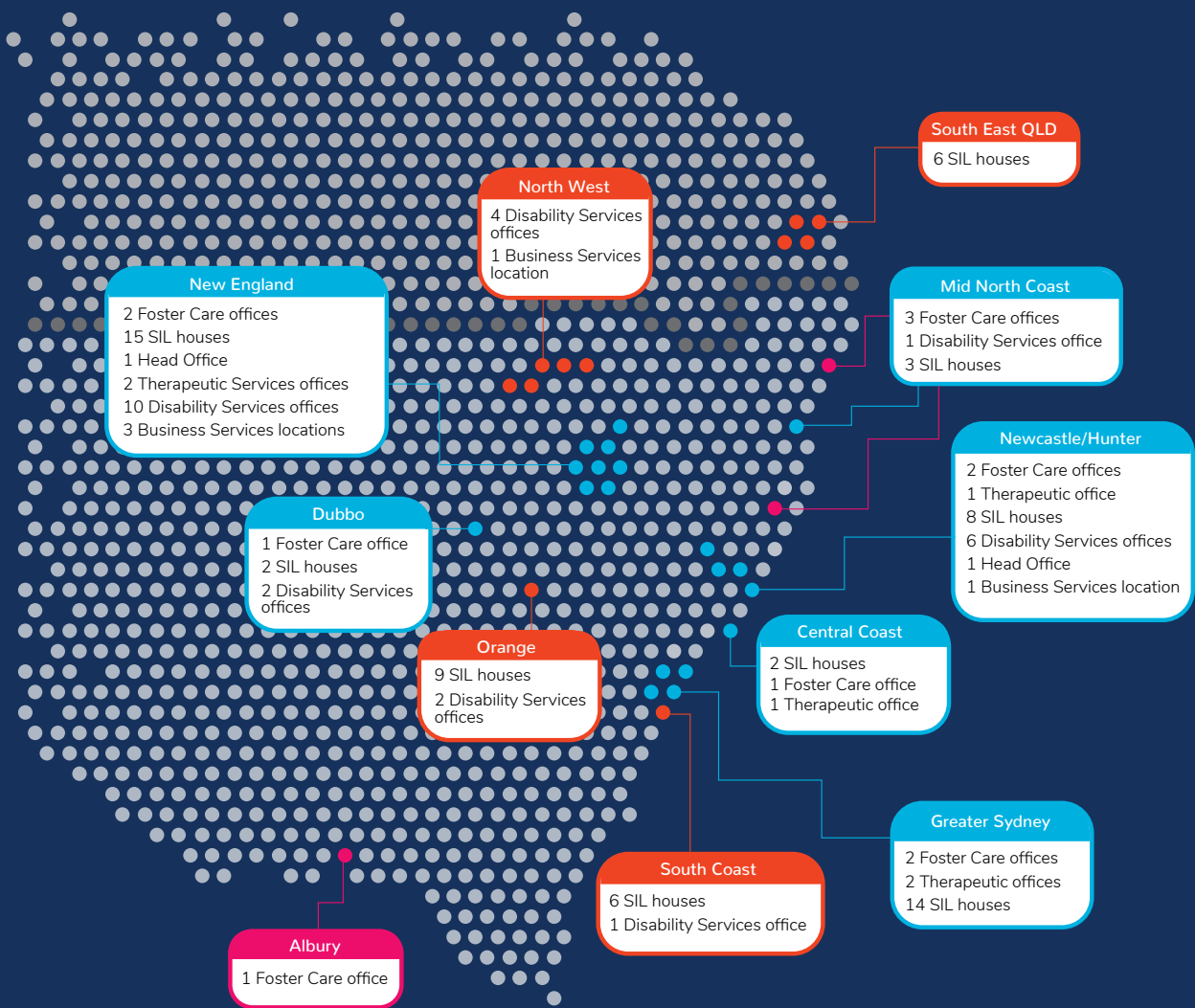
Thankfully, the physical exhibition could still go ahead at Ray Walsh House in Tamworth, which was visited by many of the artists and general public.

The 2020 Art Competition gained media attention from *The Northern Daily Leader* and Prime7 News North West.



ORGANISATION PROFILE

Site locations



New Sites 2020–2021

Therapeutic Services

Therapeutic Services at Tamworth located to their new site on the ground floor 11–15 Dowe Street in September 2020. The office is bright and spacious and we currently have six clinicians working from this site with a full-time administration support.

Our Therapeutic Services team at Camden also relocated to 22A Broughton Street where we have three clinicians and a part-time administration support.

Both sites are growing in their referral base and our vision is to create a more multi-disciplinary team including occupational therapy and speech therapy.

Disability Services

We began operating a Hub in the Illawarra region in early April 2021 which is located at 104 Central Road, Unanderra. The Hub is ideally located in the heart of Unanderra and close to shops, transport and more importantly, to Wollongong’s CBD.

The Hub is in a great location and will raise the profile of the organisation in the local and wider community. The signage is well positioned and viewable from both directions. The new site is spacious and provides a great facility for staff training and stakeholder meetings.

ORGANISATION PROFILE

Organisation chart

Concentric circles are circles with a common centre. Our clients, our customers, are our common centre. Our people are at the centre of everything Challenge does.

In a move away from the traditional, top-down approach to organisational structure, the concentric circles promote communication and the flow of information between our people and the different divisions of the organisation.

The circular structure represents Challenge as a range of divisions that are part of the same whole.



ORGANISATION PROFILE

Board members



William (Bill) Warburton OAM

Bill joined the Board of Directors in 2010. Bill became the fourth Chairman for Challenge in 2019. Bill has been associated with Challenge in its many forms since 1971 and is a retired accountant.

Bill was awarded an OAM in 2020 for service to the community.



Edward (Ted) Wilkinson

Ted joined the Board of Directors in 1978. Ted was Chairman from 2011–2019 and only the third Chairman Challenge has had in its 60-plus year history.



Kevin Kelly AM

Kevin joined the Board of Directors in 1961 and was our second Chairman from 1982–2011.

In 2009 Kevin was awarded an AM for his services to people with disability.



Paul Gruber

Paul joined the Board of Directors in 2001. Paul originally joined the Gunnedah Challenge Committee, before their daughter, Rosalyn, joined Challenge. Paul and his family have been involved with the Disability sector for a very long time.

ORGANISATION PROFILE

Board members



Louise Matthews

Louise joined the Board of Directors in 2003. Louise is a member of Rotary Club of Tamworth First Light. For the past decade, she has been heavily involved in working with youth, in particular through the Rotary Youth Leadership Award.

She has been awarded two Rotary Paul Harris Fellowship Awards for her volunteer work in this area and to the community.



Lesley Hood

Lesley joined the Board of Directors in 2009. In 2017 Lesley was nominated for Citizen of the Year Award.



Chris Durkin

Chris joined the Board of Directors in 2002. Chris is a member of the Tamworth Clay Target Club. As the father of a daughter with a disability, Chris felt it was his duty to assist the organisation wherever he could and he enjoys having input into the Disability industry.

Chris has also been a member of Lions for nearly 40 years.



John Glynn

John joined the Board of Directors in 2017. John is the resident Lawyer of the Directors. John is currently Deputy Senior Captain of the Tamworth Rural Fire Service Support Brigade.



Dr Stephen Howle OAM

Stephen joined the Board of Directors in 2020. In 2019 Stephen was awarded an OAM for his services to medicine.

Stephen is the newest member of the Challenge Board and retired from medicine in 2018.

ORGANISATION PROFILE

Executive team



Peter L Maher OAM
CEO



John Harris
Deputy CEO



Tania Mills
General Manager
Finance



Andrew Corbett
General Manager
People and Safety



Dino Santos
General Manager
Disability Services



Julie May
Foster Care
State Manager



Kylie Boyraz
General Manager
Therapeutic Services



Richard Hardwick
General Manager
Business Services



Kate Byrne
In-House Counsel



Anthony Clark
General Manager IT
and Digitisation



Emma Pollard
General Manager
Quality and Customer



FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Financial summary

The 2020–2021 financial year was again a year of growth at Challenge Community Services. The organisation’s total revenue for the year increased from \$94.5m to \$104.2m representing an increase of 10%. This increase is reflective of a strong demand for supports delivered under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), particularly in supported independent living.

With this, staff numbers have increased to 1,010. Staff and employment costs accounted for 67% of expenditure and direct out-of-home care expenses account for another 18%, reflecting Challenge’s continued commitment to delivering quality supports and services for our valued clients.

Reinvestment

During this financial year, we have reinvested \$1.062m in capital expenditure. This included the upgrade of our IT equipment (\$309,000), the purchase of replacement motor vehicles for our fleet (\$440,000) and the establishment of new disability homes.

Land and buildings

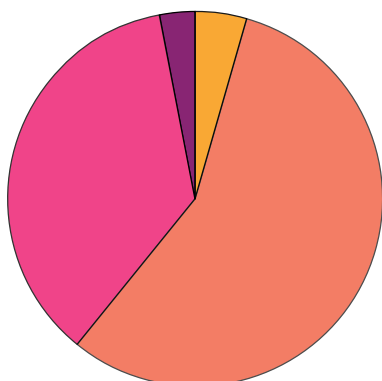
During the year, we undertook the revaluation of our land and buildings which resulted in a net carrying value increase of \$2.509m.

Assurance and risk

PKF was again our auditors in 2020–2021 and we value their independent assessment of our internal financial controls and were pleased that they issued an unqualified audit opinion on the organisation’s financial statements.

Total Income – \$104.2m

- Business Services – 4.6%
- Foster Care – 36.2%
- Disability Services – 56.3%
- Therapeutic Services – 2.9%



Two-year summary	2020–21	2019–20
Revenue and Expenditure		
Total Revenue and other income	104,259,217	94,514,478
Total Expenditure	101,922,865	92,405,303
Operating Surplus	2,336,352	2,109,175
Assets and Liabilities		
Total Assets	45,859,939	48,018,866
Total Liabilities	19,516,199	26,520,686
Net Assets	26,343,740	21,498,180
Cash balance		
Cash and cash equivalents at 30 June	12,928,770	15,050,853



FOSTER CARE

Training, culture, and campaigns

TCI and CARE

Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) training for all staff has been rolled out during the 2020–2021 financial year. The commitment to TCI needs to be embedded in practice to enable the implementation of the CARE model. The CARE model is a principle-based program that provides organisations with a framework for practice based on a valid theory of how children develop. It motivates children and staff to adhere to routines, structures, and processes while minimising the potential for interpersonal conflict. The six principles that form the foundation of CARE are:

- developmentally focused
- family involved
- relationship based
- competence centered
- trauma informed
- ecologically oriented.

The implementation of these principles throughout all levels of our organisation is the goal of the CARE model.

Much of the face-to-face component of the CARE model implementation was placed on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions. As a creative way to maintain engagement, we developed a “Fun Friday” blog focusing on a CARE principle per blog and weaving in a story related to the principle in action. We continue to participate in the CARE Community of Practice meetings. These are facilitated by Cornell University and bring together agencies across the world sharing their experiences integrating CARE into

the way they work with children and young people. We also converted the TCI refreshers to an online mode of delivery and worked on TCIF Fidelity. TCIF Fidelity focuses on how we will collect, analyse, and use data to make decisions regarding programming, training, crisis prevention, and management, and daily interactions with children, carers and staff.

Going digital

Digitalising the human connection part of the work we do was never really something we would have considered before COVID-19. Our team needed to think quickly to devise alternative ways of providing placement support during periods of lockdown. As such, “Zoom” became part of our everyday vocabulary; and not in reference to the technology platform, but as a verb! We very quickly learnt to use “Zoom”, Skype and MS Teams to keep connected with each other and with our children, young people and carers. Team lunches took on a whole new meaning with a Brady Bunch style display of co-workers on a computer screen, and children relished causing motion sickness for their caseworkers as they took off through their homes with their carer’s phone connected to Skype. Whilst we always prefer to see people in person, going digital meant we could maintain our connections without risking everyone’s health.



FOSTER CARE

Marketing

Challenge Foster Care has a focus on the human connection, on relationships and on people. In the same way that the Out of Home Care Standards look to ensure children and young people in foster care experience a sense of belonging and identity, connection to community and participation in decisions, so too does Challenge apply these standards to our work with carers. Challenge acknowledges our carers as integral to a child's care team; supporting a sense of genuine partnership and belonging. Challenge connects carers to a range of community supports and seeks authentic participation in decisions relating to the care needs of children. We acknowledge the work of a foster carer is unique. People who choose to support children and young people in foster care are special individuals who deserve special attention. They are strong, they are brave, they are ready!

December 2020 saw the start of the major Foster Care marketing campaign, "You Are Ready". The digital advertising did not start until part-way through the month; however, the increase in reach and video plays was significant and, as predicted, these increased further in January/February. The major campaign started with a wider reach strategy which featured a video, TV, outdoor billboards and bus wraps. There was an increase in enquiries coming in from targeted locations (Mid North Coast) as well as a consistent increase in enquiries state-wide.

Education support in lockdown

The notion of online or "e-tutoring" was a bit of a stretch for our retired Principal now Supervised Contact Worker, Peter Kirk. Our teacher-trained Supervised Contact Worker, Jane Cohen, on the other hand, was excited by the idea of trying something new. In true Challenge style, the team rallied their support and encouragement, and it didn't take long for Peter to call himself "an old hand". During COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, Peter e-tutored two children in Armidale, two in Coffs Harbour and one in Ballina. Jane relished using her teaching skills and experience to support our children and young people in learning remotely from home. Jane's e-tutoring began with a small group of children in the Mid North Coast area and then extended to children in Tamworth.

Despite the odd technical hiccup, Peter and Jane found the children genuinely engaged in their learning. Two of the children even continued the sessions during the school holiday period without complaint! Peter and Jane enjoyed broadening our approach to keeping in touch with the children, and carers expressed gratitude for the creative support.

First Nations

There were a number of structural changes which impacted Foster Care and our broader organisation. Our OOHHC Program Coordinator – Aboriginal, moved into a role with organisational coverage rather than a specific Foster Care focus. This was about supporting to embed Aboriginal perspectives in our broader operations. The position was renamed Senior Adviser – First Nations to better represent the work being undertaken.

The Central Coast commissioned local Darkinjung artist Brad Webb to complete an artwork that spoke to the importance of family and tradition. His concept is based on a rock shelter:

Rock Shelters were sandstone outcrops and were important places for tribal clans to accommodate themselves and to escape the cooler months. Rock art would adorn these shelters to depict in some cases dreamtime stories that would be passed on to the youth in educating them about their country and how this country was shaped and formed other times it was decorating and signifying their presence through hand stencilling with ochre.

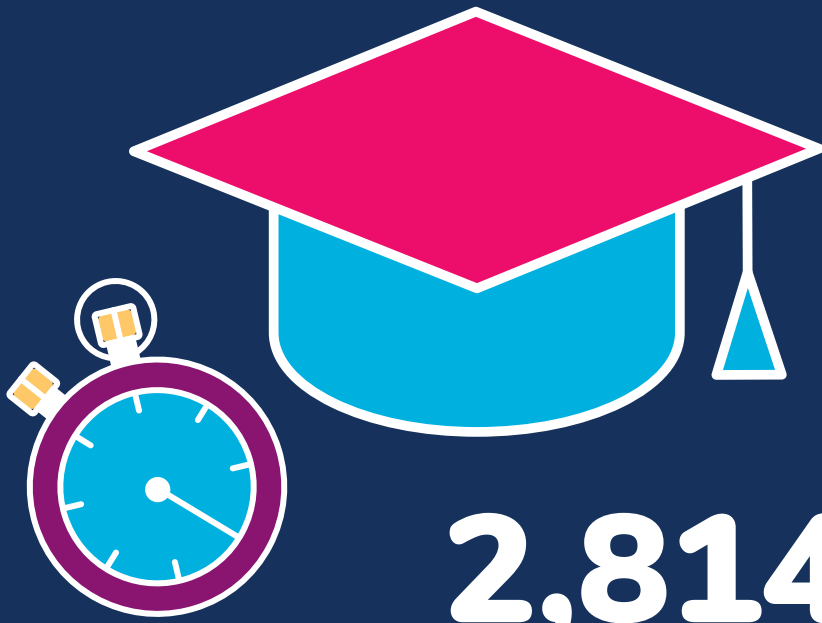


FOSTER CARE

Year in numbers



14,496
home-visit hours



2,814
hours trained



746

case-managed children and young people
plus an additional 234 supported through
non-placement support services

FOSTER CARE

Giving a child a second chance

Recently retired and finding themselves with an almost empty nest, Glenda and Phil discovered they still had a lot to give. With their own son and daughter now in their 20s, becoming foster carers was a logical next step. “I had an idyllic childhood myself,” says Glenda. “I wanted to give a child the same opportunities I had.”

Stepping in early

Glenda and Phil began the process in March 2020. Kira, their first foster placement, was only two weeks old when they brought her home from the hospital on 5 January this year. During the two weeks Kira was in hospital, the medical team began the process of detoxifying Kira’s body from the drugs she had absorbed before birth.

Glenda and Phil then continued Kira’s treatment at home until 30 January. “Having to wake Kira every six hours to give her morphine was hard at first, but we put our faith in the medical professionals and followed their instructions to the letter. Kira now sleeps through the night and is a healthy, happy baby. As soon as one of us walks into the room her eyes light up. We take her with us everywhere, even on our caravan camping trips.”

Not too late to change a child’s life

Now in their 60s – which many would think too old to care for a baby – Glenda is finding it easier in many ways third time around. “I haven’t found my age a disadvantage at all, especially as Phil and I work as a team. Because we’re retired and no longer have to answer to an employer, we can be flexible and respond to Kira’s needs. Without the pressure of

work, we are much calmer and more relaxed which rubs off on Kira. And of course we give her plenty of love and cuddles, and everything she needs to feel safe and secure. This is the least any child deserves.”

Despite enjoying being full-time carers to a small baby, Glenda and Phil don’t feel they can take the next step of committing to long-term permanent care or adoption. “Although we are both fit and well now, by the time Kira reaches 20, we’ll be in our 80s. We feel so privileged to be a part of making a difference to Kira’s life at the start and she has a home with us for as long as she needs. But we also want to give a younger couple or single person the opportunity to experience the joy of being her forever parents.”

Saying goodbye to a child you have loved and cared for is never easy, whatever your stage in life. But for Glenda and Phil, knowing they have given Kira the best possible second chance in life outweighs for them the inevitable loss they will feel when they do have to say goodbye. This is true unconditional love, something that Glenda and Phil have in abundance.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Ashley's experience of moving into Supported Independent Living

Through our Supported Independent Living (SIL) program, Challenge has supported numerous clients experience greater independence while finding the perfect place to call home. Ashley is one of the most recent clients to move into a Supported Independent Living home, and it's already made a hugely positive impact on her daily life.



Finding the perfect home

In order to make a successful transition into a new home, there are lots of moving parts and often more than just one organisation doing the work. That was certainly true for Ashley, who found her way to Challenge, thanks to the services of Trusted Support Coordination, a specialised NDIS operator.

"Ashley and her father first came to meet John Wood, Regional Manager at Challenge, and myself at one of our properties," says Melinda Shepherd, House Supervisor. "Ashley viewed a property that was similar to one she would be offered. Her support needs were discussed, and Ashley's main focus was on whether or not she would be able to bring Freddy, her pet rabbit, with her."

Throughout the entire process, Ashley says she felt very well supported, "They made me feel welcome and the workers who I met before I moved in were really lovely."

A housemate named Freddy the rabbit

After Ashley viewed the property and chose her bedroom, she was eager to start the move-in process – especially after her furry friend Freddy was given the green light to join her. "The support workers made him feel welcome and gave him lots of treats," Ashley says. "They love hugging him and saying good morning and goodnight to him."

Ashley stayed at another home for an interim period while her new place was prepared, and after a few weeks she made the big move.

Kicking goals

Since moving into her new SIL home, Ashley has gone from strength to strength. She continues with her external support three times per week, enjoys one-on-one support for community access every Tuesday and Thursday, and gets up to all sorts of activities (and mischief) in her free time.

"We go out for walks, we go and get lunch, we play with Freddy," she says. "I find it quite relaxing at home. The workers are nice and supportive."

Ashley's future is filled with animals

Despite the current COVID-19 restrictions, Ashley is hopeful that support from a jobseeker organisation will help her find the ideal job – one that involves working with animals.

Ashley's support workers are assisting her to get her driver licence as well as apply to TAFE to study the Animal Studies Certificate III course. She's also taken it upon herself to get accredited as a dog walker.

"I got my Dog Walking Certificate from Mad Paws," Ashley says. "I went online with my new computer that I got through the NDIS, then I had to do all the modules and I only got one question wrong out of the whole lot. Now I can basically walk dogs and get paid for it with my own dog-walking business."

The future is looking bright for Ashley: happy home, a new career and study on the horizon, and plenty of fun times with her pet rabbit Freddy.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Growth through relationships and partnerships

Thank you to everyone for making me feel so warmly welcomed and part of the wonderful Challenge team. Since commencing in my role as General Manager, Disability Services in February of this year, the team have spent considerable time planning the growth strategy for Disability Services and to continue with expanding our footprint in areas we are not currently already delivering services in. The growth is strong, however, our continued obstacle is finding the right staff with the right skills, capability and attributes, along with the appropriate rental properties to deliver services in.

Growth and opportunity with Liveable Home Link in Dubbo

Challenge Community Services was approached by Liveable Home Link (LHL) early in 2021 to provide bespoke Specialised Disability Accommodation (SDA). LHL had previously worked with the family of a client with high needs and they designed and built a property to cater for the client and three other residents, all with high needs. As this project was nearing completion, LHL approached Challenge to be the Supported Independent Living (SIL) provider. With the newly established collaboration with LHL, we will be able to work with potential clients that we were not able to support previously and build them a personalised property. Once a group of matching clients is identified, they and their family and carers can participate in a design process that can help them to have their needs met as much as possible in a new SDA home that they feel a greater connection to. This kind of opportunity is not available to many people with disabilities and will be a unique selling point for Challenge moving forward to all sites across Western NSW.

Muswellbrook's activities bringing joy

Muswellbrook Day Programs are undertaking great new activities and the clients are getting involved in athleticism at a high level. Each Monday and Wednesday a number of clients attend archery which is building their confidence while learning their strengths and boundaries. The aim is for archery to improve the client's accuracy, balance/coordination, composure and depth perception. The weekly Men's Program regularly go on adventure outings and we have developed a "Fun Friday" where clients have chosen adventure activities such as outings to the Zoo, Hunter Valley Gardens for Putt-Putt Golf, BBQs and pyjama days.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Building relationships in Brisbane

Challenge has been operating in the Brisbane/Ipswich region since mid-2018 with the start of the NDIA rollout in Queensland. Since then, Challenge has grown to currently have six group homes and has a small drop in support or community-based day program. We plan to expand our services across the regions in a measured and sustainable manner. Ensuring that we provide the required supports in areas where participants want to reside, that our properties are suitable to meet the needs of the participants in the long term, which our matching process is comprehensive, that our staff are recruited trained and well supported to match the needs of the participants.

We want to successfully establish a presence in each area and use this as a basis to expand our offering in that geographic location. With each success, we will continue developing our reputation as experts in SIL and through our expanding networks further market our services.

Opening more mental health group homes in the Western region

Mental Health SIL remains an important service provision for Challenge, particularly in the Orange community. With properly considered and better-managed referrals, more training and support for staff and better transition and support for mental health clients, Orange will be re-established as a qualified mental health provider. This will enable the region to build similar services in Bathurst, Mudgee and Dubbo.

Start Up

The Start-Up Program is for young adults living with an intellectual disability as they explore the possibility of self-employment through developing their own microbusiness. The program came about because people with an intellectual disability were struggling to secure meaningful employment – work that gave them the opportunity for both community and economic participation. The Regional Entrepreneurial Challenge (REC) was the second round of Start-Up which was originally run in Newcastle as a pilot program. These were run in three separate sessions. One was for our Challenge participants, the second for acquired injuries and the final was a partnership with Billabong Club House.

There were some positive outcomes from the groups, including participants gaining confidence, several started TAFE courses, one gained employment, one refined his not for profit group and was able to apply for grants and one started selling her products online. Not to mention all the personal growth and self-awareness of their strengths going forward into new programs. This second version was to be a 12 month program but was extended due to COVID-19.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Year in numbers



69

group homes across NSW and QLD



575

clients participating
in Day Programs





160

residents receiving supports



103

Connexions
participants



BUSINESS SERVICES

Celebrating the wins

The 2020–2021 year has had its share of challenging situations for Business Services. We have been dealing with the uncertainty of Tamworth Recycling, the overall drop in commodity prices at the start of the reporting period and the loss of a number of key staff. In all situations no one person can achieve everything and this is the case with Business Services. We have worked as a team across all areas of the business to grow new and exciting jobs for our employees with disability, financially tighten the belt where needed and celebrate the “wins” as a group.

Recycling – Tamworth

Tamworth Recycling has completed its final year of processing kerbside recycling for the Tamworth community with the last load delivered on 30 June 2021. After 40 years of processing recyclables for the region, the team has begun to clean up the facility as we work towards our next venture.

It is a good opportunity to acknowledge some key milestones reached in the last 12 months from the team:

- Peter Shirdon **41 years**
- Willie Nelson **40 years**
- Greg Norvill **38 years**
- Dennis Laverty **37 years**
- Anita Kelly **34 years**
- Albert Chapman **33 years**
- Bruce McLoughlin **31 years**
- John Horne **26 years**
- Mark Stones **25 years**
- David Chan **23 years**
- Jordan Woodhart **20 years**

This is a great achievement for our team and we are looking forward to adding more years and other team members to this group.



BUSINESS SERVICES

Narrabri

Narrabri Recycling continues to work with the four Local Government Areas for the processing of the kerbside recycling. There have been a number of challenges throughout the last 12 months with a number of employees with a disability moving away from employment. The team welcomed aboard two new employees and transitioned a long-time employee with a disability into open employment with Challenge.

Narrabri is currently exploring future work opportunities in the areas of poultry and aquaculture. As these micro-businesses develop, they will provide employment opportunities for people with disability in the Narrabri/Wee Waa areas.

Koora

Koora industries last September celebrated 50 years as an entity in Muswellbrook (Challenge took on Koora in 1985) and a small celebration was planned but due to the COVID-19 situation we have postponed until this year.

In January this year we welcomed the new manager, Peter Wydeman, into the role at Koora. Peter is a fitter by trade and comes to us from the mining industry. Peter brings with him a solid knowledge of manufacturing and warehousing experience.

This year also saw Koora take on commercial car washing as another task for the team as well as increased demand for our timber products and lawn and yard maintenance activities.

Koora farewelled Garth Hutchison after 38 years of service. Garth has retired from work and intends to relocate from Aberdeen to the Gold Coast to be closer to family.

Secure Scanning and Work Crew

Our Secure Scanning team have continued to provide quality scanning work for the local community with sectors such as child care, foster care, and local government coming on board for our team to digitise their records.

Our Spare Hands Work Crew have been run off their feet in the warmer months with three teams hard at it every day. It shows what a difference a little rain brings to a regional community. We have still maintained 1.5 teams during the cooler months with a number of cleaning contracts that have come our way. The Work Crew were glad to receive a number of replacement tools such as a new zero turn mower, a mower and whipper snippers to take on the extra work.

Waste No More

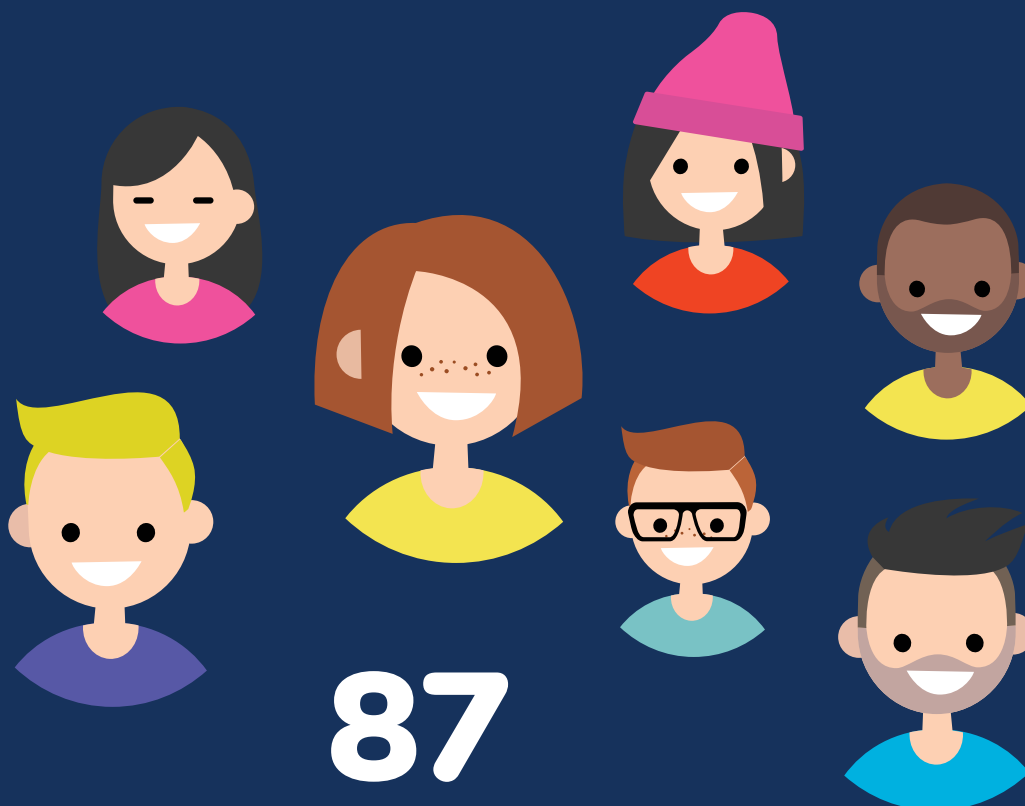
Waste No More has not only collected a massive amount of product to sell but also a good community following who come and support our program each week.

Over the last 12 months, the community support with donations for us to sell has increased dramatically and this has given us the opportunity to roster more employees with a disability into the service to learn new skills, like retail sales and stock handling.

At Waste No More we currently have one full-time staff and six employees with disability.

BUSINESS SERVICES

Year in numbers



87

Supported employees



120+

contracts through Challenge Work Crew

over 190,000

wooden products made by
Koora Industries



11,973 tonnes

of recycled material
through
Tamworth and Narrabri
Recycling



482,547

documents scanned and
reassembled or shredded
by Secure Scanning



BUSINESS SERVICES

Meet some of our supported employees

Meet Steve, Sharni and Carolyn. They're all Business Services employees at Challenge Community Services, but to them, it's much more than just doing a job. Read about their experience at Challenge and what it has been like so far.

Steve

Steve has worked in Challenge for over nine years and currently works full time between Challenge Work Crew and Waste No More. He balances this with being the father of a 15-year-old boy.

"I work in a variety of departments at Challenge," said Steve. "The fact that I can get up and go to work is great. I feel a lot better the days that I work, and it helped me get myself back on my feet after personal issues. I've even saved up and been able to buy myself a car – a Falcon!

"I do three days at the Challenge Work Crew and two days at Waste No More. I started in the laundry business at Challenge. Not long after that, I got a phone call to see if I was interested in joining the mowing crew. Now we have a crew of three. I have worked at Challenge for nine years, 10 years in December.

"What does a typical day look like? At the Challenge Work Crew, we start with cleaning jobs, such as local businesses and offices. Then we come back, change gear and load up with the push mower, a whipper snipper, and a ride-on mower. We do up to seven locations in a single day. Then we come back and drop off the gear.

"I serve customers at Waste No More all day Friday and Saturday. I enjoy the customer interaction. Push mowers tend to be popular – we can't keep up with the demand for mowers. Often ladies will come in to buy furniture and do it up. We normally ask them for a before and after picture.

"Yes, I would recommend Challenge for anyone. I believe if I didn't admit I had a disability, I would probably be unemployed."



Sharni

"I had no work and was looking for something. It was actually my mum who mentioned that the laundry was looking for someone. She told me, "go and ask them for work, and if you don't like it, you don't have to go. I obviously liked it, as I've been here ever since.

"When the laundry closed, I moved to Secure Scanning, working up to four days a week. I actually prefer working more. I sew in my spare time, including patchwork quilts and library bags. I'm trying to save up for a new sewing machine and sell the bags that I make. In my spare time, I also like doing diamond dots.

"My favourite thing about working at Challenge is covering books and scanning. I also like catching up with my friends at work and listening to their stories. We have a morning tea break and a lunch break to catch up with each other.

"Before Challenge, I worked at a newsagency when I was at school. Then I worked at Muffin Break and also worked with my dad at the servo. Challenge was my favourite job as I've stayed the longest, so I have close connections.

"When I get to work, I put my bag in my locker and talk to my teammates. Then I go inside and start work. At 10.00 am we stop for morning tea then go back to work at 10.15 am. At 12.30 pm we have lunch, then go back to work at 1. We then work until 3.30 pm, and from there we get to go home. We get to do book covering, collating (getting staples out of documents, repairing rips, sticky taping little documents onto pieces of paper – preparing it for scanning), scanning. We also do mail-out. I've been able to work on several small projects and large months-long projects."



Carolyn

"I am employed as a scanner and collator at Challenge but tend to be a jack of all trades. We collate archive documents which we then scan to digital devices or confidentially shred them. I do whatever needs to be done, whether that's collating pamphlets and posters into bags or scanning historical documents. I assist Michelle (admin supervisor support worker) with any extra tasks. If I had to pick one task to be my favourite, I enjoy the collating and scanning. I like watching the process go through and seeing the results.



"I've seen historical documents that are not in great shape, but by the time we finish scanning them, they are in good shape again.

"In my spare time, I have a large family with six grandchildren, so I'm quite often asked to babysit. I also like to sew and craft and tend to do a fair bit of reading.

"What does a typical day at scanning look like? Most times, I will come in to collate or scan, which involves editing. If other jobs need more hands-on, I can help out with that. I usually do two days of scanning and one day of whatever else is required.

"I would definitely recommend Challenge. The support we get is brilliant and allows us to work to our capabilities. As an example, I cannot do floor cleaning, and I can't lift heavy boxes, so I'm helped out with that. I love working at Challenge. Here, we

generally have a real family feel."



THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Achieving goals

Therapeutic Services has had a year of achieving goals and we continue to thrive with an ever increasing referral base and ongoing engagement with many return customers who are reaching their personal goals and making new ones.

We were delighted to make a positive difference for members of our community and proud to once again uphold our NDIS and Medicare registration. Such achievements enabled us to be a provider of choice as well as continue to provide expertise and ongoing supports to stakeholders such as Department of Communities and Justice and Department of Education. Our growing team of skilled and passionate professionals developed and built relationships not only with individuals, families, and carers but also with larger institutions such as universities and colleges supporting student placements with the vision to attract highly capable people into our workforce. Our focus to be an employer of choice offering excellent supervision and professional development is something we aspire to so each and every one, no matter how big or how small, achieves their personal goals.

We yet again acknowledge it has been another challenging year with ongoing restrictions relating to COVID-19. Technology continued to play an important role in allowing us to deliver supports remotely to both customers and staff and without creative and innovative platforms, we would not have been able to connect and support our customers and in turn keep our team positive, informed, and unified.

We look forward to a promising year ahead achieving goals and providing high quality services.



THERAPEUTIC SERVICES



Zac's story

Zac, now 20 years old, was referred to Challenge Therapeutic Services in 2019 when he was preparing to commence his High School Certificate. Zac's NDIS plan provides funding that allows him to access supports for Autism Spectrum Disorder – level 1, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and anxiety.

During Zac's final year at school and a gap year before commencing a Bachelor Degree, majoring in animation, Zac was accessing fortnightly behaviour support sessions with one of our skilled clinicians to assist with stress management and social skill building.

Zac relocated this year from rural NSW to reside in university accommodation several hours away from his family. Initially the move was a huge adjustment for Zac as he needed to learn to live independently, form new relationships and manage university coursework. These adjustments, coupled with an ongoing lockdown, have been challenging for Zac, but knowing he had ongoing behaviour support via telehealth with a trusted clinician has made the move so worthwhile and Zac is far less anxious.

Zac has almost completed his first year of university – which is a great achievement. He has managed to form new friendships and attend lots of gaming nights (pre-lockdown). He successfully navigated residing independently and achieved good results in his studies – all in the midst of lockdown.

THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Year in numbers



15,142

hours of support to our clients



27

staff members



521

new NDIS clients

906

referrals





OUR PEOPLE

Changes towards a holistic service

With the arrival of a new General Manager People and Safety in April 2021, a holistic Human Resources (HR) service was formed which incorporates the sub-functions of HR Advice, HR Services, Learning and Development, Payroll, Recruitment, Return to Work and Work Health and Safety.

Key Human Resource Management areas

During the 2020–2021 financial year the Challenge People and Safety function focused on improving key Human Resource Management (HRM) in the following areas:

- a. Recruitment of staff – it was identified that there was a need to identify wider talent pools aimed at attracting staff to our frontline roles where turnover was higher, such as Support Workers (Disability Services) and Case Workers (Foster Care). Specific initiatives have commenced to assist attracting staff to these roles via establishing partnerships with organisations that provide “trainees” (a Registered Training Organisation and TAFE NSW).
- b. Online induction – our program for Support Workers was refreshed to ensure compliance was achieved by new staff prior to them working with clients.
- c. Leadership development – all Regional Managers for Disability Services and Foster Care participated in a 360° leadership assessment and debrief which highlighted their strengths and areas where development could occur.
- d. Work health and Safety (WHS) revolved mainly around our response to the COVID-19 pandemic which emerged to ensure the safety and wellbeing (physical and psychological) of our clients and staff.

Staffing statistics

At 30 June 2021, the total staff and supported employees was 1,010 (935 staff and 75 supported employees). This was a growth of 40 employees over the last financial year which finished on 970 staff. It is important to note that 413 staff (41%) left Challenge last financial year, meaning that we employed 453 new staff during the year to reach our net growth of 40. Senior staff are looking at ongoing strategies to improve staff retention.

Fulfilment of legal obligations

Challenge ensured it met its legal obligations regarding the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry (SCHADS) award pay rises that were required to be instituted from 1 December 2020 onwards.

We also conducted an internal investigation in relation to an on-call allowances for Foster Care staff and make back payments. We self-reported this information to the Fair Work Commission and are dealing with the matter as per their requests for information.

We also instituted a Work Health and Safety Committee to ensure we complied with our Consultation requirements under the *NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and *QLD Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

OUR PEOPLE

WHS governance – incidences and improvements

The People and Safety team have continued to drive continuous improvement initiatives across the WHS discipline over the past year.

During 2020–2021, some key achievements included:

- Incidents reported totaled 5,260, involving restrictive practices, medication incidents, allegations, injuries, motor vehicle incidents, near misses and property damage. This is a 22% increase on the 2019–2020 financial year and is pleasing as more incidents are being reported and also in a more timely manner. Of these reported incidents, 12% involved client, carer and/or injuries.
- The partnership of Challenge and iCare through the Protect Together Program (P2) was finalised in May 2021. This program saw the roll out of due diligence training to management stakeholders, the development of risk profiling and risk registers, the review of the existing WHS management systems and incident-reporting process, improved safety procedures, hazard reduction and a reduction in incidents that resulted in injuries. The claim frequency per \$1m of wages has reduced from 1.14 in 2017 and 2018 to 0.5 in 2019 and 2020.
- The improvement in reporting of incidents included a more thorough breakdown and categorisation of data, which enabled the WHS department to critically analyse incident data and report trends and recommendations back to line managers.
- The WHS Department has led the development of an improved response to the ongoing issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholders were notably quicker to respond to Public Health Directives and implement the required changes to Public Health Orders within their sites and effectively support their staff and clients during the periods of change.
- In 2020, Challenge commenced the election process of a WHS Consultative Committee. We received a large amount of interest from varying business units and positions across Challenge which we took as a positive sign that workers were engaged and invested in our safety culture.
- We identified areas of improvement regarding the data integrity within the Incident Reporting System and assisted with a needs analysis.
- There has been a significant reduction year on year regarding incidents resulting in workplace injuries despite total number of staff/employees increasing. This was acknowledged by iCare who reduced Challenge's Workers Compensation premium by over \$4m for the current financial year, thus allowing a redistribution of budgeted funds to other initiatives.
- We have successfully obtained a \$10k grant from our Workers Compensation Insurers, Employers Mutual Limited, to assist with the introduction of staff wellbeing initiatives.
- We have strategically increased our personnel in the safety department to allow for more efficient safety training, consultation, and proactive support.
- We have led and supported the development and implementation of a COVID-19 preparedness plan which includes staffing Rapid Response teams (if required).
- We have also developed and introduced a Recover at Work Policy and Procedure to articulate our approach to Return to Work activities and thus have reduced our risk as it is compulsory to have such documentation as per the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) requirements.

OUR PEOPLE

Year in numbers



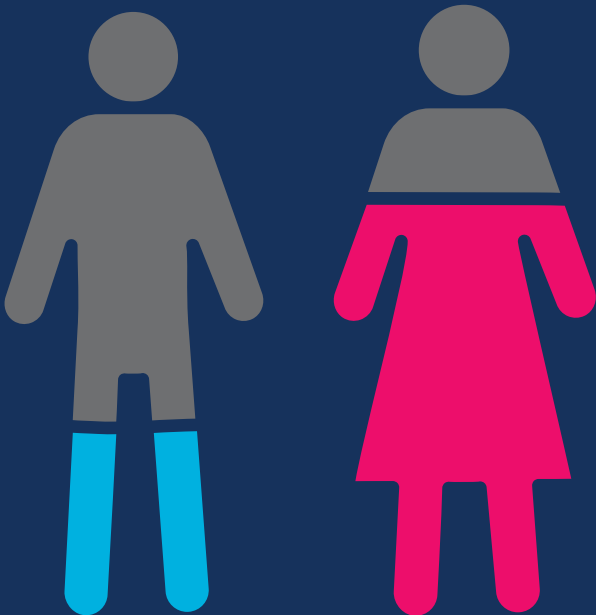
234
full time



673
part time



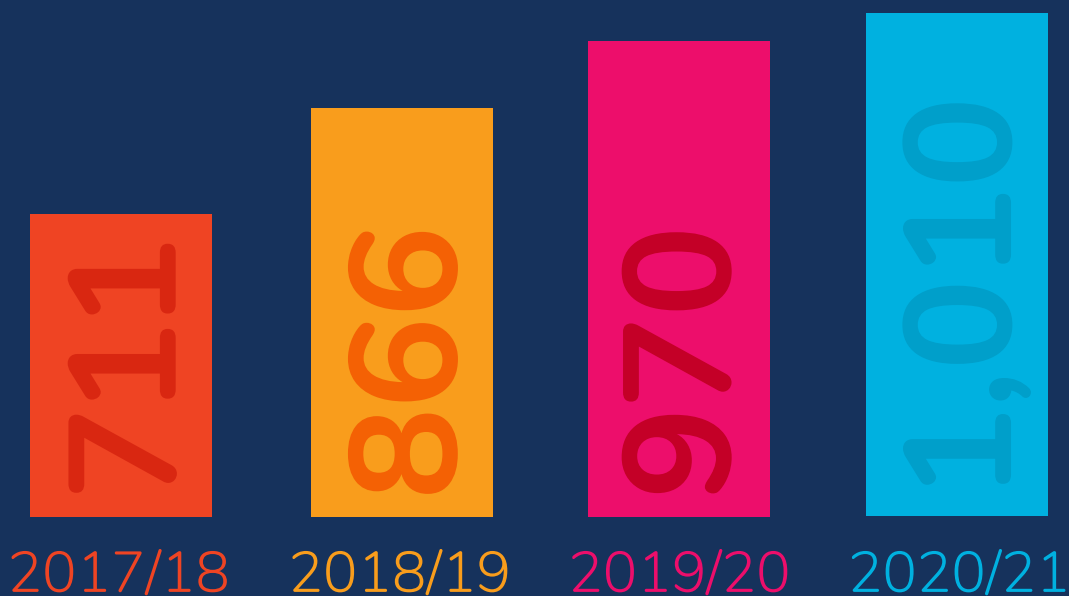
103
casual



32% 68%



1,010
staff members



staff growth



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Change and adaption

I am not sure who coined the saying, “The more things change, the more they stay the same” but it does seem to ring true with this year following on from where last year ended.

This year has seen further lockdowns and uncertainty, but at the same time, there appears to be less “technology stress” as our staff are more accustomed to the remote work. I look back to when we rolled out the first video phones about five years ago and how people were very hesitant to use them. Move forward to 2021 where remote work and catching up over video, even when working from the office, is “just normal” now.

It would seem we have reached an “equilibrium” where technology is not the focus, nor the hindrance, and people are able to just “get on with it”. Which is probably the ideal scenario from a technology point of view. Of course there are exceptions to this, but on the whole it is positive.

This reliance on technology does come at a cost with one of our biggest costs in IT being the network infrastructure required to support the services. Over the coming months and years, this has the potential to change as more people base themselves remotely, but when we get past the hype of hybrid work and remote work, a good percentage of our staff are hands-on which requires reliable infrastructure at the various work places, being an office or a residential house. We continue to try and find ways to enable staff to work without the hindrance of technology. It would seem that the changes we will see are going to be around what methods are used to work, as opposed to whether someone is working from an office or home.

Throughout the year, we have constantly tried to ask “what will make the front line people’s lives easier?” while keeping the network, and therefore information, secure. This is a difficult line to walk as changes can make things better, but sometimes “more of the same” is easier to navigate and just as productive. We need our staff to concentrate on their job, not trying to figure out how to drive the latest fad in technology. We have tried to concentrate on small, incremental changes rather than large sweeping changes that add up to an overall improvement. Things such as improved work flows in forms, better reporting from existing data, more reliable access to systems all add up to a better overall experience.

So, while we acknowledge that there are constant changes in the environment in which we operate, we are striving to ensure that things such as reliable system access, remote work and “known” technology stay the same. Ultimately, people still need to send an email or make a phone call to stay connected and better serve the people we are here to serve.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Acacia Medical	Hunter Hair and Co	The Entrance Rotary Club
Allannah & Madeline Foundation	Hunter Wetlands	Wendy and Bret Blackmore
Allcoast Locksmiths	Ignite Support Service	Westpac Banking Corporation
AMPS Agribusiness Tamworth	Jason Cannon – Cannon Cohen & Associates	Widders Consultancy
Anytime Fitness Cessnock	JB Pest Services	Woolworths
Arcadian Consultants	John Tredinnick – Psychologist	<u>Federal Government</u>
AWAHS Men’s Shed	Liberty Foodcare	Department of Health
Austbrokers ABS	Midale Psychology and Consultancy – Melanie Howe	Department of Social Services
Balladoran Cultural Camp Education	Murook Cultural Centre	National Disability Insurance Agency
Ballina Adult Community Education	Myhealth Medical Centre Oran Park – Dr Petrus Weenink	<u>NSW State Government</u>
Behaviour Change Consulting – Dr Mark Clayton	National Australia Bank	NSW Department of Communities and Justice
Big W	Nimble	Housing NSW
Blue Moose Productions	NLS Law – Neisha Shepherd	NSW Department of Education
Burraja Cultural Centre	Paint Shop Armidale	NSW Health
Bullimbal School Tamworth	Parry Logistics	<u>Local Government</u>
Bunnings Warehouse	People Fusion	Gwydir Shire Council
Cactus Creative	Planit Kitchens Central Coast	Moree Plains Shire Council
Coles Supermarkets	Poppy Seed Media	Narrabri Shire Council
Colgate Palmolive	Port Stephens Security Doors and Shutters	Tamworth Regional Council
Commserv Professionals Pty Ltd – Fiona Haymes	Praise Joe Urban Pantry Tighes Hill	Gunnedah Shire Council
Connecting Families	Priceline Pharmacy	<u>Major Therapeutic Services Supporters</u>
Cornerstone OnDemand	Promotions Only	Flourish Australia
Cornell University	Quality Services Consulting	Aruma
Create Foundation	Redback Solutions	Foundations Care
Crossing Theatre Narrabri	Regional Australia Bank	Kirinari
Eddies Fresh Chickens – Taree	Rotary Club of the Entrance	Northcott
Ethical Merch Co	Safe Places Community Services	Sunnyfield
Estate of the late M P Pengilley	Sailability (Belmont & Port Stephens)	
Expr3ss	Seed People Consulting	
GoGo Coffee	Stoney Aqua Park	
Good 360 Australia	Tamworth Shopping World	
Greenhill’s Kmart and House of Hyggelig	Taree Ten Pin	
Henriques and George Ballas		

DONATIONS AND BEQUESTS

Your generosity goes towards a range of services and supports within Challenge. You are supporting children in care and people with disability.

For any donations or bequests please contact us on 02 6763 1811.







CHALLENGE
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