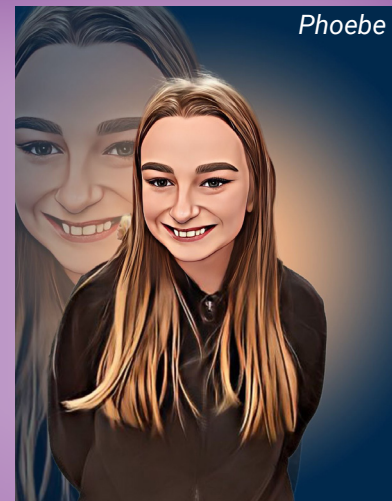


## 2022 Annual Report

# Supporting You and Your Goals



All cover images were digitally created using software to enhance photographs of some of our Bendigo participants. For more digital participant images with user permissions, see inside this report.

## **Theme**

Never has it been more important to support people in a variety of ways during the difficult times experienced over these global pandemic affected years. Distinctive Options continued to provide a safe environment for all participants and staff, through quality, innovative supports offering choice and variety, while still being able to work on service and organisational growth strategies. This was all completed under a mandatory NDIS pricing regime that continues to squeeze at service provider's viability.

Our theme this year, **Supporting You and Your Goals** is on the back of: The Victorian community slowly progressing out of the COVID pandemic's hold; uncertain NDIS funding for individuals as they battle for adequate, appropriate and necessary NDIS plans; constantly changing mandatory NDIS pricing rules and structures imposed on registered providers; greater administrative impositions and costs on service providers from the NDIA and the Quality & Safeguards Commission that are not funded; impacts on the economy caused by both the pandemic and other global factors which directly or indirectly had an effect on Distinctive Options; and workforce scarcity post-COVID.

## **About this report**

This Report provides information about our activities, operations, highlights and performance on objectives for the 2021-2022 financial year. It reflects the indicators from our Strategic Plan. We created our report with input and ideas from management, staff, participants and the Board to provide a detailed reflection about our service, our impacts and our role in the communities we serve.

## **Indigenous acknowledgement**

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

## **Audience**

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

## **Feedback**

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

## **Accessibility**

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

## MISSION

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

## VISION

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

## VALUES

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

We apply these to all our interactions.

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## Site Profiles

Refer to back cover







# About Us

*From DO's archives – a former staff member and two former participants having a lot of fun!*



 **DistinctiveOptions**  
In Life

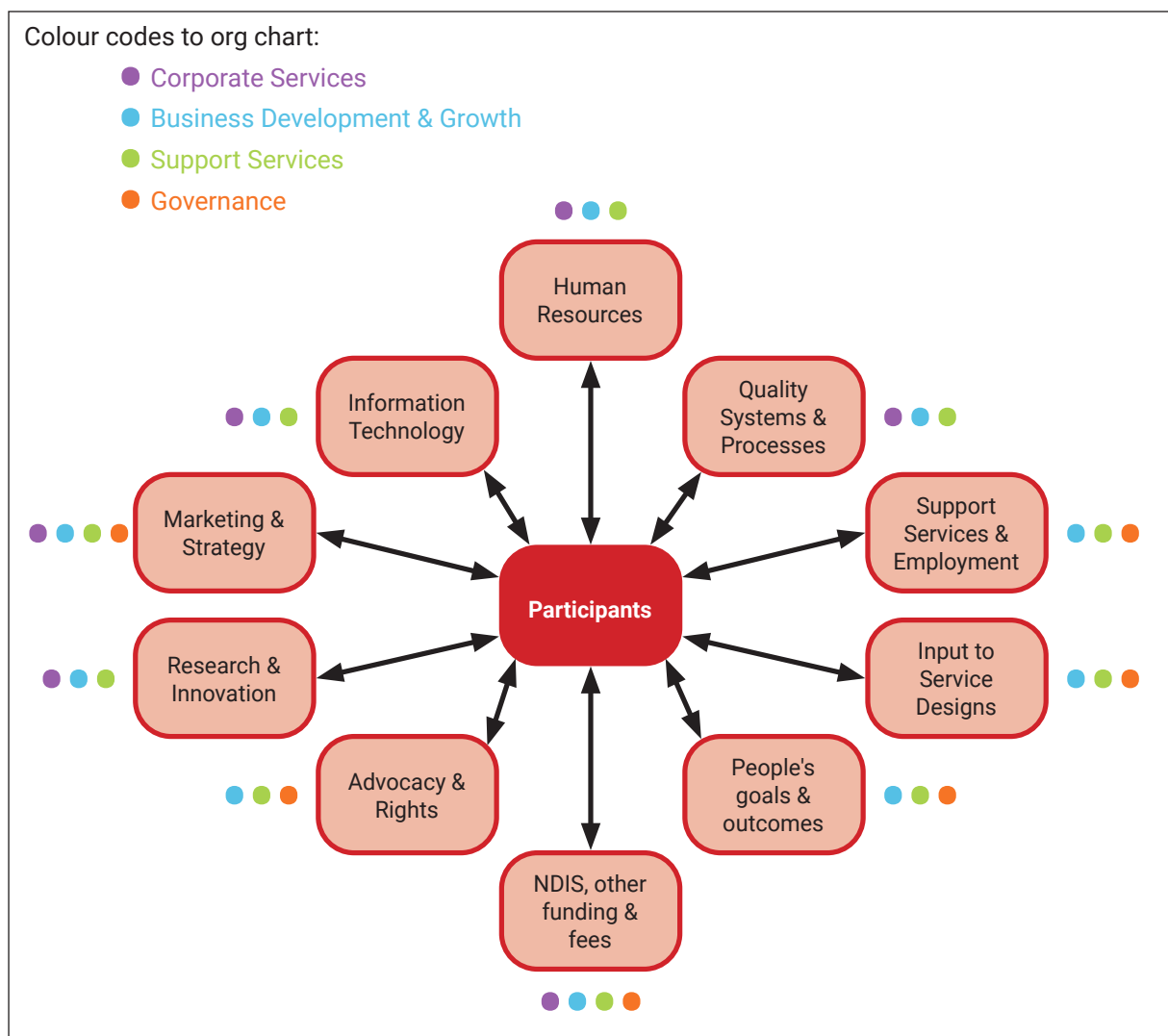


# Organisation Overview



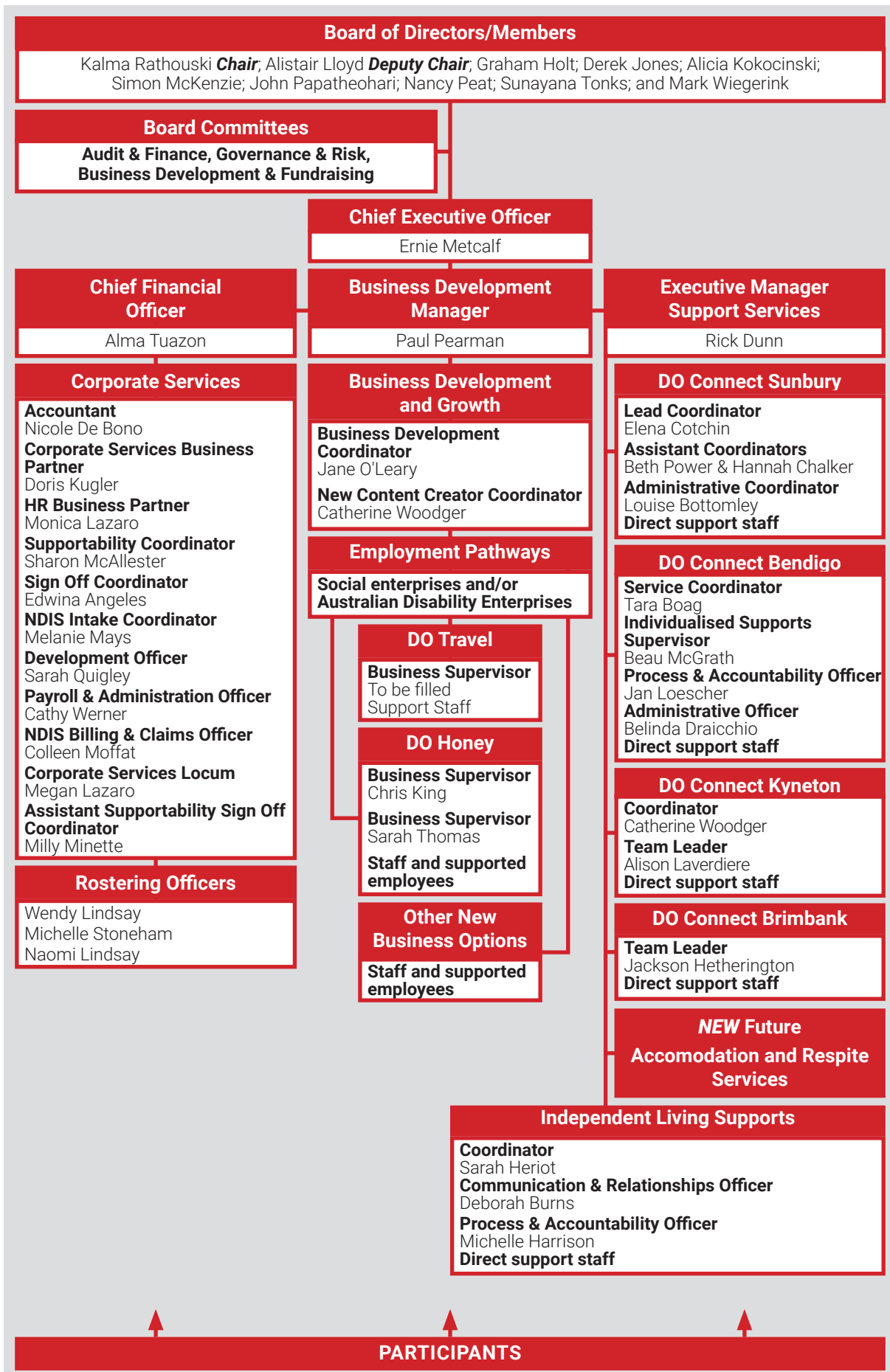
## Who We Are

Distinctive Options is a registered not-for-profit charity with the ACNC, it is endorsed as a deductible gift recipient by the Australian Taxation Office, and the organisation is a company limited by guarantee. The NDIA dictates what registered service providers can charge through a mandatory NDIS pricing structure. We see ourselves as a profit-for-purpose provider, so we can re-invest and grow service options for our participants. Established in 1985, we provide services to children and adults with a range of group and individual support options available, that during the year was expanded into employment options. As at the 30th June, Distinctive Options had 186 employees operating from six individual sites across the north-central-west region of Victoria.



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

# Organisation Chart



Distinctive Options was unsuccessful in retaining open employment services following a Commonwealth Government tendering process. Employment services income at this time equated to more than 50% of total revenue. The organisation re-energised its focus on direct support services to people. This focus strengthened Distinctive Options quality approach to deliver better options for people with disabilities, providing a point of difference between our organisation and others. The financial loss of the open employment was initially a significant short-term viability set-back. The General Manager was replaced by a new CEO and by June 2014 Distinctive Options was developing and growing its business through recognized quality services and supports, knowing it needed to in order to survive as a niche service provider. The basic foundations established in 2014 set up the first 'building blocks' under an emerging new NDIS paradigm to evolve current Distinctive Options' operations and its support services to people.

- 1985** | The Sunbury Adult Unit commences in May, supporting 15 participants
- 1989** | First 'Rights & Responsibilities' network is formed whilst two new employment businesses are established
- 1993** | The organisation is renamed Able Community Services with 50 participants generating \$727,000 in total revenue
- 1997** | A mowing business service is established, participant numbers reach 69 and total revenue hits \$1.27 million
- 1999** | The organisation is renamed Distinctive Options following the acquisition of MBM Association Inc.
- 2004** | Quality certification is achieved against Disability Standards and ISO 9001:2000 accreditation is attained
- 2011** | The organisation has 88 participants and total revenue reaches \$4.03 million
- 2014** | Employment services are ceased with the organisation moving its focus to direct support delivery only, resulting in revenue decreasing to \$2.21 million
- 2017** | Participants begin to transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and a number of new service options are introduced to 165 participants, generating total revenue of \$4.13 million
- 2018** | 70% of the organisation's 234 participants transition to the NDIS with revenue topping \$5.5 million
- 2020** | COVID-19 in the last quarter results in widespread changes to service delivery, yet support hours reach an all time high average of 15,778 per month, with revenue at \$9.06 million
- 2021** | In a year of ongoing pandemic lockdowns and restrictions, participant support hours achieved an average of 14,892 per month, with total revenue of \$10.9 million, allowing our organisation to retain all of our staff
- 2022** | No COVID subsidies, but still service interruptions due to pandemic up until late October 2021. Participant support hours averaged 15,538 per month to 269 people by June 30th. Total revenue generated finished at \$9.3m



## Strategic Objectives

By June 2022, Distinctive Options was in the last phase of its short-term Strategic Plan designed to withstand the initial impact of COVID and its ongoing affect as the community and economy opened up. We aim to grow our services to assist and empower those we support, helping each of our participants to gain equality and inclusion in the community. Everything we do is built around four key strategic objectives.

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

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

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

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

A summary of our progress towards each of these objectives as detailed on Pages 24-27.

By March 2022, the organisation had reviewed the strategic plan's direction with a view to developing a new plan during the year to carry Distinctive Options forward from 2022 to 2025. Refer to pages 96-97 for an outline of the new Strategic Plan.

## Stakeholders

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

## Feedback

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

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



A sample of some of the great compliments received from across our services, recorded in our Compliments Register this year include:

### **DO CONNECT BENDIGO**

- “Thank you for being so accommodating. Sophia and Ava will be much better off at your group as it is far more suited to them.”
- “You’re doing a brilliant job Tara...during COVID, you should be proud of yourself.”
- “...It has been a long time since I have seen a support worker so effective from the start...”
- “I love DO, can I please come another day as I don’t like the activities at my other provider?”
- “You are all doing a wonderful job. Jenny really likes DO so don’t give up on what you’re doing, it’s amazing.”
- “I like DO. I could look all over Bendigo and not find anything better.”
- “Carer passed on a compliment received via the NDIS – supporting documentation was very well outlined, easy to follow and provided an excellent level of information. Some of the best she has seen.”
- “You’re bloody amazing...”
- “Bendigo site opening day. This place looks great and we are thinking of moving our brother from another service. ...I think our brother would love it here...with a range of different programs.”

### **DO CONNECT KYNETON**

- “So pleased to see how organised you are – it’s refreshing.”
- “Brigitte had an absolute hoot of day on Tuesday, did not shut-up all night talking about her day...Thank you and all your team for putting a smile on a very special girl’s face. It made my week as well as hers.”

### **DO CONNECT SUNBURY**

- “You are all doing a fantastic job in these trying times. The wonderful communication is appreciated.”
- “We continue to be supportive of the manner you are managing these difficult times, congrats to you and your team.”
- “Peter is really enjoying these services and it is a fabulous outlet for him.”
- “DO has been great for Jessica, for her well-being & mental health. She thoroughly enjoys her days at DO.”
- “Your incredible work during this time has really been appreciated.”
- “Congratulations on this result – nothing like good management trumping good luck. Thank you Ellie and the leadership team.”
- “John said we are the best service he’s dealt with, we have good communication and the staff that look after Mary are very caring in looking after her and adjusting to her support needs.”
- “I love your communication with the team about the plan updates and was impressed with your plan for Travis. I learn a lot from these posts.”
- “Communication has been brilliant and Dylan cannot speak highly enough of the services he is receiving from DO.”

### **INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORTS**

- “Sue called to say how happy she is with staff member Will. Jonty now has a reason to get out of bed...”
- “Amazing outcome with Bec this Saturday. Tristan didn’t want to come home and loved his time with Bec.”
- “...I have never met with a management team in such a comprehensive way to ensure that all the correct processes are in place prior to the client beginning service.”



## Chairperson's Message

I am pleased to report, at year's end, a profit of \$277k was achieved. The last year has seen much good work on the part of our Board and management and I am pleased to report on some fantastic developments.

We signed an agreement with our partner Rosenthal, a major developer in the Sunbury area. Rosenthal will develop two purpose built supported disability assisted dwellings in Sunbury as a gift to Distinctive Options. Never have we received a donation of this magnitude. On Distinctive Options' insistence, a deliberate clause was included in the agreement that will see the dwellings return to Rosenthal's ownership should they no longer be used for the intended purpose. This will ensure our organisation never sells these assets for profit and that the intended purpose remains for the benefit of our participants into the future. I thank Rosenthal for their generosity and for their trust in Distinctive Options.

In February 2022, with our cash reserves sitting at just under \$5.4m, we were in a low interest world returning very little on our cash. This was a good problem, but how could we best invest the money? The Board decided on investing \$2.5m in the ethical share market, using Koda Capital and accepting a long-term view on these investments. The Board undertook a healthy exercise in preparation for this investment, to understand each Board member's comfort levels in risk taking on the stock market. This is something we had not previously done and it is fair to say we have historically been adverse to risk as a Board and rightly so, given past financial reports have not always been so

comfortable. I thank the Audit & Finance Team for their fine work that has led us to this decision.

Our organisation has grown and so has our geographical footprint, aside from the upcoming Rosenthal development, we have expanded to a new larger premises in Bendigo. Soon we will have a presence in the Keilor Downs/St Albans area due to a new partnership with Brimbank City Council. We have also leased the former Hume Customer Service Centre and Water Catchment Authority's former offices adjacent to our Sunbury offices. These newly leased premises will undergo refurbishment and will truly be fitting for the size of the organisation that we now are.

Our future plans are no smaller. We will become a fundraising organisation with an ambitious figure budgeted for the future year in fundraising amounts of over \$50,000. We will expand our supported employment services so that each employment service is sustainable on its own accord and will provide the quality of life and dignity that employment brings (when done well), to our participants who seek this and deserve this. Our internal policies, both at an organizational and Board level, will undergo an architectural restructure, to avoid the growing pains we will otherwise experience from growing too big for our current boots. This should ensure appropriate alignment of policies and procedures and remove any potential for conflicting approaches. To do this massive body of work, we will employ a consultant and I thank the Governance & Risk Committee in identifying this need.

Finally, I turn to our people. In March, I attended Distinctive Options' first triathlon and I was struck by the sheer passion and commitment of our staff. It is without a doubt that the dedication of our staff makes our organisation the place our participants want to attend each day. Congratulations to our Business Development Manager, Paul Pearman, for organizing this day and for the many hours invested by staff to make this fun day a success.

I want to thank Ernie Metcalf and his leadership team for the excellent work done, particularly steering the organisation through COVID times to the new COVID normal world we are currently living and working in. Your unwavering commitment is truly appreciated.

I also wish to praise the work of my colleagues on the Board, all of who are volunteers. I acknowledge further the additional work often done by our Committee Chairs, as was the case in the recruitment process of our three new Directors this year, Alicia Kokocinski, Sunayana Tonks and Mark Wiegerink, who I extend a warm welcome to. It is both a pleasure and honour working with my colleagues on the Board. Their commitment provides the continued focus on improving the organisation. My experience is such that I am happy to say we are a robust, respectful and healthy Board that is prepared to tackle the hard questions. We remain true to the mission of enabling our participants to reach their full potential and to gain equality, while always taking calculated and appropriate risks. Through the work of our Board and Management, I am confident that Distinctive Options is a safe place for our participants and staff.

This leads me to say that I would not look beyond Distinctive Options for a loved one or for myself, if choosing a service provider was a decision I had to make. So strong is my view that our organisation is an excellent service provider, that I have left a gift in my will for Distinctive Options. I ask anyone who has ever been involved with our organisation on any level, to consider doing the same. This will provide assurance in the future proofing of our organisation, so that the services we provide and more, will continue to be on offer for our cherished participants, long after we are gone.

Our Annual Reports have become nationally award winning. I trust you will enjoy this year's annual report.

**Kalma Rathouski**

*Board Chairperson*



## CEO's Message

By now, everyone is well and truly over discussing or talking too much about COVID. Unfortunately during 2021-2022, the effects of the pandemic still impacted our people, our participants, our services and the community. Our people and participants displayed great resilience to meet these challenges and any disruptions to services, which included the sixth and final Victorian lockdown ending late in October 2021. During the year we lost seven staff who decided they did not want to follow the mandatory State Government requirement for all disability support workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Pleasingly, everyone else did. Our participants also chose to be vaccinated.

There has been a continuum of changes in the disability sector for many years. Today, for registered NDIS service providers, the NDIA imposes many new requirements and a number of these are not supported by any funding. Services need to adapt to this environment and any impacts on funding caused by lingering pandemic issues. I'm pleased to say Distinctive Options has come through the year strongly, delivering a satisfactory end of year operating profit. We were also able to retain most of our exceptional staff and recruit new staff. I sincerely thank the management team for their diligence and perseverance during the year, plus a very special thank you to all of our hard working and dedicated staff.

Within this framework, we have grown our service offerings to provide more experiences for people accessing our supports. This includes moving out of the small rented houses into larger, more accommodating sites to either act as

a base for operations or a site used to enhance learning opportunities. The new Bendigo site is an excellent example of what an expanded site can offer. It is located next door to the Bendigo NDIS within the CBD. Credit must go to the great staff in Bendigo, led by Tara Boag, who made it all happen as seamlessly as possible. Feedback from participants and families about the move is extremely positive.



*Image above highlights some important community networking by the CEO at the official opening.*

Further growth was achieved through our other key partnerships. These include Hume City Council, which has agreed to lease Distinctive Options their former customer service centre at 40 Macedon Street, located opposite the Global Learning Centre in Sunbury. This site will become our new corporate headquarters, freeing up space at 36 Macedon Street for use to expand our DO Connect Sunbury support services. Another of our long term partners, Greater Western Water, is providing a site on their land in Sunbury for Distinctive Options' new supported employment Bee Keeping



business. We have successfully secured a leased site at the new Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre from a new partner, Brimbank City Council. This site opens up a whole new range of options for people who we support in the St Albans/Keilor area. It is expected the Brimbank site will be opened around September 2022. Additionally, our partnership with Rosenthal Developers is moving forward with a signed Heads of Agreement. The new accommodation houses in Sunbury are expected to be operational later in 2023.

The rollout of new virtual reality (VR) learning systems has been well embraced. VR provides a doorway for individuals to experience new real life opportunities and knowledge that they would otherwise probably not be able to. Similarly, purchasing new interactive touch screen whiteboards have added to Distinctive Options' learning and training tools for people with disabilities.

In October 2021, Paul Pearman commenced in a new role as Business Development Manager. Paul has successfully started our move into supported employment. All supported employees are paid a reasonable rate of pay which allows people to increase their disposal income, while still having a disability pension or part pension. This is another very positive move by Distinctive Options and a real point of difference between us and many of our local competitors.

**Australasian Reporting Award (ARA)**

During the year, Distinctive Options submitted its 2021 Annual Report to ARA for assessment. I am very pleased to advise that the Report received a Gold Award. ARA advises "...to receive a **Gold Award** a report must demonstrate overall excellence in annual reporting. It should provide high quality coverage of most aspects of the ARA criteria and full disclosure of key aspects of the organisation's core business. A Gold Award report is a model report for similar organisations to follow..."

ARA auditors additionally commented that although the number of reports submitted for assessment this year had increased, the number of Gold Awards was lower than the previous year. To receive a Gold Award this year is a significant Awards achievement in reporting by Distinctive Options for our key stakeholders. It is Distinctive Options' second gold award.



*Pictured is ARA auditor Andrew Crawford, presenting the CEO with our Gold Award certificate. The official announcement and presentation of awards event was held at the Sydney Masonic Centre.*



## Our Forward Look – Continuous Evolution

Distinctive Options has set itself on a path to expand quality services and employment options for people. Moving into the digital world is part of this strategy as it adds significant value to traditional services offered by opening up new ways to deliver experiences. As someone stated, if you tell me I still may not be able to do it, but if you show me, I probably will be able to do it. Digital media plays an important role today, offering expanded options for people to learn.

For Distinctive Options to keep evolving its support options, while ensuring our operations remain financially sustainable, it will continue through:

- Expanding accommodation or respite, expanding supported employment opportunities or by developing social enterprises and through new or evolving partnerships
- Expanding technology that provides interactive or real life experiences for people
- Expanding technology for use by staff as learning and development tools
- Expanding business opportunities through a number of ways, such as from mergers or business acquisitions, including commercial acquisitions that add value to the organisation
- Moving in the future to an open market place for NDIS pricing that allows providers to set their own price structures
- Developing and moving to a new Distinctive Options enterprise agreement for all staff in 2023 – this should make it much more transparent and easier to understand conditions of employment rather than the multiple industries covered under the current, complicated and amalgamated single community services Modern Award

## Thank You

I need to thank Board Chair Kalma for her support, along with the former Chair Simon McKenzie, each of the Chairs from the various Board Committees, plus the rest of the Directors of Distinctive Options.

From our partners in the community, I thank Rosenthal and the Millett family for its very generous and supportive partnership, Hume City Council for its continuing support, Greater Western Water for ongoing support, Brimbank City Council as a new partner, all of our external NDIS Support Coordinators for their proactive approach to seek better service options for people, plus all our other business partners. Distinctive Options is enriched by these partnerships.

### **Ernie Metcalf**

*Chief Executive Officer*



## Support Services – Manager's Report

With service outlets in Sunbury, Bendigo, Kyneton and St Albans one could easily assume on face-value that Distinctive Options supports participants in four locations. In fact Distinctive Options currently delivers supports in 56 different locations including those listed below:

Ascot 3364	Delahey 3037	Hoppers Crossing 3029	Melton 3337
Bacchus Marsh 3340	Derrimut 3030	Huntly 3551	New Gisborne 3438
Brookfield 3338	Diggers Rest 3427	Ironbark 3550	Riddells Creek 3431
Brunswick 3055	Eaglehawk 3556	Jackass Flat 3556	Romsey 3434
Bulla 3428	Epsom 3551	Junorton 3551	Spring Gully 3550
Bullengarook 3437	Eynesbury 3338	Kangaroo Flat 3555	Strathdale 3550
California Gully 3556	Flora Hill 3550	Kennington 3550	Strathfieldsaye 3551
Carlsruhe 3442	Gisborne 3437	Lancefield 3435	Sydenham 3037
Castlemaine 3450	Golden Square 3555	Little Hampton 3458	Taylors Lakes 3038
Craigieburn 3064	Goldie 3435	Long Gully 3550	Toolern Vale 3337
Daylesford 3460	Harkness 3337	Macedon 3440	Trentham 3458
Darley 3340	Heathcote 3523	Maiden Gully 3551	Werribee 3030
Deer Park 3023	Hillside 3037	Maldon 3463	Woodend 3442

As our reputation continues to grow as a provider of high quality disability supports, so too does the demand for our services with an ever expanding geographical 'foot-print'.

Understanding the regulatory environment in which we operate is critical to our continued delivery of well-considered and safe supports. To this end we have created additional roles for Process and Accountability Officers who are now embedded in all service areas. They ensure the accurate collection of vital participant information, continuous improvement of processes and produce a range of Plans designed to identify and manage risks to the health and safety of staff and participants. They are also authorised with the NDIS Commission to monitor and implement Behaviour Support Plans or Restrictive Practices across all services within a highly regulated Human Rights framework.

All service areas have been reviewed over the course of the last twelve months to ensure that their structures and operations better align with contemporary models of support, the changing expectations of what the NDIS defines as being reasonable and necessary as well as the fluid needs and expectations of participants and families. Many of these changes are referenced elsewhere in this Annual Report and include changes in leadership and leadership structures, a raft of changed systems and processes particularly with regard to health, medical and medication administration as well as significant investment in the latest technology, aids and equipment to further enhance services. Up-grades to Sunbury facilities, the consolidation of Bendigo services to new offices at King Street and the pending relocation of St Albans services from Lester Ave to the new Brimbank Aquatic & Wellness Centre are further evidence

of the conscious evolution of our services and service models. We will continue to interrogate existing practices and support models in the year ahead with a view to always making what is 'best' even better.

Additionally our NDIS Registration has expanded to include Specialist Disability Accommodation, Assistance with Personal Activities for those with High/Complex needs and Support with Household Tasks all of which point to new service offerings on the horizon for DO.

We have seen growing interest and enthusiasm for our evening and weekend social activities offerings where small groups of participants can enjoy social activities and opportunities based on friendships and shared interests (28% increase in hours delivered in 2021/2022). Fishing trips, Dinner and Drinks, Dinner & Dancing, Movies & Live Theatre, Live Music & Concerts, Festivals, AFL and other sporting events are just some examples of the opportunities enjoyed by participants over the past year; opportunities and experiences that may have otherwise been missed. A good life demands flexibility, choice, control and it is our challenge to support this for each and every person and to the greatest possible extent regardless of when or where those opportunities present.

The most recent NDIS Quarterly Report (2021-2022 Q4) shows that the largest cohort of new entrants to the National Disability Insurance Scheme by age were children representing 44% of all new scheme participants. Correspondingly we have seen a 118% increase over the past year in the number of children being supported by Distinctive Options thanks to their new NDIS Packages (currently 24 children in total). It is an exciting and emerging area of service delivery for Distinctive Options where we will seek to increase our expertise in supporting children with disability and their families.

Employment and the lack of meaningful or appropriately remunerated work remains a source of concern for people with disability. While 59% of participants aged between 15 and 24 have an employment outcome in their NDIS Plan, only 23% are in paid employment according to current NDIS figures. It is obvious that despite their desire to join the workforce and contribute to the economic life of their communities, people with disability continue to be denied even the opportunity to do so.

Distinctive Options has committed to tackle this issue directly by establishing a Business Development Unit to work in hand with Support Services in seeking to create training pathways and sustainable employment opportunities for participants. It is an ambitious endeavour with the potential to fundamentally change the lives of participants and we are entirely committed to creating something new and enduring in this space.

The ongoing challenge from a service-delivery perspective is to ensure that we routinely question existing practices and remain willing to flex, adapt and innovate without ever compromising on the quality of supports we must deliver today and every day at Distinctive Options. To this end I cannot praise enough our growing team of dedicated Support Workers and their Support Service Leaders whose boundless passion, energy and expertise are the foundation of all that is truly great about our organisation.

**Rick Dunn**

*Executive Manager Support Services*



# Chief Financial Officer's Report

## Corporate Services Overview

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

## Expanded Corporate Services Team

The Corporate Services Team which evolved in the last three financial years consolidates the different services and functions that support the rest of operations in order to meet best practice standards, compliance, financial reporting and with the development of infrastructure systems can prepare the organisation to its growth phase. The team comprises of the Accountant, the HR Business Partner, NDIS Intake Coordinator, Development Officer, NDIS Billings & Claims Officer, Payroll & Administration Officer, Client Management Systems Coordinator, Sign-off Coordinator & Assistant and the Rostering Team. The centralisation of Rostering function for effective roster management,

better coverage on after hours and weekend shifts, matching staff to participants and address service gaps have now formed part of Corporate Services Team.

## Integration of Cloud Based Systems

The quest for efficiency in payroll administration has prompted the implementation of hr3 which is a combined Human Resources and Payroll system that incorporate Automated Workflow and On-Boarding modules. The approval process consistent with the Delegations Policy were built into the system in line with organisational hierarchy to manage leave applications, training requests and timesheet entries.

The build-up of Human Resources module was completed 2021 within hr3, enabling the electronic storage of employee information including contracts, skills, qualifications, staff training, performance evaluation, employee tasks, assets issued and emergency contacts. The database build up project for HR data paved the way to the establishment of the Automated Workflow for management of due dates for drivers licences and working with children checks. The On boarding module project was completed in December 2021. This allowed the process of electronically on-boarding new staff members with their NDIS orientation certificates, personal details, superannuation and emergency contacts and a sign off of relevant HR and compliance policies and procedures normally covered during the staff induction. Upon completing of the on-boarding process, staff are then issued

with Letters of Appointment. The final process required the submission of relevant information to hr3. The efficiency gained in this process provided significant savings in administration, time and eliminates manual input into the hr3 system.

The migration to Microsoft Dynamics Business Central which was completed in August 2021, enabling the integration of data with SupportAbility for billing information. The integration required the automatic download of invoices from SupportAbility to Business Central for invoicing purposes. The integration with hr3 enabled the seamless download of payroll information and leave entitlements to Business Central. The effective design and great collaboration work between the three cloud-based solutions, Digital Armour and Distinctive Options Project Team have taken Accounting to the digital arena producing significant productivity and efficiency gains in processing time and provision of accurate data. The customised reporting of financial information has also reduced the month-end process to a considerable degree enabling more time spent on analysis.

### Technology Business Partners



### Team Environment

The successful implementation of a number of system projects in 2021-2022 have significantly increased the capability and confidence of the Corporate Services Team who worked tirelessly throughout the year in different projects to achieve operational efficiency and quality of data. With a very lean but skilled team, the use of digital technology has become seamless. Effective mentoring, training and collaboration have been the major catalysts to team success and cohesiveness.

### A giant step into Virtual Reality

Through the gracious donation from Coles, Distinctive Options was able to roll-out the Virtual Reality Project by customising contact and acquiring picco equipment to provide a digital experience to our participants. The equipment which were trialled during the launch of the new Bendigo office have received favourable responses from the Community. All equipment have been deployed to the different sites. Stage 2 content will roll out in 2023.

### Looking ahead

Despite the longest lockdown in the later part of 2021, the gradual return of participants have contributed to better operating results, allowing the company to continue to thrive in this environment providing continuous supports on both one-on-one setting and group programs. The outlook remains positive for the organisation with the following initiatives being implemented in the new financial year.

- Launch of the new Staff portal that will house all relevant quality management systems data and later on the Board and Participant portals.
- Introduction of new NDIS fraction or apportionment pricing in July 2023.
- The roll-out of Work Health and Safety Module for management of risks and incidents.
- The relocation of Corporate Services and Management Team to the former Hume Customer Service Centre to free up space for more group activities
- The relocation of DO Brimbank to the new Aquatic and Wellness Centre
- Scoping work for a new CRM system that integrates with mobile rostering and award translation.

### Alma Tuazon

*Chief Financial Officer*





## Business Development - Manager's Report

Walking through DO Connect Sunbury Group Supports for the first time was an experience I will never forget. Around every corner, through every door, there were smiles, waves and hellos. Throughout my twenty plus year professional career, I have never had a welcome to any organisation like the one I experienced with Distinctive Options. Personally having had little experience with people with disabilities, I was a little anxious, nervous and anticipative at the same time. Immediately, I was put at ease from that moment, it dawned on me that Distinctive Options is about people coming together and people achieving together no matter how big or small that achievement may seem. Ultimately Distinctive Options is the true advocate of community for all.

**Humble beginnings** – Another striking observation that I made within the first weeks of joining Distinctive Options, is the humble nature of the support worker and fellow coordinators. This truly is a service industry, in service to others. I felt compelled to highlight the stories that were happening every day, every minute and every second at Distinctive Options.

**The creation of A Story Every Second** – Distinctive Option empowers others to create stories every second, of every day. One of the first tasks assigned to the Business Development Team was the creation of a new website to reflect the organisation and its values. A Story Every Second was at the beating heartbeat of the new website creation. Tasked with highlighting the stories of Distinctive Options participants, our coordinators collaborated with participants to write the stories and bring them to life via our new website.

**It's about you** – As part of the website creation process, we looked at key phrases which articulated the purpose of Distinctive Options. We proudly came to the conclusion that the website, being an extension of the organisation, is about you, the participant of Distinctive Options. Some key fundamental principles that we collectively commit to are as follows:

- We will always listen to understand first rather than seek to be understood
- We will always be truthful and honest in our conversations and commitments; if we say we will do something then we will do it
- We will always value you more than we value your funding
- We value and measure success 'one person at a time' by people telling us that Distinctive Options have made a difference in their health, happiness and wellbeing
- All behaviour is a form of communication and it is incumbent on us to better understand rather than you to 'better communicate'
- We want you to have bigger ambitions because better outcomes happen when people imagine better and experience more
- We all learn from experience which involves being allowed to make mistakes in order to do better next time

Moving into the future, A Story Every Second and our website will continue to evolve with the inception of a new Content Creation role that will heavily collaborate with participants of Distinctive Options and our support team across all regions where Distinctive Options operate.

### **Our first foray back into supported employment**

– In January 2022, Distinctive Options won the contract to deliver 9,000 Yellow Pages books to the Sunbury community. This would be the first employment contract that Distinctive Options had undertaken in a number of years. Across a ten-week period, four participants supported by Kevin Richards made every single one of those deliveries. We are proud of the fact that our delivery legends were paid the equivalent of a trainee wage, empowering them to a “distinct life balance” while learning important work skills.

**The DO Triathlon** – In February 2022, the Business Development Team embarked on the organisation’s first fundraiser post COVID-19. Twelve participants from DO Sunbury and DO St Albans came together with the assistance of the Hume City council, Reclink Australia and Brian Millet of the Sunbury Triathlon Club to train and compete over a five-week period. The result was amazing, having raised enough funds for the purchase of much-needed tricycles for use throughout Distinctive Options.

### **DO Pathways Warehouse & DO Honey**

**Launch** - In May 2022, Distinctive Options made the move to lease a warehouse, providing a new home for employment services delivered by Distinctive Options Pathways.

**Moving into the next year** - The Distinctive Options Pathways team are looking forward to the 2022/23 financial year with anticipation. We have contracted Rebecca Light from Beeresponsible, a respected local beekeeper, to train our first ten apiculturists as part of the DO Honey Social Enterprise. We expect our bees to arrive in the spring of 2022 and the first commercial honey production to follow in the summer of 2023/24.

I want to thank my fellow Executive Team, Ernie, Alma and Rick, for their support this past year while we develop further employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Furthermore, I’d also like to thank my team, coordinated by Jane O’Leary, whose amazing outlook and working nature have empowered the Pathways team to lift off the ground. And lastly, our supervisors, Christopher King, whose guidance with the warehouse setup has been invaluable, and Sarah Thomas, whose infectious enthusiasm for opportunities for people with disabilities in employment is invaluable.

Here’s to a fantastic 2023/24 as we empower change in people’s perception of disability within employment.

### **Paul Pearman**

*Business Development Manager*

# Year in Review

## 2021

### July

- Distinctive Options commences development of new virtual reality systems for participants and staff, as well as for a new income stream.

### August

- Business Central (new Accounting System) is operating live for the new financial year.
- Staff bonuses paid to eligible employees for the year ended 30 June 2021.

### September

- To manage and minimise operational risks, management makes COVID vaccinations mandatory for all Distinctive Options staff.
- Fair Work Australia's legal team advises Distinctive Options on mandatory COVID vaccinations and confirms Fair Work's support for taking this stance.
- Distinctive Options is a highlighted business in Digital Armour's September newsletter.

### October

- Victorian Government's Public Health Order makes COVID-19 vaccinations mandatory for all authorised workers, which includes the disability sector.
- Paul Pearman commences as Distinctive Options' new Business Development Manager.

### November

- Hume City Council agrees to lease Distinctive Options the former Hume Customer Service Centre and former Catchment Management Authority offices at the 36 Macedon Street, Sunbury site.

## 2022

### January

- New lease entered into for larger single site located at 56-60 King St, Bendigo

### February

- New supported employment business to delivery telephone directories. Four participants are employed as supported employees.
- DO wins tender for new lease to use 160 square metres at Brimbank Council's Aquatic and Wellness Centre, located in Taylors Road, St Albans / Keilor Downs.

### March

- New DO disability triathlon is held in Sunbury, organised by the Business Development team in partnership with Reclink and Hume City Council.
- New DO website is launched.

### April

- DO picks up new short-term Book Delivery mail-out business.

### May

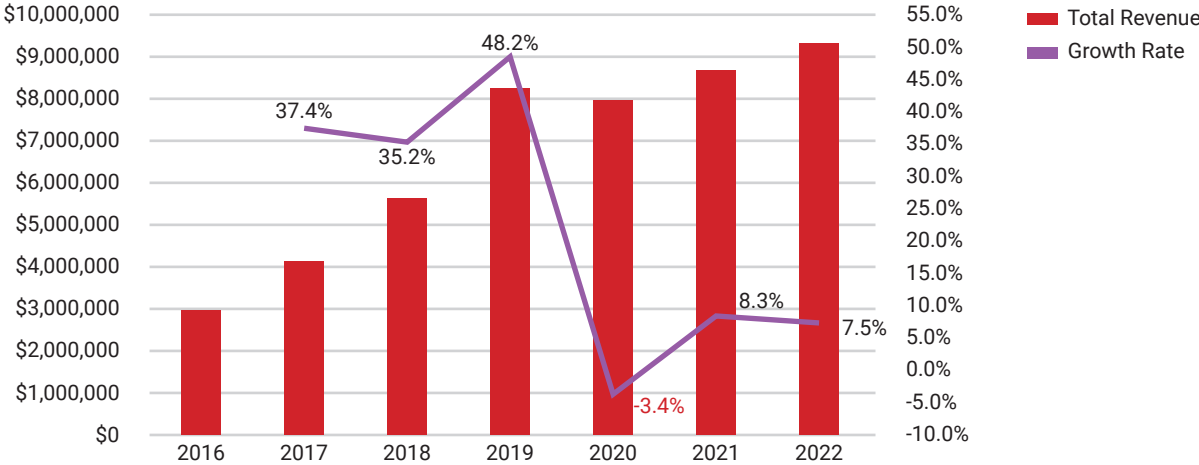
- DO wins Gold Award for its 2021 Annual Report from the Australasian Reporting Awards.
- Well attended Open Day for new DO Connect Bendigo site.

### June

- New warehouse rented at 50 MacDougall St, Sunbury as a base for supported employment pathways. The official opening day held at the warehouse was in June.

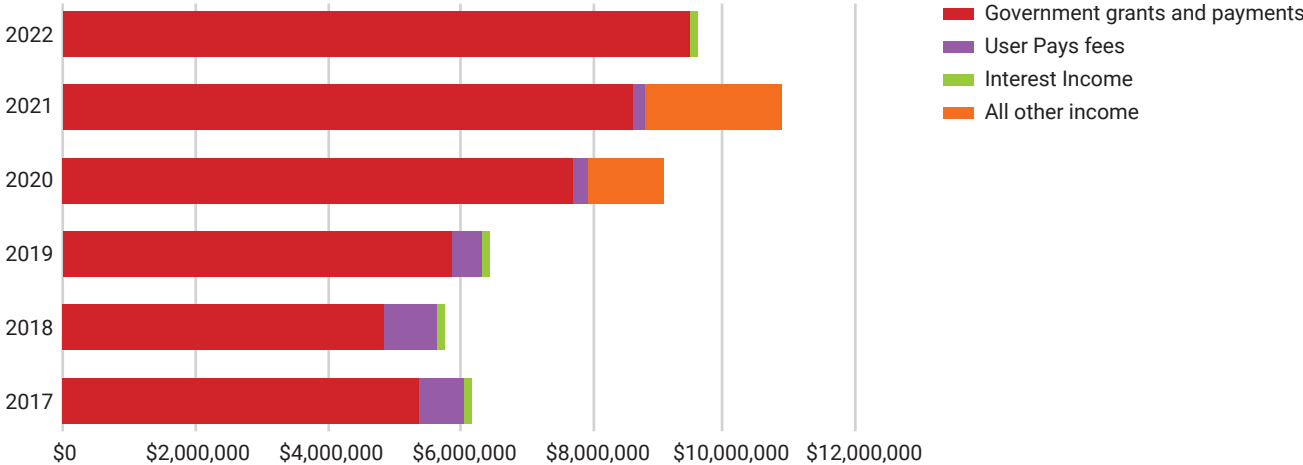
# Financial Performance Analysis

## Revenue Analysis



During the financial years 2020 and 2021, both significantly impacted by COVID, Distinctive Options received Commonwealth government Job Keeper subsidies. These subsidies have been netted out of the above chart’s revenue for 2020 and 2021 to provide a more reflective indication of support services and general business income. The results indicate that this year Distinctive Options was able to continue delivering support services to a slightly increasing number of participants without any government COVID related subsidies. This is a very positive result under current economic conditions.

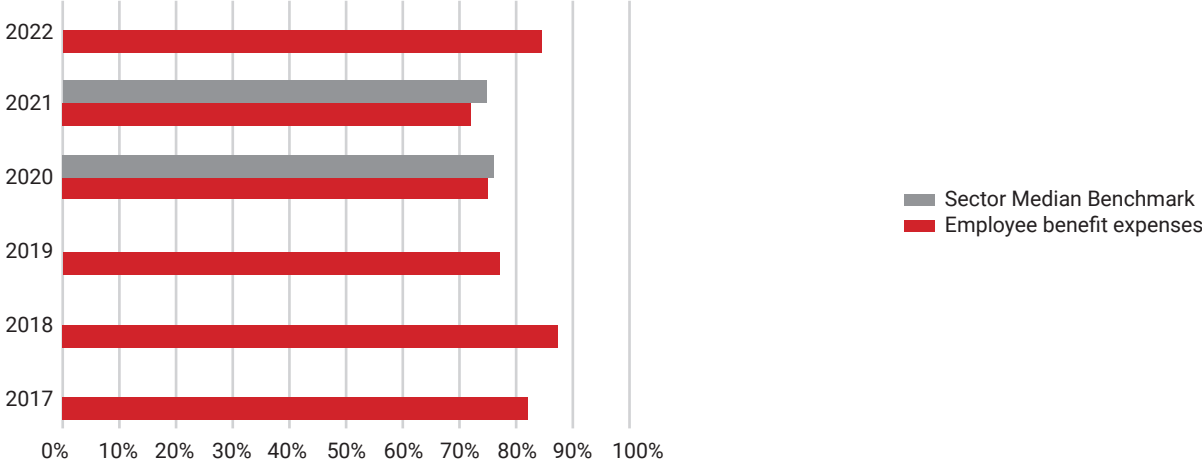
## Income Sources - Trend Analysis



The income sources trend analysis chart opposite includes all previous Job Keeper stimulus packages (shown under ‘All Other Income’ in 2021 and 2020). Distinctive Options’ primary source of income this year came from each participant’s individual service agreements, being from NDIS funding and from the Commonwealth’s Continuity of Support packages for participants aged 65+. Government grants this year also included a one-off NDIS payment totalling \$274k, acknowledging the extra costs incurred by providers to ensure COVID-safe environments for participants and staff.

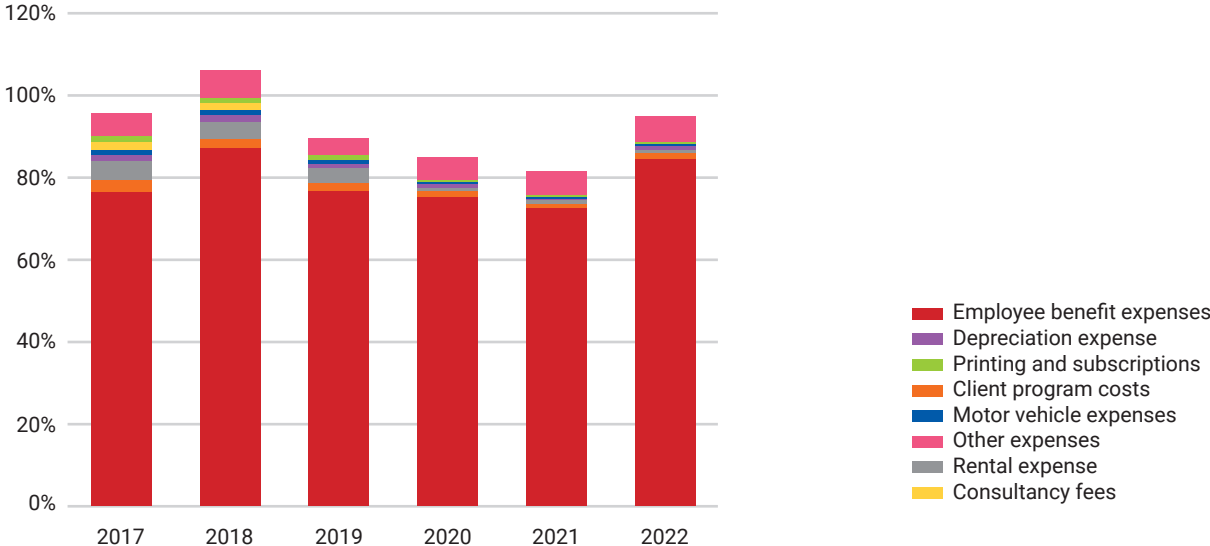
The single largest expense as a support service provider, is related to Employee Benefits, which includes all salaries, wages, oncosts and leave provisions. The following chart highlights Distinctive Options' performance in 2022 compared to other years. Acknowledging this ratio in 2022 is higher, part of management's strategy was to try and ensure the organisation retained its pool of staff during the pandemic, particularly across the lockdown period stretching from July to October 2021. Income over this four month period was significantly reduced. Many services have verbally stated they lost staff, lost participants, and as a result, made a loss in 2022. The majority of Distinctive Options support staff were transitioned from casual to permanent part time to achieve our retention goal. The sector median benchmark in the above graph is derived from ACNC data on 79 disability provider charities operating in Victoria.

### Employee Benefits Ratio as a % of Total Revenue



While the Employee Benefits Ratio is one of many indicators on performance used in benchmarking financial results, it is not the only indicator. Obviously, the more an organisation spends on employee benefits, the less it has for other operating costs and profitability. Management ensures Distinctive Options 'lives within its means' to deliver financially viable operations, plus innovative, quality support services. It will be interesting to see exactly how benchmarked results for Victorian providers compare in 2021-2022 without any Job Keeper subsidies.

### Analysis of Expenses

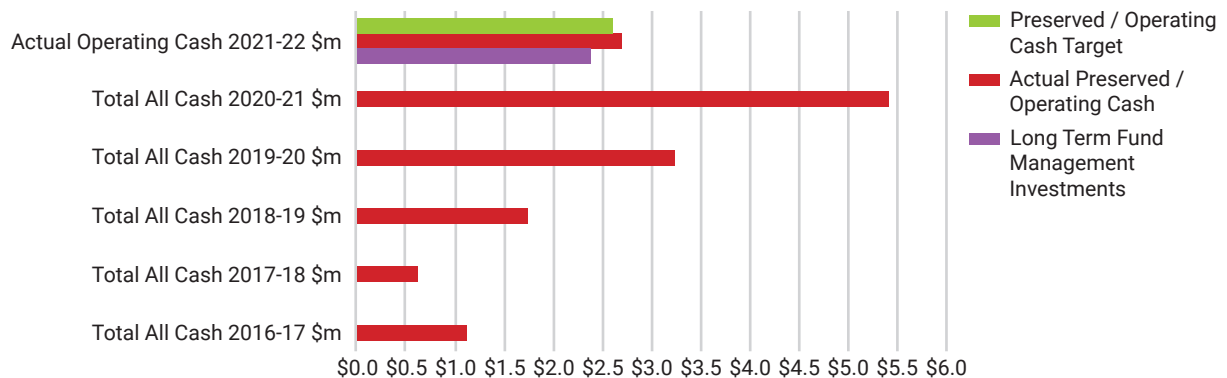




A graphical analysis over the past six years of all key expenses is shown opposite. Given the discussion above, it is not surprising to see the increase in employee benefit expenses. As a service industry, this cost will always be the organisation's major expense.

The key to our organisation's sustainability relies on our cash reserves, generated from operational and investment cash flows. These reserves provide the ability for Distinctive Options to reinvest in growth opportunities and expansion into viable support and employment services moving forward. To demonstrate the organisation's effectiveness in maintaining adequate cash and cash equivalent reserves, the following chart should be noted.

### Operating Cash & Long-Term Fund Investments

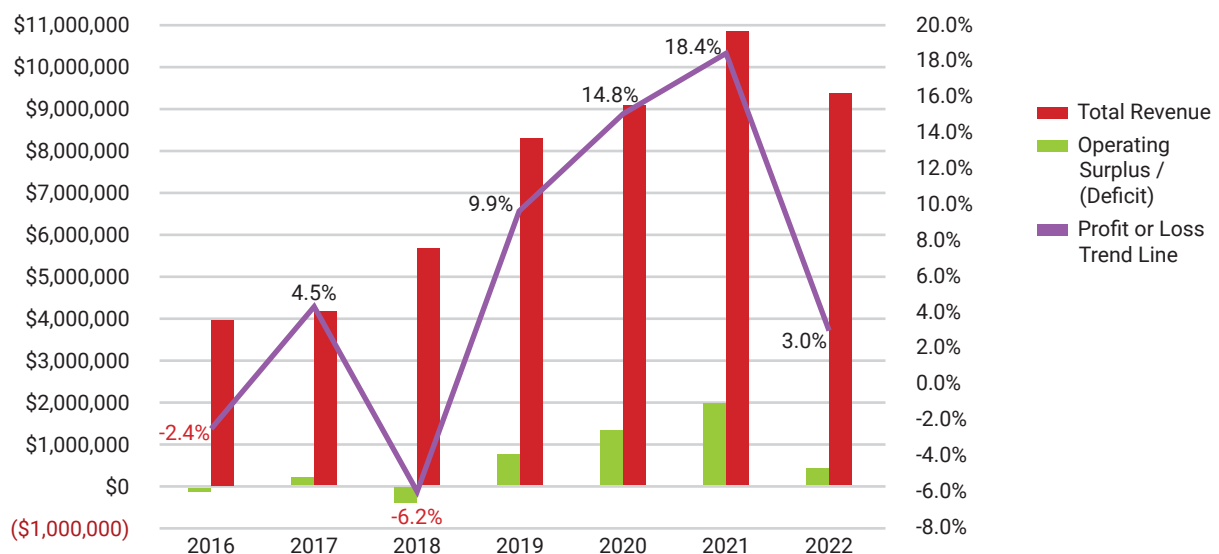


This chart highlights that in 2021-22 the organisation moved surplus cash into long-term fund investments. Distinctive Options appointed Koda Capital as our first external fund manager in February 2022. International volatility on financial markets has affected Fund Managed investments in the short-term.

The next graph highlights Distinctive Options trends in revenue and profitability, particularly over the past four years following organisational changes and refinements that were made from a 2018 restructure.

In this graph, years 2020 and 2021 include Job Keeper subsidies in total revenue. The results achieved in 2022 are very positive, indicating our alignment to delivering the best quality services and experiences.

### Total Revenue Compared to Profit or Loss



# Strategic Performance

The 2020-2022 Strategic Plan outlines the goals and direction of Distinctive Options during and post COVID's impact. The Plan supported the organisation to maintain operations during exceptional circumstances, and if possible, expand in line with our mission, vision and values. It includes specific outcomes for four key objectives, described on Page 7. A Balanced Scorecard measures our performance against the set Strategic goals. This tool allows the organisation to measure outcomes throughout the year, with updates made every month and provided to the Board for oversight.

Distinctive Options successfully achieved 80.3% of its short-term strategic priorities. Given the impact of COVID and other issues during the year, this is a very strong performance result. A few years ago the Board set its Scorecard benchmark performance result target to achieve equal to or greater than 72% for a satisfactory performance. The next section provides a detailed overview of our specific strategic goal results. Successful outcomes have a green square ■ to indicate the result, whilst partially achieved have an orange square ■. Outcomes not achieved have a red square ■.

## Be Resilient

Measures	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
<b>P1 - Develop agile, robust and accurate profit and cash flow forecast reporting systems</b>				
Business Central financial software delivers new Board profit or loss, financial position and cash flow forecasting reporting	24-Aug-21	Carried forward	23-Aug-21	■
Business Central software links deliver billing downloading efficiencies	≥50%	new	60.0%	■
<b>P2 - Innovation focus developing an E-Strategy for delivering services via electronic and digital media</b>				
Virtual reality equipment and software evaluated and costing ratified by A&F Committee	31-Jul-21	Carried forward	27-Jul-21	■
Virtual reality software developed for DO participants and staff training completed	15-Oct-21	new	09-Mar-22	■
Virtual reality equipment and software purchased and in operation	31-Oct-21	Carried forward	01-Feb-22	■
<b>P3 - Ensure acceptable risk appetite and tolerances support and drive organisational growth and development</b>				
Board and management team review risk appetites and tolerances for Strategic Plan review	22-Oct-21	17-Feb-21	07-Mar-22	■
Compliance with funding body reporting requirements	100%	100%	100%	■
Annual compliance with ACNC reporting requirements	31-Jan-22	02-Dec-20	24-Nov-21	■
Company ACNC details are up to date	15-Nov-21	25-May-21	24-Nov-21	■
Company responsible persons checked via ASIC	1-Nov-21	05-Mar-21	19-Nov-21	■
Participant and family satisfaction survey results	> 85%	98.3%	92.9%	■
Number of complaints received	< 10	10	6	■
Number of compliments received	> 50	48	82	■
Governance documents due for review are reviewed	100%	100%	85.0%	■
Interim QA audit to increase NDIS Scope of Registration	31-Jan-22	new	Progressing	■
NDIS and other sector issues provided to the Board	> 30	29	40	■
Review and adoption of Balanced Scorecard results for last year	31-Aug-21	25-Aug-20	12-Aug-21	■
Review and adopt Balanced Scorecard for current year	30-Sep-21	29-Sep-20	28-Sep-21	■

We achieved 84.4% of the 'Be Resilient' targets set. One policy and its associated procedure were deferred for a month or two, but they were reviewed in August 2022. The interim QA audit was delayed until July 2022 as Distinctive Options developed policies and procedures relevant to increasing our scope of registration for proposed new service offerings.

## Be Distinctive

Measures	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
<b>P4 - Collaborate with partners to develop new opportunities, diversifying income streams</b>				
New business partnerships or alliances to grow services	>2	2	3	■
New income streams from partnerships	>1	0	3	■
New service offerings from new business operations	>2	new	1	■
Heads of Agreement with Rosenthal signed for new SDA houses	31-Mar-22	new	24-May-22	■
<b>P5 - Recruit new Directors for Vacancies that fill specific skill gaps identified</b>				
Recruit new Directors to fill vacancies	>1	3	3	■
Key Director roles filled for 2022	07-Dec-21	22-Dec-20	07-Dec-21	■
Directors' median attendance at Board meeting	> 66%	100%	100.0%	■
Review and adoption of annual financial audit management report	31-Oct-21	22-Oct-20	26-Oct-21	■
Board completes review of director skill matrix to assess skills required for vacancies	31-Oct-21	29-Sep-20	23-Nov-21	■
<b>P6 - Recruit, nurture and maintain staff through an investment in training and development</b>				
Board completes CEO's annual performance review	4-Nov-21	22-Dec-20	08-Dec-21	■
Number of lost hours from reportable WorkCover injuries	< 1,000	570	0.00	■
DO's WorkCover premium rate	≤ 2.25%	2.2555%	2.0297%	■
Staff turnover ratio	≤ 12%	12.2%	23.3%	■
<b>P7 - Ensure marketing aligns with organisation vision, mission and values</b>				
Number of media & social media articles published	≥ 450	464	403	■
Marketing Plan strategy is reviewed	31-Mar-22	20-Aug-20	Progressing	■
Number of marketing / fundraising events held	≥ 1	0	1	■
Annual Reporting Award achieved	Gold	Gold	Gold	■
<b>P8 - Recruit expertise in fundraising and a high profile patron</b>				
Recruit a high profile patron	30-Apr-22	Deferred	Deferred	■

This year was another good performance, achieving 82.0% of the 'Be Distinctive' targets set. For those targets with ■ indicators, the following information is provided. In a year still affected by the pandemic, expansion into one new service offering, compared to the target of 2, is still a positive result. Distinctive Options' staff turnover ratio was much higher this year than in previous years. Workforces in general were all affected by the impact of COVID, including because some staff moved out of Victoria. Around 5% of our staff were against mandatory vaccinations. Other changes in work patterns all affected this indicator. Despite this, our organisation retained the majority of staff and were able to recruit new staff. The number of media articles was also affected by the prolonged Victorian shut down number 6. With a complete review underway into our next Strategic Plan, the final review of our Marketing Plan has been delayed. Additionally, the decision to recruit a high profile patron was deferred into next year as one of our Committees determines the outcomes and requirements for such a role.

## Be Sustainable

Measures	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
<b>P9 - Ensure liquidity and cash flows meet operational needs</b>				
Preserved / operating cash reserves	> \$2.6m	\$5.418m	\$2.678m	■
Long-term investments with Fund Manager	\$2.5m	new	\$2.328m	■
Current Ratio (liquidity)	> \$2.15 to \$1	\$3.93 to \$1	\$2.71 to \$1	■
Interest earned on short-term investments	> \$15,000	\$8,165	\$4,571	■
<b>P10 - Other Financial Targets and Ratios</b>				
Number of days cash is available	> 108 days	237 days	105 days	■
Debt collection: 61 to 90+ day debtors	≤ 10%	13.2%	18.6%	■
Underlying Result Ratio (profit margin)	> 4%	19.4%	3.0%	■
Return on Assets	≥ 5%	30.3%	3.6%	■
Debt Ratio	< 0.30	0.27	0.27	■
Number of successful financial or legal claims for more than \$5k against organisation	≤ 1	0	0	■
Unforseen financial risks indentified > \$20k affecting current budget	< 2	0	0	■
Employee Benefits as a % of total revenue	≤ 79%	72.7%	83.9%	■
Total Profit or Loss	\$447,920	\$2,000,025	\$277,017	■
<b>P11 - Take up new grants or tenders that can deliver short-term or long-term profits</b>				
Successful grant applications	> 8	6	0	■
Successful tenders	> 1	0	0	■
<b>P12 - Consider any mergers or acquisitions that add value to DO</b>				
Mergers or acquisitions considered	if any	0	2	■
<b>P13 - Ensure donors and other fundraising delivers maximum returns</b>				
Fund raising activities generate a return	> 25%	none held	none held	■
Income generated from fundraising, donations or bequests, and grants	≥ \$57k	\$45,901	\$3,010	■
Number of donations or bequests	> 6	4	21	■

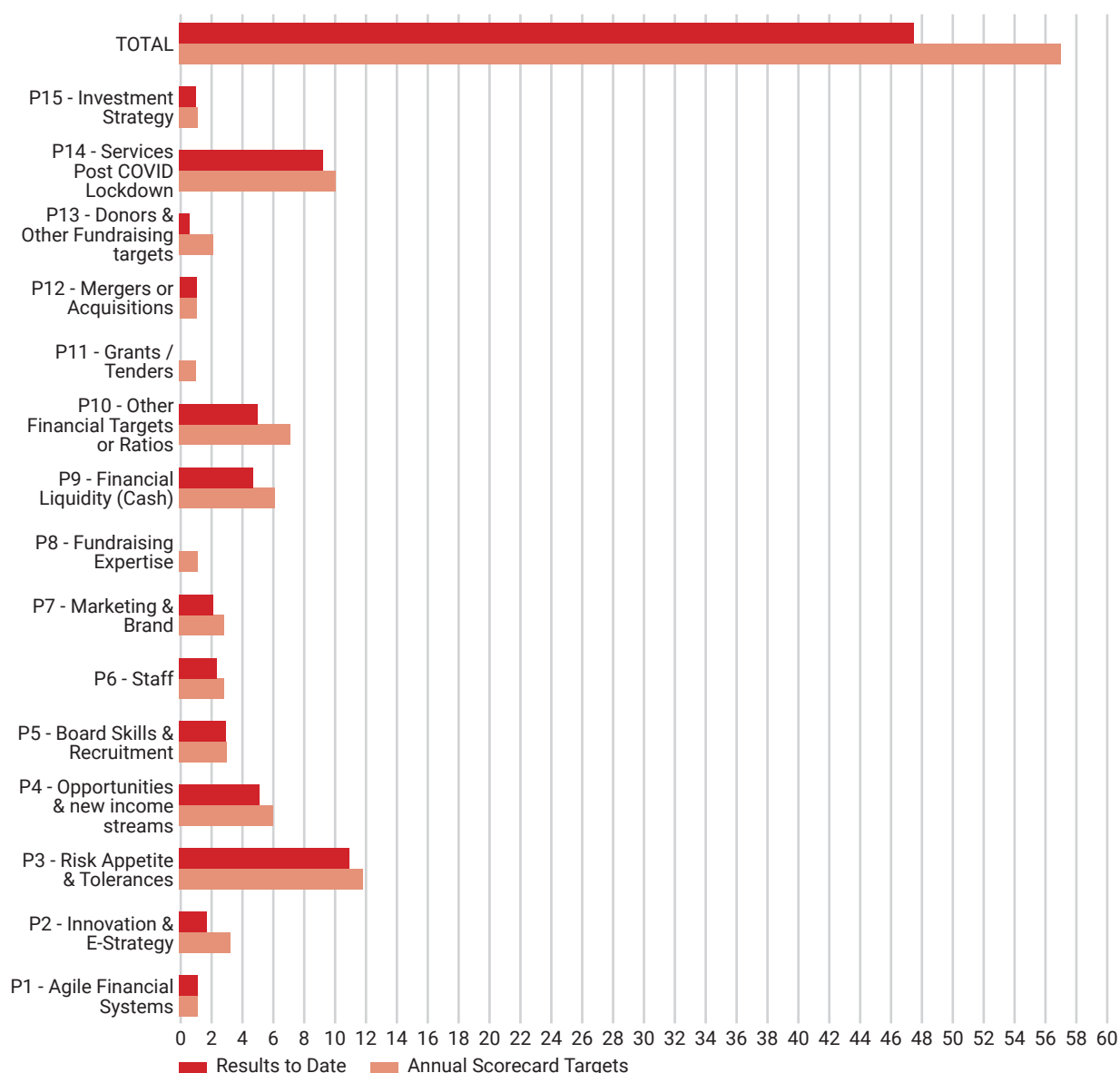
2021-2022 will be remembered for very trying circumstances caused by enforced lockdowns, without any financial Commonwealth Job Keeper subsidies. It was followed by the slow progress as the community came out of the grip of the pandemic. Under all these impacts, Distinctive Options has delivered a fair performance, achieving 67.1% of the 'Be Sustainable' targets set. There were a range of financial targets, including the organisation's short-term and long-term investments, impacted by both the pandemic and other global economic conditions. To still be able to deliver an operating profit under these circumstances has been a testament to strong financial management across the organisation.

## Be Progressive

Measures	Target	Last Year	This Year	Result
<b>P14 - Ensure rollout of group services post-COVID lockdowns does not lose participants</b>				
Net number of new people accessing support services	> 15	52	13	■
Number of new supported employees working	> 4	new	7	■
Average monthly 5 billable participant hours	> \$916.7k	\$724.2k	\$746.3	■
Average monthly participant support hours	> 15,232	14,861	15,538	■
<b>P15 - Long-term Investment Strategy</b>				
Investment Fund Manager approved and appointed by the Board	19-Oct-21	new	23-Nov-21	■

As alluded to above, the average monthly billable hours in dollars was affected by the impact of COVID lockdowns earlier in the year. Whilst noting there were only a handful of targets under this section in the short-term Strategic Plan, Distinctive Options achieved 92.7% of the 'Be Progressive' targets set, a very strong performance during a challenging year.

## Governance Balanced Scorecard - Short Term Strategic Priorities Status









# Services

*Participants enjoying themselves at a show in the Melbourne CBD during 2022.*

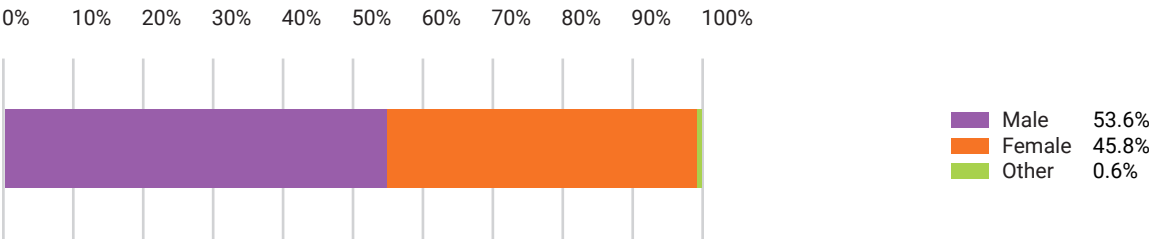


# Participants

Participant numbers grew slightly throughout 2021-2022, ending higher than the previous year. While a number count provides a guide, it is really the level of support hours provided, that drives services and the quality of supports provided. For this data see 'Service Delivery' in the next section, showing growth in the average monthly hours of support provided, as well as a comparison before and after the impact of the COVID pandemic.

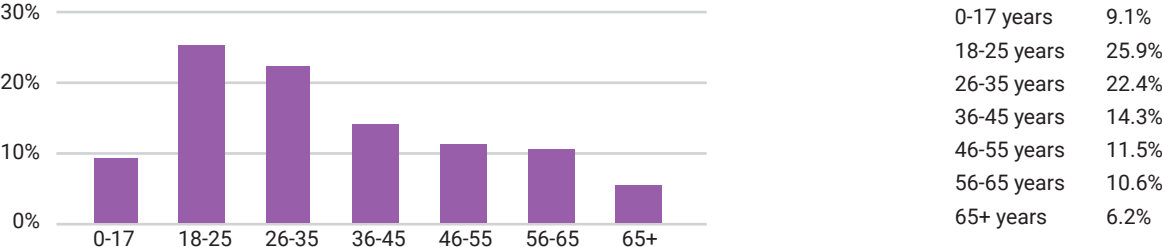
## Gender

Gender balances remained consistent with previous years, with Distinctive Options having more male than female participants, with some participants identifying as neither.



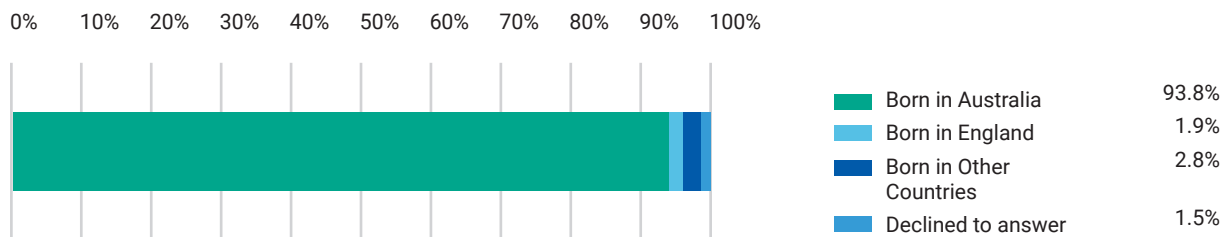
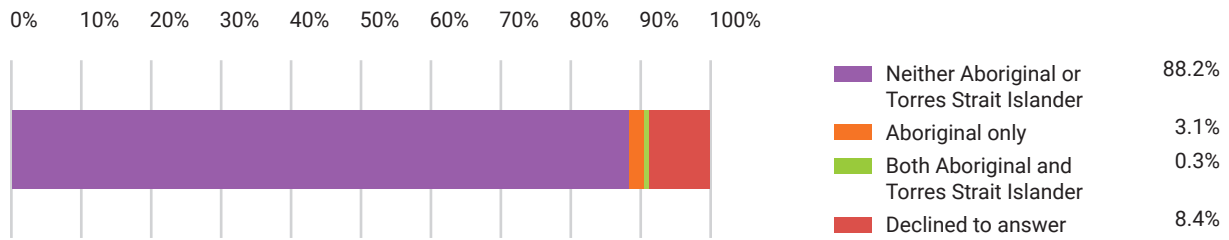
## Age Distribution

Age distribution stayed constant with minor fluctuations throughout the year. Once again, more than 50% of participants were aged 35 or younger.



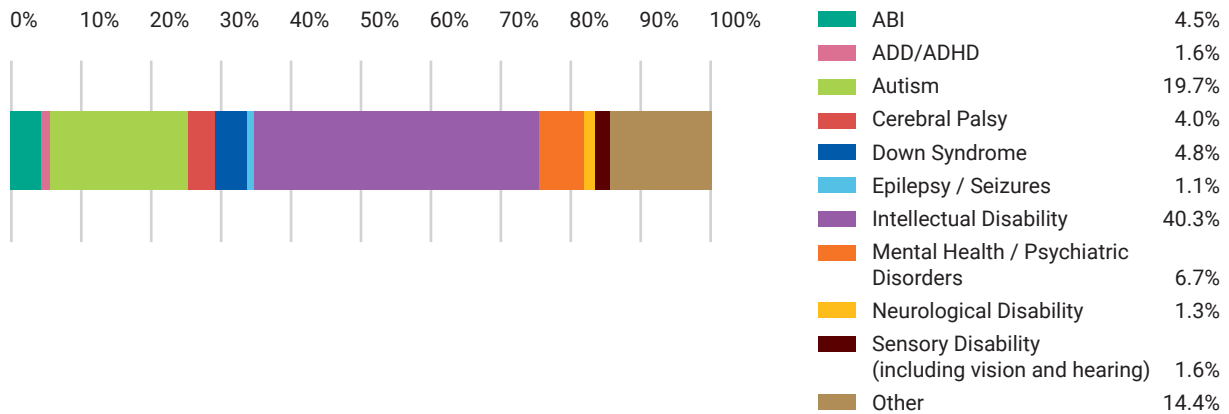
## Cultural Identity

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



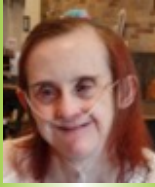
## Primary Disability

Like previous years, the primary disability for our participants is Intellectual Disability, followed by Autism and Mental Health/Psychiatric Disorders.



# Vale

**Gone, but not forgotten.**



**Heidi  
Eppingstal**

*- passed away in July 2021, aged 46. She received 1-on-1 service supports from Distinctive Options since 2002.*



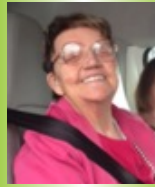
**Dawn  
Murray**

*-passed away in December 2021, aged 90. Dawn started at Distinctive Options in 1994 in a new support service arm of the organisation which was created for the mature aged participants who were mostly living in residential services.*



**Stephen  
Lunson**

*- was only supported by our 1-on-1 services for a short period of time, from May 2021. Sadly, Stephen passed away in January 2022, at the age of 68.*



**Beth  
Wilmot**

*- passed away in May 2022 at the age of 77. Beth began participating in group supports with Distinctive Options back in 1996. After moving to an aged care service, she began receiving 1-on-1 services from our organisation in 2015.*

No permission to use a photograph

**Lee  
Neophytou**

*- came to Distinctive Options while undergoing Palliative Care in November 2021. She was a positive woman with a great sense of humour. Sadly, Lee was not with Distinctive Options long, as she passed soon after in January 2022, aged 63. In that short time she made a big impression on her staff with her big personality. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.*



Digitally enhanced images of some of our DO Connect Sunbury participants

Andrea



Ben



Caitlin



Corinne



Dakota



Darren



David



David



Dean



Dom



Emma



Jack





Digitally enhanced images of some of our DO Connect Sunbury participants

Jessica



Josh



Katherine



Kiara



Kokyan



Kristeen



Lachlan



Lochlan



Luke



Monique



Peter



Robert





Digitally enhanced images of some of our DO Connect Sunbury participants

Samantha



Samantha



Sarah



Sarah



Steven



Talisha



Thomas



Tim



Travis



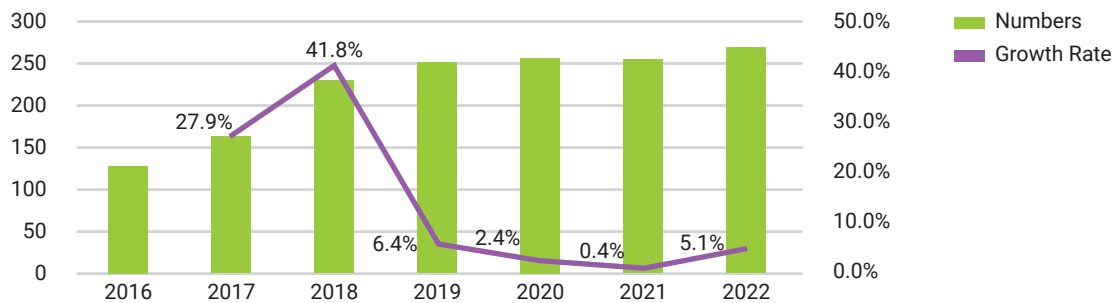
# Service Delivery

## Support Delivery Hours

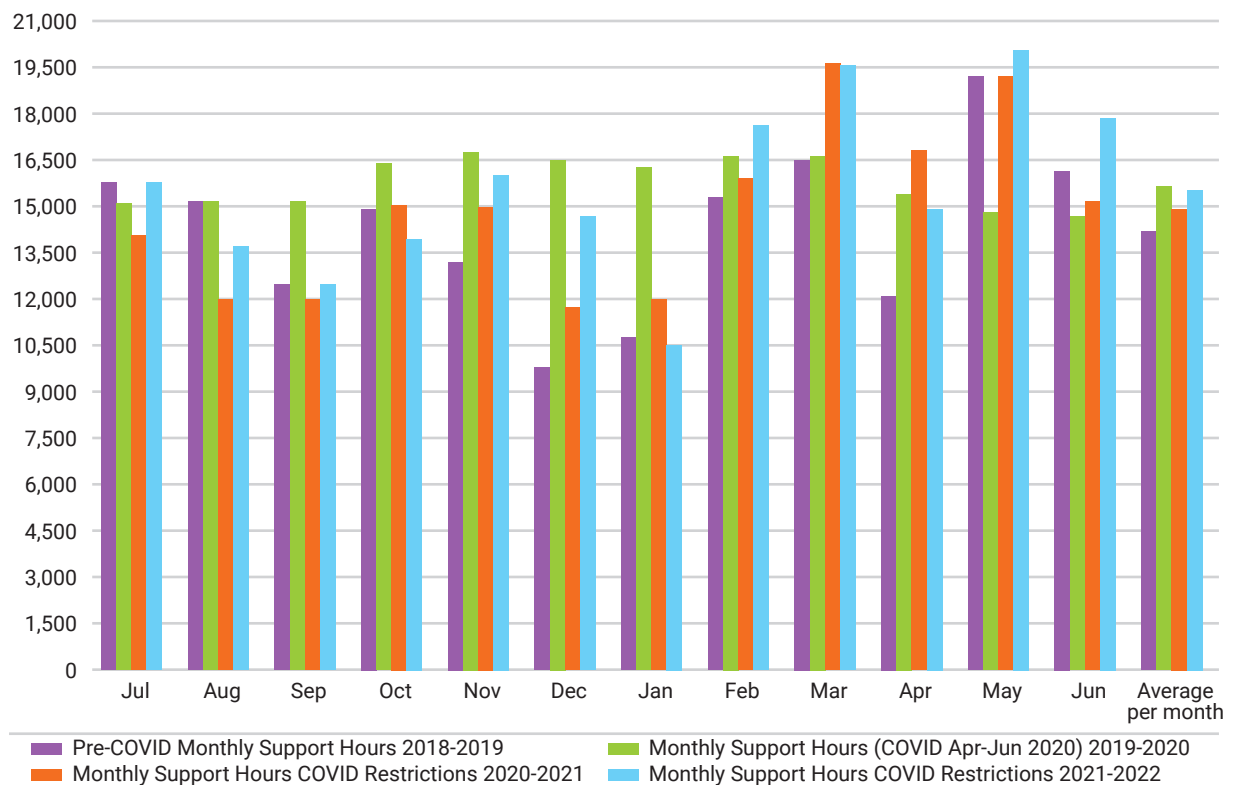
The fifth and sixth Victorian COVID lockdowns, plus some ongoing service restrictions, occurred during 2021-2022. These pressures continued to affect the organisation’s ability to deliver service support hours, particularly for people in group programs. Despite the pandemic restrictions on service and some initial staff shortages, Distinctive Options was able to grow both the number of support hours and the number of participants.

May 2022 saw the highest level of support hours recorded, as shown in the graph below. In another challenging year, this growth is a significant achievement and a useful indicator of Distinctive Options’ reputation with external NDIS Support Coordinators and in the communities that we offer services.

### Number of Participants Supported



### Participant Support Hours

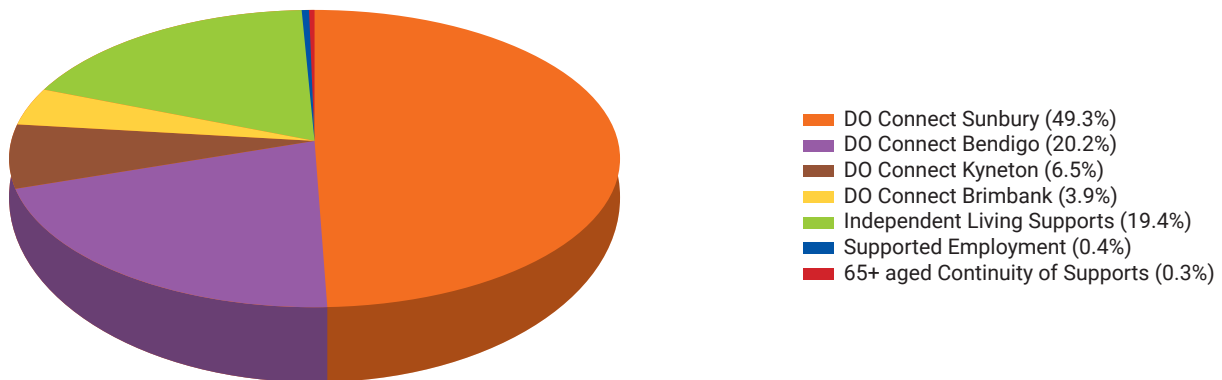


The impact of COVID lockdowns can be seen in the graph over the period July to October 2021, after which support hours generally increased as restrictions eased.

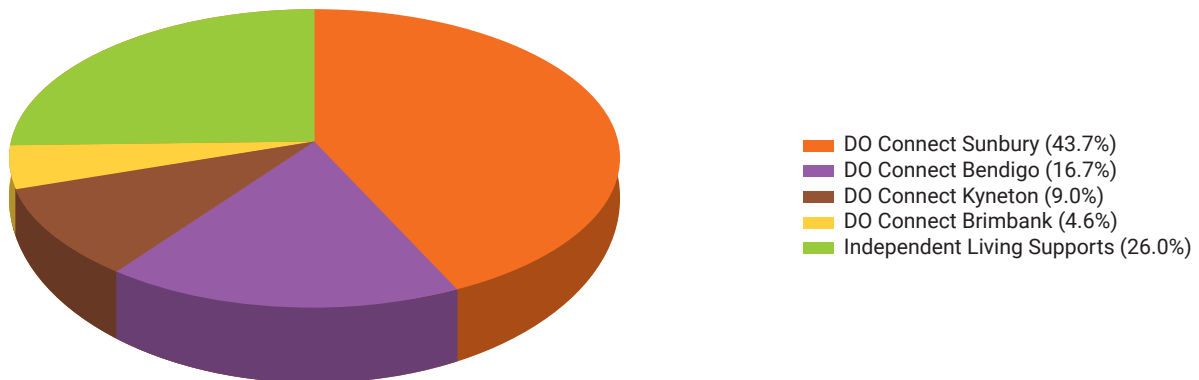
## Service Distribution

DO Connect Sunbury remains the largest Distinctive Options service both in participant numbers and support hours provided. It has been pleasing to watch the growth in our Bendigo operations, making it our second largest support service. In a very competitive Bendigo marketplace, this indicates the quality and innovative services offered from our site. Supported employment, currently at less than 1%, is a new addition to the suite of service options. It is expected to grow over the next couple of years as Distinctive Options offers more pathways for participants to access. In Brimbank, there is a waiting list of participants ready to join the Brimbank service once we move into the new Keilor Downs site located at the Aquatic and Wellness Centre.

### Support Hours as a % of Total Hours provided in 2021-2022



### Support Hours as a % of Total Hours provided in Previous Year



## Surveys

During the year, Distinctive Options conducted one annual Participant and Family Survey. Responses from the survey were very positive, generating a high satisfaction rating of 92.9%, across topics related to services, outcomes, quality, communication, management and feedback. Feedback provided through the survey give quantitative positive assurance that our services are delivering high quality, responsive supports to our participants.

## Human Rights

Distinctive Options is committed to supporting participants to be empowered in recognizing and preserving their rights and wellbeing. We design each of our services and supports to ensure high quality service provision delivers human rights and are always respected. Our approach is to empower participants through information, support and education so they are in the best position possible to understand their rights and options to make informed choices and decisions. Measures we take include providing accessible information to participants about their rights and responsibilities, being aware of cultural and communication needs, assisting people to always exercise their rights, and ensuring comprehensive systems are in place to identify and address any potential human rights breaches. There were no breaches to human rights identified in the previous twelve months.

### Michael J Hines Award

There were five winners of the Award this year:

- Cameron D, from DO Connect Kyneton
- Barry G, from Independent Living Supports
- Jessica O, from DO Connect Sunbury
- Tara S, from DO Connect Bendigo
- Nam T, from DO Connect Brimbank

Each participant demonstrated strength and dignity in the face of adversity throughout the past year. These five people bring the total number of recipients of this Award to twelve.

*Pictured below is Jessica from Sunbury, receiving her award from the CEO.*



### Rights and Responsibilities (R&R) Networks

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

Our organisation has three R&R network groups that run weekly or monthly advocacy sessions. Locations include Bendigo, Kyneton and Sunbury. First launched in 1998, the groups provide participants the opportunity to express their views and ideas, as well as to raise and problem-solve any issues they identify. The participants are responsible for managing each meeting and actioning any items raised. Regular agenda items include networking, community events, health and wellbeing, safety and personal business. R&R members also provide feedback on organisational issues, including document reviews and strategic planning. Guest presenters from the community also attend meetings to create opportunities for participants to ask questions and explore what is happening within their local communities.

## Bendigo R&R Group

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While it was difficult to run a Rights & Responsibilities meeting during the pandemic, the R&R group solved this challenge with a brilliant idea – outside meetings. They organised their monthly meeting in the DO (Wills St) car park so everyone could still attend, as well as safely social distance. They also went through any new government guidelines and make sure everyone had a good understanding of what was needed to keep everyone safe, such as masks, hand hygiene etc.

Moving to the new location at King St, the R&R Group took on the responsibility of making sure everyone was aware of the Fire Evacuation Plan. We have revisited this at every meeting so everyone has a good understanding.

Due to restrictions, opportunities for guest speakers and outings were limited so R&R instead focused on safety and on how best we could keep groups running. Participants' rights were at the forefront of the discussions. Participants had a say on how to be safe whilst at group supports and their rights during the pandemic lockdowns.

Bendigo R&R group is now getting back into the swing of things post COVID-19. We have been doing a lot of activities with everyone being involved, hosting a couple of fundraisers after deciding what was most important to the participants and what they would like to fundraise for. These were:

**Crazy hair day** - Everyone came in with crazy hair and participants and staff raised \$51 for the leukaemia foundation; **Hoodie up day** - The R&R group held a morning tea, everyone wore their hoodies and donated money to go towards 'Hoodie up for Autism'. All-up we raised \$90; and the **Good Friday Appeal** - The R&R group set a goal of \$200. After lots of brainstorming, an Easter hat making competition and Easter egg hunt was run and we raised \$301.

## Open Day

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The R&R group was involved in the planning of our open day in May for the new King St site, including delivering an Open Day Welcome speech and providing guided tours of the new building. It was a team effort to get the building organised and ready for the day and R&R played a key role in this.

## Having a Say Conference

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Participants from Distinctive Options, mostly members from our R&R groups, have been attending the 'Having a Say' conference for many years. VALID's 'Having a Say' conference supports individuals to find their voice, to speak up, to be heard, and to be respected. People enjoy attending the conference for a range of reasons. Some are keen advocates for people with disability and want to debate about issues, whilst others find the whole environment empowering.

Sadly, due to COVID restrictions, VALID's 2022 Having a Say Conference was cancelled. We look forward to the return of this important event in 2023.



## Independent Living Supports

Distinctive Options established its first 1-on-1 Outreach services in 2013. In 2021, these services were renamed Independent Living Supports (ILS). ILS is a regional service that provides various 1-on-1 independent living support activities to participants who do not access other Distinctive Options support services. ILS can include independent daily living skills, community access, social support, personal care, a range of physical activities, online support delivery options, cooking and more.

In the last twelve months following a thorough internal review, this team transitioned into a more effective ILS administrative structure, which better meets participant's and the organisation's needs under the NDIS. The review and operations realignment was designed to improve Distinctive Options quality services for ILS participants, families and staff. We achieved this by re-engineering administrative supports, acknowledging the significant differences between needs and outcomes for individualised 1-on-1 services compared to group supports. Our new team consists of Sarah Heriot (ILS Coordinator), Deborah Burns (Communication & Relationships Officer), and Michelle Harrison (Process & Accountability Officer).

The ILS Coordinator's role focusses on overseeing all ILS staff, staff performance, interviewing and on-boarding, as well as monitoring all ILS procedures and activities. The Communication & Relationships Officer's role assists with the intake process and staffing issues, while focusing on communication and relationships with participants and their families to maintain positive rapport. The new Process & Accountability Officer role has a focus on risk management, compliance, processes and procedures, in relation to our ILS participants.

In February 2022, the ILS team relocated into a new office at 36 Macedon Street, Sunbury, formerly used by the Port Phillip Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

The COVID pandemic presented all ILS team members and participants with some challenges. As was common throughout the sector, ILS struggled with staffing shortages from December 2021 to April 2022. HR led a re-energised recruitment drive resulting in the recruitment of 25 new support workers to the ILS team. As stressful as the pandemic affected period was, ILS managed to attract some high quality, diverse and valued support staff to our team. As the ILS team delivers supports and outcomes to participants, the new team remains a work in progress to generate expected organisational outcomes and performance.

## DO Connect Supports

DO Connect Sunbury was established in 1985; DO Connect Brimbank in 2015; DO Connect Bendigo in 2016; and DO Connect Kyneton in 2017. These services provide a range of supports for various group activities and individualised supports, including home and independent living skills, sport and recreation, photography, art, literacy and numeracy, rights and responsibilities, advocacy, travel training, community access, radio shows, on-line services, physical fitness, survival skills, communication, social skills, other additional extended hours or after hours supports, supported holidays, volunteering and more!

## DO Connect Bendigo

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Bendigo has had many changes over the course of 12 months. The first big change was an internal administrative restructure which began in December 2021. This new structure introduced three revised key roles to oversee services:

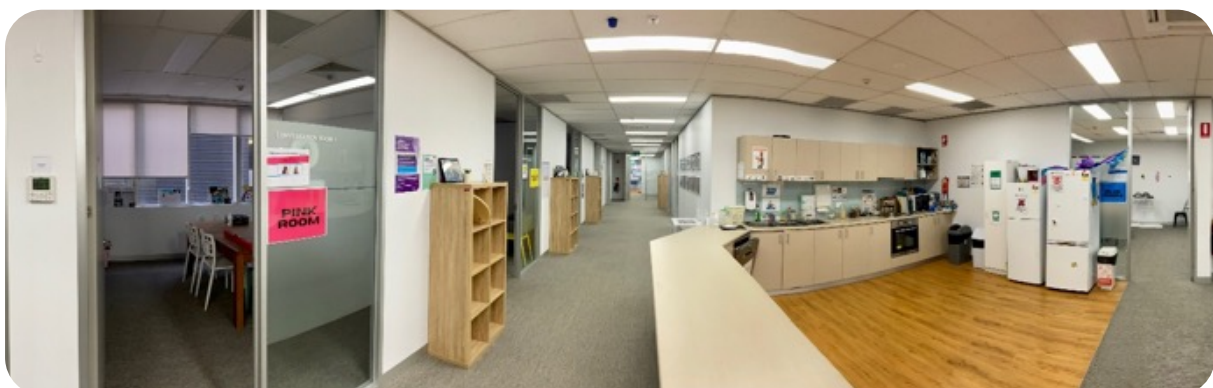
- **Bendigo Coordinator** - role created to oversee and streamline all support services (group and individualised supports) in Bendigo. Tara Boag was appointed to oversee the continued smooth running of all Bendigo support services.
- **Process and Accountability Officer** - Jan Loescher is an excellent asset for this position and has brought her extensive practice knowledge and planning skills to this important new role.
- **Individual Support Supervisor** - Beau McGrath oversees the day to day running of Individualised Supports (IS). Beau has brought energy and expertise to the Bendigo team, plus he is respected by participants and staff.

### Change of Bendigo location

With the restructure came the opportunity for a change of location for administration and service delivery. Our location in King St Bendigo is newer, larger, and is within the Bendigo CBD. All Connect services (group and 1:1 support) moved to this location in January 2022. The merger between the former Albion and Wills St sites into King St meant that the new larger site provides room to continue to grow DO Bendigo Services. Bendigo had fantastic assistance from its highly committed and enthusiastic participants and support team.

We celebrated the above achievements by working with the Business Development team to hold an Open Day in May 2022, which was a great success with a lot of fun had by all who attended. Participants from IS and Group supports assisted on the day and provided Bendigo Connect with excellent support and help.

*Pictured below is a view from the back of our new King St site through to the front entrance.*



## Group Supports

While COVID still presented hurdles for Bendigo support services, the group team have demonstrated the Values of Distinctive Options - 'We are distinctive and innovative by offering choice and control, by providing unique experiences, by helping people live the life they want, and by being the best in all we do'.

Group support participants and supporters have been very resilient and supportive during our move into King St. Through communication and consultation with participants, we were able to fully realise the advantages of our new location and create a warm and inviting environment. Art Program participants created a welcome space at the entrance and a 'Tree of Positivity' (pictured below) which they contribute to monthly.



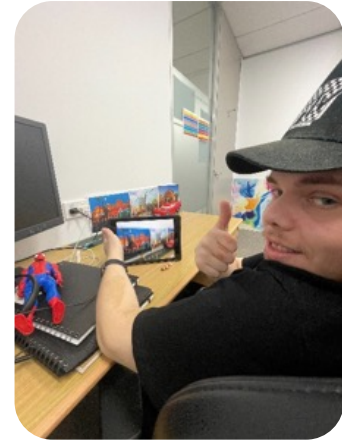
Group Supports have now settled into the new location and are going strong. We have welcomed new participants to Group Support services with each participant bringing their own views and voices to Bendigo programs.

Some program highlights included:

- Participants continue to be involved in our R & R group. Participants also attend the Self Advocacy Resource Unit group providing their views and opinions on matters that are important to their daily lives along with learning self-advocacy skills. These meetings occur weekly at the Bendigo Library.
- A new Bendigo Men's Health Group started in June 2020 and continues to grow. A group of participants volunteer at the Long Gully Community Garden and attend monthly visits to DIY classes at Bunnings Kangaroo Flat.
- Bendigo Ladies Health group focuses on women's health and provides the opportunity for women of all ages to engage in the community whilst learning about health and wellbeing.
- Digital Art Program. This year group supports started a digital art program. Participants work on their own individual projects and have now started to create their own stories and bring them to life on the computer screen.



*Some of DO's Bendigo R&R group members with staff at the Gravel Hill garden project.*



*Jarred is pictured developing his story via digital media.*

### **Individualised Supports (IS)**

COVID-19 presented challenges for Bendigo IS services. Support workers showed their ability to respond and adapt to unforeseen shift cancellations due to participants testing positive to COVID. In addition, staff were able to build new relationships with participants and families as staff were required to work with a vast range of new participants. IS remained steady during the pandemic period with supports starting to increase at the end of March 2022.

Staffing experience and capacity to work with a diverse range of participants has greatly increased due to the Bendigo restructure. This has increased the reliability for Distinctive Options as short notice shift cancellations are now more easily filled with different suitable staff.

Bendigo IS currently has 56 participants receiving differing types and levels of supports. A large volume of existing participants increased their support hours and are engaging in activities that are helping them work towards Plan goals and achievements. Another positive sign has seen IS participants starting to engage within Distinctive Options and attend internal events and community based programs. Participants helped greatly by promoting the Open day for the new site among their own networks in the Bendigo community.

Once pandemic restrictions were eased/removed, participants were able to resume working towards their goals with full access and renewed energy. Staff have supported participants to network and make connections in the Bendigo community which has presented volunteering opportunities for some of our IS participants such as at the Great Stupa, and with the Salvation Army. Easing of restrictions meant some participants were able to go on their planned respite or supported holiday. Most of our IS participants have now returned to normal and we continue to make connections within the Bendigo community for future events.

Distinctive Options has seen growth and our networks have increased all thanks to everyone's dedication, hard work and positivity.



# DO Connect Brimbank

What a year 2021/2022 has been, with multiple lockdowns and changes in the Brimbank community. Our DO Brimbank participants have done an excellent job adjusting to the changes and challenges that the past year has thrown their way! Getting back into the groove of our normal day program activities, the DO Brimbank participants were more than happy to continue to be able to access the community once again, working out at the local gym, going swimming at the local pool and even brainstorming new programs as a group. All participants should be SUPER proud of their achievements over the past year!

Some recent achievements over the past year include cooperating with the local Salvation Army hub to bring some old garden beds back to life. These gardens were unfortunately neglected during lockdown and our participants rejuvenated them so that they now can grow fresh produce and harvest vegetables to be used to make ready-made meals for those who might need them.

Many of our participants have been working very hard on their community access skills, practicing how to get to and from the local libraries, community and shopping centres and could even catch the bus to and from some locations with their eyes closed!

During lockdown, participants were encouraged to work towards their daily living skills such as preparing easy to make meals, creating a "lockdown cookbook" which participants still use to this day!

Early in 2022, two participants had the opportunity to be a part of the inaugural DO Triathlon, which involved weekly training sessions supported by Brian Millet over an eight week block. This concluded with them participating in a swim, run and bike riding event. To celebrate their efforts, they were even presented with medals at a "thank-you breakfast" ceremony hosted by Hume City Council.

With our group service operating from the new Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre hub late in 2022, participants are more than excited about this move. They will be able to use the fantastic facilities and use our space, creating new programs and activities we are able to run from this hub!

*Pictured below is Edward demonstrating his cooking prowess!*



*Participants Daniel and Nam with their Hume triathlon medals.*





## DO Connect Kyneton

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Our Kyneton services were established with the clear ethos that participants would be supported to always be able to engage with the community. Indeed, DO services at all locations are committed to the principle of inclusion, representation and self-advocacy at all levels.

By the end of 2021, it was decided that the Jennings St site was no longer required. Only a small number of participants from the Kyneton service were accessing this building. We soon identified the benefits of operating entirely in the community, although it took time for all of us to adjust to the new norm.

Happily, the opportunities for community engagement continue to grow and perhaps our most fruitful collaboration has been with the dedicated team at Kyneton Community House (KCH). Kat Mansbridge, the Education & Projects Coordinator at KCH, established the accredited Skills for Life course for DO participants to identify vocational goals and build workplace skills.

*Pictured seated is Kat Mansbridge with Alex Graham in the background from KCH.*

Six participants attended the course, building skills in financial literacy, workplace relationships and gaining a nationally accredited First Aid certificate. Together they completed a fundraising project for a charity of their choice: Loki's Lodge Animal Welfare Centre.



Donations from local businesses were sought and gratefully received. Ross Kilner deserves a particular mention for his role in selling hundreds of raffle tickets around town. Three participants then signed up as volunteers at Loki's Lodge, providing vital support to the animals in need.

Other participants now volunteer with the horticultural team at KCH on Mondays and Fridays. While also studying permaculture, they worked throughout winter in 2022 to transform the barren ground into a green oasis in preparation for the Good Food Hub. Food grown on site will be used to cook delicious meals for the weekly community lunch. With qualified chef and trainer Alex Graham on board, this exciting venture provides ongoing opportunities for participants to make valuable contributions to the local community.

Cameron is one of the volunteers, who is a recipient of a Michael J Hines award in 2022. Throughout the pandemic lockdown, Cameron demonstrated great strength in adversity. He is an outspoken member of our self-advocacy Rights and Responsibilities (R&R) group. In 2021 he and the other R&R group members participated in two meetings with Macedon Ranges Shire Council, advocating for better public facilities around Kyneton as part of the Council's Disability Action Plan. These included footpath improvements and public toilets at the new community exercise park.

*Pictured opposite is Cameron enjoying himself on a community excursion to Lauriston Reservoir, located on the Coliban River, 9 km from Kyneton.*

DO Connect Kyneton continues to provide Individualised support in the home or community for a number of participants in Kyneton and surrounding areas. Supports include personal care, household tasks, attending appointments and community access.



Public transport in the Macedon Ranges is limited, and staff provide transport as needed. Our dedicated support workers travel to work from across the Macedon Ranges and beyond, with

some residing in Kyneton itself. We thank our support workers for their flexibility in adapting to changes as they arise and in line with participant's needs.

Long term Individualised Supports (IS) Kyneton Coordinator Melanie East took leave in January, with Alison LaVerdiere ably stepping up to replace her two days a week. Also assisting was Taryn Schneider. Taryn is a dedicated and caring professional.

Sadly, in May 2022 Distinctive Options lost one of our most long-standing participants, Elizabeth (Beth) Wilmott. Beth enjoyed singing old time songs and dancing at Morning Melodies. People who knew her well said *"...at times you couldn't tell that she had a hip replacement! In her downtime at home, or in art rooms, she would be seen drinking tea, or coffee and sneaking in a biscuit. She would knit and sing at the same time. Beth had a sweet tooth and enjoyed eating tea cakes. She had a sense of humour, laughing and clapping her hands often. When Beth made her mind up about something, she was very determined. She was always well dressed, respectful and always had to be on time for everything..."*

Let's hope we can all find time in our lives for a chat, a biscuit and a cup of tea.

## DO Connect Sunbury

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DO Sunbury Connect consists of Group Support, Individual Support within the home or the community, Group Holidays and our newest services, Short Stays and Extended Hours Events. These new services offer participants the opportunity to access events and short-term getaways with friends, in and around Melbourne.

After COVID restrictions were eased and community engagement was possible, our focus was transitioning groups from an in-centre approach to better utilising facilities in the community in line with preferences expressed by participants. This alleviated the need for extra space within our buildings to align with the company's COVIDSafe Plan, however it brought its own challenges because it meant a higher demand for extra staff.

With a year of so much change, participants and staff were passionate about giving back to people and groups in need. We raised over \$1,600 for a number of causes including, the Good Friday Appeal, the Tri State Games, a local family who tragically lost both parents, and a local baby boy diagnosed with CMV. Items were also donated by some local businesses and were made into hampers for the Salvos.

Notable community involvement included:

- Participants attended a 'Defend Our NDIS' rally in Melbourne
- Community Leaders delivered a presentation at Bullengarook Secondary Campus of the Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School about their personal achievements since attending D.O (pictured opposite).
- Participants trained for and participated in the D.O. Triathlon
- Radio Chat interviewed Rebecca Cowan, director of the Good Friday Appeal



Art has been an activity enjoyed by many participants, especially as it was still able to continue throughout lockdowns. Our large, collaborative art project, 'Freedom', completed during 2020, was proudly displayed in 2021 at the Hume Global Learning Centre.

Multi-media portraits of participants that were also created during lockdowns by staff member Jason Mills and participants, were displayed for 2021 International Day of People with Disability at the Sunbury Square shopping centre. The portraits now hang in the hallways of Building 1, as a part of the recent renovations, with an expansion and improvement of our art space, freshly painted walls, new signage and new garden beds.

*Pictured opposite is Stephan, proudly pointing to his portrait.*

With this new enthusiasm for the arts, we have this year welcomed our first registered volunteer, Kay Beale (a former D.O. employee), who now comes in on Mondays to teach pottery and ceramics.

With an eventful year behind us and services now being able to operate to their full potential, we look forward to seeing what direction our participants lead the service for the remainder of 2022.









# Employees

*Bendigo participant Dave and staff member Andrew hard at work during the new site's Open Day in May 2022*





# Our Executive Management Team

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



**Ernie Metcalf**

## **Ernie Metcalf – Chief Executive Officer**

Ernie has led Distinctive Options since November 2016, guiding the organisation firstly through the NDIS transition and now the impact of the global pandemic. He holds a Master of Business Management, a Graduate Diploma in Accounting, plus qualifications in total quality management and internal auditing. Ernie has many years of experience in the disability sector coupled with management experience in local government, the water industry and in the for-profit business sector. In his role as CEO, Ernie is responsible for the organisation's entire operations and reports directly to the Chairperson and Board of Directors. He oversees development and growth, strategic planning and leadership. Ernie holds membership to the International Initiative for Disability Leadership (IIDL), National Disability Services (NDS), the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and is an Associated Member of the Institute of Community Directors Australia (AMICDA). He is also a founding member of a Disability Services CEO Best Practice Network.



**Rick Dunn**

## **Rick Dunn – Executive Manager Support Services**

Rick has worked for Distinctive Options since November 1998, providing significant expertise on disability issues and best practice service provision. He holds a Bachelor of Education, Master of Education (Psychology), Diploma of Business Management (Community Services) and Advanced Diplomas in Project Management and Human Resource Management. Rick is responsible for a variety of key management tasks at Distinctive Options, including operations management, strategic advising and general oversight of each of the service areas of the organisation. He acts as the Authorised Reporting Officer for NDIS issues at Distinctive Options. Rick is directly accountable to the CEO for the performance of support services. He is a member of our peak body's NDIS Issues and Sector Reform Committee, NDS National Quality and Safeguarding Community of Practice, Disability Day Services Community of Practice & Victorian In-Home Supports Providers Community of Practice. He is also the Community Co-opted Member of School Council for Sunbury & Macedon Ranges Special Development School.





**Alma Tuazon**

### **Alma Tuazon – Chief Financial Officer**

Alma became Distinctive Options' first CFO in September 2018. She provides financial guidance including monitoring the ever changing NDIS funding model. Her role not only analyses and reviews financial data, reporting on financial performance, preparing budgets and monitoring expenditure and costs, but also delivers a range of other corporate service operations. Alma provides financial information to the Board and other stakeholders, ensuring the organisation's financial health and security. She holds a Bachelor in Accounting and a Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Finance and Investments and has worked in the industry for over 30 years. She has experience in quality and risk management, marketing, IT and business development, and is accountable to the CEO for all corporate service functions.



**Paul Pearman**

### **Paul Pearman – Business Development Manager**

Appointed in October 2021, Paul joined Distinctive Options as their first-ever Business Development Manager. Paul oversees all new social enterprise business initiatives within the Distinctive Options Pathways programs. In addition, he is directly responsible for the organisation's brand positioning and presentation. Paul has a wealth of experience leading small to large businesses for over twenty years. Paul is an advocate for the community and a purpose-driven collaborator. He is directly accountable to the CEO for the performance of business development.

# Key Personnel

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

## Corporate Services



**Melanie Mays - NDIS Intake Coordinator**  
*Advanced Diploma in Business Management*

Melanie commenced her career at Distinctive Options a little over 12 years ago. She originally was employed as student placement, but this soon evolved into a support worker role with Distinctive Options back in 2009. Melanie would support individuals in Sunbury, including driving and organising group holidays to locations such as Sydney and Moama.

Over time, and with the support from some brilliant mentor's, Melanie followed a path into communication, becoming Sunbury's Communication Coordinator in 2012. This enabled her to provide input to management around an ultimate goal of building capacity within the service. It would create sustainable, inclusive communication environments that enable the maximum participation of people with communication difficulties in their programs, as well as in their community involvement and in their general life aspirations. This pathway then lead Melanie into the interest of supporting individuals with behaviours of concerns and management strategies.

Following maternity leave in 2016, Melanie returned to supporting individuals within programs before filling in for the Coordinator, whilst Elena Cotchin was on maternity leave. Melanie again took maternity leave in 2019, returning early in 2020 just prior to COVID. She took up a new role as Assistant Coordinator for Sunbury Groups. With the onset of COVID, Melanie worked on the launch of D.O. Online, ultimately managing this online service during the pandemic. This online service delivered up to 600 hours online support to those with significant disabilities whilst they were home isolating. Melanie also had experience assisting the HR Business Partner with staff training and internal auditing along with playing a part in the project team supporting the development of accommodation services for those with disabilities.

At the beginning of 2022 Melanie took over the NDIS Intake Coordinators role, and she is continuing to grow within this role.

## DO Connect Bendigo



**Beau McGrath – Individualised Supports Coordinator**  
*Certificate IV in Disability*

Beau started his career in the health field by first completing his Cert III in Individualized Support, starting work at Bendigo Health. He joined Distinctive Options in August 2021 as a support worker wanting to help support people with disabilities and to assist people to live life to their fullest.

An opportunity arose to assist the Bendigo Coordinators in the office one day a week. Beau’s excellent interpersonal skills which he developed in his roles as a Porter and a department Supervisor at the Bendigo Health hospital were quickly recognized by the Bendigo Coordinators.

Beau was successful in applying for role of Individual Support Supervisor and was appointed IS Supervisor in January 2022. He worked alongside Jan Loescher and Tara Boag during the transition period. Beau was an integral part of the Bendigo restructure and was a major support to the Bendigo Coordinator, staff and participants with transitioning into the new building.

Beau is very passionate about his role and takes great pride in his work ensuring he does his very best to meet the support needs of the participants, families and support workers.

## DO Connect Kyneton



**Taryn Schneider – Acting Team Leader**  
*Certificate IV in Mental Health*

Taryn first joined the company in November 2021 after approaching Distinctive Options to complete her work placement. Following the completion of this placement, she was offered a role as a Disability Support Worker. Taryn previously worked with several companies from administration/billing analyst and lastly a Customer Relations department dealing primarily with customer disputes & resolutions.

Taryn then focused on motherhood, after which, she decided a career change was on the cards. Taryn’s area of interests are mental health so she completed a Cert IV in Mental Health, with the focus of gaining employment within that sector. However, after joining Distinctive Options Taryn found that working with participants with disabilities and mental health barriers is where her true passion lies. In May 2022, she stepped up into the role of Acting Team Leader for Kyneton services delivered by DO Connect Kyneton.

## DO Connect Sunbury



**Louise Bottomley – Administration Coordinator**  
*Certificate III in Home and Community Care*

Louise is the first person you will see as you walk into the building of DO Connect Sunbury, and often the first person you will speak to on the phone. She began at Distinctive Options in May 2011 as a Disability Support Worker after working at Peter Mac Hospital for 20 years as the Medical Records Manager.

Louise worked in all areas within programs, from Cooking to Swimming and 1:1 Support. She was a Program Advisor to several participants, which involved building a rapport with their families and supports, ensuring their information was kept up to date and relaying this information to all support staff.

In January 2015, Louise began a new role as the Administration Officer, after the previous incumbent moved on to establish the Outreach 1:1 service, now known as Independent Living Supports. Today, Louise's role now includes a wide variety of responsibilities, such as filtering phone calls, approving staff's timesheets on HR3, daily cash handling, invoices, fleet management and rostering. Louise took over the Individualised Support Services for participants who attend group services in Sunbury in April 2021. This has been a successful venture and she finds great satisfaction in creating new opportunities for participants and extra shifts for staff. The program has allowed participants to have the chance to see their favourite AFL team play at the MCG, visit the gym weekly and to stay home independently when their families go on holidays.

Louise says that every day at Distinctive Options is different and she enjoys the relationships she has with individual participants and hearing about their lives as they pass by reception. She has no plans of moving on and would like to stay at Distinctive Options until retirement.

## Some Highlighted Support Workers



**Gwen Garner (DO Sunbury)**

Gwen Garner started with Distinctive Options in 2015 as a student on placement while studying Certificate IV in Disability. She continued on as a support worker in DO Connect Sunbury, as she loved getting to know all the participants and building strong connections with them.

In 2019, Gwen pioneered a program called 'Acts of Kindness'. One project this group took part in was driving to local shopping centres and offering to assist community members with pushing their trolleys and unloading their groceries into their car. This help was well received by the elderly and those with small children. We would receive many messages thanking the group for their assistance. The Acts of Kindness group also regularly met at the St Andrews Drop in Centre with community members and assisted the seniors with serving cups of tea and biscuits, as well as helping with the dishes and packing up. Relationships were formed and the group was always warmly welcomed. Another task the group would complete was visiting Careworks to pick up any unneeded food. They would then deliver the food to Animal Land farm in Diggers Rest for the animals to enjoy.

Gwen says she has never had a job that is so fulfilling and interesting, she loves the diversity and honesty of the participants. She enjoys the task of creating programs around participants' individual interests and goals. She hopes to be able to make a positive difference to their days and wants to be remembered for making them laugh. Gwen also enjoys the friendships formed with other staff members, some continuing outside of the workplace. Coordinators note that Gwen is always willing to lend a helping hand. She goes above and beyond in her role at Distinctive Options and is a valued staff member.



**Sharon Norris (ILS)**

Sharon Norris commenced working with Distinctive Options in November 2019 as a support worker in Individual Living Support, previously working in Retail Management. She supports participants with varied needs to reach their goals. This includes daily living and independence, personal care and community access, going to parks, cinemas, personal shopping and cafes. Sharon is passionate about building trusting, caring relationships with participants and working with them to reach their goals.

She enjoys working in this field, meeting new people and strives to leave a positive impact on those individuals who she supports. Sharon stated that it means a lot to her to be acknowledged in this Report.





### Johnny T (DO Kyneton)

Johnny T has been working as a disability support worker for just over a year now. He previously provided support in a live-in rehabilitation facility for people with mental health and substance abuse issues, so he has experience in multi-disciplinary areas.

Johnny enjoys working with our participants and strives to support them in achieving their goals. He is always suggesting new experiences for them and encourages social and community interactions.

Johnny says his role as a support worker is rewarding and he always like to do *'just that little bit more'* to ensure our participants feel safe, supported and have a good belly laugh. He likes to share his love of music, outdoors/nature and bad dad jokes with everyone he supports and works with.



### Caitlin Smith (DO Bendigo)

Caitlin Smith is passionate about people's independence and rights. She believes that it is very important to support self-advocacy in disability and encourage people to achieve their full potential. "I love supporting someone to become more independent and confident in their own abilities".

This belief drove Caitlin to enrol in a Diploma of Community Services to further increase her knowledge. Caitlin has a wonderfully positive outlook on life and she always looks at situations from different angles to ensure goals and achievements are met.

She completed her Certificate IV in Community Services and Disability at Bendigo TAFE and previously worked in retail and hospitality. Caitlin then started working for Distinctive Options in Individual Support Services in 2017. "I enjoy working at Distinctive Options and feel fully supported not only as a support worker but as a person as well".

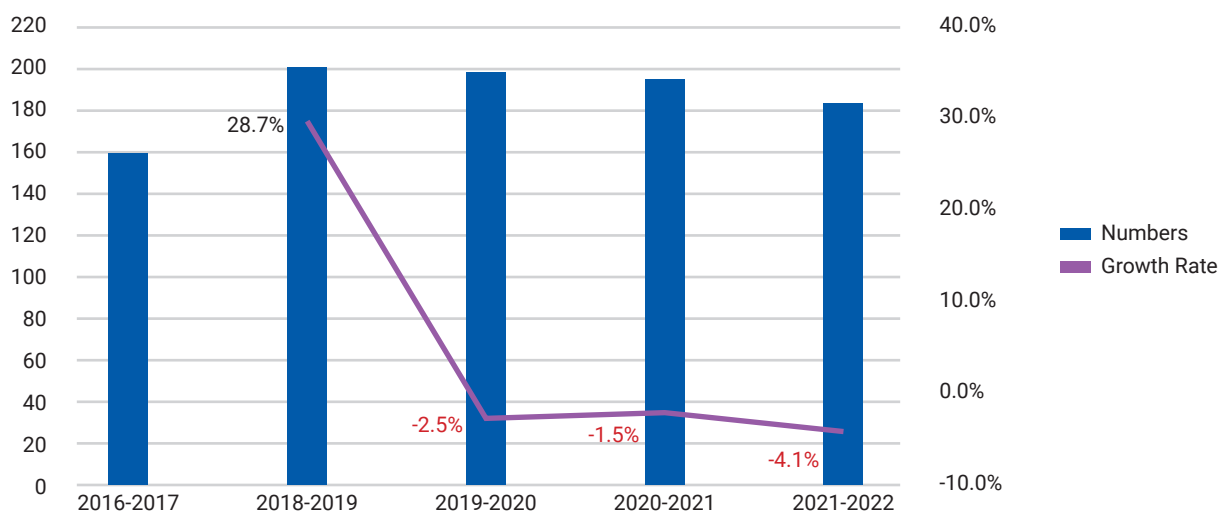
# Workforce

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

## Staff Profile

We concluded the year with 186 employees, only slightly lower than last years' number. As at 30 June 2022, our full time equivalent employees equated to 85.0. Again, this is only marginally lower than the pre-COVID February 2020 result of 93.8, indicating that Distinctive Options has largely retained its workforce following the impact of the pandemic. The staff turnover ratio for permanent employees in 2022, as shown and discussed in the Scorecard data, was significantly higher than previous years. There is no industry data currently available to benchmark our performance against, however, we anticipate there was a higher turnover ratio across the sector recorded for the year. In the "Great Attrition Report" by McKinsey & Co, dated 13 July 2022, data from respondents who quit their jobs between April 2020 and April 2022, found 17% did not return to the workforce, 48% moved to a different industry, and 35% took a new job in the same industry. Additionally, 65% of respondents did not return to the same industry. "Some industries are disproportionately losing talent, others are struggling to attract talent, and some are grappling with both".

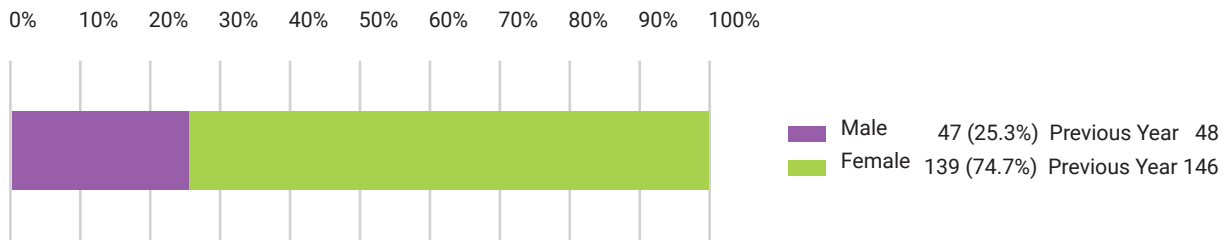
## Staff Numbers



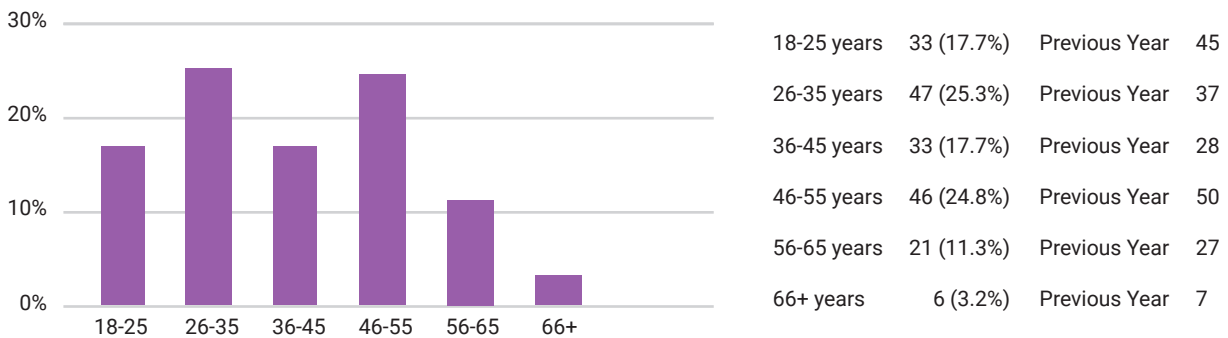
## Staff Demographics

Distinctive Options' program to retain our staff saw growth in the number of permanent employees compared to casuals. This retention policy also assists our organisation to ensure the quality of services through stability in the workforce, with permanent employee numbers increasing to 74.7%. Staff statistics relating to gender, age and years of service provide an indicator of the balance in Distinctive Options' workforce. The range of staff ages continues to align with our participant age groups.

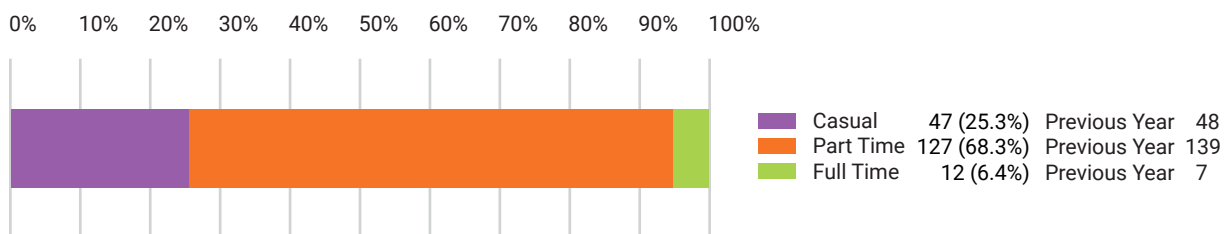
### Gender



### Age

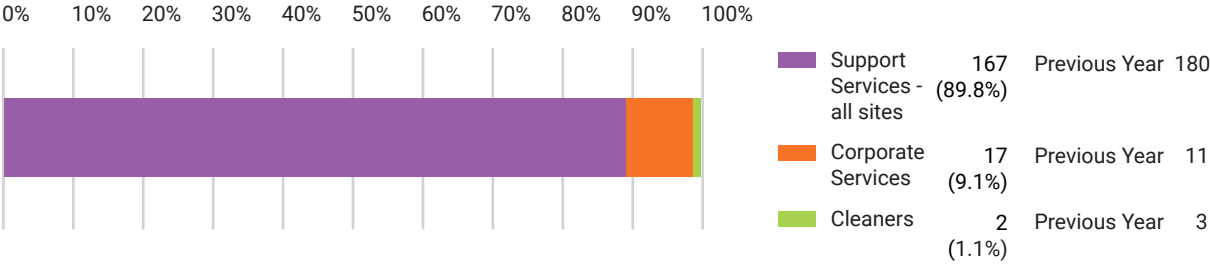


### Employment Status

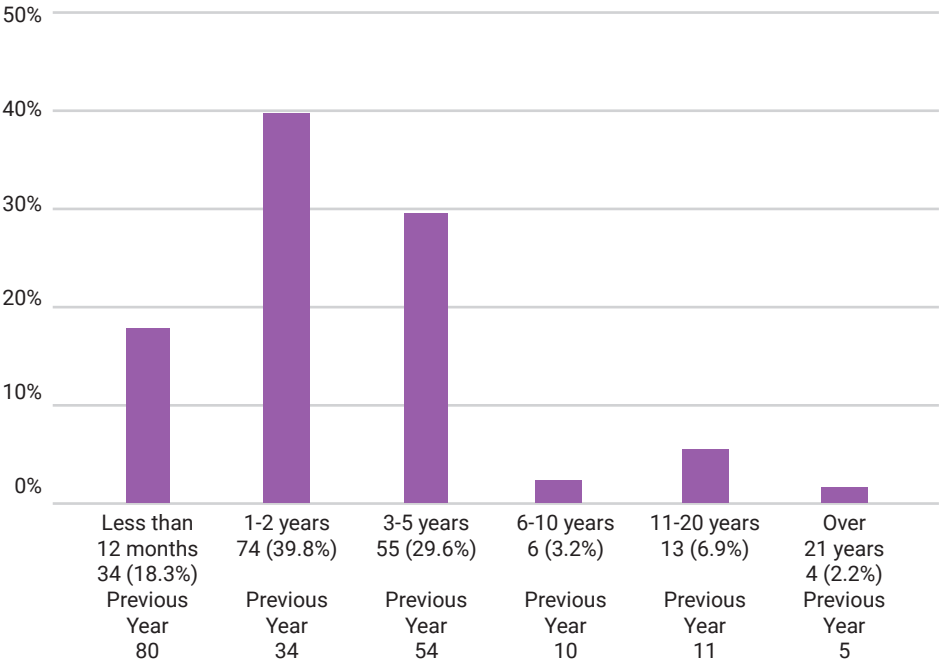


## Primary Work Types

The breakup between staff working in support services and corporate services is:



## Years of Service



## Staff Milestones

The following employees reached a milestone this year:

**Hannah Chalker**      **10 years**

**Kevin Richards**      **30 years**

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

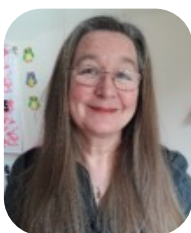
## Staff Retirements

- **Deb Regwell** commenced as Distinctive Options' cleaner for the 36 Macedon Street site in March 2013. She retired in July 2021. We thank Deb for her work and service over these eight years. She will be missed by management for her gardening and iris conversations. Deb regularly won awards for her irises at the Sunbury Show.

- **Lesley Carbis** commenced as a support worker in Sunbury in May 2006. She retired in August 2021. Initially employed as a bus driver to do the morning and afternoon bus runs, she eventually spent her mornings doing a bus run and then supporting participants with their personal care needs, before returning for the afternoon bus run. Lesley was an all-rounder, working across all types of programs. She says her time at DO has been the most wonderful, memorable and humbling journey of all.



- **Ingrid Van Der Molen** commenced as a support worker in Sunbury in July 1993. She retired in March 2022 after almost 29 years. Ingrid worked in a variety of roles over this long association but was most passionate in the delivery of creative arts activities and supports including Drama, Music and Art. Her passionate advocacy for the rights of people with disability and tremendous affinity with and capacity to



support those with high needs in particular was truly impactful and inspiring. We applaud and thank her for all that she has contributed to our participants, staff and culture over these many years.

## Financial Information

The modern *Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHADS)* covers all staff (except for the CEO and management team who are on personal contracts). All staff pay rates are as per this Award. Salary rates for employees under the SCHADS Award, increased in line with an annual Fair Work Australia determination.

There were no Australian Job Keeper COVID related wage subsidies paid to Distinctive Options in 2021-2022.

Distinctive Options paid Superannuation at 10% on salaries as per legislation. Distinctive Options is under the Victorian Portable Long Service Leave (PLSL) Scheme and pays into the Scheme each quarter. The PLSL Scheme allows staff to take their long service leave entitlements with them if they change jobs but remain in the community services industry. Salary sacrifice is available to all permanent staff according to Fringe Benefits guidelines for charities. AccessPay externally administers all approved not-for-profit charitable sector salary sacrifices.

## Volunteers

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

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



## Probity

Distinctive Options is required to undertake a number of probity checks to ensure the safety of all participants. NDIS screening compliance requirements under the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission standards are now in place for all employees, management and the Board. Additionally, the Victoria Government mandated during the pandemic that all people working in or for disability services were required to be vaccinated against COVID. Proof of vaccinations are required for all staff and volunteers.

## Policies and Procedures

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

## Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment

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

## Equal Employment

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

## Professional Development

Distinctive Options is committed to offer the best ongoing learning and development to all staff in order for them to gain or strengthen their skills to carry out the various employment roles with confidence. Our organisation continues to offer external training on essential qualifications, such as First Aid and CPR, to maintain a skilled workforce. Some of the professional development accessed by staff this year included:

- Cerebral Palsey
- Manual Handling
- First Aid and CPR
- Epilepsy
- Epilepsy Midazolam
- Dysphagia
- Diabetes

120, or 64.5%, of Distinctive Options' total staff members undertook training during 2021-2022. Staff are encouraged to apply for external training opportunities that interest them and are relevant to their role. The organisation also encourages support staff to complete a Certificate IV or higher in disability by subsidising the cost of training in most cases and offering opportunities for student placements. The annual training budget ensures staff can access multiple professional development opportunities, promoting and encouraging Distinctive Options as an employer of choice.

## Staff and Volunteer Induction and Orientation

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

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

## Supervision and Mentoring

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

Some positive examples of mentoring during 2021-2022 include the CEO mentoring the Business Development Manager in employment services and governance practices, the CFO mentoring the Accountant relating to preparing financial reports and budgets in the format required for Board consideration, the Executive Manager Support Services has been mentoring the new Brimbank Team Leader and Acting Kyneton Team Leader about developing and growing service options for people through partnerships and networking, along with learning staff leadership skills. He continues to guide, supervise and mentor our growing team of Disability senior staff, Team Leaders and Coordinators.

## Staff Survey and Other Feedback

In June 2022, all employees were invited to participate in a voluntary and confidential survey. The survey collected demographic data and gathered feedback on employee satisfaction and engagement. We had 85 respondents this year. This compares favourably with previous years which recorded 78 responses in 2021, 92 in 2020 and 46 in 2019. Each of the questions were optional. Some of the results from the staff survey included:

### Staff Diversity

- Our staff have a range of diversity in countries of birth. Although 84% of staff were born in Australia, including 2% identifying as indigenous Australian or Torres Strait Islander, others were born in the Philippines, India, Sudan, Liberia, Iraq, Turkey, Germany, UK and the Netherlands.
- Spoken language was predominantly English, at 88%, but with diverse backgrounds other languages are spoken.
- Our staff religious beliefs are also diverse, with 45% identifying as religious, comprising 23% as Christian, 15% as Catholics and 7% others. 13% of staff identified as having a disability.

### Other Comments

Over 90% of staff recorded positive remarks and satisfaction with their employment. Some of the other comments included:

- Staff have reported that they need ongoing training in OH&S, HR3, Supportability, policies and procedures – a similar comment to the previous year's survey.
- 80% of our staff feel that they are making a positive difference in other people's lives and are satisfied with the shifts they are working. 55% feel that the work they do at DO is challenging, stimulating and rewarding.
- Some of the staff commented that Distinctive Options is professional, offers flexibility, has good solidarity between staff and management, and DO is creating opportunities for participants, and the organisation possesses progressive values.

- Support service staff continue to express needs for more staff meetings, communication and ongoing training, assistance with software and systems.

Management acknowledges these staff needs, whilst always balancing the implications imposed by mandatory NDIS pricing. This funding only provides for direct support services and not staff training. We have acknowledged a continuous improvement process related to staff growth through training and development, tied to one of our strategic goals. Changes to information technology has been fairly constant as we move into a more digital world, and training with ongoing support for staff is an ongoing requirement as part of our quality practices.

## Staff Newsletters

Distinctive Options issues quarterly staff newsletters using MailChimp. The newsletters provide important information to staff across the organisation, helping to keep staff up to date. Additionally, each operating area send out their own newsletters to update their staff on vital information.

Some of the key topics this year included: NDIS quality and safeguard practices, mandatory compliance obligations such as NDIS Worker Screening clearance, COVID -19 vaccinations and certificates, training, staff survey findings and internal job advertisements.

## Flexible Work Practices

Flexible working arrangements are available to employees, including flexible hours, the possibility of working from home.

Coupled with the opportunity to move from full time to part time employment and any other reasonable arrangement that benefits both the organisation and individual.

## Gender Issues

Distinctive Options demonstrates its commitment to equality in the workplace with a number of women holding key management and coordinator roles. Equally important, is the number of males employed by Distinctive Options to match the gender needs of people who we support. Our Human Resources processes ensure that staff are paid according to role responsibilities and individual qualifications plus experience in line with the Modern Award.

Gender diversity is also actively encouraged on the Board.





# Operations

*The Distinctive Options Pathways team who are learning the art of apiculture & horticulture with the impending arrival of our new bees in October 2022.*



 **DistinctiveOptions**  
In Life





# Operating Environment

## Accreditations and Government Issues/Policies

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

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



## Continuous Improvement

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

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



## Privacy Issues

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

## Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability

We have a goal to integrate sustainable development into all of our activities.

This means we are committed to minimising our impact on the environment. Some of the measures we have implemented at Distinctive Options are:

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

## Research and Development

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

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

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

The Executive Manager Support Services is a member of our peak body's NDIS Issues and Sector Reform Committee, NDS National Quality and Safeguarding Community of Practice, Disability Day Services Community of Practice & Victorian In-Home Supports Providers Community of Practice. This assists in keeping Distinctive Options at the forefront of disability issues, or emerging issues, from around the country.

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



# Risk Management

The ASX Corporate Governance Principle 7 - Recognise and Manage Risk, states “...One of the key roles of the board ... is to monitor the adequacy of the entity’s risk management framework and satisfy itself that the entity is operating with due regard to the risk appetite set by the board...”

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

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

## Risk Appetite Statement

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

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

### STRATEGIC Risks

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

### FINANCIAL Risks

Distinctive Options needs to remain competitive, efficient and a financially sustainable organisation in order to ensure long-term viability under an NDIS environment. As such, the organisation takes a conservative approach to investments by having a ● **Low Risk Appetite.** For long-term fund managed investments, Distinctive Options adopts a higher risk tolerance, through a more ● **Moderate Risk Appetite.**

## OPERATIONAL Risks

● **Moderate Risk Appetite:** For fundraising that contributes to brand awareness or grows cash reserves. ● **Low risk appetite:** For any activity that does not support regulatory compliance, quality accreditation, or NDIS provider registration; for activities that may compromise its reputation, ethics, brand, or credibility; and for non-availability of systems, including cyber security to limit or mitigate system hacking.

✗ **ZERO Risk appetite:** For bribery, or other forms of corruption, or fraud by individuals, in systems and processes. The organisation has no appetite for the misuse of its information and a number of years ago Distinctive Options adopted a zero appetite for abuse.

## Occupational Health and Safety

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

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

OHS Measure	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Lost time	738 hours	570 hours	zero hours	zero hours
Lost-time injuries	1	1	0	0
Reportable WorkCover injuries	1	6	4	1
Serious injuries	0	0	0	0
Manual handling injuries	0	0	0	0
Hazards or near misses	10	12	38	22

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

## COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to be a significant risk for people. Our quality management system vigilantly maintains updates to ensure our COVID-19 Policy and government-mandated COVID Safe Plan deliver safe workplaces and service environments. Distinctive Options remains compliant with government directions at all times, this includes during lockdowns and as restrictions were eased. Although there were some participants and staff across all sites who contracted COVID, Distinctive Options did not record any major or significant out-breaks of the pandemic during the year.



*Staff members Louise and Beth show how to check temperatures during COVID's impact*

## Strategic and Business Planning

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

## Internal Auditing

Internal auditing processes are in place to ensure that the organisation is compliant with all quality requirements, including the NDIS Practice Standards and the Child Safe Standards. Audits are prioritised according to risk and are conducted across all areas of the organisation, including governance, finance, operations, systems, processes and controls. More information about internal auditing is provided under Continuous Improvements on Page 66.



# Marketing, Fundraising and Networking

Distinctive Options maintains its registration as a fundraiser organisation in Victoria, with Consumer Affairs Victoria. Word of mouth reputation remains our strongest marketing tool. We continue to work on increasing our brand awareness in our local communities through printed and online material, video production and attendance at events where possible. Since the onset of the pandemic, little or no marketing and fundraising has been undertaken by Distinctive Option over the past two years due to a range of community restrictions. For 2021-2022, however, there were a few as detailed below.

## Fundraising

March 2022 – Distinctive Options, in conjunction with Hume City Council, Reclink Australia and the Sunbury Triathlon Club, held its first-ever Triathlon, the DO Tri. 12 participants ran the race of their life around the Sunbury Aquatic Centre and nearby Clarke Oval to an endearing audience. Thanks to the organisations who supported the event, including the Sunbury Rotary Club, Pepps Coffee, YPA Real Estate Sunbury, One Agency Sunbury, Olive Tree Sunbury, NewsXpress Sunbury, VICS Restaurant, O'Shannassy Meats, Sunbury City Electrical, Peters Multi Services & Trafman Solutions. Particular thanks to Brian Millett from the Sunbury Triathlon Club, who was an inspiration to everyone involved and, more importantly, to the participants who completed the Triathlon.



*All the participants who were involved in the inaugural triathlon.*

## Marketing

### Media Articles

August 2021 - Midland Express Article regarding a partnership with Kyneton Community House delivering a Life Skills Course.

April 2022 - Star Weekly newspaper article on 'Defend our NDIS' involving Distinctive Options participants and staff.

### Expos

In September and October 2021, noting there were no rural lockdowns in place, staff attended:

- 'One Community' Bendigo Expo
- Melton Disability Expo
- Melton Virtual Care Expo

In March 2022

- Hume Health Together Disability Expo
- Sunshine Specialist School – School Leavers Expo

In May 2022

- Business Development Manager attended the Greater Western Water/Sunbury Business Association's Business Expo, in Hume's Sunbury Global Learning Centre

## Networking

The management team were involved in a range of networking activities. This included with our active community partners, including local Victorian MP, Josh Bull, other best practice service providers, along with a group developing a Local Jobs Program, funded through the Commonwealth Government.

Throughout the year, our NDIS Intake Coordinator worked with all the local external NDIS Coordinators and Planners, as well as with new families seeking services. Similarly, our Coordinators networked throughout their local communities to expand options for people who we support.

## Social Media

Distinctive Options actively uses Facebook to provide information about our services and participants, with around five posts added per week. Staff volunteer their time to contribute to the page and to respond to the messages and comments left by the public. We are extremely grateful for those that give their time to raise awareness of our organisation.

Facebook “likes” again increased during 2021-2022, recording a high of 1,962. Likes increased by 4.1% from 1,884 last year (in 2021). The previous two years recorded 1,724 in 2020 and 1,575 in 2019. Our Facebook reach attracted 66,089 people during the year. For those engaged in our Facebook posts this year, 85.8% were females and 14.2% were males.

Instagram followers totalled 417 this year across Melbourne and regional Victoria, while noting 6% included followers in Sydney. The majority of interest came from within Australia, but it was interesting to note followers from the US, England-Scotland-Wales (UK), Cyprus and South Africa!



## Governance



# Board of Directors

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



**Kalma Rathouski**

**Kalma Rathouski [MSocSc] - Board Chairperson**

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

Kalma holds a Master of Social Science and 15 years' experience at the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, where she gained experience in conflict resolution, investigations, stakeholder management and communications. Kalma went on to work as an Executive Officer for a community bank and currently works with social services agency CatholicCare Victoria, where she is responsible for stakeholder engagement throughout the state. She has a keen passion for disability having experienced life in a wheelchair for a short time, following an accident. Currently in her third term, Kalma is honoured to have served Distinctive Options and to have seen it mature into the organisation it is today.



**Alistair Lloyd**

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

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

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

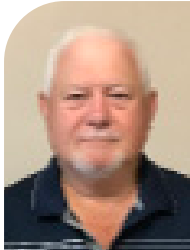


**Graham Holt**

**Graham Holt [Dip Bus Mgt]**

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

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



**Derek Jones**

**Derek Jones** [FCPA]

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

Derek is a retired finance professional who is in his third term as a Director with Distinctive Options. He had a significant career in both the public and private sectors, including 15 years as a Finance Manager and Chief Financial Officer of Sustainability Victoria. Derek's areas of expertise include financial reporting, risk management, strategic planning, governance and compliance.



**Alicia Kokocinski**

**Alicia Kokocinski** [BA, Dip PR]

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

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



**Simon McKenzie**

**Simon McKenzie** [BCom, JD, GAICD]

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

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



**John Papatheohari**

**John Papatheohari** [BBus, CA, CHCIO]

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

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





**Nancy Peat**

**Nancy Peat** [AdvDip (FinPlan)]

*Nancy is an independent Director and Chair of the Business Development & Fundraising Committee.*

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



**Sunayana Tonks**

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

*Sunayana is a non-independent Director, who has a lived family disability experience. She is a member of the Governance & Risk Committee.*

Sunayana is a highly qualified compliance, risk and internal auditor with over 15 years of broad experience in managing and advising on compliance and risk obligations across various organisations. She is passionate about ensuring regulatory obligations and risks are considered in everyday decision making. Sunayana has a Bachelor of Law which included learning on disability and NDIS law. She brings her own personal experience with being a mother of a child with autism. She is also a Board advisor of an independent school.



**Mark Wiegerink**

**Mark Wiegerink** [MBA; BBus (Marketing)]

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

Mark is a strategic marketing and fundraising executive with close to 25 years' experience in leading wholesale, consumer and not-for-profit organisations. As a frontline fundraiser, he delivered more than \$100 million in fundraising income for the charities he served. His fundraising expertise includes:

- Management of the Regular Giving program at Save the Children
- Management of the Brotherhood of St Laurence fundraising program
- Development/implementation of the fundraising strategy for the Alannah & Madeline Foundation, and
- Leadership of the Direct Response team at the Stroke Foundation.

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

**Former Directors who retired or resigned during 2021-2022:**



**Anthony Aboud** completed his final three-year term of office at the November 2021 AGM. Anthony served as Board Chair for 5 years, from November 2015 until November 2020. He was involved in many of the Committees during his terms of office. His contributions to Distinctive Options Board will be missed.

# Corporate Governance

Distinctive Options is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* and registered as a charity under the Australian and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Act 2012. Ultimate responsibility for the organisation rests with the Board of Directors. The Board reviews and updates the organisation's Constitution at least every five years through guidance, advice and expertise from our legal representatives. The periodic Constitution review was conducted in 3rd quarter of 2022.

## The Role of the Board

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

The ACNC lists the following Governance Standards that registered charities must comply with:

- Standard 1: Purpose and not-for-profit nature
- Standard 2: Accountability to members
- Standard 3: Compliance with Australian laws
- Standard 4: Suitability of Responsible People
- Standard 5: Duties of Responsible People
- Standard 6: Maintaining and enhancing public trust and confidence in the Australian Not-for-profit sector

Additionally, as a company limited by guarantee, governance also takes into consideration the Australian Institute of Company Directors' not-for-profit Governance Principles. These are:

- Principle 1: Purpose and strategy
- Principle 2: Roles and responsibilities
- Principle 3: Board composition
- Principle 4: Board effectiveness
- Principle 5: Risk management
- Principle 6: Performance
- Principle 7: Accountability and transparency
- Principle 8: Stakeholder engagement
- Principle 9: Conduct and compliance
- Principle 10: Culture

## Board Committees

The Board operates three committees that are dedicated to specific areas of the business. Each Committee has Terms of Reference, reviewed annually. They meet regularly to discuss relevant issues and provide recommendations to the Board for consideration. Management and Corporate Services staff also attend Committee meetings where appropriate. A description of these Committees and their 2021-2022 activities are provided on Page 82.

## Board Meetings

Under the Constitution, the Board must hold a minimum of 9 meetings per year. Generally, no Board meetings are scheduled in January or July. Additional meetings are held as required. The Board met 13 times during 2021-2022, over February to December, including one special meeting in April. The CEO and management team attend Board meetings, allowing them to present operational and financial information to the Board as required. Board agendas are developed by the CEO/ Company Secretary in consultation with the Chairperson. The CFO takes and disseminates the minutes.

## Attendance at Board Meetings

Director	Eligible	Attended	Rate
Kalma Rathouski	13	12	92.3%
Alistair Lloyd	13	10	76.9%
Anthony Aboud ( <i>retired at Nov 21 AGM</i> )	6	6	100%
Graham Holt	13	7	53.8%
Derek Jones	13	12	92.3%
Alicia Kokocinski ( <i>commenced in 2022</i> )	4	4	100%
Simon McKenzie	13	12	92.3%
John Papatheohari	13	13	100%
Nancy Peat ( <i>approved leave of absence</i> )	11	11	100%
Sunayana Tonks ( <i>commenced in 2022</i> )	4	3	75.0%
Mark Wiegerink ( <i>commenced in 2022</i> )	3	3	100%
CEO / Company Secretary	13	13	

The median attendance by Directors at Board meetings was 92.3% - which is in line with best practice. Board meeting attendance is expected to be a minimum of 67% per annum, except when an individual Director has approved leave.

## Board Members

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

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

Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>Members</b>	8	8	8	9	10

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

## Current Director Terms

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

Director	Appointment Date	Maximum Term Expires
Kalma Rathouski	16 March 2015	AGM 2023
Derek Jones	23 February 2016	AGM 2024
Graham Holt	27 February 2018	AGM 2026
Simon McKenzie	27 March 2018	AGM 2026
Nancy Peat	24 April 2018	AGM 2026
Alistair Lloyd	23 March 2021	AGM 2030
John Papatheohari	23 March 2021	AGM 2030
Alicia Kokocinski	12 April 2022	AGM 2031
Sunayana Tonks	12 April 2022	AGM 2031
Mark Wiegerink	26 April 2022	AGM 2031

## Director Renominations

Director Derek Jones' renomination for a third term was accepted and endorsed by members. Three new Directors were recruited during the year to expand the Board's skills set.

## The Chairperson

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

## Accountability

As the governing body, the Board is accountable to:

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

## Board Charter

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

## Independent Advice

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

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

## Board Review and Development

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

## Management Responsibility

The Board formally delegates responsibility for daily operations to the CEO and the Management Team. The CEO is the Board appointed Company Secretary/Public Officer for Distinctive Options.

## Summary of the Board's performance against ACNC Governance Standards

### Standard 1: Purpose and not-for-profit nature

- In line with the organisation's Constitution, Distinctive Options delivered a range of support services and employment options to people who have a disability, to enhance their lives.

### Standard 2: Accountability to members

- Distinctive Options is accountable to its members and stakeholders through transparency in reporting, such as through its award-winning Gold ARA annual reports, strategic planning sessions, the AGM and other mechanisms used from time to time.



### **Standard 3: Compliance with Australian laws**

- Distinctive Options complies with all relevant Australian laws related to the organisation's operations. No breaches were reported or investigated.

### **Standard 4: Suitability of Responsible People**

- Distinctive Options ensures the suitability of responsible people in several ways. For Directors, they are screened through an external recruiting firm's practices, then each candidate must apply for and meet NDIS Worker Screening requirements or have a valid Working With Children's Check. The Company Secretary undertakes another screening process for Directors through ASIC's company register to ensure no candidate is listed as a banned or disqualified person. This ASIC check is conducted annually for each responsible person. All Directors are now required to have a current Director Identification Number to hold a Board position, this is provided through the Australian Business Registry Services through an application and screening process.

For key management listed as Responsible People with the ACNC, appropriate probity checks are completed by the Board for the CEO, or the CEO for other managers. Additionally, NDIS Worker Screening proof or a valid Working With Children's Check are required.

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

### **Standard 5: Duties of Responsible People**

- Director's roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are specified in the organisation's Board Charter and as per Distinctive Options' Constitution. Key management roles are responsible and accountable as per their position descriptions, Balanced Scorecard targets, and through the organisation's Delegation Policy, which includes delegated authority.

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

- Distinctive Options prides itself on the excellent reputation it has developed and maintained over many years. The organisation consciously strives to maintain and enhance public trust and confidence. These methods include through its quality annual reporting, growing and enhancing its reputation both in the community and with our partners for its quality services and employment options, as well as from regular feedback and information provided by key stakeholders. The organisation's Balanced Scorecard uses several indicators and targets to assess our performance in this area.

# Board Committees

## Audit and Finance Committee

Derek Jones (Chair)	10/10
John Papatheohari	10/10
Kalma Rathouski	4/5
Alicia Kokocinski	3/3
Anthony Aboud - <i>retired</i>	3/5
Simon McKenzie	3/5
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	10/10
Alma Tuazon (CFO)	10/10
Paul Pearman (BDM)	1/1

The core roles of the Audit & Finance Committee are to monitor and review:

- the organisation's financial performance and financial risks,
- the annual financial audit, including liaising with the financial auditors, and
- the organisation's investment strategy.

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

## Governance and Risk Committee

Alistair Lloyd (Chair)	4/4
Simon McKenzie	4/4
Kalma Rathouski	4/4
Sunayana Tonks	1/1
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	4/4
Paul Pearman (BDM)	1/1

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

## Business Development & Fundraising Committee

Nancy Peat (Chair)	4/4
Graham Holt	4/4
Mark Wiegerink	0/1
Ernie Metcalf (CEO)	3/4
Rick Dunn (EMSS)	4/4
Alma Tuazon (CFO)	3/4
Paul Pearman (BDM)	3/4

The Business Development & Fundraising Committee is responsible for reviewing business, marketing and fundraising strategies and plans, reviewing and acting upon participant and supporter feedback surveys and monitoring the Strategic Marketing Plan. All Management Team members are involved in this Committee. The Committee reports to the Board after each meeting.



# Finances

*Participants and staff joined in the Australia wide "Defend our NDIS" rally, shown here successfully campaigning in Melbourne with many others prior to the 2022 Federal Election.*





# Independent Audit Report



## Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

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

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

#### Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a general purpose - simplified disclosure financial report of Distinctive Options Ltd, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and Directors' Declaration.

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

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the Company's financial position as at 30 June 2022 and of its financial performance for the year ended; and
- (ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosure Standard and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

#### Basis of Opinion

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

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

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

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

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

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# Independent Audit Report



## Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

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

#### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

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

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

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

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# Independent Audit Report



## Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

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

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

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

  
Saward Dawson



Matthew Crouch

Blackburn VIC

Dated: 3 November 2022

# Profit or Loss

## Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2,022 \$	2,021 \$
<b>Operating activities</b>			
Revenue and other income	3	9,310,804	10,859,938
Employee benefit expenses		(7,811,084)	(7,898,894)
Client program costs		(80,821)	(68,341)
Rental expense		(77,005)	(106,553)
Depreciation expense		(91,972)	(57,388)
Motor vehicle expenses		(49,545)	(39,194)
Telephone costs		(23,515)	(24,019)
Computer expenses		(172,741)	(157,767)
Consultancy fees		(6,600)	(40,118)
Interest expense - Leases		(20,156)	(21,279)
Training		(36,232)	(30,065)
Repairs and maintenance		(30,279)	(15,130)
Printing		(11,287)	(22,907)
Subscriptions		(24,539)	(18,458)
Equipment leases		(7,396)	(7,396)
Board and management costs		(29,932)	(3,405)
Amortisation expenses	10	(212,082)	(156,255)
Other expenses		(236,647)	(199,819)
Waste disposal		(1,836)	(1,090)
<b>Surplus for the year from operations</b>		<b>387,135</b>	<b>1,991,860</b>
<b>Investing activities</b>			
Investing revenue	3	(110,118)	8,165
<b>Surplus/(deficit) for the year from investments</b>		<b>(110,118)</b>	<b>8,165</b>
<b>Total surplus for the year</b>		<b>277,017</b>	<b>2,000,025</b>
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>277,017</b>	<b>2,000,025</b>

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

# Financial Position

## Statement of Financial Position

As At 30 June 2022

	Note	2,022 \$	2,021 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	1,988,825	2,970,074
Trade and other receivables	7	1,130,339	653,463
Financial assets	8	3,017,575	2,448,007
Other assets	9	85,191	61,870
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>6,221,930</b>	<b>6,133,414</b>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Right of Use Assets	10	1,335,955	569,568
Plant and equipment	11	318,713	388,946
Intangible assets	12	168,112	-
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>1,822,780</b>	<b>958,514</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>8,044,710</b>	<b>7,091,928</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	10	170,491	137,731
Trade and other payables	13	619,688	646,846
Provisions	14	758,730	642,879
Other liabilities	15	9,950	133,417
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>1,558,859</b>	<b>1,560,873</b>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	10	1,193,443	447,824
Provisions	14	24,625	92,465
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>1,218,068</b>	<b>540,289</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>2,776,927</b>	<b>2,101,162</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>5,267,783</b>	<b>4,990,766</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Retained earnings		5,267,783	4,990,766
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>5,267,783</b>	<b>4,990,766</b>

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

# Equity and Cash Flows

## Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

### 2022

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

### 2021

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

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

## Statement of Cash Flows

### For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:</b>			
Receipts from customers, government and other funding		9,027,224	11,220,839
Payments to suppliers and employees		(8,876,467)	(8,621,604)
Interest received		4,571	8,165
Dividends received		2,696	-
Interest paid		(20,156)	(21,279)
<b>Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities</b>	21	<u>137,868</u>	<u>2,586,121</u>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:</b>			
Payment for plant, equipment and computer software		(189,851)	(215,595)
<b>Redemption/(Placement) of term deposits</b>		1,759,246	(1,505,383)
Net purchase of investments		(2,490,422)	-
<b>Net cash used by investing activities</b>		<u>(921,027)</u>	<u>(1,720,978)</u>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:</b>			
Lease payments		(200,090)	(149,468)
<b>Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities</b>		<u>(200,090)</u>	<u>(149,468)</u>
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held</b>		<b>(983,249)</b>	715,675
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year		<u>2,970,074</u>	<u>2,254,399</u>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year</b>	6	<u><u>1,986,825</u></u>	<u><u>2,970,074</u></u>

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



# Director's Declaration

## Principal Activities

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

## Short and Long Term Objectives

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

## Strategy for Achieving the Objectives

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

## Performance Measures

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

## Members' Guarantee

Distinctive Options is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of, and for the purpose of winding up of the company, the amount capable of being called up from each member and any person or association who ceased to be a member in the year prior to winding up, is limited to \$NIL for members that are corporations and \$20 for all other members, subject to the provisions of the company's constitution. At 30 June 2022, the collective liability of members was \$200 (2021: \$180).

## Board of Directors

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

## Other Items

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

## Meetings of Directors

During the 2021-2022 financial year, the Board held 31 meetings of Directors (including Committee meetings). Each Director's attendance rate at meetings is in the Governance section of the Annual Report. Board meetings are on the final Tuesday of each month, commencing at 6:30pm. During 2021-2022, the majority of all Board meetings were on-line via ZOOM.

## Auditor's Independence Declaration

The lead auditor's independence declaration for the year ended 30 June 2022 is on Page 93.

# Director's Declaration

## Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

### Directors' Declaration

In the opinion of the Directors of Distinctive Options Ltd:

- a) The financial statements and notes of Distinctive Options are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:
  - i) Giving a true and fair view of its financial position as at 30 June 2022 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
  - ii) Complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosure Standard (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*; and
- b) There are reasonable grounds to believe that Distinctive Options Ltd will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Directors.

Director .....  


Director .....  


Dated this 03 day of November 2022

# Auditor's Independence Declaration



## Distinctive Options Ltd

ABN: 89 090 842 470

### Auditors Independence Declaration

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June 2022 there have been no contraventions of:

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

  
Saward Dawson



Matthew Crouch  
Partner

Blackburn  
Dated: 3 November 2022

1

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CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS™  
AUSTRALIA - NEW ZEALAND



Member of Russell Bedford International

Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation

# Glossary

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

# Abbreviations

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

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# Moving forward - Strategic Plan 2022 to 2025

## OUR VISION

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

## OUR PURPOSE

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

## OUR VALUES

People  
Support  
Advocacy  
Community  
Quality  
Sustainability



## OUR PARTICIPANTS

<b>PRIMARY FOCUS</b>	<p><b>(A) Support usage and participant satisfaction</b></p> <p>Key strategic targets to measure performance relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average monthly support hours</li> <li>• Number of participants supported</li> <li>• Satisfaction rate achieved from participant / family surveys</li> </ul>	<b>SECONDARY FOCUS</b>	<p><b>(B) Service feedback and participant safety</b></p> <p>Strategic targets to measure performance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of compliments versus complaints</li> <li>• Number of service reports on participant injuries</li> </ul>
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## OUR CAPABILITIES

<b>PRIMARY FOCUS</b>	<p><b>(C) Expansion of participant support services or pathways</b></p> <p>Key strategic targets to measure performance relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of residents in accommodation services</li> <li>• Number of supported employees employed</li> <li>• Number of participants using holiday travel services</li> <li>• Number of holiday travel promotions marketed to participants</li> <li>• Number of supported employees who transition into open employment</li> </ul>	<b>SECONDARY FOCUS</b>	<p><b>(D) Expansion of in-house services provided</b></p> <p>Strategic targets to measure performance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Speech or Occupational Therapists employed</li> <li>• Number of participants accessing DO therapist services</li> </ul> <p><b>(E) Expansion of fundraising and marketing</b></p> <p>Strategic targets to measure performance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing Plan fundraising goal achieved</li> </ul>
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## OUR PEOPLE

<b>PRIMARY FOCUS</b>	<p><b>(F) Staff retention, safety and culture</b></p> <p>Key strategic targets to measure performance relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff turnover ratio</li> <li>• Staff satisfaction and organisational culture</li> <li>• DO's WorkCover Premium rate versus Industry rate</li> </ul>	<b>SECONDARY FOCUS</b>	<p><b>(G) Staff training and development</b></p> <p>Strategic targets to measure performance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of staff undertaking training and development</li> <li>• Number of supported employees trained</li> </ul>
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## OUR ASSURANCE

<b>PRIMARY FOCUS</b>	<p><b>(H) Financial viability and sustainability</b></p> <p>Key strategic targets to measure performance relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term growth in fund managed investments</li> <li>• Operating cash and cash equivalents levels</li> <li>• Number of days cash is available meets liquidity target</li> <li>• Participant funding value analysis target</li> </ul>	<b>SECONDARY FOCUS</b>	<p><b>(I) Quality assured service provider</b></p> <p>Strategic targets to measure performance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory completion of external quality audits</li> </ul>
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The new Plan is supported by a Strategic Risk Dashboard, containing 10 key strategic risks.

# Thank You

## Government Funders

National Disability Insurance Agency for all NDIS funding

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

## Grant Providers

Hume City Council

## Donors and In Kind Supporters

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

## In Kind Supporters

Kaye Beal- Volunteer, Brimbank City Council, Josh Bull & Jarrod Bell, Bunnings Kangaroo Flat, Bunnings Sunbury, Robert Burke electrician, Cameron's Coffee House, Careworks Sunbury, Citizens Advocacy, Cute & Cuddly Ponies, Eaglehawk community garden, Eagle Pizza Bendigo, Every Australian Counts, Fish Care Victoria, Gisborne Men's Shed, Golden Square Football Club, Great Supa Bendigo, Highlands FM radio, Hume City Council, Hume Sunbury Library, Kyneton Bowling Club, Kyneton Caring Community Foodbank, Kyneton Community House, Kyneton Community Kitchen, Kyneton Library, Kyneton Sports & Aquatic Centre, Limitless Fitness, Long Gully Community Garden, Brian Millet, Sunbury Triathlon Club, Paul Millet, TF & A Millet Pty Ltd (Rosenthal developers), Parks Victoria, Pheonix F.M, PJT Test & Tag, Reclink, Rotary Club, Sunbury Salesian College, SES Sunbury Unit, St Vinnies Sunbury, South Gisborne Tennis Club, Sunbury Aquatic Centre, Sunbury Bowling Club, Sunbury Cobaw Community Health, Sunbury Football Club, Sunbury Men's Shed, Sunbury Pony Club, Sunbury Primary School, Sunbury Tennis Club, Tip Top Painting, The Zone Bendigo, 3NRG Sunbury Radio, Treilly's outdoor Bendigo, Victorian Electoral Commission, Wildlife Rescue & Rehab, Woodend Library, Woodend Nursery

# Get Involved

## Donate

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

## Leave a Bequest

You can choose to leave a bequest to Distinctive Options in your Will. This legacy provides a significant contribution to the work that we do in the community and helps to secure the future of Distinctive Options. Call us today on 03 9740 7100 for more information or contact your local solicitor.

## Volunteer

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

## Work With Us

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

## Spread the Word

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

# Site Locations



## DO Connect Sunbury

Located at 24 Macedon Street, Sunbury 3429

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

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



## DO Connect Bendigo

Located at 56-60 King Street, Bendigo 3551

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



## DO Connect Kyneton

Office located in the Kyneton Community House, 34 Mollison Street, Kyneton 3444

For more information and details, contact the Team Leader on 0417 098 365



## DO Connect Brimbank

Currently located at 12 Lester Avenue, St Albans 3021

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



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ACN 090 842 470



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