



# Supporting & Empowering People with a Disability



## Chairman's Report

What an extraordinary year this has been; with both a life-changing pandemic and a pre-planned, aspirational new era for Gateways governed by our Purpose to improve the lives of people who have a disability or additional need and their families. 2020 will be remembered for uncertainty, tragedy, change and patience.

It was with pleasure that the Board welcomed the new CEO, Stephanie Gunn, in late July 2019. In making this appointment, the Board recognised the opportunity for a commencement of a new phase of Gateways' proud heritage and the change journey this would entail.

During the year the Board reflected on how fundamental our approach to ensuring quality and evidence-based practice is. We reiterated our commitment to the provision and expansion of our efforts in therapy, assessment, recreation, behaviour support and accommodation for those with autism, intellectual disability and especially those with complex needs. Similarly, we celebrated the contribution we continue to make through innovative community support for older people.

*“ We also agreed that it was time to lift our gaze and over time ensure that we contribute to the needs of those we support through a range of innovative partnerships, ventures and service development. ”*

This has started with our PLACE strategy, the first location of which is North Geelong which will see an exciting, innovative space for the community, our participants, families and like-minded businesses to create a uniquely inclusive space that equally values and respects all abilities. A key part of the PLACE strategy is to more quickly address the demand for our services in western Melbourne and the south west.

We have also acknowledged that it is time for Gateways to invest in ourselves. The Board has asked the management team to critically look at and make recommendations for change to our corporate, operational and workforce supports to ensure everything we do is sustainable and cost-effective.

Of course, while we have been focused on these longer-term issues, we have also had to manage the immediate impact of COVID-19 on our operations. I want to thank the entire management team who have worked tirelessly to ensure preparation and readiness. The policies, training and risk management have been carefully designed to ensure the reduction of risk for our participants as much as possible. Through this time, we not only looked inwards, but we have taken the opportunity to contribute strategy, analysis and solutions to the sector more widely. Finally, I want to thank all staff for their unwavering, positive approach and commitment to our mission and

the support and collegiate guidance from all members of the Board. In particular, I thank those members who have resigned from the Board during the year for their wisdom and guidance, specifically Rose Hodge and Mark Appleford who for many years provided the voice of the participant and corporate governance insights respectively.

Stay well, Stay Safe.

Regards,

**Dr Bernie Jenner OAM**  
**Chairman**

### Gateways mission statement:

Gateways Support Services' mission is to empower and support children and adults who have a disability and their families to maximise their quality of life, potential and positive relationships. We also build knowledge in communities to enrich their understanding and active embrace of people with disabilities.



## Keeping loneliness at bay for our seniors



As an older person, the social restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic hit Geelong resident Muriel particularly hard. She was not allowed to visit her husband Ted, who lives with dementia at a nearby care facility, unable to make her regular visits to the Pakington Street shopping strip and her usual Cafe Care Connect social catch-ups were also put on hold. Muriel says she even had to remain behind her door when her friendly neighbours came by to check on her. “When I first met Muriel she was very flat and missing life,” says Gateways

Individual Support and Recreation worker Heather.

“There were a lot of things she couldn't do and she was feeling very isolated.”

But thanks to Heather's twice weekly visits under the Commonwealth Home Support Program, Muriel says the restrictions have been a little more bearable.

*“ I look forward to it every week and make sure to let people know they can't come over on a day when Heather is coming. She makes such a difference. ”*

## CEO Review

This strange and surreal year has been met with extraordinary responses across the entire Gateways Support Services family.

We started with a focus on shaping our next five years and drafting exciting plans to build on the strengths we are known for. We were embarking on a transformation journey for the next step in our story with new offerings and supports for those with autism, intellectual disability and complex needs as well as new connections to our community and new investments in our staff.

After many years of looking, we found a new Geelong head office to accommodate our growth. A new home that would support our vision of enabling Positive Lives And Community Engagement. A PLACE where other businesses, community groups and organisations could come together to share in our vision of a fully inclusive environment. Detailed talks with stakeholders and community needs analysis showed our plans were highly valued and deeply needed.

We signed the lease on the former Target site on Thompson Rd, North Geelong in March and began plans for staff to move to Gateways Community PLACE. And then the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Overnight, our attention shifted to the safety of our participants and staff in the context of COVID-19.

We had to create new policies and practices never before experienced and – with no manual or guide to show the way - make decisions that kept us awake at night.

I want to apologise to you, our clients, where we were unable to safely continue providing you with services during lockdown periods. Thank you for your understanding and support.

I also want to thank our staff who have continued to provide services in this unknown space. Many put their hands up to provide support above and beyond their usual roles.

“ *This is what Gateways Support Services stands for and these are the values that we will always live by.* ”

As a result of good practice, an amazing team and a bit of good luck we have remained COVID free.

And while we look forward to emerging from these difficult days, we can still reflect on many wonderful achievements, the highlights of which are summarised in this report.

We hope you enjoy reading about all the facets of Gateways Support Services 2019/2020 journey. We thank you for being an important part of it and we very much look forward to welcoming you to our new PLACE very soon.

## 2019 – 2020 Highlights

### OUR CLIENT STORY IN NUMBERS

- More than 2100 clients supported across all areas.
- Overall service user satisfaction rating of 94%.
- 9 in 10 respondents to our COVID-19 survey were satisfied with our communications and actions taken during the pandemic.
- Almost 90 volunteers across 16 programs gave more than 2900 hours.
- 16 Interchange Host Buddies gave almost 800 hours of support to Gateways families.
- Continued growth in our trusted Plan Management Financial Administration service with 502 participants assisted across all our regions.

### OUR STAFF JOURNEY

- 12 of our staff achieved 20 years or more service milestones.
- Introduced practice leads to guide our quality of services.
- Initiated a leadership program for senior management and team leaders.
- Appointment of a south west Victoria regional manager to oversee our services and growth in that area.
- Provided 5127 sessions of training to 663 staff.

### OUR ORGANISATIONAL JOURNEY

- Western Melbourne headquarters opened in Droop St, Footscray.
- Moved Geelong HQ to former Target site on Thompson Rd, North Geelong.
- Finalised our strategic plan for the next three years – focusing on our PLACE strategy.
- Worked with local manufacturer to supply PPE to disability support providers around the country.
- Signed a new partnership with SDA provider Casa Capace allowing us over time to offer more accommodation services.
- Refreshed all policies in line with new NDIS National Quality and Safety Framework and Practice Standards.
- Enhanced our reporting against strategic progress and risk to the Board and commenced a review of governance.
- Introduced RiskMan system to further build incident reporting and risk management procedures.



## Recreation

Children, teenagers and adults with disability experience fun, social and skill-building activities with their peers through our social and recreational programs. Developed and led by a team with deep experience in autism, intellectual disability and complex behaviour, our recreation and overnight camps programs support participants in making friends and being in the community. Families choose these programs knowing their loved one is having fun, new experiences and gaining life-skills in a safe and supported environment. Through the Commonwealth Home Supports Program we also offer programs for people who are frail aged or have dementia.

## Individual Support

Our Individual Support services were adapted to support the needs of families during COVID-19 restrictions: from additional shifts, safety advice and extra information to meet demand, to supporting restriction transitions or just offering a friendly ear.

Gateways offers a range of in-home and community-based disability supports in the Geelong and Western Melbourne regions. Overnight and day stays are available to children (0-18) at Boost 4 Kids in Ocean Grove and Getaway House in Warrnambool. The Interchange Host/Buddy Program is also available, matching people with a disability to a trained volunteer to share recreational activities.

**658** Participants across both regions

**9** Overnight camps for adults, teenagers and children

**15** Unique programs

**16** Regular participants in the Prime Movers over-65s program



### Recreation Highlights

- Ran our first school holiday programs in western Melbourne with a total of 57 participants attending.
- Introduced 3 new programs in western Melbourne and Geelong to support participants transitioning from youth to adult groups.
- James, 16, who has epilepsy and frequent nocturnal seizures, joined friends at an overnight camp without a parent for the first time. (see story below).

### Individual Support Highlights

- Supporting our participants to transition through lockdown stages and ensuring our staff were always safe with appropriate PPE, hygiene and safety advice.
- Home-schooling participants in their homes and in our temporary classroom at our North Geelong HQ.
- Seeing Ebony, 23, who previously wasn't engaging in activities outside of her room, begin enjoying sessions at what she now calls the North Geelong 'Big Place'.

**154** Individual Support participants

**9** Participants attended Boost 4 Kids

**34** Participants engaged in the Commonwealth Home Support Program for people aged over 65 who are frail aged or with dementia

## James joins friends on camps for the first time



With the right support and plans in place, 16-year-old James has achieved his goal of attending recreation camps without a parent for the first time. The sociable teen, who has epilepsy, autism and an intellectual disability, experiences regular night-time seizures, which initially restricted his ability to join his friends at overnight camps. But by having a dedicated overnight active support stay at the camp to assist him, he was able to remain overnight and participate fully in all of the activities. His parents say the achievement gave James such a feeling of pride and he can't wait to attend more camps with Gateways.

*“As parents we felt relief that James could go on camp and get the full camp experience; that he was getting excellent care and we could relax while he was away, knowing he was in safe hands. James felt grown up, independent and not different to his friends... this made all of the difference in the world!”*

## Therapy

Gateways has a team of 47 speech pathologists and occupational therapists with expertise in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), developmental delays, intellectual disabilities and complex behaviours.

Our one-on-one and small group services span early intervention and therapy for children aged up to 6, programs for school-aged children and specialised adolescent and adult therapy to support life transitions, self-management and work skills development.

**117** Children attended group therapy programs

**546** Children aged 2-12 received NDIS funded therapy

**128** Adolescents and adults received NDIS funded therapy

**53** Autism assessments completed



## Kindergarten Inclusion

Early intervention experience and expertise make Gateways a trusted partner, providing Kindergarten Inclusion Support packages to enhance inclusion for children with disabilities in the Geelong and Barwon region, Warrnambool and south west Victoria.

Our degree qualified Preschool Field Officers have delivered the PSFO program for more than 20 years, helping early educators build their confidence, knowledge and skills so they can provide inclusive programs that respond to the needs of all children.

**407** Children received a PSFO service

**40** New KIS additional assistants employed

**63** Kindergartens receiving support

## Therapy Highlights

- 372 participants engaged in online therapy, which we introduced to address COVID-19 restrictions.
- Our Geelong region Youth Plus team grew to 7 therapists and added the Gaining the Edge program for young people transitioning to secondary school.
- Online innovation saw introduction of the Fiction with Friends program; a creative story writing program for 7-11 year-olds delivered entirely via Zoom.
- Two of our occupational therapists had research published in professional journals.

## Kindergarten Inclusion Highlights

- Introduction of an online Early Childhood Educators Library resource.
- 3 PSFO team members attended the Early Childhood Australia National Conference in Tasmania in September.
- Among 60 KIS services selected to receive specialist consultancy by Cathy Prytz.

## Therapy meets recreation in bright new program

Tarneit mother of 3, Liane, says her children, Kye, 9, and 6-year-old twins Lyla and Ayva, all struggle with high anxiety and social skills.

So when she heard about Gateways Support Services' new Bright Sparks program, which works on individual therapy goals in fun, small group recreation sessions, Liane was quick to enrol her children.

*“Some of the things we notice is how they'll handle a social situation afterwards. They adapt things they've learnt and put it into practice. Things as simple as turn-taking,”* Liane says.

Bright Sparks draws on the expertise of our therapy and recreation teams to provide a group therapy option for children aged 6-11 years.

The therapy-informed program, which commenced in January, worked with 14 children over 128 hours using activities such as science, craft and cooking to help children reach their individual NDIS plan goals. The program was then put on temporary hold by COVID-19.

Bright Sparks team member Ellie says she enjoyed seeing participants gain confidence and improve social skills.



*“Some participants were particularly shy to start, but with time they came out of their shells, which was very special to see,”* she says.

## Accommodation and Specialist Support Services

Gateways' Accommodation and Specialist Support Service teams adapt and change to meet residents' needs and are led by the residents' ideas of what they want their home to be.

We provide shared and independent living services to support people with a disability to live in the community.

Gateways also provide individual planning and staff support for people with disabilities living independently. We provide Out of Home Care for young people with complex disabilities at three houses in Geelong funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

- 4** New homes in the past 12 months
- 3** Homes for children with a disability
- 8** Shared accommodation houses for 43 individuals
- 10** Flexible living homes for 17 individuals
- 1** Dedicated respite house
- 44** Participants experiencing Social Connect programs

### Supported Accommodation Services Highlights

- Created policies and trained our staff to ensure houses remained COVID-19 safe.
- Redeveloped a 6-unit block in Geelong, creating a home for 6 young adults supported by comprehensive behaviour support and skills development teams.
- Developed partnership with SDA builder Casa Capace to build 5 new homes in the next 12 months.
- Growth of Positive Behaviour Support team to include 3 practitioners.
- Employed a practice lead nurse to oversee health support planning and training.
- Housing partnership with HCA providing 2 Box Hill homes for 4 young people with a disability leaving home for the first time.



## A team approach makes space for friendship

Sunshine, toys, a picnic blanket and a strong support team have been the ingredients in an organic and unexpected friendship between two of our young residents, Denzel and Amber. Both moved into a newly re-developed block of specifically designed units early in the year. These units deliver against Gateways' vision of providing therapy-informed care in an affordable environment for young people who are moving out of home for the first time or who might otherwise be homeless, with the goal of growing their independence.

The separate spaces, spacious outside yard, highly skilled staff

and a commitment to integrated support design has seen increased independence in daily living skills, a reduction in behaviours of concern and increasing confidence to engage in interactions with others.

Lead Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner Carolyn Foot says support staff and families have seen a significant reduction in previously high levels of anxiety to a level that has enabled them to explore new connections.

*“Both have thrived given the opportunity to have personal space designed to meet their needs,”* Carolyn says.

*This development has been made possible with financial support from Adroit Insurance and the Geelong Community Foundation.*



## Parent support

Our services embrace families to deliver understanding, knowledge and skills to help parents and carers navigate the NDIS and confidently support loved ones with a disability. A range of parent and carer support programs are offered in the Geelong and western Melbourne regions. Gateways is the only Geelong provider to have Strengthening Parent Support state government funding.

**12** Support groups across both regions  
**235** Families received parent support services



### Parent Support Highlights

- Support groups successfully delivered via Facebook and Zoom to address COVID-19 restrictions.
- Introduction of Wyndham Support Group, co-facilitated with MacKillop Family Services.
- Well-attended Carers Week movie night in Geelong.
- Successful application for \$15,000 Supporting Carers Locally Grant from the State Government.

## Support Coordination

Our team of independent support coordinators brings strong NDIS experience and local knowledge of providers and services – not only of NDIS funded supports, but also mainstream and community supports - to ensure participants receive the best options to meet their goals. In addition to expertise in autism, intellectual disability and complex behaviours, our team brings a range of professional and lived experiences spanning early childhood, aged care, child protection and diverse backgrounds.

Gateways also has team members with training and experience to deliver Specialist Support Coordination services.

### Support Coordination Highlights

- Growth in south west Victorian team from 3 to 11.
- 130 new Support Coordination clients.
- 16 new Specialist Support Coordination clients.

**858** Support Coordination participants  
**23** Participants receiving Specialist Support Coordination



## Service Area & Office Locations



## Supporters

Thank you individuals, volunteers, fundraising groups, trusts and foundations, Victorian and Commonwealth governments (Department of Health and Human Services, Department of

Education and Training, Department of Social Services and National Disability and Insurance Agency). You enable us to provide children and adults with a disability and their families with vital support.

## Major Supporters

### GROUPS & BUSINESSES

Gateways Auxiliary

A special thank you to the major sponsors of the 16th Annual Gateways Golf Day - Adroit Insurance & Risk, LBW Business + Wealth Advisors, Discount Drug Stores, YNA Your Nursing Agency, Maxwell Collins Real Estate, Curlewis Winery, Harwood Andrews, Geelong Insurance Brokers, Cockies Beer and Drysdale Clinic.

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## About Gateways Support Services

Gateways Support Services is a community organisation that has been making a positive difference in the lives of children, adolescents and adults with a disability or additional need and their families for more than 20 years.

We see the potential and strengths of every person we support. Our team is here to support people with a disability to make choices and achieve their goals so they can enjoy

meaningful lives in their community.

With local knowledge and specialist support in autism, intellectual disability and complex behaviours, Gateways Support Service assists more than 2000 participants and families every year across Geelong, Melbourne's western suburbs and south west Victoria.

## Get in touch

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Gateways is an NDIS and DHHS registered disability service provider, with quality accreditation.

