



PRESIDENT'S
& CEO'S
REPORT

**We have a plan
for the future...**



**and we are
implementing it!**

Our Melba, Our Future!



Ben Renshaw and Hayley Dean

It is increasingly becoming a cliché to observe that this past year has been like no other. Cliché it may be, but it is certainly true. Melba, along with many other organisations, has been severely challenged by the coronavirus pandemic. Importantly, we have successfully met these challenges and are enormously proud of the resilience of our communities, notably the people supported, their families and our support staff.

In this year's report we discuss in some detail the different ways we have been truly tested, the difficulties encountered, and even with the unique challenges of the past year and the incredible outcomes that have been achieved.

We start our report with a reminder of the Strategic Plan, Our Melba, Our Future!, which we launched at the beginning of the 2019/20 financial year.

It is a plan for the future; a future made possible by the extraordinary and outstanding leadership of Glenn Foard. It is only apt that at the commencement of this report we pay tribute to Glenn. Glenn stepped down as CEO in early September 2020. In reflecting on his time at Melba, our Life Governors consistently spoke of Glenn's vision for Melba, and how privileged they were to bear witness to its eventual fruition under his diligent,

steadfast and honorable stewardship. In his announcement of his decision, Ben remarked that Glenn is held in extremely high regard not only at Melba, but also by our community partners and colleagues in the disability sector. He has been an outstanding CEO over more than eight years, with a long list of notable achievements. Melba has thrived under his values-based leadership and the Melba community is deeply indebted to him for all he has done.

Importantly, Melba had a succession plan in place. Following a rigorous due diligence process involving our partners, SACS Consulting, the Board of Directors selected Hayley Dean as Melba's new CEO. Hayley commenced as Chief Outcomes Officer at Melba in early 2017. Since then, she has played an integral role in our growth and development. Hayley has overseen our transition to the NDIS and been instrumental in planning for and completing the transfer of government services, managing the bushfire crisis in Gippsland and Central Highlands in the summer of 19/20 and responding to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The Board, Glenn and Hayley have been committed to guaranteeing a seamless change in leadership. Whilst Glenn will be deeply missed, the baton has been successfully passed and received – 'Our Melba, Our Future!' is opening up a world of opportunities for people to live a fabulous life.

Readers of last year's report will recall that the Board considered having a clear strategic path for the Melba Group to follow was essential. Accordingly, a new five-year plan titled Our Melba, Our Future! was finalised and presented to staff at a series of forums in July and August 2019, and family forums in October 2019.



The plan has three primary goals:

01

Drive
Outcomes
and Quality

People purchasing services from Melba receive excellent service that enables them to achieve their desired personal outcomes.

02

Continue
our Growth

Melba will grow to meet the needs of individuals and families. Growth will be managed and considered in locations and services where we can make a positive difference. Excellence in service delivery will be fundamental to growth. Growth will not be at the expense of existing services.

03

Empower
our workforce

Melba has a vibrant, thriving culture and an engaged, skilled workforce that is inclusive and accountable.

Having a plan is important; implementing it, even more so!

During the course of the year many of our activities were aimed at advancing the goals set out in **Our Melba, Our Future!** One of the personal outcomes Melba supports people to achieve is to choose where they live and with whom they live. To do so, we have actively partnered with various organisations and housing developers to provide more accommodation options for the many people who require them.

It was exciting to partner with Guardian Living and begin supporting the first person to move into the Maude Street units in Cheltenham in July 2019, overseen by Angela Quero, our General Manager Outcomes, South. Six people now live happily in these units.

Similarly, the work of Rachael Jones (General Manager Outcomes, Central Highlands and Wimmera) and her team to supporting four women who were previously homeless move into units in Canadian, Ballarat during the latter half of 2019 was immensely satisfying. Their lives, and life outcomes, have changed markedly since. Since then other developments at Lilydale, Mt Evelyn, Rosebud, Wantirna, Ringwood and Frankston are all progressing. Encouraging discussions about Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) projects in other locations have also been held.

The Argyle Street development in Frankston, in particular, is noteworthy as it is being advanced through a trust specifically established to enable Melba to partner with two other investors to build six units. The inaugural meeting of the trustee board was held on 18 February 2020.



Following a tender, a builder was chosen and construction is now underway. We look forward to the completion of these units in 2021.

While the pandemic did cause some delays to construction, it was very exciting to participate in a 'virtual launch' of the Snowball Avenue development in Mt Evelyn on 17 June 2020. Individuals chosen through an expression of interest process have now commenced living in their new homes - another great partnership, on this occasion with fellow not-for-profit Anchor.



Individuals wishing to live at our Anderson Street development in Lilydale have also now received offers to do so and are excitedly awaiting the completion of final works so they can take up residence! It has been some time in the making, but we are confident it will be worth the wait for the individuals concerned. Both these services will be overseen by Aaron Fry, General Manager Outcomes, East.

We have continued to grow our service offerings, in accordance with our plan. At the very beginning of the year, 1 July 2019, we officially commenced a new respite service for children in Camms Road, Cranbourne. We were pleased to assume responsibility for this existing service when the previous provider decided to refocus their organisation away from disability services. We know how important respite is to family members and now, more than one year later, these families and individuals have been very satisfied with the outcomes the service assists them achieve.



In August and September 2019, after following receipt of our 'Readiness Certificates' from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), we began managing the former departmental services in 65 locations around the state. After preparing for the transfer for the preceding 12 months - it was a big task - we were privileged to have the opportunity to support some 600 people living in Supported Independent Living homes and receiving Short-Term Accommodation

Assistance in facility-based respite services and to welcome approximately 700 departmental staff to our organisation. These new services are in the north-west, south and east of Victoria ranging from Nhill in the Wimmera to Orbost in East Gippsland.

Prior to the transfer, the Board established a subsidiary entity, Melba Support Services Australia Ltd (MSSA), to deliver the new services. Wholly-controlled by Melba Support Services Inc, the company is governed by a Board comprised of a subset of existing Melba Directors. Accordingly, the Melba Group now comprises three entities – our long-standing parent entity, Melba Support Services Inc, MSSA and the Argyle Street trustee company. We may be three entities, but we have only one purpose as set out in our strategic plan: to open up a world of opportunities for people to live fabulous lives!

Our commitment to the regional Victorian areas where we are now delivering services has resulted in the establishment of new offices in Morwell and Horsham. After first operating from a temporary office in Morwell, it was great to officially open our new office in June 2020. We also undertook substantial refurbishments to our Melba Avenue office in Lilydale, our Urquhart Street office in Ballarat and our Thomas Street office in Dandenong.

Growing our service offerings must be underpinned by strong ‘back-of-house’ services. Our investment in a talented and dedicated Practice, Quality and Safeguards (PQS) team headed by Dr Anneke Jurgens paid dividends for the people we support in a myriad of ways and offered valuable advice and assistance for our staff. The establishment of a 24/7 practice support hotline enables staff to seek guidance at any time, when they need it. During the months that followed the transfer it is notable that Anneke and Sally Nicol (a long-time manager at Melba and an Outcome

Specialist in the PQS team) oversaw more than three hundred Personal Outcome Measures interviews with individuals and their families as part of the preparation involved in advance of a full transition to the NDIS. This was a major effort, made more difficult by the pandemic, and has assisted greatly in the development of NDIS plans.



We also invested heavily in improving our Information and Communication Technology and associated software systems. Notably, in August 2019, we replaced our reliance on ageing in-house servers at Lilydale with Infrastructure as a Service arrangements resulting in welcome improvements in connectivity and system reliability that held us in good stead during the pandemic. We also undertook projects that have delivered enhancements to our payroll arrangements, the consolidation of systems used in Ballarat and Melbourne, an upgraded finance system, and improvements to software that enables direct support workers to access information about people they support in real time. These new software systems position us much better for the future. We acknowledge the dedicated efforts of Glen Collins, General Manager ICT, and his team. Glen is moving to Darwin with his family so sadly we will be bidding him a fond farewell at the end of this year. His skills and commitment will be missed.

As noted above, the third goal of our plan is to empower our staff and have the very best workforce possible - we want to be a true employer of choice and reward staff for the excellent work they do. During the year we were pleased to negotiate a new enterprise agreement for Melba Support Services Inc. with our staff and their union representatives - an agreement that is unique to Melba. While formal negotiations commenced in October 2019, prior to that we conducted a staff survey and face-to-face sessions to gain feedback and staff views on the key priorities for conditions and benefits for the new EA. This informed the Melba position that was tabled at the commencement of negotiations and shared with staff.

Sasha Eden, our General Manager, People and Culture along with Rupert Evans, our Industrial Relations Advisor, led negotiations which concluded in December 2019. With the support of both relevant unions, staff



voted overwhelming in favour of the new agreement reflecting the additional benefits it provides. The agreement was lodged with the Fair Work Commission following the vote and approved. Its implementation commenced in April 2020. In our view, the EA offers the most attractive terms and conditions of any equivalent agreement in the disability sector - what Melba's hard-working staff deserve.

We feel confident it is an important step along the path of achieving our workforce goal and commend Sasha and Rupert, and all the bargaining representatives, on their work.



Covid-19 Data

119

COVID-19 Meetings

119

Leadership Updates

32

Videos produced for
COVID-19

482

Flu injections given to staff by
Melba's complex health team

20

COVID-19 Protocols regularly
developed and continually
updated

102

FAQs regularly developed
and continually updated

Plus...

Regular development and
production of Easy Read
COVID-19 Fact sheets

Managing Emergencies



Somewhat presciently, in early December 2019 the senior management team completed work on a plan to assist Melba manage any crisis that might come our way.

Little did we know what lay ahead! Only a short while later came the horrendous bushfires that affected several parts of Victoria, in particular East Gippsland, and tested our emergency management capacity.

As a result of bushfires in Gippsland in late December and early January, people living in group homes in Orbost, Bairnsdale and Moe South had to be evacuated to ensure they were safe. Individuals living at Orbost were away from their homes for almost three weeks. As you can imagine, this involved considerable effort on behalf of staff and the individuals concerned. All showed amazing resilience.

In particular, we acknowledge the staff who while still supporting people at Melba, were also trying to ensure they, their families and their own homes were safe. We are very grateful no one lost their life but were deeply saddened that some staff lost their home, animals or significant possessions. We pay tribute to the leadership our General Manager Outcomes in Gippsland, Kerrie White, displayed during this emergency.

Importantly, a debriefing workshop was held on 21 January with the assistance of an external consultant, Risk Logic. We were keen to provide support to staff affected, but also to embed any learnings that may assist in future emergencies. Additionally, visits to our group homes by Kerrie, Hayley and Glenn in January and February were a further opportunity to both thank and support staff and hear about their experiences. It was pleasing that in their review, Risk Logic were very complimentary of the whole team's efforts.

Of course, the bushfires were not confined to Gippsland. Rachael Jones also dealt with bushfires in the Central Highlands and Wimmera – indeed, she had to evacuate her own home on more than one occasion and Aaron Fry also worked hard to ensure that people living in Mt Evelyn were safe. All our staff and managers are to be commended for helping respond to the emergency. And we all have an ongoing role to play. Our strategic plan emphasises the importance of “a culture of environmental consciousness and responsibility” which is required to help address climate change and seek to avert such disasters (or worse) in the future.

Almost as soon as the threat from bushfires had dissipated, a new, insidious threat emerged. On 16 March 2020, the Victorian Premier declared a State of Emergency in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

We had previously written to our community providing advice about the virus and the range of measures Melba was taking to manage the health risks to the people we support and our staff but much more work was to follow.

Soon after, on 22 March, the Premier announced that Victoria was proceeding over the next 48 hours to implement a shutdown of all non-essential activity across the state to combat the spread of the virus. We had anticipated this necessity and had, in the preceding days, made the extremely difficult decision to suspend some of our support services. All Victorians know what followed as we successfully managed the ‘first wave’, contemplated our recovery from it, and then were forced to combat the more serious ‘second wave’ that continued until October 2020.

In accordance with our pandemic plan, Melba undertook a host of measures in response to the emergency.

While it is not possible to comprehensively summarise all the actions taken in this report, it is worth noting we achieved the following →



Importantly, communicated frequently with individuals we support, their families and our staff via a range of mediums, including our website, providing updates and advice, establishing a 24/7 hotline for enquiries and a dedicated COVID-19 information hub – our communications team overseen by our General Manager, Innovation and Development, Dave Glazebrook, are to be commended for their efforts over many months.

Appointed a Pandemic Operations Adviser, Marsha Sheridan, and our own Medical Adviser, Dr Miranda Sandars, who both provided invaluable assistance and guidance.

Developed COVID-19 safe plans for all our sites.

Developed and frequently updated very detailed protocols to assist in the management of COVID-19 and respond to possible outbreak scenarios.

Ensured staff completed additional infection control training and instruction on the proper use of PPE.

Invested heavily in the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which in the early months of the pandemic was in short supply, and we gratefully acknowledge the assistance of both the McAllister and Graham families in securing PPE for our staff.

Ensured sufficient supplies of hand sanitiser were always available, which was also challenging in the early days of the pandemic, and we acknowledge the donations of Carlton and United Breweries who pivoted their manufacturing to produce hand sanitiser to meet supply shortages.

Established a dedicated COVID-19 team in which every member is to be commended for ensuring the whole Melba Community remained safe and well, and we sincerely thank:

Marika Best

Rebecca Hunt

Alex Magri-Olson

Zulejha Molokov

Dr Miranda Sandars

Nicole Stow

Sharen Calheiros

Megan Jacobs

Beth McIntosh

Lauren Parker

Marsha Sheridan

Kelli Stringer

Russell Harrison

Anneke Jurgens

Nathan Mhizha

Sonia Pesti

Steve Stainsby

Bec Vanderlinden

Distributed comprehensive daily summaries of international, national and local developments to our COVID-19 team and relevant managers, prepared by our Executive Office Manager, Kirsten Filmer.

Rolled out influenza vaccinations for all our staff, which also permitted Dr Sandars and our nursing health specialists to visit work sites and group homes and answer questions about infection control protocols.

Checked in regularly with individuals who were not receiving their normal services, along with their families.

Monitored the health and well-being of our staff who performed admirably throughout the emergency going above and beyond to keep people safe.

Provided 'safety net' payments to staff to mitigate any financial disadvantage they incurred as a result of precautions taken to restrict transmission of the virus, which complemented the JobKeeper benefits some staff received.

Supported more than 90 individuals and 400 staff to be tested for COVID-19.

Established necessary business continuity strategies, including the capacity to support staff working from home as required.

Managed the impacts of increased staff absenteeism which resulted from the requirement not to attend work when feeling the least bit ill and, in so doing, we commend the willingness and flexibility of staff who were redeployed to assist in areas other than their normal roles during the pandemic.

Established sites in each of our regions for use as 'isolation' accommodation, which, thankfully, has not been required.

Liaised regularly with DHHS regarding the public health directions that they issued and how they could best be applied to disability services, participating in the Ministerial Disability Taskforce they established.

Supported the use of technological solutions to enhance communication between family members and their loved ones in group homes when visiting was limited.

Provided additional support to individuals living in our group homes when they were unable to attend their regular day-time support services.

Issued more than 1,000 'worker permits' in response to government directions to ensure our essential services could continue.

Ultimately, there are no words to adequately express our admiration and appreciation for our support staff, who had to continually ‘pivot and flex’ to meet the ever-changing COVID environment.

Their enduring commitment and dedication is exemplary. To say that an enormous amount of work was done by everyone in the organisation is too simple an

understatement, but perhaps the effort is best illustrated by the fact that Melba has, at the time of writing, not had a single COVID-19 outbreak. As all readers of this report will know, we focus on the personal outcomes of individuals we support, one of which is to enjoy the best possible health. The fact that no-one we support has contracted the virus is a great outcome equalled only by the fact no staff member contracted the virus at work either.

“ Our sincere thanks go to everyone who contributed to this significant achievement. ”



Advancing the Disability Sector

Slowly, yes too slowly, we have seen advances in the rights of people with disability and in the way disability services are provided. Melba has always sought to play a leading role in advocating for such advances and, despite competing priorities and the challenges of emergency management, this year was no different.

One important initiative that we are hoping will drive continued progress is the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. The Royal Commission was announced in February 2019 and at that time we issued a media release in strong support of its work stating that the abuse and neglect of people with disability is shameful and totally unacceptable and voicing our hope it will result in important recommendations on policy and practice to address past systemic failures.

The commission's work got underway this past year. In July 2019, Glenn attended an early workshop run by the Commission to provide feedback on a draft policy framework they developed. At the workshop he spoke about the importance of advocacy.

Subsequently, we entered an excellent partnership with an advocacy organisation in Gippsland - Gippsland Disability Advocacy Incorporated - to provide information and education to people we support in that region.



They are also supporting anyone who wishes to make a submission to the Royal Commission and tell their story.

In a similar vein, in November 2019 we issued a bulletin regarding the Royal Commission, reiterating our zero tolerance for abuse and other violations of individuals' rights and giving the imprimatur to any member of our staff who wished to raise a matter with the commission to do so.

Melba has continued our whistle-blower protections through our partnership with the independent organisation, Stopleveline. This protected disclosures service is available for anyone to use, as necessary, at any time.



We were pleased to see that advocacy services received specific funding through the Royal Commission to assist people tell their story. We provided assistance to our committed group of self-advocates at Melba, known as ARROW (standing for Advocacy, Rights, Representation, Outcomes and Worth) to prepare their own submission in response to the Royal Commission's issues paper on Rights and Attitudes released in April 2020. The result was a powerful video featuring ARROW members and a family member speaking passionately about the importance of education to increase understanding of disability and tackle negative community attitudes.

NDIS Supports Provided in 2019 /2020

- ✓ High Intensity Daily Activities
- ✓ Assist in Coordination or Managing Life Stages, Transitions and Supports
- ✓ Daily Personal Activities
- ✓ Assist with Travel/ Transport Arrangements
- ✓ Specialist Positive Behaviour Support
- ✓ Assist with Daily Life Tasks in a Group or Shared Living Arrangements
- ✓ Development of Daily Living and Life Skills
- ✓ Participation in Community
- ✓ Social and Civil Activities
- ✓ Support Coordination
- ✓ Group and Centre Based Activities

Melba also contributed to a joint submission prepared by a large group of disability providers in response to the Commission's issues paper on Emergency Planning and Response also released in April 2020. The submission drew on the collective experience of disability providers fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and the bushfires discussed above.

On 1 July 2020, a commission of a different kind commenced operating in Victoria – the National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission.

Both MSS Inc and MSSA Ltd are registered with the NDIS Commission and have liaised regularly with its staff, ensuring we are meeting all our reporting obligations. At the time of writing, we are undertaking a quality audit required of all providers as part of accreditation processes. We understand the importance of independent quality assessments as one mechanism to drive quality improvements across the sector and look forward to reporting positively on our ongoing accreditation in the future.

We have also continued to liaise closely with the National Disability Insurance Agency about a variety of matters associated with the NDIS. In previous reports dating back some years now, we have written passionately about the changes ushered in by the NDIS and our support for its fundamental principles giving individuals choice and control and the right to receive necessary supports. Our advocacy for these principles will not waiver.

That is not to say, however, that all has gone smoothly regarding the administration of the scheme. In September 2019 we wrote to the Federal Government expressing our disappointment regarding decisions about Temporary Transitional Payments and the unwillingness to include specific funding for these payments in individuals' plans.

Cumbersome administrative processes have also resulted in plan approval delays for people we support and we have, and we have advocated on behalf of individuals who received inadequate planning outcomes.

In February 2020 (pre-pandemic!) Glenn, Hayley and Angela hosted a visit by the NDIA Chair, Dr Helen Nugent, at the Maude Street, Cheltenham development. We were very pleased to discuss with Helen Melba's history and our current Supported Independent Living (SIL) services. We introduced Helen to two people living at Maude Street, who both explained the benefits of having a home of their own and the outcomes it helps them achieve.

Most recently we have followed closely the pricing policy changes the NDIA has introduced with respect to SIL services. While understanding the need to have a financially viable scheme, we are concerned the NDIA is focusing on cost at the expense of personal outcomes. Individuals' choices regarding with whom they live must be respected, just as they are for every other member of the community.

Notwithstanding the NDIS is still a work in progress, with some policy anomalies and administrative flaws, we still consider it is overwhelmingly a positive force for change in the disability sector and our wider society. We share with you some feedback we received regarding the NDIS, Melba and the Support Coordination services we provide through the team led by General Manager, Sarina Bunnnett. A long-term advocate of an indigenous man wrote in June 2020, "It is the first time in 5 years that the safety nets and supports we have in our legal system and society are working for (him) and this is due to the expertise of Melba...".

This, of course, is the promise of the NDIS and it is pleasing Melba is able to play a part helping the scheme deliver on that promise.

We love feedback at Melba!

We have always thought that receiving feedback, in whatever form, is critical to delivering the very best services we can.

Accordingly, throughout the year we encouraged feedback in a range of ways.



At, and following, the staff forums held in July and August 2019, we conducted a survey completed by 225 staff. Of particular note are the following results:

99% of respondents reported that

“ My team upholds the human rights of people we support ”

98% reported

“ Melba genuinely puts people we support first ”

99% reported

“ Melba has a clearly defined vision and strong core values ”

98% reported

“ Overall, I enjoy my job ”

These are particularly positive results that speak to the culture of the organisation.

We also held two family forums in October 2019 in Lilydale and Ballarat attended by 22 people. We wanted to seek feedback from families and discuss their experiences of the NDIS.

Those attending the family forums reported they had “confidence in the Melba staff who support my family member” and that “Melba assists my family member to exercise their human rights”. It was also gratifying to note that all respondents believed “it is OK to complain when necessary”.

Following the transfer of services from DHHS, we engaged Orima, a well-regarded research firm with a particular interest in disability services, to conduct three further surveys with people we are supporting following the transfer, their families, and with staff seconded from DHHS. The three surveys were conducted in early 2020.

Again, there were some very positive results, particularly with respect to the safety of individuals, but also findings that confirm there are areas for improvement. We thank everyone who participated in all the surveys conducted during the year and encourage participation in the surveys planned for the coming year.

Similarly, we thank everyone who has provided feedback in other forms. Complaints are an important source of feedback and we acknowledge that we don't always get everything right. As detailed in our strategic plan we seek to “embrace failure as a vehicle for learning”.

For those readers who might like to hear feedback directly from Paul, a parent in Gippsland, you can listen to a ‘MelbaLoop’ podcast. Check it out on SoundCloud here: <https://soundcloud.com/melbaloop/episode-4-the-melba-experience>

You can also watch interviews conducted with several people we support on our website here: www.melbasupport.com.au/melba-news



Recognition

Just as learning from feedback is important, so too is recognising excellent work when it occurs. At Melba we believe in celebrating successes and having fun – it is, after all, one of our values and an intrinsic part of our organisational culture.

As has been our practice for some time, we were pleased to provide our hard-working staff with a small gift in December. Nothing large, but a small token of appreciation for their commitment. Many transferring staff, in particular, expressed their pleasant surprise.

And we celebrated – at four separate end-of-year functions in Yering (Lilydale), Traralgon, Dandenong and Ballarat. Some 450 people from the expanded (post-transfer) Melba community attended these events! It was great so many joined us to have fun and hear the outcome of Melba's awards.

As many know, we annually recognise staff who have reached long-service milestones. In fact, in total we acknowledged 169 staff for their dedicated work for many years during the four events. Special mention must be made of Kay Barnett who retired in 2019 after 43 years of service at Melba. Kay, you are a legend and we honour your life-long commitment to people supported at Melba.

The individual 2019 Stevenson Award for work which is above and beyond what is expected went to two outstanding staff members who the judges could not separate – Donald Harvey from Ballarat and Simon Scoggins from Lilydale.



Donald is completely dedicated to ensuring that all people who access our services are responded to promptly, and with a high level of person-centred service. We often receive unsolicited positive feedback from our community regarding how terrific Donald is!

Simon Scoggins, a member of our ICT team, worked tirelessly during the year assisting with the transfer of DHHS services to Melba, spending time away from home in Ballarat and Morwell, working long hours to provide training and patient guidance. Simon's work has been consistently recognised by colleagues as exceptional.

The team Stevenson Award also went to joint winners – the Larbert Road team in the East the and the Arthur Creative team in Central Highlands.



Arthur Creative is a fabulous team of staff made up of highly qualified arts practitioners who bring their amazing knowledge and skills to their work. The team is very outcomes-driven for the participants they support. Artists supported through Arthur Creative achieve high recognition for their art forms. They have won awards at renowned events including Royal South Street and Sit Down, Shut Up and Watch Film Festival. This year, their works were exhibited at the Ballarat White Night Festival and ContainArt – a mobile gallery for small works.

The Larbert Road team's story dates back to May 2019 when a technician installing a television antenna accidentally broke the sprinkler pipe in the roof at the group home, causing massive flooding of much of the house including some bedrooms. The quick actions of the team working that day meant

Practice, Quality and Safeguards

113 Learning and Development Sessions



(on Human Rights, Zero Tolerance, Quality Compliance, Quality Practice, Complex Health and Positive Behaviour Support)

88



People supported by the Positive Behaviour Support team

Every SIL service has their own practice mentor coach



everyone at the house were safely evacuated – including the technician! But the property was unfit for people to return to.

Emergency accommodation was quickly organised at Glen Alvie House in Queenscliff, which has the necessary support equipment and facilities. For the next 10 days, the Larbert Road team travelled to and from Queenscliff, over an hour and a half away, to ensure that people had continuity of support, and were happy and safe until they could return home.

Truly an 'above and beyond' effort.

Congratulations to the award winners, indeed to all the nominees and we sincerely thank all staff who work at Melba for their skill, commitment and dedication.

We wouldn't be Melba if we didn't also recognise the people we support. As many readers will know, we do that through the Rebecca Britt Award. Bec was a vibrant part of Melba's Community Connections program and the Melba Advisory Group (now known as ARROW). Upon Bec's death in 2010, we initiated an award in her honour with the support of her grandmother.

The award is presented to someone who throughout the year has demonstrated some of the same attributes we admired in Bec including kind-heartedness, an ability to make others smile, generosity, a passion for life and a willingness to advocate for other people with disability. Joshua Steer won the 2019 award in recognition of his outstanding personal qualities.

Josh encourages and helps his friends and staff every minute he can and warmly greets everyone who arrives at Melba Avenue in Lilydale. His engaging manner ensures you can't help but smile when you're near him! He is warm and generous person and a worthy winner of the award. Our congratulations go to Josh and to the other nominees: Joel Gills, Lindsay Lee and Llewie Scott all of whom display similar attributes.

It was pleasing that others were also recognising people we support. Ron Weiss, whom we have supported for many years, was nominated for the Victorian Senior of the Year Award and received a Certificate of Recognition and Appreciation from the Premier and the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers for the work he does in his local Mt Evelyn community. Everyone loves Ronnie and this recognition was very well deserved.

In early March 2020 we had the opportunity to recognise Melba's founders and early volunteers at an afternoon tea function. Glenn spoke to them about recent developments and many wonderful memories of Melba's beginnings in the 1970s were shared! During a tour of our Melba Avenue site, everyone was particularly impressed with Able Bakehouse's new commercial kitchen (for which we had recently received our Certificate of Registration from Yarra Ranges Council). Remembering our history, which is now rapidly approaching 50 years, and the efforts of those who 'did the hard yards' establishing Melba, is important. Our thanks go to two of our founders and Life Governors, Pauline Jones OAM and Harry Jones OAM, for their assistance in organising the event. It is amazing they are still supporting our work after nearly five decades!

The Able Bakehouse



243 Hampers



1,200

Meals for homeless during Covid-19 (via Anchor)



189

Meals sold to staff



Sadly, another outstanding member of the Melba community, Colin Rose, passed away in September 2019. Colin, a long-time Board director and member of Melba's Human Rights Committee, was a passionate advocate. His lived experience of disability added immense value to Board decision-making. He also used that knowledge to promote a better understanding of disability in the community. In particular, his experience of living in various forms of disability accommodation – some good, some not – inspired Melba's decisions to become involved in the development of homes that people could honestly say they chose to live in. Vale Colin – dear friend, you are greatly missed.

Like Colin, other directors make important contributions to our organisation. Two past directors were recognised in 2019 with Life Governorship by awarding them life governorship. Both received their awards at our end-of-year celebrations.

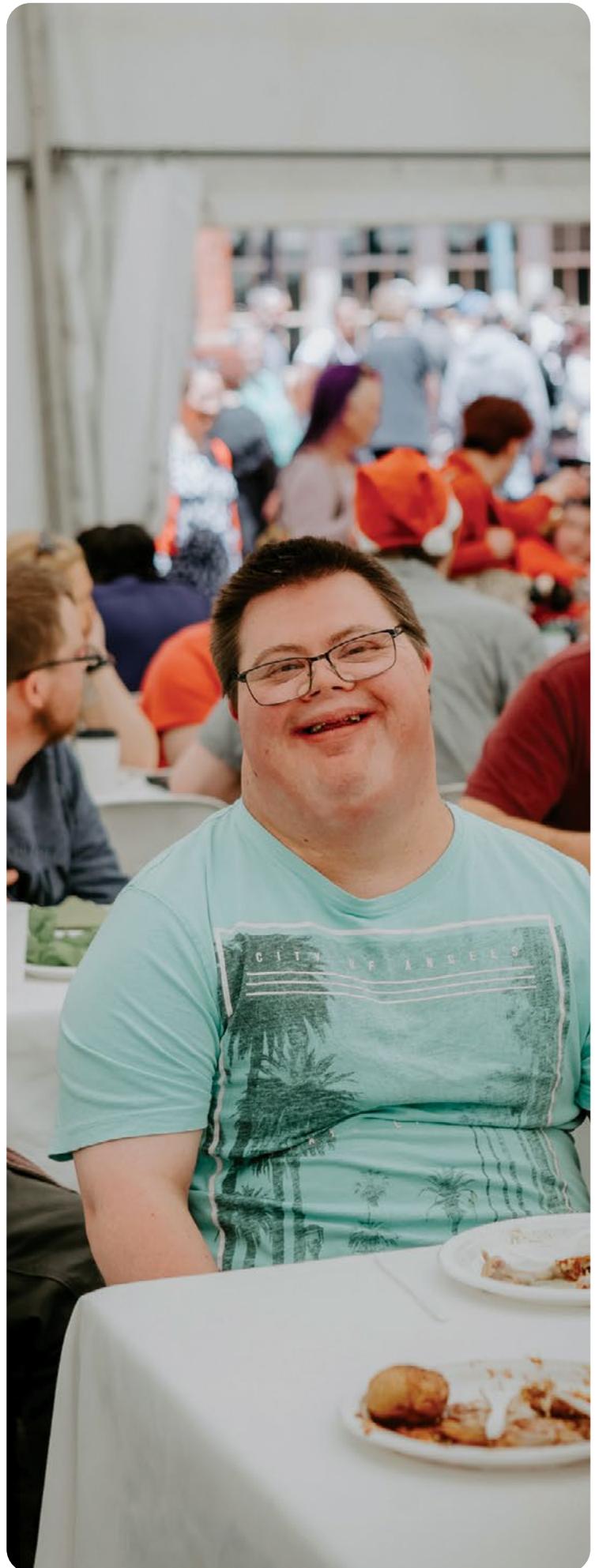
Dr John Annison was elected to Melba's Board in 2009. In 2012 he was elected President, and served in this capacity for five years before serving as Vice President for a further year. During his time on Melba's Board, John also chaired both the Governance and Remuneration Committees, ensuring that the Board fulfilled its legal and other responsibilities. Importantly, John oversaw the development of a Board Charter – a critical framework that guides the activities of Melba's Board.

John has made an extraordinary, life-long commitment to improving the quality of life of people with intellectual disability.

He has volunteered his expertise and skills to organisations for more than three decades, including as President of the Council of Intellectual Disability Agencies, a peak body of disability service providers in Victoria from 1996 to 2005. He is a very worthy Life Governor.

So too, Graham Leaver who was elected to Melba's Board in 2006, serving for 12 years before stepping down at the end of 2018. Graham fulfilled a critical role on the Board as a family member of someone we support (required by our Rules of Association). Graham and Anne-Marie's son, David, was supported at Blue Ridge for many years. Indeed, David will long be remembered at Melba as our inaugural Rebecca Britt Award winner in 2013. Graham and David share the same qualities: a very kind heart, a sense of humour and a wonderful ability to encourage others.

Graham has always been enormously supportive of Melba's work; he has always had the needs of people we support first and foremost in his mind, even helping us to build the wonderful bus shelter at Melba Avenue in Lilydale, now dedicated in memory of David.



Finally, our thanks...



Our thanks go to our directors who provide excellent governance for the organisation.

At the 2019 AGM existing directors Dominica Tannock, Jonathan Pickering, Richard Frampton and Jan Calvert, as well as Ben, were re-elected to the Board following the end of their previous two-year term. They joined continuing directors, each of whom were half-way through their two-year term and newly elected director Natasha Ludowyk from Ballarat who replaced Daina McLeod who retired and did not stand for re-election. We thank Daina not only for her time on the Melba Board, but also for her leadership as Chair of the Karden Board prior to our merger.

For the last year we have, therefore, had a Board of ten directors. In addition to those listed above, we thank Samantha Davies, our Vice-President, Michelle Marcantonio, our Treasurer, along with Matthew Brett (who chairs the Governance Committee) and Illona Laurie-Rhodes (our Gippsland director). Notably, seven of the ten directors have lived experience of disability.

Dominica and Richard have announced their retirement as directors and we thank them for their commitment and the expertise they brought to the Board.

Jan Calvert has also made the decision to retire after 21 years serving on the Board. Jan's commitment to people we support through her work on the Board has been nothing short of extraordinary. A consistent and passionate voice for families and for people we support, Jan's expertise has been invaluable in Board discussions and

Supporting people across the state of Victoria



80+

SIL group homes, townhouses, units and apartments



9

STAA respite properties



6

Offices:
Lilydale, Dandenong,
Ballarat, Morwell,
Horsham and Bairnsdale



4

Day Support
and Community
Connections
programs



1

Creative Arts
program



Individual supports
across Victoria

decisions. It was not only prudent but prescient that our founders enshrined in our rules that the lived experience of disability must always have a voice on Melba's Board. We look forward to the election of new directors at the forthcoming Melba AGM in November 2020.

While not part of our formal governance arrangements, we thank His Honour, Justice David O'Callaghan, who provides support as Melba's Ambassador. We also acknowledge others who volunteer their time to assist Melba and the people we support, noting that the pandemic has – for obvious reasons – limited their ability to do so this year. They are valued members of the Melba community.

Throughout the year we maintained good relationships with a range of organisations that benefit Melba and the people we support. Of note are our partnerships and work with Box Hill Institute, La Trobe University, Yarra Ranges Council, Gippsland Disability Advocacy Incorporated, the Council on Quality and Leadership, SAI Global, Mt Evelyn and Districts Community Bank, the Office of the Disability Services Commissioner, National Disability Services,

Prescience Design, the Department of Health and Human Services, the NDIA, Jubilee Housing, Housing First, Community Lifestyle Accommodation, Guardian Living, Lilydale Uniting Church, Community Housing Limited, Anchor Incorporated, Inspiro, SACS Consulting, Pathways to Care, local schools, Volunteering Victoria and the Quest Trust.

We want to pay a special tribute to the generosity of the Victorian Chemists Golf Club who again in October 2019 organised a very successful fund-raising golf day and dinner. We thank all our donors who support our work, noting that more than 90 individuals have contributed to the construction of homes at Anderson St, Lilydale.

We also acknowledge the support we receive from our local Members of Parliament notably James Merlino MLA who provided much appreciated assistance during the year, along with Yarra Ranges Councillors, all of whom are great friends of Melba.

Finally, to the people and families who have made the decision to purchase services from Melba – thank you. You entrust us to provide the support that meets your unique needs and assists you achieve the personal outcomes of importance to you. We are privileged to do so.



Ben Renshaw

President and Chair of the Board



Hayley Dean

Chief Executive Officer





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