

SINCE 1924



UNISSON | IT STARTS *with heart*
DISABILITY

2020
ANNUAL REVIEW



Contents

01 FOREWORD

Acknowledgement of Country	2
Purpose of our Annual Review	2
A Message from our CEO & Chairman	4

02 ABOUT US

It Starts With Heart	6
Our Proud History	7
Our Vision, Purpose & Values	9
Strategic Focus	10

03 UPDATES & HIGHLIGHTS

Unisson Snapshot	12
Working In Unisson	14
FY 19/20 Highlights	16
Employment Milestone Awards Relunched	18
Moving on Up	20
Introducing Blue Apple	22
Our Response to COVID-19	24
Thriving During COVID-19	26
A Focus on Wellbeing	28

04 MY UNISSON STORY

Venessa	30
Lyn	32
Mathew	34
Rhett	36
Claire	38
Damien	40
A Career with Unisson: Craig	42

05 CORPORATE UPDATES

Our Structure	44
Financial Year Snapshot	45
Executive & Senior Leadership Team	47
Board Members	48
The Board	50
Our Funding Sources	52

Front cover: Geoffrey Gregg playing guitar and singing at the Terrey Hills Community Access Centre open day

Inside front cover: Taylor Mallaby and Riding for the Disabled volunteer Steve O'Connor

Back Cover: Process Worker Robert Ewins at the 2019 Pack Works Christmas party

Acknowledgement of Country

Unisson Disability respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land we now call Australia.

We recognise and respect their continuing spiritual connection to land, sea and community and acknowledge their stories, traditions and living cultures.

We value the cultural contributions of Indigenous peoples and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

We further acknowledge the cultural contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability and reaffirm our vision of a world where every person is welcomed.



Purpose of our Annual Review

Unisson's Annual Review is much more than a report of our achievements and financial performance throughout the previous financial year, it also provides an opportunity for the people we work alongside every day to share their stories and experiences.

Our review is published for our many stakeholders, valued supporters, community partners, employees, government agencies, families, advocates, the people we support and anyone who is considering becoming part of the Unisson story.

AT UNISSON WE

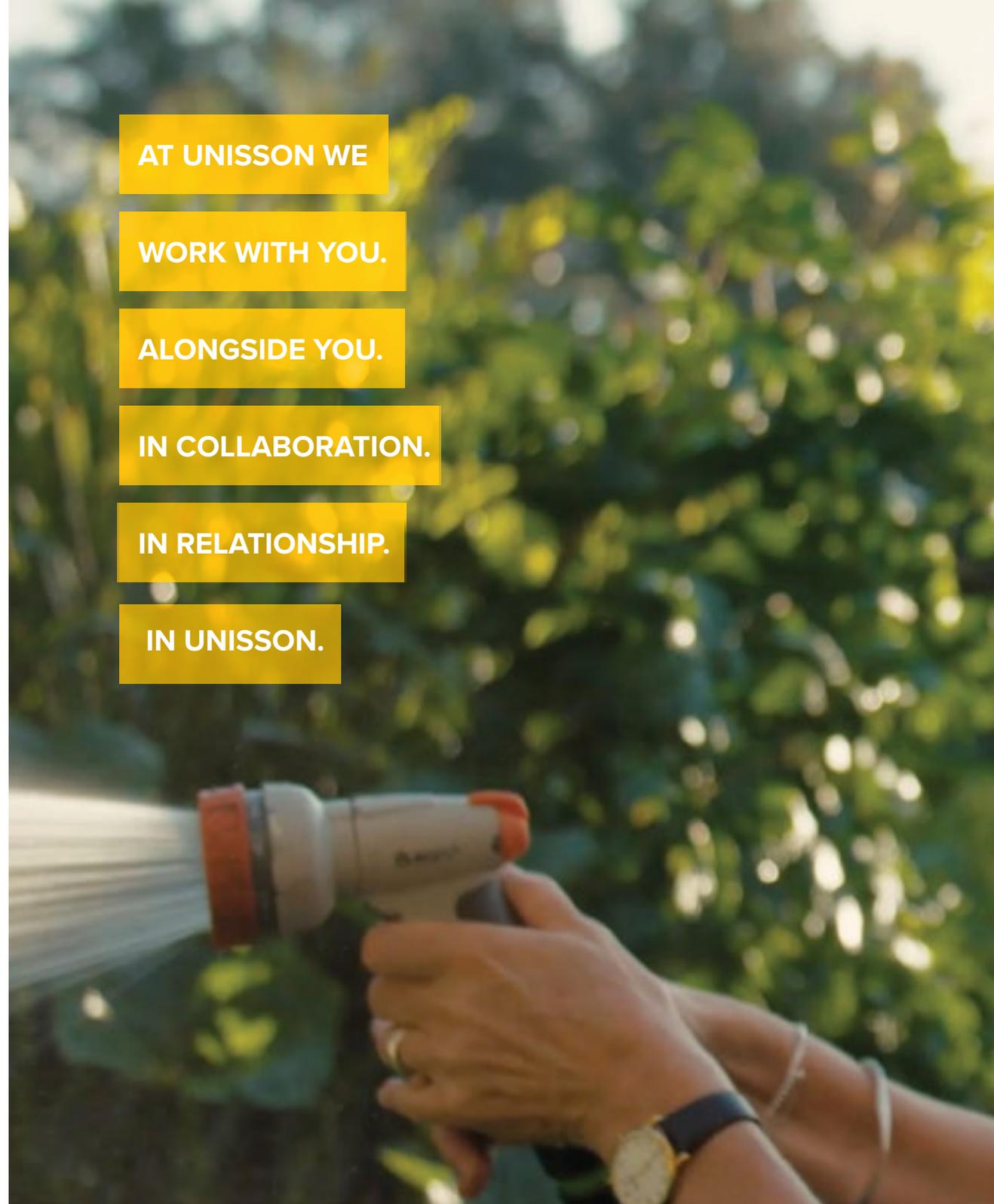
WORK WITH YOU.

ALONGSIDE YOU.

IN COLLABORATION.

IN RELATIONSHIP.

IN UNISSON.







A message from our CEO & Chairman

- The last financial year has been a
- challenging but successful year for
- Unisson - we are certainly living in
- interesting times!

During the year, the NDIA continued to review and adjust the NDIS, improving the experience for participants and providers while ensuring the scheme remains sustainable. A number of other changes were driven by the NDIS Quality & Safeguard Commission, largely to streamline and improve protections for participants. While we welcome refinements and improvements to the scheme, the constant changes have made it difficult to plan for the future with certainty.

The Disability Royal Commission started its activities during the last financial year. We continue to support the Royal Commission and the focus that it brings on how disability is treated in the community. We hope that it leads to recommendations that will result in tangible improvements to people's lives and a reduction in violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.

The event that has had the biggest impact during the year has been COVID-19, which has impacted on our clients, our staff and our communities. This once-in-a-century event has required us to adapt quickly to minimise the impact

and ensure that everyone was safe. This caused us to implement significant changes to our services, including suspending many of our services for a little over three months. During this period, our clients were unable to attend their regular activities and, like the rest of the community, were isolating in their homes. We focussed on ensuring our clients understood what was happening and why, and we provided additional supports at home to keep them healthy and engaged. Suspending some of our services triggered a massive redeployment of staff at short notice and we managed to allocate shifts to almost all of our staff. Our managers and support teams responded brilliantly, making sure that everyone had the resources and information they needed. We are so proud of how everyone worked together.

Despite the challenges with COVID, Unisson still managed to achieve revenue growth of 16%, primarily due to the establishment of six new houses in Northern Sydney, Western Sydney, Central Coast & Hunter. We also grew our Support Coordination service by 25% which was particularly important for our clients during COVID. We managed to achieve a modest surplus thanks to a focus on the financial sustainability of all our services. Achieving surpluses does not define us, but it does sustain us.

In addition to achieving growth, we also made progress in a number of other areas. We opened a new state-of-the-art Community Access facility at Terrey Hills, we relaunched our art program under the brand 'Blue

Apple,' grew our social media presence by 60%, released new Practice Leadership resources to our Team Leaders and Managers and relaunched our milestone recognition program.

In the coming year we are focussed on four key areas, namely property, IT systems, growth and excellence. For property, we are working on identifying and sourcing new housing types which match the needs of current and future clients. For IT, we are selecting new systems to replace our end-of-life client management systems and to improve our governance and compliance activities. For growth, we are aiming to maintain revenue growth of 15% per annum from the establishment of innovative and sustainable services. And for excellence, we continue to set high standards for all our services through a focus on Person-centred Active Support, improved governance processes and through embedding the philosophies of our Art of Human Connection program.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have contributed to the success of the organisation during the last year. Thank you to all the members of our Board of Directors (both Unisson and Lorna Hodgkinson Foundation) who have been so generous and committed in giving their time and expertise to lead the stewardship of our organisations. Thank you to the Executive Team, the Senior Leadership Team and our broader leadership team for their strong commitment and support. Thank you to the Corporate Services teams for their tireless support behind the scenes.

And a huge thank you to our amazing team of Direct Support Professionals who work determinedly every day to create opportunities for a great life for the people we support. It's their dedicated support of our clients which is the heart of what we do. And it's been heart-warming to see how well everyone has responded during the difficult circumstances this year to ensure our clients were safe and happy.

We look forward to another exciting year ahead – we have a clear path forward and a great team of people who are strongly committed to our important purpose. We feel privileged to be able to play a role in creating a world where every person is welcomed.



Image: Steven Gregg,
Chairman of the Board

It Starts With Heart

The most important thing you need to know about us is 'Unisson'. It means what you think it means. No hidden or cryptic messaging. It's simple. At Unisson, we work with you. Alongside you. In collaboration. In relationship. In Unisson.

There is one part that probably needs an explanation – the double SS. This is to retain a connection to our history and our previous name, Sunshine.

When we talk about collaboration and partnership, it means that your goals are our goals. Whatever you want out of life, and however you want to go about getting there, we are along for the ride with you.

You see, to us, the ride is the journey - the relationship we build with you. We believe relationships don't just make the world go 'round; they make it a better place for all of us to live.

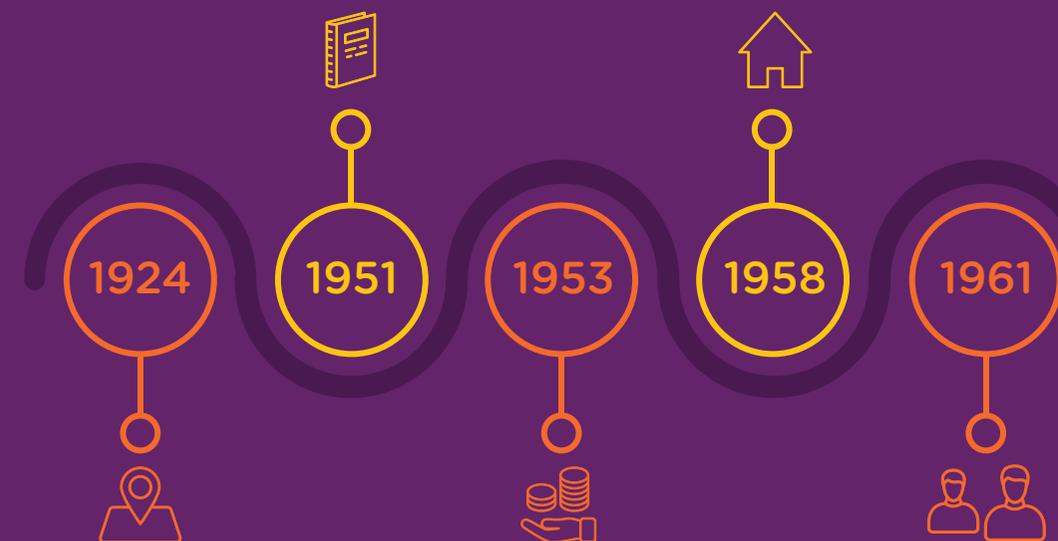
We believe our people are different. We employ people who embody our values, people who want to make a difference in the world. We believe that small actions can create big impact. We are the man who will let you go first in the checkout when you have fewer items. We are the woman who smiles at you with comfort when your young child has a tantrum in the shopping centre. We are the people that, when we ask, 'How are you?' stop and really listen. We are the people who believe a more inclusive world for people with disability is possible, and we know our everyday actions will help create it.

As an organisation, we've been around forever. Well, not forever, but close to it; 96 years! We are proud of our history not because it means we are old, but because it means we have inspiring beginnings to lean on. Our beginnings continually inspire us towards our vision of a world where every person is welcomed – really welcomed, not just waved at.

IT STARTS
with heart

Lorna passes away. By this time there are more than 60 students living and studying at the Sunshine Institute. In her will, she bequeaths the home to a group of trustees who decide to form a non-profit organisation. The Sunshine Institute is renamed the Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home.

In response to an ever-increasing demand for accommodation, dormitory-style residences are built over the next decade.



1924
Lorna Hodgkinson, a remarkable Australian of great dedication and vision, establishes the Sunshine Institute. Lorna purchases a large house at Gore Hill on Sydney's Lower North Shore and opens it as a residential school for six children with intellectual disability.

1953
The Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home becomes a registered charity.

1961
Vocational training commences for the residents with the introduction of a 'Sheltered Workshop'.

Our Proud History

An official school opens on the grounds of the original Home providing an up-to-date educational program for the children.

A new Adult Training Centre is completed. Additional specialist staff are appointed, including social workers, psychologists, speech therapists, dental therapists, nursing staff and teachers.

The original Gore Hill site is sold to help fund Sunshine's expansion into community-based living. A Corporate Head Office is established at Pymble. In the coming years, Sunshine's services expand across Sydney and up to the Central Coast and Hunter regions.

Sunshine welcomes the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Unisson Disability continues to expand its services which now include community services, supported living, shared living, short-term accommodation, supported employment and support coordination.



The Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home celebrates its 50th birthday.

The Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home is shortened to Sunshine. Sunshine begins looking at ways to move away from institutional living. A number of units and homes are purchased and many of the people supported make the transition to living more independently in group homes.

Sunshine celebrates its 90th birthday.

Sunshine rebrands to Unisson Disability. The new name reflects who we have evolved into as an organisation and our unique approach to working with those we support.

Art studios are rebranded to Blue Apple Art Studios, and together with Frenchs Forest Community Access, move to larger premises in Terrey Hills. New community hub opens in Raymond Terrace.



OUR VISION



A WORLD WHERE EVERY
PERSON IS WELCOMED

OUR PURPOSE



WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE
POSSIBILITIES FOR A GREAT LIFE

OUR VALUES



GENEROSITY

We give our hearts and minds in an effort to understand others



INCLUSION

We celebrate diversity and seek to ensure everyone is valued and respected



COURAGE

We are brave in our intent to be authentic and advocate for what is right



CREATIVITY

We work together to find the yes, and encourage new ways of doing and thinking

Strategic Focus

During FY19-20, the Executive and Senior Management Team undertook several major projects including improving and expanding: our services, employee training, our employee attraction and retention initiatives, our internal and external communications and our business reporting capabilities. Progress towards providing improved technology solutions that are a better fit for our growing organisation remain on-track.

Our three-year, rolling strategic plan has been reviewed by the Board and implementation commenced on July 1, 2020. Our strategic plan readies our entire team to achieve our objectives and measure our effectiveness over the coming financial year.

OUR STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES



CLIENTS

To ensure clients receive personalised supports that are underpinned by the principles of social inclusion.

Strategic Priorities

- 1.1 Our clients have a positive experience at every stage of their journey with us
- 1.2 Our clients see us as a trusted and valued partner
- 1.3 We develop new and evolving supports and services



COMMUNITY

To enrich and influence the community's experience around inclusion and diversity of people with disability.

Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 We build our influence by creating new connections within the community
- 2.2 We have strong collaborative partnerships



PEOPLE

To attract, develop and retain an inclusive and responsive workforce that embraces the organisation's vision, purpose and values.

Strategic Priorities

- 3.1 We embrace diversity and our employees feel they are part of and contribute to a positive work environment
- 3.2 We attract capable people who want to make a difference
- 3.3 We enhance and develop critical skills and capabilities at all levels of the organisation
- 3.4 Our culture embraces courageous and innovative thinking and delivers great outcomes



ORGANISATION

To cultivate innovation and excellence within a resilient, well-governed, safe and agile environment.

Strategic Priorities

- 4.1 We generate sustainable growth
- 4.2 We use technology to become more efficient, effective, and innovative
- 4.3 Our governance framework measures and ensures that we provide high quality services
- 4.4 Our property portfolio matches our clients and service needs

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN READIES

OUR ENTIRE TEAM TO ACHIEVE OUR

OBJECTIVES AND MEASURE OUR

EFFECTIVENESS OVER THE COMING

FINANCIAL YEAR.

Unisson Snapshot

EMPLOYEE TYPE
411 PART-TIME
149 FULL-TIME
220 CASUAL



THERE WERE
16 ACTING ROLE
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR CAREER
DEVELOPMENT



31
EMPLOYEES
CELEBRATED A
LONG-SERVICE
ANNIVERSARY
(INCLUDING 3
SUPPORTED
EMPLOYEES)



TOTAL REVENUE ROSE TO
\$61.7m

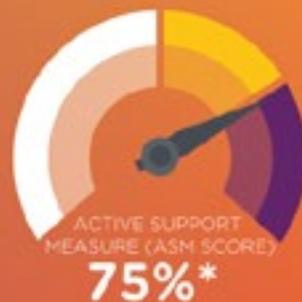


720,000
HOURS
OF CLIENT SUPPORT
WERE PROVIDED

OUR EMPLOYEES COME FROM
39 DIFFERENT
NATIONS



215 EMPLOYEES
RECEIVED A
MILESTONE
RECOGNITION
AWARD



THERE WERE 114
REFERRALS,
LEADING TO
47
PEOPLE EMPLOYED
THROUGH OUR EMPLOYEE
REFERRAL PROGRAM

THERE WERE
7 INTERNAL
PROMOTIONS



Working In Unisson

We know how important it is to work - In Unisson. It enables us to collaborate to produce our best work together and provide high-quality support. As our organisation has undergone extensive growth in recent years, in 2019/20 the following initiatives were undertaken to improve our alignment to our purpose of ‘working together to create possibilities for a great life’ for the people we support and to improve the way we work, In Unisson.

IT STARTS
with heart

NEW TAGLINE AND VIDEO - ‘IT STARTS WITH HEART’

We’re proud of our difference and want to promote it to motivate our people and describe Unisson’s way of being to people outside of our organisation. Towards the end of 2019, we launched a new tagline and supporting video. The new tagline “it starts with heart” captures the key message we want people to know about who we are. It describes Unisson’s way of being, from the type of people we hire to the way we approach the work

we do. The use of ‘heart’ speaks of an organisation that’s driven by purpose and ‘it starts with...’ suggests that the first step in any interaction comes from a place of compassion, empathy and kindness and that our work with someone is a journey and not a one-off transactional process.

COORDINATING ACTION ACROSS TEAMS

Our 2019 Employee Survey results were consistently high in all but one area – communication between peers across departments. The Senior Leadership Team made the decision to invest in research and training into ways we might improve the way we work together as an organisation,

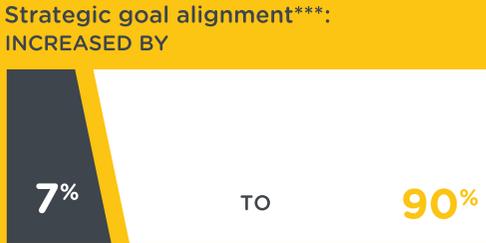
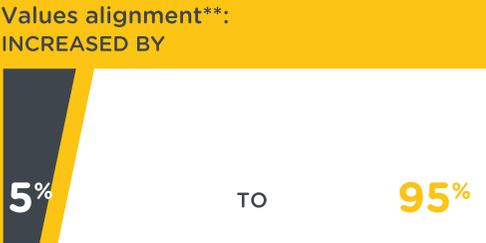
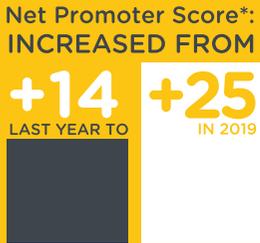
and business mentors, Resource Advisory, were engaged to facilitate training for the Leadership Team and all teams within Corporate Services.

At the first training event, the 90-strong Leadership Team brainstormed questions such as: how do we work together currently, what works well, what doesn’t work well, what stops us working well together as teams, what would help our teams work better together, what could we achieve if we all worked together and how could our leaders help us to work better together. Results were then organised by importance and priority and provided to the Senior Leadership Team to action.

At the two subsequent training events, the Leadership Team and Corporate Services Team received training in conversational practices to coordinate action. This best-practice approach provides a framework to mindfully make requests, negotiate expectations, deliver satisfactory tasks and provide feedback to avoid re-work and loss of trust that can damage relationships and impact an organisation’s operating costs.

We are already witnessing the benefits of embedding this approach into Unisson’s day-to-day business practice and the training has been timely for our corporate workforce, many of whom have been working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

EMPLOYEE SURVEY ANALYSIS



*Net promoter score = whether you would recommend Unisson as an employer.
**Values alignment = sharing and understanding Unisson’s values and recognising the connection with your role
***Strategic goal alignment = understanding the connection between a person’s role and Unisson’s strategy



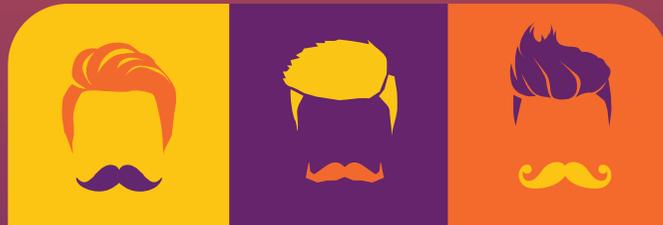
FY 19/20 Highlights

ROYAL COMMISSION UPDATE

Unisson welcomes the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and looks forward to the positive recommendations and changes that will arise about how to better protect people with disability in the future.

Unisson's approach to the Royal Commission is to be proactive. We have reviewed our policies, and procedures in readiness for any recommendations arising from the Royal Commission. This puts us in a strong position to ensure that any changes are actioned quickly and with the least disruption for our clients and their families.

To support clients and families, we have created a Royal Commission area on our website with key details, latest news and links to further information and Easy Read resources.



COMMUNITY

To support our vision of 'A world where every person is welcome', in November, nine daring Unisson employees (including CEO David Kneeshaw) grew a range of spectacular moustaches to raise money for the Movember appeal, the men's wellbeing charity that tackles prostate and testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention. The team raised over \$2,800.



HARNESSING THE POWER OF IDEAS

In April 2020, we launched Bright Ideas, an innovation program to harness the innovative power of over 780 creative minds in our organisation. The program aims to inspire an innovative organisational culture by providing a process for capturing, reviewing and implementing ideas and rewarding employees for their contribution.

Once an idea is submitted, it is reviewed and prioritised by the Univators, a panel of volunteers from across the business.

Successful ideas are then forwarded to the Senior Leadership Team for approval and further development or immediate implementation.

For an example of the positive impact of a Bright Idea, see the launch of our online art classes on page 23.

FUTUREPROOFING OUR TECHNOLOGY

As our organisation grows, and to continue to provide the best administrative and communication service for clients and their families, we made the decision to update our Client Management System (CMS). In August 2019 we partnered with disability service provider CIVIC to explore options for a new best-in-class CMS.

Whilst our collaboration was extremely valuable during the brainstorming and requirements gathering phase, as our requirements became more concrete, it became clear that requirements for both organisations, along with integration with legacy systems, were too divergent and a joint CMS solution was no longer feasible.

Unisson's requirements had also broadened to include:

- **Client Management System (CMS)** to streamline management of client activities, rostering and billing
- **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** system to enable us to improve the way we communicate with clients and families
- **WHS and incident/risk management system** to assist with recording incidents, complaints and support measures to manage quality, safety and risk

With assistance from independent advisory firm Grant Thornton, we scanned the marketplace for solution providers that would be a good fit for our requirements and have selected a suite of solutions that will set us up well for years to come.

We are on track for implementation of our new Core Unisson Business System (CUBS) in mid 2021.

UNISSON WEBSITE MORE USER-FRIENDLY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

In January 2020, we were proud to launch the next phase of our website refresh that focused on improving accessibility and usability for people with disability.

Updates include:

- Consolidated, easier to navigate menus
- Larger, easier to click buttons and links
- New accessibility menu with fast, easy access to change contrast and a Read Speaker – functionality that reads out loud the content on the page

Improvements were also made to design and functionality, including:

- Cleaner more modern look
- Additional multimedia capabilities for fast loading video and audio content
 - Advanced news topic filtering functionality
 - Improvements to the display of our shared living vacancy information
 - FAQ page design and functionality improved
- Contact us & newsletter sign-up forms more user-friendly



NEW COMMUNITY HUB IN RAYMOND TERRACE

In July, we established a community hub in Raymond Terrace to serve clients in the Port Stephens region. Coordinating with an existing local service provider, who were looking to reduce their services in this region, and after consultation with clients and families, the provision of Supported Living services for 17 clients transitioned to Unisson. We look forward to expanding our service offering in this region.

DYLAN ACES RADIO ADVERT

We're always looking for new ways to connect with people, so when we were thinking about how to promote our services in the Hunter region, we thought we'd try radio advertising. And rather than use voice-over actors, we thought we'd offer a Unisson client the opportunity to be involved.

Dylan volunteered and spent around an hour recording the advert and touring Newcastle's Southern Cross Austereo studios.

Dylan said the experience was "Pretty cool!"



Image: Dylan Fry recording Unisson's radio advert at Southern Cross Austereo studios, Newcastle

IMPROVING QUALITY OF SUPPORT

We deliver on our purpose of 'working together to create possibilities for a great life' for the people we support by providing high quality support - because great support = great lives for the people we support.

Since 2013, Unisson (with consent from participating clients and families) has been a proud partner and co-sponsor of the La Trobe University Living with Disability Research Centre's longitudinal study of Person-centred Active Support (PCAS or 'Active Support').

This study of support provided to people with mostly intellectual disabilities living in shared supported accommodation in Australia, aims to discover and share best practices and other predictors for delivering high-quality support, and create industry benchmarks. Participating organisations receive an annual report-card and subsequent published academic papers advise industry stakeholders and service referral agencies.

During the 6 years that we've been participating, Unisson has successfully applied the study's recommendations and best practice findings to achieve ongoing improvement in the work that we do.

We have taken the decision to share our results on our website, along with accessible, educational content about the benefits of PCAS. We hope that this will contribute towards a trend of transparency among providers and will provide people with disability and their families a means to make more informed choices based on the quality of a provider's services.

Employment Milestone Awards Relunched

In October, we relaunched our initiative that recognises and rewards tenure of employment.

All employees who reach a 5, 10, 15 or 20+-year employment milestone receive a letter of thanks and a gift and their achievement is recognised via our internal communications. Our employees define Unisson as an organisation, and this is an important way to show how much we appreciate their ongoing commitment.

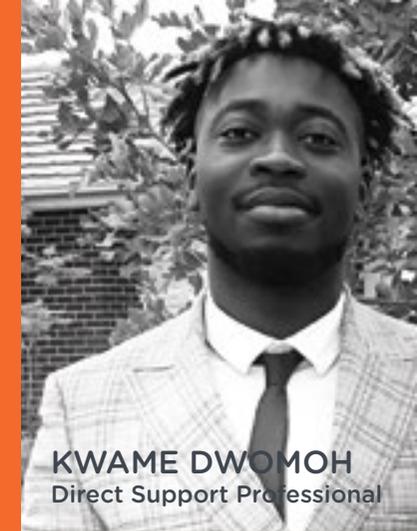
We've captured a few comments about what some of the highlights have been for some of these valued employees during their time at Unisson.



“
Supporting amazing clients, gaining new experiences and sharing my knowledge with others.

”

KWAME DWOMOH



KWAME DWOMOH
Direct Support Professional



AJAY KALIA
Direct Support Professional

“
I love my job.

”

AJAY KALIA

“
I love making a positive difference and creating smiles. It fulfills my life every day.

”

ANJU BHUSAL POUDEL



ANJU BHUSAL POUDEL
Direct Support Professional



“

It's been a privilege to work across different areas and get to know the many people that make up Unisson.

”

GEMMA GOODWIN



“

I've enjoyed building close relationships with the 4 clients and their families that I've been supporting for the past 20 years.

”

MARY MCCLOSKEY



RASHIKA ISLAM
Manager, Human Resources

“

I cherish the relationships I've made at Unisson. It's an amazing journey of my career.

”

RASHIKA ISLAM



LING (TINA) YUN
Direct Support Professional

“

Doing a positive thing every shift to make our clients happier.

”

LING (TINA) YUN



“

Being part of an organisation with such a strong, brilliant, people-centred culture. It's amazing!

”

ANDREW ALLEN



“

The rewarding feeling I get from clients is what keeps me loving my job!"

”

SUZY TAPAI



SUZY TAPAI
Direct Support Professional



Image: Ashleigh Linschoten at the Terrey Hills Community Access Centre opening day morning tea



Image Sensory room at the Terrey Hills Community Access Centre



Image: Blue Apple art studio client Damien Egan and Art Facilitator Bethany Smith with Unisson General Manager, Client Services Gail Jeltse and NDIA CEO, Martin Hoffman at the Terrey Hills Community Access Centre open day

Moving on Up

As our services continue to grow and evolve, it became clear that we needed to consider how best to support clients' needs in the future and to consider the opportunities we want to invest in on their behalf.

The decision was made to move our community access centre at Frenchs Forest, as well as combine and move Unisson's three art studios, to new premises in Terrey Hills. This gave us the opportunity to custom-design a new larger community access centre and separate art studio to continue to provide high-quality support to clients.

The new facilities provide bushland surroundings and a broader range of opportunities for clients within a vibrant and pleasing working environment for staff.

The new premises feature:

- Larger premises, including music and sensory rooms and a large, bright indoor activity space
- A large separate art studio, providing greater creative opportunities for clients and staff
- Adjoining bushland with expansive outdoor activity area
- A community setting, close to local shops and restaurants
- Plenty of parking, ensuring safe clearways and easy access to the building.

Clients, client families, staff and external support providers affected by the move received regular progress updates and we were thrilled that all staff and clients chose to make the move with us to the new premises.

The new community access centre opened on 28th January and the Blue Apple art studio opened on 3rd February. On moving day, our focus was to provide a warm welcome for clients and to create a celebratory atmosphere with morning tea and then a BBQ lunch.

On the 10th March we held our official open day and were pleased to welcome client families and NDIA CEO Martin Hoffman, who said:

"We can all be very proud that Australia has decided as a society that we're going to treat people with disability in a different way than we've done before, and increase the support and the care that we provide through the government to do that. It's about each individual participant and family who are caring for, and loving a person with disability, and have the opportunity to take part in the activities here at Unisson and that's why I was really excited to be here with you this morning to offer my support".

Everyone is now settled in and enjoying what the new location and facilities have to offer.



Image: NDIA CEO, Martin Hoffman delivering a speech at the Terrey Hills Community Access Centre open day



Image: Entrance to Blue Apple art studio and adjoining Community Access Centre in Terrey Hills

Image: Blue Apple art studio in Terrey Hills.
Artwork 'Lucy the budgie' by Frances Scott



Introducing Blue Apple

○ In February we were proud to open Blue Apple, our new art studio in Terrey Hills. When considering a name for the studio, we felt it was important for it to have its own distinct brand identity and we chose to focus on what will appeal to the people using it - art. The name Blue Apple was chosen because it's quirky and fun and because it appeals to people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and skill levels who identify as artists.

Blue Apple combines Unisson's three art studios; paper pulp, art and ceramics, in one location, providing artists with opportunities to participate in more than one class, across different art mediums in the same day and to socialise with a larger group of like-minded people.

Artists love the new facilities and the relaxed, social environment and we look forward to expanding the art mediums offered and hosting exhibitions in the future.

BLUE APPLE ART TEAM RECOGNISED FOR THEIR 'BRIGHT IDEA'

Unisson recognises the value of innovative thinking that benefits our organisation and clients with our Bright Ideas initiative. The following example demonstrates how the Blue Apple team harnessed the power of innovation to meet our purpose to create possibilities for a great life for the people we support.

When face-to-face art classes were no longer possible due to COVID-19, the Blue Apple team were concerned for clients, who rely on their regular art classes for their wellbeing. This led to the bright idea to trial art classes online.

The Blue Apple team came up with a kit that would meet the artistic needs of all interested art clients for approximately 8 weeks. They then carefully assembled

and delivered the kits (using safe practices) and provided instructions for preparing for an online art class at home using Microsoft Teams or Skype.

Online classes began with one art facilitator, but due to demand soon expanded to three.

The trial went amazingly well, with the Blue Apple team continually innovating to meet client needs including providing a customised kit for a local client who is passionate about ceramic art, along with support to ensure that his artwork was collected for firing.

The Blue Apple team received several enquiries from Support Coordinators and Ability Linkers seeking services for people in precautionary self-isolation at home and quickly organised a flier with details of their online classes. Incredibly, news of Blue Apple travelled all the way to Perth and Unisson now has an interstate client who was unable to access the type of art classes she wanted locally.

As COVID-19 restrictions ease and Blue Apple reopens, the Blue Apple team will continue to provide online art classes to meet individual clients needs.

Top right: Blue Apple art studio in Terrey Hills
Mid right: Blue Apple art studio in Terrey Hills. Artwork 'Scottish Castle' by Damien Egan
Bottom right: Blue Apple art client Frances Scott was happy to receive her art kit



Our Response to COVID-19

 COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the way Australians live and work. This is how Unisson responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, to continue to meet the needs of clients, families and staff during this challenging time.

Always mindful of the needs of our clients and their families, we've used an agile approach that is proactive and precautionary, adapting the way we work to limit the impact of any changes for our clients, client families and staff. This has enabled us to continue to deliver high-quality support while remaining flexible in meeting the needs of individual clients. To ensure everyone is aware of the changes, we've provided regular communications for client families and staff and ensured that clients have been supported to understand what is happening and why changes have been necessary.

In March, we began implementing precautions alongside government recommendations. This included:

- 14-day isolation at home for any staff (or member of their family/household) who have been overseas
- Revising client activities – avoiding using public transport, large shopping centres and crowded events or places
- Postponing all large face-to-face Unisson events and training sessions and implementing online alternatives
- Corporate staff were advised to avoid all unnecessary face-to-face meetings and to work remotely, where possible
- Support staff essential training adapted for online delivery or groups of 5 or less
- Increased hygiene and social distancing. Bulk ordering personal protective equipment (PPE, e.g. masks), sanitizer and cleaning products continued
- Processes and procedures updated

As COVID-19 continued to spread in the community, during the month of March the difficult but necessary decision was made to temporarily suspend all of our centre-based services and implement restrictions for visitors to our supported independent living (SIL) homes. The impact of this was incredibly significant. With the majority of clients in precautionary isolation within their family home or in their SIL home, it was a challenging time for everyone.

As this new way of working started to become our new normal, in April we expanded our capabilities to include:

- Updated workplace health & safety procedures for staff and clients who are symptomatic or confirmed COVID cases
- IT department rolled out Microsoft Teams and online training to keep staff who are working remotely connected
- Blue Apple art studio provided online art classes
- Individualised approach to clients scheduled to transition into a SIL home, providing them with the option to continue
- Transitioning many of our experienced casual staff into permanent roles to fill the additional shifts required by our new precautionary way of working
- Pack Works continued fulfilling customer orders by redeploying Unisson casual staff. This ensured our supported employees (on paid leave) had work to come back to when it was safe to do so

Although restrictions in the community were easing throughout the month of May, we were concerned about the impact of COVID-19 cases that we'd seen in the aged care sector and made the decision not to ease restrictions, with the exception of allowing Official Community Visitors to access Unisson sites providing they adhere to our safety precautions.

On 29th June we began the phased re-opening of suspended services with additional safety precautions in place including refusal of entry to persons from an identified COVID-19 hotspot, temperature checks, social distancing, disposable utensils and additional staff engaged for continual cleaning and disinfecting. Clients were advised not to use public transport and to access the community with caution.

As COVID-19 continues to be a part of our lives, we are committed to ensuring we continually innovate, to find new ways of providing exceptional support, while prioritising the health and wellbeing of clients, staff, and the broader community.



Thriving During COVID-19

- Precautionary isolation was a
- sudden change to regular routines
- for clients, but it wasn't all doom
- and gloom.

During COVID-19 precautionary isolation, staff increased the wellbeing focus of activity programs to include physical, emotional and intellectual activities to keep up morale and make the best of the situation we found ourselves in.

Housemates at Unisson's Supported Independent Living homes had opportunities to try new activities, share their interests and get to know each other and their support staff better – deepening connections and improving friendships. And a house band – the Vibe band – was also born (see Craig's story on page 42-43)

Our aim is for clients to look back on their COVID-19 experience and recall some happy memories – here are some we'd like to share.

1. Nicole Black completes a puzzle and housemates share their travel stories; 2. Mary Dalla and Melinda Connolly enjoying a game of quoits; 3. Clients in Maryland craft a wreath for Anzac day; 4. Michael Mayne, Cameron Woods, Mandy Rickard-Bell, David Burgess and Greg Knight with Direct Support Professional Jenie Fortuno commemorating Anzac Day with a BBQ lunch at their home in Glenwood; 5. Sally and Michelle sing and dance with Vibe band Direct Support Professionals Craig Bailey and Luke Passfield; 6. Karen Rowe decorates her gardening project; 7. Cameron Woods and Mandy Rickard-Bell making pizzas; 8. Jun Wang painting with his Direct Support Professional Kirsten Bisset; 9. Alison Hall making a chocolate cake; 10. Michael Mayne and Cameron Woods enjoy ball games in the garden; 11. Redeployed Direct Support Professional Meng Wong standing in for Pack Works supported employees; 12. Stephen Hayes and Robert McKenzie playing croquet in the garden; 13. Rebecca Dixon during her online art class with Blue Apple art facilitator Bethany Smith



1



2

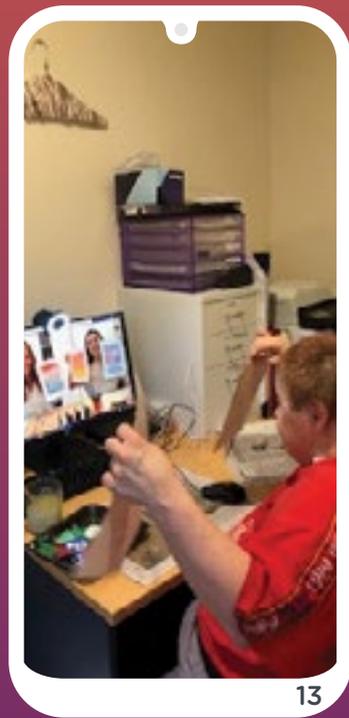
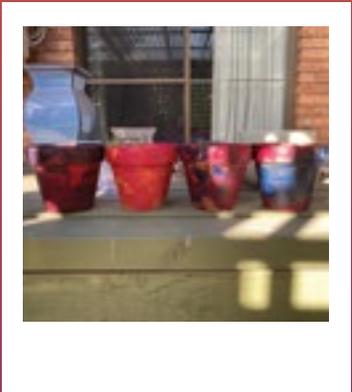
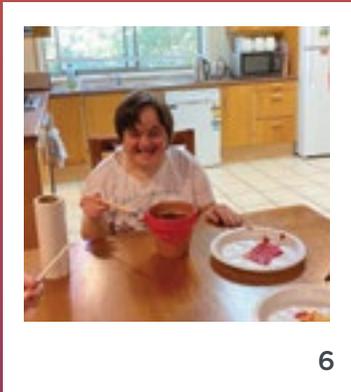
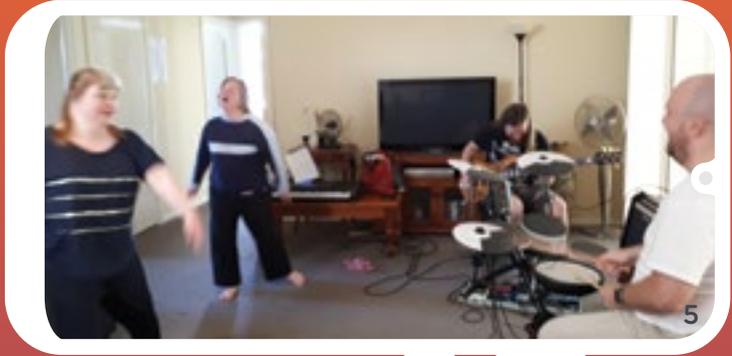


3



4





A Focus on Wellbeing

- An organisational culture that supports employee wellbeing is not only good for employees, it's also good for an organisation's customers and bottom-line.
- But for Unisson, the value of a focus on employee wellbeing goes much further.

As a not-for-profit, having an organisational culture that supports employee wellbeing is as important to us as providing high-quality support to the people who access our services. After all, a healthy and engaged workforce is likely to gain greater job satisfaction, have better working relationships, and be more productive. And Unisson recognises that the true value of focusing on employee wellbeing goes much further, because, not only does it create a positive organisational culture that reflects Unisson's values and way of being, it also enables us to provide high-quality support and deliver on our purpose of 'working together to create possibilities for a great life' for the people we support.

This understanding of the link between quality of support and quality of life has motivated our organisation since its beginnings in 1924. It inspires our culture, values, people and practices and our wellbeing program – Wellbeing...being U - plays a key role in enabling our employees to bring their best selves to the work they do with colleagues and the people we support.

Wellbeing...being U - provides physical and mental wellbeing support to all Unisson employees and complements an inclusive and welcoming organisational culture that provides ongoing training, opportunities for career progression, reward and recognition and supports employees to be their authentic selves.

The program is focused on providing a range of benefits that support a work-life balance and promote a healthy lifestyle. Over the last 12 months we have invested further

in the wellbeing benefits by; partnering with a health fund to offer discounted membership, introducing additional leave for our front-line leaders, relaunching our milestone recognition program and building our communications focus with regular wellbeing reminders and resources.

Our annual client and client family feedback survey results tell us that it can be disruptive if a Direct Support Professional or Team Leader leaves or is unavailable, reminding us of the importance of reducing staff turnover and absence by ensuring our staff are supported, recognised and paid fairly for the work they do and that they have opportunities for career progression within the organisation.

We are committed to proactively engaging our employees to understand and meet their needs. Our annual employee survey asks employees to rate the support they receive, and suggest how this might be improved, and asks what they would like to see in Unisson's benefits program and how they would like to be recognised. In 2019, we delivered on 21 of these requests, ranging from learning and development to work/life balance.

We were again reminded of the value of our wellbeing program when COVID-19 brought a sudden change to the way we all live and work. In response to this challenge, the Wellbeing Team have been providing additional resources to support employees during changes such as working remotely, redeployments to other service areas, new WHS and training requirements and supporting clients during precautionary isolation.





Image: Venessa Crane with her artwork 'I'm more than they've quacked me up to be' at Unisson's Blue Apple studio in Terrey Hills. More of Venessa's artworks can be viewed on her Instagram account @venessa.crane



Venessa

QUACK-ERS ABOUT ART

○ Inspiring studio facilities and creative connections enable Venessa to express and evolve her visual style.

For talented, award-winning artist and disability spokesperson Venessa Crane, art is an integral part of her daily life. For the past three years she's been attending Unisson's art classes where she's been supported to hone her techniques and develop her unique style.

When she began art classes with Unisson, Venessa was already an accomplished artist, but she was intrigued by the diverse range of mediums offered and the opportunity to work with art professionals and alongside fellow artists. These opportunities, within a supportive and inspiring artistic environment, have enabled Venessa to explore her artistic style with new mediums, such as paper-pulp and ceramics.

"I'm very much into variety and exploring different mediums and I'm hoping to get a feel for what I like and introduce new elements into my work," says Venessa.

Venessa's work includes multiple stylistic genres from the playful to the more traditional, including a solo exhibition of her portraits, but she's best known for her prolific duck artworks inspired by Donald Duck. Venessa has great affection for Donald that goes beyond his cute, cuddly and humorous side to his more human-like characteristics that, as a child, she could relate to.

"As a child I liked his quirky personality," she says. "He's very determined and he does get a bit hot under the collar with frustration sometimes and I can see that in myself as well."

There is bravery in artistic expression, as an artist's style is often a reflection of themselves. This is something that Venessa embraces and has never shied away from. She explains that her role of spokesperson for people with disability

developed from her experiences as school captain at Allambie Special School and when she later completed her HSC by correspondence. "I had to get out there and speak," she says.

An artist's style continually develops and evolves with each artwork and, whilst Donald will always hold a special place in her heart, Venessa's recent works have led her to create a new character, QuackStar. QuackStar's character is still under development, but Venessa can share that he's a duck with beautiful, fluorescent, rainbow wings and, as QuackStar is her own creation, she will be able to sell her artworks.

"I'm extending myself at the moment. I'm doing a few designs of another duck called QuackStar and I've started a sculpture of a duck with rainbow wings. As much as I love Donald, I'm in my comfort zone designing another duck and there won't be any copyright restrictions," she says.

Venessa was thrilled when, in early 2020, Unisson's three art studios merged to become the Blue Apple studio and moved to new custom-designed premises in Terrey Hills. As well as having floor to ceiling windows with excellent natural light and a bush outlook (and the occasional passing duck), all the art facilitators are within the same space at the same time and it's easy to move between art mediums and to connect with other artists.

"She sees the same people each time, so they build up a rapport, and she comes with a really lovely support worker who feels like another member of the team," says Unisson Art Coordinator Heidi Fergusson.

"I absolutely love it!" says Venessa "it's nice to have collaboration from everybody. I really look forward to coming."

“I absolutely love it! It's nice to have collaboration from everybody. I really look forward to coming.”

Image: Lyn Stokoe baking at her home in Fletcher





“ It felt like I was part of a family. ”

Lyn

SUPPORTING A THIRST FOR FIRSTS

- When Lyn needed accommodation urgently, initial options weren't the best fit for her needs.
- But with support from Unisson, Lyn now has a place she can truly call home

Living in her Unisson supported home in Fletcher makes Lyn Stokoe very happy as her initial experience of moving out of her family home to a supported living home with another disability service provider had been a bumpy ride.

As a child, Lyn attended a mainstream school where she became accomplished in reading and writing but, in other areas, her mild intellectual disability meant that she required additional support which, in the 1960s, wasn't available. Instead, she was tasked with coaching younger children to the detriment of her own learning. By year six this learning gap had widened and, concerned about her wellbeing entering the secondary state system, Lyn's parents withdrew her from school.

Lyn lived with her parents in a caravan park and, whilst she was happy, she had few opportunities to try new things or to make friends with people her own age. In later life, when Lyn's mother died and her father went into palliative care, Lyn found that, in her early 60s, her protective upbringing hadn't equipped her to live independently, although this was her goal.

Lyn moved into a supported Shared Living home on the Central Coast with another disability service provider but was uncomfortable with her living arrangements and struggled to progress her independent living skills.

Lyn's cousin Geraldine contacted Unisson to find accommodation and support that better suited Lyn's needs including her preference for an all-female household with fewer residents that was closer to family. Geraldine was reassured by Unisson's person-centred active support approach and the time and attention taken to understand

Lyn's needs and match her to the right home, support staff and housemates.

Lyn now shares her new home with another female resident and one more will be joining them soon. Having time to make deeper connections with her support staff and housemates is important to Lyn. "I like that there are fewer people around me and I like talking to the staff," she says.

The NDIS has provided Lyn with opportunities to progress her social and independence goals and, with support from Unisson, she's gaining the skills and confidence to live more independently and try new things.

Lyn has discovered a passion for baking and diamond dotz®, she attends social cooking and craft groups, her local church and she's a Meals on Wheels volunteer. In the future she plans to volunteer as a reader for the elderly and to go on another holiday with her direct support professional and Geraldine.

When she moved from her family home, Geraldine suggested that Lyn keep a record of her new experiences and achievements – Lyn calls this her "Book of firsts". Some of Lyn's firsts include making cupcakes, toasting marshmallows, having a cappuccino, using a sewing machine and going on a cruise. One of Lyn's favourites was participating in a secret Santa at Geraldine's house, which is now closer to her own home.

"It felt like I was a part of a family," said Lyn. "I laughed a lot at the kids, as I have never been around children at Christmas."

And by sharing her story, Lyn was happy to add "First time I've been in a photoshoot".

Image: Ground Works Home and Garden Maintenance
Worker Mathew Grillo at work in Terrey Hills





“ I like the people. I like the work. The job’s good and I like being outdoors. ”

Mathew

GROWING SKILLS IN GARDEN MAINTENANCE

○ A job that he loves provides Mathew with more than just a wage.

Finding enjoyable paid work that also draws on our individual skills and passions is what most workers aspire to, and what twenty-six-year-old Mathew Grillo achieved when he began working for Ground Works.

Mathew comes from a long line of farmers and gardeners, so it was no surprise to his mother Nina that he loved working outdoors and had an aptitude for gardening.

“Mathew’s a hands-on person,” says Nina. “His dad was a gardener and from a young age Mathew would sit on his lap on the ride-on mower and my parents had a farm in Galston growing vegetables and flowers, so he grew up around experiences like that.”

After he left school, Mathew enjoyed working in a paid, part-time job at an organic farm. He also had another part-time gardening job but, as is often unfortunately the case for people with disability seeking employment, a voluntary job, although done well, was slow to progress into paid employment.

After four years, Mathew was ready to look for a new opportunity. It was around this time that Mathew moved to a new Supported Independent Living home and a staff member recommended that Nina contact Unisson Works, Unisson’s disability enterprise that provides paid employment for people with disability in a supported environment.

“That was the best thing we did,” says Nina “Mathew loves working with Unisson”.

After a two-week trial, Mathew was employed as a Home & Garden Maintenance Worker at Ground Works, where he works three days a week, and with his background and experience, he was quick to pick up the work and soon got

to know his work colleagues. Mathew now travels in a crew of 4-6 supported employees and his support facilitators to work sites around Sydney and the Central Coast providing gardening services to councils, government, retirement villages, hospitals, residential properties and customers who have garden maintenance in their NDIS plan, so they can continue to enjoy their outdoor spaces.

Seeing the results of his hard work and earning a wage, gives Mathew a real sense of pride and purpose says Ground Works Coordinator Troy Prescott,

“Working for Ground Works gives Mathew purpose and he’s proud to tell people about what he does. He’s made friends and he can buy what he wants with the money he earns and do more social events. He’s genuinely happy being outdoors working.”

Ground Works shares its Thornleigh base with Unisson Works’ mailing and packaging business Pack Works and is where Unisson Works hosts its social events such as BBQs, cultural and birthday celebrations and the annual Christmas party.

Mathew also chose to work one day a week in the Pack Works warehouse learning new skills as a Process Worker. He says that his favourite task at Pack Works has been participating in assembling around 120,000 induction bags for children starting Kindergarten, but, while he enjoys the variety and the larger social group at Pack Works, Mathew’s passion remains working outside with Ground Works, he says,

“I like the people. I like the work. The job’s good and I like being outdoors.”

Image: Father and son Rhett and Laurie Bilborough at Rhett's home in Normanhurst



Rhett

SUPPORT DURING A MOVING TIME

With support from Unisson and his father Laurie, Rhett experienced a smooth transition to his new supported home

When he turned 68, small business owner and sole carer Laurie Bilsborough reluctantly began the process of organising supported accommodation for his 26-year-old son Rhett, to ensure his needs would continue to be met in the future. Like many parents experiencing this rite of passage with their adult children with disability, it's a process that evokes a mix of both sadness and optimism.

Rhett had enjoyed several respite holidays at Unisson's Hornsby cottage and Laurie had been impressed with Unisson's person-centred active support approach to meet Rhett's needs, so he chose Unisson as the provider of Rhett's Supported Independent Living (SIL) accommodation and support.

As well as providing more time to plan and prepare Rhett for the move, Laurie's proactive approach enabled the goal to move into supported group accommodation to be added into Rhett's NDIS plan so that SIL and additional Support Coordination funding was available when it was needed.

Laurie is particularly appreciative of the work of his Support Coordinator Justin:

"I take my hat off to everyone involved, but we couldn't have made it happen if it hadn't been for my Support Coordinator Justin. Like most parents, I didn't have the time to push to make it happen. The paperwork can be totally overwhelming, so to be able to hand most of that over was a relief," says Laurie.

"I met with Laurie and we talked about Rhett's requirements," says Justin De Rhede. "There wasn't much around at the time and it was a constant search, then a house became available and we all went out to have a look".

It was a great match for Rhett, as well as another client who is now Rhett's housemate, and work began on recruiting Rhett's support staff, furnishing the home and preparing Rhett for the move. Rhett likes his current routine, so it was important to maintain this. Rhett continues to attend his day program and supports to facilitate his love of swimming, painting, football and riding his tricycle were planned into his free time.

Laurie's life has also changed. Now that he isn't taking care of Rhett's day-to-day needs, he's focussing more time on his business and personal wellbeing, knowing that Rhett is safe and happy. And when he speaks to Rhett on the phone or they spend time together, which is most Saturdays, it's quality time.

The transition was made easier by the strong connections Rhett has formed with his support staff.

"I did fear that when I'd pick Rhett up and have him for the day that he wouldn't want to go back," says Laurie "but it's been quite easy as he's already developed positive relationships with his support staff, which is good. They come across as very professional, proactive and caring".

Rhett says that he likes his new home and he's beginning to rely less on family, occasionally choosing a house activity over a catch up with family. It's a bitter-sweet sign of success for Laurie who says he's looking forward to one more male housemate of a similar age moving in, to complete the creation of a social, home-like environment. "That will change the dynamics again for the better and create a sense of family," he says

“ Rhett's already developed positive relationships with his support staff. They come across as very professional, proactive and caring. ”

Image: Claire Coulter walking Peanut during a visit to her parents in Foster





“ I like the house and my friends. ”

Claire

SUPPORTING A BUSY, INDEPENDENT LIFE

○ Claire’s lifestyle is certainly action-packed – which is exactly how she likes it

Claire Coulter loves her Unisson supported home in Ryde as it’s the perfect base for her busy, independent lifestyle and because she shares it with her closest friends. “I like the house and my friends,” she says.

As the group of five friends had known each other since they were young, when the NDIS provided each of them with the opportunity to choose to move into a supported independent living home, it was only natural that they would want to move in together.

With her friends as housemates, Claire is always in good company whether she’s taking care of domestic tasks, socialising inside and outside of the home, going swimming or unwinding after a day at work. She says her favourite ways to relax at home are drawing superhero characters, cooking and watching DVDs with her friends.

Claire has an adventurous spirit. In 2018, Claire and her housemate Sally Tennant achieved a long-held goal of going on an overseas holiday together, choosing an eight-day supported cruise of the South Pacific. It certainly met their expectations and they particularly enjoyed visiting the islands, dancing at the disco onboard the ship and the broad variety of meal choices.

Claire works part-time at the George Institute for Global Health, where she’s responsible for the mail, assisting with administration tasks, making coffees and maintaining the kitchen. During the 17 years she’s been working there she’s made some good friends and regularly catches up for work or social events.

Claire enjoys visiting her family in Sydney and on NSW’s Mid North Coast, often navigating public transport and travelling independently. She regularly catches up with her brothers who live in Sydney’s CBD, staying for the weekend and going out for meals, to the theatre or to see the latest movies. She also looks forward to visiting family in Foster. As well as spending time with her parents, Claire likes the change of pace, taking Peanut the family’s rescue greyhound for walks on the beach, swimming in the ocean pool and caddying for her father. On her most recent trip, Claire decided she’d like to try golf herself and loved it. She now plans to take lessons and keep up the practice both at home and during her visits to Foster.

Claire’s lifestyle is certainly action-packed – which is exactly how she likes it - and Unisson’s person-centred, active support approach supports her choices and ensures that assistance is available when it’s needed, from direct support professionals that Claire knows and trusts.

Claire’s parents Margaret and Robert are pleased to see how she’s supported to live a happy, independent life of her choosing with a good balance of home life, work life and regular visits with family.

“Unisson has done a fabulous job and we’re really happy with the set-up. We think the staff are exceptional and we think that Claire is very lucky,” says Margaret “she has a really fulfilled life and she’s got the best of three worlds”.

Image: Damien Egan at one of his favourite garden centres near Ryde



Damien

SUPPORTING A CHANGE OF PACE

- When he retired at age 60, after 20 years of working at Unisson’s supported employment
- business, Pack Works, Damien faced one of life’s most challenging transitions. But with the right
- supports in place, he’s now embracing the change of pace.

Retirement is a complex rite of passage. The freedom to pursue new interests, fulfil dreams or just relax and enjoy life can be exciting, but it also means adjusting to the loss of established routines, connections with colleagues and a sense of purpose and identity.

A gradual transition to retirement is preferable, but sometimes ‘life happens’ and this isn’t possible. This was, unfortunately, the case for Ryde-based Damien Egan. In just 18 months, Damien experienced the distressing loss of both his parents, spent time in hospital after a fall, moved house and gained a new support team. And during this whirlwind of events, he decided it was also time to retire. As Damien’s retirement came about quite suddenly, the Support Coordination funding in his NDIS plan was insufficient to meet his transition to retirement needs.

Support Coordination is designed to help eligible people to access a mix of supports in their NDIS plan, get the best out of their funding and increase their capacity to live the life they choose. Eligibility includes major life transitions such as retirement, leaving school and moving home or events such as loss of a primary carer, a first NDIS plan, a period of crisis or a change of circumstances that reduces someone’s capacity to manage their plan.

When Damien retired, Unisson Support Coordinator Ros Richardson applied for additional funding and got to work researching and requesting the supports that would enable him to thrive during this next chapter of his life.

Working closely with Damien, his family and Unisson Team Leader, Gunta Jarjoura, Ros worked with Damien’s interests, and Gunta implemented his program, using a person-centred active support approach. By collaborating with Damien’s sisters Margot and Liz and his brother Michael, who are strong advocates for Damien, Ros and Gunta learned about Damien’s childhood experiences to improve the quality of his program and supports. And as he is selectively non-verbal with people he doesn’t have a strong connection with, this information was also used to match Damien with support staff who share his interests.

With the right supports available, Damien transitioned to his new lifestyle at his own pace. He now enjoys a range of activities that are meaningful because they relate to happy experiences from his childhood, growing up in an artistic, musical family. They range from simple pleasures, such as having breakfast and afternoon tea in the garden while receiving assistance to read the newspaper and talking with his support staff, to interests such as art classes and going to the theatre, and fulfilling dreams such as going on holiday.

“Gunta has done an awesome job sorting everything out and Ros has been amazing,” says Margot “For people who have family members transitioning, it’s imperative to have a Support Coordinator who knows exactly what they can access, because there’s a lot of things available that the average person doesn’t know about that can add so much value to someone’s life.”

“Gunta has done an awesome job sorting everything out and Ros has been amazing.”

Image: Unisson Direct Support Professional Craig Bailey with Michelle in the music room at Unisson's community access centre in Terrey Hills, playing 'The Animal Song', a song they co-wrote.



A Career with Unisson: Craig

CONNECTING THROUGH MUSIC

Sharing his love of music is enabling Direct Support Professional Craig Bailey to inspire musical collaborations and create positive outcomes

“ This is the best job I’ve ever had. ”

Prior to working for Unisson, Craig says that working in the corporate sector was “not fulfilling and a bit of a brutal environment” until an acquaintance, who works for Unisson, encouraged him to consider becoming a Direct Support Professional (DSP). “She said I had the right temperament and that Unisson were looking for people like me and would provide training,” says Craig.

When he’s not working, Craig is focussing on what he describes as his “main passion, hobby, obsession” of playing music with his band. His work and musical life used to be separate, but happily for Craig and the people he supports, this is now no longer the case. At Unisson, Craig found a welcoming culture of diverse, like-minded people who share his values, and he was encouraged to draw on his musical skills in the work that he does with clients.

Among the clients he’s been working with is a client who is selectively non-verbal and loves music. By sharing his own love of music, Craig discovered that this client enjoys a wide range of musical genres including jazz, folk and classical and arranged to play for him.

“I would ask him ‘what do you feel like today?’ and I’d run him through my repertoire and give him the choice of the order I played things,” said Craig.

Craig has now been accepted as a person that this client chooses to communicate with and what started as playing and talking about music has branched into conversations about other topics. This strengthened connection, shared interest and better understanding of this client’s opinions has been influential in better meeting his needs.

At the supported independent living home where he works, Craig’s ‘school of rock’ style music sessions, where clients participate by singing, dancing and playing percussion instruments, have been transformative.

Craig has a great way of engaging clients – asking for their help to perform, providing lyrics that can be sung back, working at a pace where they’ll be successful and providing praise and humour. He often ad-libs, changing the lyrics of popular songs to be about clients, their interests or just what’s happening in the room at the time, for maximum engagement and enjoyment.

Craig noticed that one of the clients, Michelle, showed skills in keeping time whilst conducting and was interested in the keyboard, and when he asked if she would like to learn she was very enthusiastic. Craig donated and customised one of his old keyboards by drawing on the keys and used creative descriptions to communicate when to play the chords he had taught her so she could instantly start playing popular songs. “My way of teaching was to use different animals or other object names for the names of the chords or the notes – apple, cat, dog – so it was an association, instead of saying A, C, D.”

Michelle’s joy at learning and playing music is what motivates Craig’s music lessons “She’s beaming, she feels really good about herself and for me that’s the best part,” he says.

During COVID-19 precautionary isolation, Craig organised a collaborative concert for the housemates, with help from Michelle and DSP Luke Passfield who plays drums. It was so popular that regular concerts followed and a house band – the Vibe band – evolved, which is going from strength-to-strength.

Sharing his love of playing music with the people he supports has given Craig a real sense of purpose and job satisfaction. “There’s a beauty in watching them just responding to the sounds naturally, that’s a real part of music making,” says Craig “This is the best job I’ve ever had.”

Our Structure

PEOPLE WE SUPPORT AND THEIR FAMILIES, GUARDIANS OR ADVOCATES

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

TEAM LEADERS

CORPORATE SERVICES, MANAGERS AND COORDINATORS

(Marketing, Finance, Payroll, IT, HR, WHS, Property, Fleet)

CLIENT SERVICES MANAGERS

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

HUMAN
RESOURCES
MANAGER



PRACTICE
LEADER
X 2



REGIONAL MANAGER /
CLIENT SERVICES
X 2



MARKETING &
COMMUNICATIONS
MANAGER



ENQUIRIES
MANAGER



FINANCE
MANAGER



MANAGER,
QUALITY &
SAFEGUARDS

EXECUTIVE TEAM

GENERAL MANAGER,
CORPORATE SERVICES



GENERAL MANAGER,
CLIENT SERVICES



GENERAL MANAGER, BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Financial Year Snapshot

780

Employees

61.7m

Total Revenue

163k

Private Funding Donations

1.5m

Investment Income

55.1m

Net Assets

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Employees	571	655	679	719	780
Total Revenue	37.9m	40.0m	46.6m	54.8m	61.7m
Private Funding Donations	254k	94k	140k	424K	163K
Investment Income	1.6m	1.4m	1.5m	2.7m	1.5m
Net Assets	40.9m	44.6m	48.3m	52.7m	55.1m



“ The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team. ”

PHIL JACKSON

Executive & Senior Leadership Team

Unisson Disability's Executive & Senior Leaders are highly skilled individuals from a variety of backgrounds. They are passionate about using their unique skills and experience to create opportunities for the people with whom we work – opportunities that will help clients live their best life.

Supported by more than 90 like-minded and capable leaders throughout the organisation, Unisson Disability's success is a truly collaborative effort. You can view our Senior Leaders Bio's on our website.



DAVID
KNEESHAW
**Chief Executive
Officer**



GAIL
JELTES
**General Manager,
Client Services**



KATRINA
JACKSON
**Manager,
Marketing &
Communications**



RASHIKA
ISLAM
**Manager, Human
Resources**



SAWAKO
FITCHETT
Manager, Finance



TERRI
COHEN
**Manager, Quality
& Safeguards**



TRACEY
SHERWIN
**Enquiries
Manager**



JOYCE
BAILLIE
**General Manager,
Corporate
Services**



MICHELLE
CARLYLE
**General Manager,
Business Development
& Innovation**



KAREN
BIRD
**Regional Manager,
Client Services**



RYAN
TRACEY
**Regional Manager,
Client Services**



CATHY
GAUCI
Practice Leader



JENNIE
BROADLEY
Practice Leader

Board Members

 Unisson Disability's Board is made up of a team of talented people united in their passion for creating possibilities for the people our work touches to live a great life.

Our Board members bring significant and wide-ranging skills and experience to their roles. Together, they are committed to helping Unisson Disability continue to grow as a provider of high-quality disability services whose key difference lies in the extraordinary connections we make with those we support and their families.



STEVEN GREGG
CHAIRMAN
B COMM

Steven is a highly experienced investment and commercial banker with extensive Australian and international executive experience. He held various positions with ABN AMRO including President and Global Head of Investment Banking, UK. He was also employed at Chase Manhattan, Lehman Brothers and AMP Morgan Grenfell. His most recent executive role was as Expert Partner at McKinsey & Company in Australia and the US. His current non-executive roles include Senior Advisor with McKinsey & Co and as Senior Consultant to Grant Samuel.

Steven has been the Chairman of Caltex Australia Ltd since August 2017 and he is the Chairman of Lorna Hodgkinson Foundation and Unisson Disability Limited. He serves as Trustee of the Australian Museum Trust, and as a Non-executive Director of Challenger Limited, Challenger Life Company Limited, William Inglis & Son Ltd and TabCorp Holdings Limited. His former roles include Chairman of Austock Group Limited and Chairman of Goodman Fielder Pty Limited.



PETER HORTON
B BUS

Peter has more than 40 years' experience in accounting and finance roles.

He previously practiced as a Chartered Accountant, retiring as a partner from KPMG in 2001. This was followed by roles as Director of Finance & Accounting for Event Hospitality and Entertainment Limited and CFO and Company Secretary for Carlton Investments Limited, where he still serves.

Peter joined the Board of Unisson Disability in 1999 as Treasurer. He enjoys using the skills gained throughout his career to assist Unisson Disability in meeting its objectives of providing support to people with intellectual disability.

Through his close involvement with the organisation, Peter has developed a great admiration for the families and employees involved in our work.



ALEX GELMAN
OAM, GAICD, M COMM, CPA

Alex brings over 25 years of practical business and technology experience, focusing on strategic technology advice, business technology transformation, cloud solutions and strategies to compete in the digital age.

Previously, Alex founded C9 Solution and Consult Point, plus was the National Head of Technology Advisory at Grant Thornton Australia.

Currently, Alex is an Executive Director at Care Support Network and a Partner at Strategy Assist.



DAVID HARDY
B COMM, MBA, MA

David has had a long career in corporate strategy and planning.

He was Head of Strategy for the Insurance Australia Group, and has been in leadership roles with the consulting firms Accenture and McKinsey & Co.

He currently mixes consulting and teaching and is on the adjunct faculty of the Australian Graduate School of Management at the University of NSW where he leads a strategic consulting project class.

David has had a personal involvement with Unisson Disability for most of his life as his brother Richard has been supported by the organisation since he was a young boy.



REBECCA FLETCHER
B COMM, MA TESOL, GRAD CERT HRM

Rebecca has been part of Unisson Disability since 1988 and was Unisson's CEO from 2005 until retiring in October 2018.

She has extensive experience across a number of industries including banking, finance, manufacturing and the disability sector, working in Australia and the Asia Pacific region. Rebecca holds formal tertiary and post graduate qualifications in Accounting, Human Resources Management, Company Director, NFP Management and Teaching. She is a Fellow with the Australian Institute of Company Directors, serves as a Director of an aged care facility in Sydney and is a Non-executive Board Member of the Lorna Hodgkinson Foundation and Unisson Disability Ltd.

Rebecca is passionate about continuing the legacy of Dr Lorna Hodgkinson by working to enable people with disability to access the opportunities that allow them to be integrated in their communities and live their best lives.



ROBERTA RYAN
BA (HONS), B.SOC.SC (HONS), GRAD DIP

Professor Roberta Ryan is a leading social policy, program evaluation and stakeholder engagement practitioner and researcher, with more than 30 years' experience in academia and consulting across Australia and internationally.

A qualified social worker, Roberta has specialised skills in large multiservice evaluations, service development, delivery and applied policy research. She has also worked for a number of non-government agencies in direct practice and management roles and has designed and undertaken a range of complex government and non-government policy advisory and applied policy projects.

Roberta's extensive experience includes working with people with disability and their families in applied policy, service review, evaluation and service management.

Her work in the disability field includes projects for government, non-government agencies, peak and advocacy organisations, including the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the NSW Disability Council, Family Advocacy NSW, Centacare, Burnside, Jewish Welfare and UnitingCare.

Roberta is Deputy Head of Faculty in the Newcastle University Faculty of Business and Law and is the Director of the Hunter Research Foundation Centre.



DR GILLIAN BROOKS
BA (PYSCH), MBBS HONS. FRACP

Dr Gillian Brooks is a specialist paediatrician and Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Physicians (Paediatrics and Child Health). She has extensive experience in community child health and developmental paediatrics, general paediatrics and paediatric rehabilitation.

As Senior Staff Specialist Developmental Paediatrician and Team Leader for Children's Hospital Westmead (Parramatta Early Childhood Assessment Team), Dr Brooks leads a multidisciplinary team in the service of paediatric patients and their families.

She has extensive experience across the assessment, diagnosis and management of children and adolescents with developmental disabilities. Dr Brooks strongly supports a holistic approach to the treatment of children, which takes into consideration their family environment, as well as their social, cultural and linguistic needs, and revolves around taking a partnership approach with families.

She has a special interest in quality improvement projects and in research related to service delivery and building the capacity of individuals with a disability to lead a full life.

The Board



ROLE OF THE BOARD

Unisson Disability is governed by a Board of Directors who are appointed by our members. The Board is responsible for:

- Unisson's governance, broad policy and strategic objectives
- Approval of the annual budget and strategic plan
- Ensuring the availability of adequate financial resources
- Selecting, appointing, supporting and reviewing the performance of the CEO
- Ensuring compliance with regulation, constitutional law and contractual agreements

Each Director shares ultimate responsibility for the organisation's overall success and accepts legal responsibility for Unisson Disability.

The Board is also responsible for ensuring significant risks are identified and appropriate controls and responses are implemented within the organisation.

The Board encourages and stimulates the generation of new ideas, creativity and innovation that can benefit the organisation. It plays a key role in determining the efficiency and productivity of the organisation and works to enhance the performance of the organisation by developing improved ways of working, discovering innovative solutions, embracing technology, and implementing modern business processes.



WHEN THE BOARD MEETS

The Board meets eight times each calendar year as well as meeting with our members and stakeholders at the Annual General Meeting.



WHO IS ON THE BOARD

The Board is comprised of Directors who are individual volunteers with an interest in supporting people with disability, and who bring to Unisson Disability skills and expertise in their various fields and professions.

Board members are independent and free from any other business or relationship which could affect the business of Unisson Disability. The names and details of each of our Board Members are within this review. Many of Unisson Disability's Directors have had a long-standing relationship with the organisation before commencing as a Director.



HOW NEW DIRECTORS ARE RECRUITED

The power to appoint and dismiss Directors is conferred on the Board by the Constitution of the company. The process of choosing Directors to invite to the Board is a considered process, with particular attention given to assessing the skills matrix across the Board as to which area of expertise the Board feels would most benefit Unisson Disability.

Upon identifying a suitable candidate for Directorship, and after necessary meetings and interviews with the Chairman and selected Directors, and the consent of the individual to act as a Director of Unisson Disability, the potential Director is either appointed as such by the Board or elected to the position at the company's Annual General Meeting.

At any one time, the skills that the Directors bring to the Board and consequently to the organisation span the areas of business finance, law, governance, strategy and health.



BOARD COMMITTEES

The Board is empowered by the Constitution to appoint advisory committees consisting of members of the Board and such other members as the Board thinks fit. Unisson's committees act in an advisory capacity and conform to any regulations given by the Board. Unisson Disability has three formal committees within the following areas:

- Governance and Operations Risk Review
- Strategic Planning
- Finance, Audit and Investment
- Property

The objectives of the committees are to review the performance of the company and to ensure operational efficiency and effectiveness within their designated areas. To this end, the Directors on the sub-committees pay particular attention to acquainting themselves with the operations within the area of their specific sub-committee based on reports provided by the CEO and the executive team, and offering constructive input and strategies with a view to augmenting the performance of the company in those areas.



ETHICAL STANDARDS

Unisson Disability is guided by and aligns its service provision closely with the NSW and National Standards for Disability Services – the doctrines of which are embedded in the policies and procedures that govern every area and division of Unisson Disability. This vigilance reflects the organisation's overarching objective to provide quality services, fundamental to the shift to person-centred service delivery and individualised funding, where people will enjoy more choice, portability and flexibility in their funding and supports.

Unisson Disability also maintains membership and involvement with peak industry organisations to ensure awareness of policy and procedure across the disability sector.

Our Funding Sources

Some of the innovative projects mentioned earlier in this report would not have happened without the support of our funding sources.

We believe our long-standing reputation with Government agencies, along with our forward-thinking approach to service delivery contributes to our success, time and time again.

We acknowledge the support of the Commonwealth Government departments and agencies listed below in delivering our services to the people we support.

- Department of Social Services
- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- Department of Health

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE

MANY PEOPLE WHO MAKE REGULAR

OR ONE-OFF DONATIONS OR

PROVIDE US WITH A LEGACY GIFT.

THESE CONTRIBUTIONS ENABLE

US TO INVEST IN CREATING

POSSIBILITIES FOR A GREAT LIFE

FOR THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT.



UNISSON

DISABILITY

1300 266 222

hello@unisson.org.au

unissondisability.org.au

 [/unissondisability](https://www.facebook.com/unissondisability)

 [@unissondisability](https://www.instagram.com/unissondisability)

 [@unissonNSW](https://twitter.com/unissonNSW)

CORPORATE SUPPORT OFFICE

6 West St
PYMBLE NSW 2073

POSTAL ADDRESS

PO Box 474
GORDON NSW 2072

REGISTERED NDIS PROVIDER

ABN: 28 613 272 772

ACN: 613 272 772

NDIS Provider Number:
4050 000 228

