

2021

Annual Review



UNISSON | IT STARTS *with heart*
DISABILITY

MCCONNELL BOURN
The company for
KNIX



Local artist Brett Ferguson (right) presents entrepreneur Dick Smith (left) with a portrait he created at our Blue Apple Art Studio at Terrey Hills.

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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.

Cover Image: A proud moment for Matthew Gow after completing the Kuring-gai Chase Fun Run.

Who We Are



At Unisson we deliver NDIS services to around 600 people across Sydney, the Central Coast and Hunter regions. We are about creating opportunities for people to live a full life, with a sense of belonging and as welcomed members of their local communities.

We believe it's our people who make the difference. Through nurturing and education, we encourage them to be the best that they can be, to deliver service with excellence and to embrace the values which we hold dear: generosity, inclusion, courage and creativity. The best types of services are those delivered with authenticity and energy, knowing that every moment has the potential to offer a sense of self-determination.

The Unisson way is about building relationships, establishing pathways for those we support to engage as active members of their communities and creating an environment where people can make choices, knowing they are supported each step of the way.

When we work together and walk together, anything is possible.

Our Strategy Framework



FY 20/21 in Reflection

Digital Transformation Enters Its Final Phase

Unisson's new digital systems transformation continues, with software development and integration nearing completion and roll out beginning in the coming months. This is an organisation-wide process and a major milestone for Unisson which will thoroughly modernise our IT systems and provide a state of the art platform that will have a positive impact on our clients and staff.

Kuring-Gai Chase Fun Run for the Special Olympics

In May, Unisson participated in the annual The Kuring-gai Chase Fun Run and Barry Easy Walk for Special Olympics Australia. The event included a 4.5km walk or run and a 9km fun run. Unisson is a proud sponsor, supporting local athletes with disabilities on their journey to the Special Olympics. Among the large crowd were staff from Unisson's Pymble Head Office, as well as a number from other Unisson locations along the North Shore. With smiling faces and some quick paces, it was wonderful to see our people and our clients sharing these special moments.

Image: Alison Hall enjoying the Kuring-gai Chase Fun Run



New Senior's Program at Beaumont Hills

Unisson kicked off its Senior's Weekly Program at Beaumont Hills this year, providing opportunities for people of similar ages to enjoy some great social activities together one day a week. The program includes an art day, scone making, ballroom dancing, beer at the pub, a visit to the Discovery Museum at Castle Hill and Puzzle Day. It's a great way for people to connect and begin new friendships.



Local artist Brett meets his hero

Local artist Brett Ferguson created a portrait of his hero and renowned entrepreneur Dick Smith at our Blue Apple Art Studio at Terrey Hills, formerly the site of Dick's Australian Geographic office. Brett was able to present the much-welcomed portrait in person to Dick and give him a nostalgic tour of our newest centre.

Image: Brett Ferguson discussing his portrait with Dick Smith



Blue Apple Art Studio Creates New Opportunities

The team ran their successful Mother's Day stall in May, raising funds for client art supplies. Offerings included paintings and pottery, full of bright colours and unique perspectives. Blue Apple Art continues to create new opportunities for our clients to share their artistic skills with our community. Our online art classes have been a huge hit when NSW Health restrictions have not permitted in-person attendance.

Image: Handmade cards and ceramic pieces created by Kirsten Bisset during an online class with Bethany Smith.

Unisson Works

Unisson Works provides employment opportunities for over 60 supported employees across its two brands, Pack Works and Ground Works. Structural changes over the last 12 months have allowed the business to focus on customer acquisition and quality of service while also ensuring that we have better support in place for our supported employees and their families.

In June 2021, Unisson Works successfully achieved **ISO Certification 9001:2015** which will guarantee that our products and services continue to meet the expectations of our clients going forward and, at the same time, demonstrates the high standards which we are able to achieve through the work of our supported employees. Maintaining this accreditation will allow us to engage with larger businesses, providing more opportunities which will allow us to grow Unisson Works into the future.

During the year we welcomed **several work experience students** from years 11 and 12, and we will open our doors to more students in the coming year, providing

them and their families with a range of opportunities as the school years end.

Other exciting initiatives we've implemented include our **Employee Awards** to recognise our supported employees for their contributions and achievements, and a computer training lab for our people to learn basic skills such as data entry and word processing. We now have supported employees involved in every aspect of our work from job sheet creation to invoice preparation.

As an integral part of our team development, in the first part of 2021 we began building elements of our **Unisson Works social club**, starting with our NRL footy tipping competition, run primarily by our supported employees. We plan to increase our social events and activities in the next 12 months, with all Unisson Works employees, facilitators, management and supported employees invited to join in the fun!

Unisson joins the Diversity Council of Australia

During the year, Unisson became a member of the Diversity Council of Australia, an organisation with which we have great synergy. With over 700 members, including large retail and banking organisations, Unisson welcomes the opportunity to further commit to strengthening its diverse and inclusive workplace. Membership will give us access to leading research, best practice policies and expertise across the whole spectrum of diversity. Supporting a diverse and inclusive culture reflects our Art of Human Connection principles, our values and our vision of a world where every person is welcomed.



Unisson Snapshot

EMPLOYEE TYPE
446 PART-TIME
167 FULL-TIME
217 CASUAL
64
 SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES

OUR EMPLOYEES COME FROM
44 DIFFERENT
 NATIONS

51 PEOPLE EMPLOYED
 THROUGH OUR EMPLOYEE
 REFERRAL PROGRAM

THERE WERE
32 ACTING ROLE
 OPPORTUNITIES
 FOR CAREER
 DEVELOPMENT



THERE WERE
20 INTERNAL
 PROMOTIONS

14 EMPLOYEES CELEBRATED
 A LONG-SERVICE
 ANNIVERSARY
 (INC 4 SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES)

801,500
 HOURS
 OF CLIENT SUPPORT
 WERE PROVIDED

593 CLIENTS
 SUPPORTED
 BY UNISSON



66 EMPLOYEES
 RECEIVED A MILESTONE
 RECOGNITION AWARD

Stuart

CELEBRATING EVERY DAY ACHIEVEMENTS



Stuart moved into Unisson's short-term accommodation (STA) at Hornsby during the middle of 2020 while he was applying for suitable funding for long-term shared living arrangements. During his stay, Stuart was able to really build on his living skills which would greatly assist him when he moved to his new home.

Unisson's unique person-centred active support process has enabled Stuart to further develop his independence with encouragement from support workers. According to the STA team leader Elizabeth Green, "It is really important to get to know the clients on a personal level to assist them to meet their NDIS goals and any personal goals the clients may set. Some clients want to learn and build on skills while other clients want a holiday where they can rest and chill out. In Stuart's case, he wanted to maintain his normal routine of working, going on social outings and learn some new living skills that would assist him in his new home."

Unisson's support coordination team worked together to find a few different options for Stuart's new home. This ensured that his needs were being met as well as important things such as proximity to work and being close to his community activities. Stuart got to know his new support workers and his new house mates by having barbeques at the STA as well as morning teas at his future home. He has since settled into his new home and enjoys his independence and extending his social connections.

Stuart continues to learn new skills, whether at work or at home and is proud of what he has achieved. His hobbies include listening to the radio and watching TV. Stuart also loves music and is a big fan of the Australian folk-influenced group The Seekers. Last Christmas he received a CD player with a Seekers CD which he absolutely loves to play and listen to with other people.

Another favourite pastime for Stuart is going to coffee shops. Elizabeth says that at STA, "The staff really try to add incidental learning opportunities in everyday tasks as well as encouraging physical activity on outings. When Stuart goes on coffee outings, staff try to encourage him to go on a walk before ordering his coffee!"

Stuart recently celebrated his 60th birthday with a large lamington cake. It was great for him to celebrate such a milestone in his life with his new housemates, but also to celebrate his many achievements in the last 12 months.

Image: Stuart celebrating his 60th birthday

Craig and Con

A FRIENDSHIP FOR OUR TIMES



Over the last few years, Con and Craig have become inseparable. Con has been a regular visitor to Unisson's St Ives Community Access Centre for around seven years and over that time he and Craig have formed a very special friendship.

Located in a quiet suburban neighbourhood, the centre offers a variety of activities and outings, plus a chance to meet a range of people, nurture your creative side or even learn some new gardening skills in the special sensory garden. No two days are the same and the satisfaction comes from being part of an active and growing community.

Con resides in a shared living home in Turramurra while Craig lives a shared living home at St Ives - so Unisson's community centre is the perfect place to catch up.

Upon arrival at the centre, Con and Craig always seek each other out to discuss their plans for the day. Often this will involve an outing which both love to enjoy, such as a trip to Narrabeen Lakes. You can be sure that Con is always actively looking out for Craig - especially on stairs or on uneven ground.

Con also likes walking and will sometimes persuade a more hesitant Craig to come along. Con is a great support to Craig, who is a little unsteady on his feet and Con will always offer assistance.

Like a lot of other Sydneysiders, Con and Craig both share a love of coffee shops. Craig loves to sit in busy coffee shops, watching people come and go. Con also likes the social aspect.

Emotional support is important too in this special friendship. Con and Craig find it easier to face challenges when they are together. At times when both are feeling unsure or anxious, they are able to provide a sense of calm to each other. Building their communication skills with one another helps Con and Craig interact with more confidence in other settings.

Con and Craig both enjoy being part of the wider group at the St Ives Community Access Centre. Sitting with others and being involved in the general conversation or going out for day trips gives both Con and Craig a lot of satisfaction as well as that important sense of belonging.

Image: Con and Craig enjoying a day trip with St Ives CAS at Narrabeen Lakes

Cathy and Jennie

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN ACTION

Unisson continues to set high standards for delivery for all of its services through a focus on person-centred active support. Leading this approach through training and mentoring of our frontline and leadership staff are Cathy Gauci and Jennie Broadley, our practice leadership team.

Cathy joined the organisation twenty-five years ago at a time when Unisson - then known as Sunshine - was transforming its operational model from institution-based services to community-based services and independent shared living. Cathy was employed to manage the community-based accommodation, which was initially in the Hornsby area and this continued to grow as the original institution was wound down. According to Cathy, it was the sheer commitment of Sunshine's board and leadership team to make this historic transition happen, despite the magnitude of the change and the financial resources needed, that she recalls as a proud and defining moment in our organisation's story.

Jennie joined Unisson 13 years ago, having coordinated on a joint project with Sunshine while working for another provider. The focus of that project was to explore opportunities that lay within the mainstream training sector which people with a disability could tap into – or finding the “yes” as we like to call it. Jennie said it was that person-centred lens, looking at people's career development opportunities, “that really beautiful intent that Sunshine had”, which made it easy, when the opportunity arose, for her to make the move to Sunshine.

Jennie was responsible for our supported employment program, the transition to work program, as well as open employment and criminal justice programs. Again, it was finding the “yes” – exploring the potential in everyone, supporting their growth and helping them into a job where they could become part of a community. According to Jennie, “All of us in the industry know that with the right amount of support, people can achieve great things.”

Five years ago, Unisson asked to Cathy and Jennie to combine their wide-ranging operational

expertise and lay the groundwork for our practice leadership. Since 2013, Unisson has partnered with La Trobe University's Living with Disability Research Centre in its study of person-centred active support, which has taken a broad approach to analysing the culture of shared living for people with a disability. Ten organisations have participated in the study, including Unisson, and 65 accommodation services have been evaluated for effective team leadership, person-centred active support, wellbeing through engagement and quality of life outcomes. Unisson has used the results of the research to further focus its approach to supporting clients - and practice leadership is an integral part of that.

Practice leadership involves building a team's strengths and skills through coaching and mentoring. According to Jennie, “It's about team leaders having the skills to create an environment where our support workers are able to focus on quality of life and providing support to people to have meaningful engagement, to be able to grow, to have choices and become part of a community. That only happens within organisations committed to that.”

Cathy adds, “It's about that connection which we try and build with team leaders and managers. How we support people is at the core of what makes Unisson unique. It's about our relationship, it's about our values and then how we embed that. It doesn't happen automatically.”

The practice leadership team are always looking for opportunities to broaden their reach and they enjoy working with groups of people from all across the organisation. Cathy and Jennie both passionately believe that Unisson has remained focused on providing quality services and ensuring that we never forget our purpose of working together to create possibilities.

So what motivates Cathy and Jennie in their unique roles?

Jennie explains, “I think at the heart of all of us, the joy of supporting the individual brings us into this industry. I've always enjoyed being able to build a passionate team of people and so ensuring that we have the right focus and the right attitude, and being able to influence the quality of our service and ultimately the lives of all of the people that we support - I mean, there's nothing more rewarding.”

When asked about the highlights of their careers at Unisson, there is a common thread. It's not necessarily about how the organisation has grown or evolved, it's about hearing the individual's story, no matter how big or small, people just giving it a go, knowing that they are well supported as they do so.

On a personal note, Cathy and Jennie love working together and often speak with one voice. According to Cathy, “I think one of the reasons is that we share very similar values, however, we're quite happy to disagree with one another if we've got a different perspective, which adds to the quality and depth of our conversation.”

Jennie adds, “together we come to a greater solution for organisational practice because we have the same value set underneath. And I've never laughed as hard as I have with Cathy!”

JENNIE BROADLEY
Practice Leader



CATHY GAUCI
Practice Leader

Financial Year Snapshot

830

EMPLOYEES

2017: 655 2019: 719
2018: 679 2020: 780

\$66.9m

TOTAL REVENUE

2017: 40.0m 2019: 54.8m
2018: 46.6m 2020: 62m

\$64k

PRIVATE FUNDING DONATIONS

2017: 94k 2019: 424k
2018: 140k 2020: 163k

\$1.2m

INVESTMENT INCOME

2017: 1.4m 2019: 2.7m
2018: 1.5m 2020: 1.5m

\$63.5m

NET ASSETS

2017: 44.6m 2019: 52.7m
2018: 48.3m 2020: 55.1m

Where to From Here



We will embrace our values of generosity, inclusion, courage and creativity.

We will evolve and adapt our services to the changing needs of our clients.

We will discover the “yes” in everything we do.

We will deliver a positive experience to our clients at every stage of their journey with us.

We will enhance our relationships with our clients through person-centred engagement.

We will support our clients to become active members of their communities.

We will strengthen and embed client representations across our governance structures.



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IT STARTS

with heart

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