



Annual Report 2019-2020

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, Mercy Connect acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country, and their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs, and to Elders past, present and emerging.



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Our Purpose

Mercy Connect supports people in need to live fulfilled lives.

Our Mission

Through the Mercy tradition to recognise the rights of adults, children and older people with a disability and to assist each person to achieve their life's ambitions in a connected and meaningful way.

**We are energised by
the spirit of Mercy.**

**Our Mercy-led service
bounds us together.**

**It signifies growth,
a journey to connect.**

**Our rich legacy unites and
inspires us.**

**To move forward and make
a difference to those in need.**

**We are grounded in
our values.**

**They are a true reflection
of who we are.**

**It is the spirit, that empowers
and advocates changes.**

**We believe everyone can
live a more connected
and meaningful life.**

Together we grow.



Our Values

Our values reflect the ethos of the Sisters of Mercy; to enhance the well-being of others in our support. They are inspired by Catherine McAuley's legacy, guiding and empowering us to be better.

Our Mercy-led actions of compassion, hospitality, respect, innovation, teamwork and accountability bring us together in life and work.

					
Compassion	Hospitality	Respect	Innovation	Teamwork	Accountability
Supporting and listening with kindness and understanding.	Welcoming each other with openness and a smile.	Accepting and treating each other with integrity.	Seeing opportunities and creating new solutions.	Working together with a shared view of success.	Choosing courage and taking ownership of our actions.

Values Awards

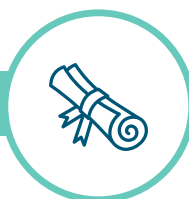
Annually, we recognise and celebrate our staff and participants. The recipients of the Values Awards are those who showcase our values in their everyday life.

Compassion	Hospitality	Respect	Innovation	Teamwork	Accountability
Antoinette Ardren	Elizabeth Gill	Elizabeth Gill	Tracey Forte	Kambora Group Home	Tammy Cain & Jeanie Keeton



Strategic Priorities 2021-2023

Innovation



Recruit school leavers, TAFE and University graduates



Suitable assessment and transition accommodation



Participant / family / guardian experience pathway modelling and mapping



Research opportunities with Universities



Innovative disability housing models

"You should remember that not to advance is to go back".

Catherine McAuley

Capability



Service capabilities to meet participants / families / guardians needs and wants



Future provision care and support services



Finalise organisation restructure



Enhance governance of properties and assets



Improve staff engagement and satisfaction



Increased capital investment in Information and Communication Technology



Introduce leadership development for all staff



Refine and develop policies and procedures



Disability Royal Commission - Response and transparency

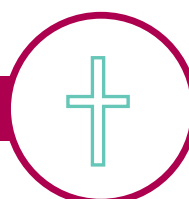


Invest in training and capability building



Develop governance frameworks

Growth



Increased collaboration with church and Mercy Ministries



NFP organisations future acquisition and or partnership



Additional services for participants / families / guardians wants and needs



Explore market areas

Governance Our Board



Matthew Clancy

Chair
2020 - current
Director
2017 - current



Michael O'Callaghan

Chair
2017 - 2020
Director
1998 - 2020



Carmel Daley RSM

Director
2020 - current



Judith Doughty

Director
2017 - current



David Hicks

Director
2018 - current



Anthony McFarlane

Director
2018 - 2020



**Helen Monkivitch
RSM AO**

Director
2015 - 2019



**Sr Lorraine Phelan
RSM**

Director
2018 - current



**Des Powell
AM**

Director
2019 - 2020



Marguerite Ryan

Deputy Chair
2020 - current
Director
2017 - current

Organisational Chart Our Team

The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) is a community of Catholic Religious Sisters in Australia, Papua New Guinea and further abroad.

The ISMAPNG story begins in Ireland on December 12, 1831 when Catherine McAuley, along with two companions, Anna Maria Doyle and Elizabeth Harley, professed their vows and became the first Sisters of Mercy. In 1846, just five years after Catherine's death, the first Sisters of Mercy arrived in Australia to make a foundation in Perth, Western Australia. The first Sisters of Mercy in Papua New Guinea came to Goroka from Australia in 1956. In 2010, the congregations of Adelaide, Ballarat East, Bathurst, Cairns, Goulburn, Grafton, Gunnedah, Melbourne, Perth, Rockhampton, Singleton, Townsville, West Perth, Wilcannia-Forbes, as well as the autonomous region of PNG, decided to ask the Holy See for permission to relinquish our their independence and to come together as one new congregation. Rome granted this permission in July 2011, to become effective at

the commencement of the First Chapter of the new congregation on December 12, the 180th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland.

The new congregation is known as ISMAPNG.

Whatever and whenever their ministry is, ISMAPNG are part of the one Mercy mission, part of the ongoing mission of the compassionate Jesus. In furthering their charism, ISMAPNG partner with thousands of women and men as employees, associates and volunteers. Together ISMAPNG has a proud and continuing history of serving people suffering from injustices related to poverty, sickness or lack of education.

ISMAPNG's mission of Mercy today extends to responding to a range of local and global needs and are guided in their mission by the ISMAPNG 2017 Chapter statement which recognises that 'at this time of global vulnerability God's transforming mercy fires our hearts anew with deeper reverence for all creation'.



Chair Report Matthew Clancy

It is a great privilege to be offering my first Chair update for the 2019-2020 Annual Report.

Over the past 12 months, Mercy Connect has undertaken a period of revitalisation to ensure it continues to support people in need to live fulfilled lives. This has seen a focus on participant outcomes supported through organisational restructuring, internal reviews and assessments, greater investments made in essential resources and infrastructure and the consolidation of our services.

During this time we have also experienced very real challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in very rapid changes being made in the way we offer our services. I am extremely grateful for the patience and graciousness in which our participants, families, guardians and teams have responded to these uncertain times.

Going forward, Mercy Connect will continue to evolve its services in line with the ongoing rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across Australia. We continue to welcome the challenges that this innovative funding model presents and recognise its contribution to the improvement of participants' lives through choice and control. We stand ready with, and supportive of, our participants by embracing new ways of operating as a registered NDIS provider.

During this year's Mercy Day (24 September 2020) we will release our new 2021-2023 Strategic Plan with its three core pillars of Capability, Innovation and Growth. There are many wonderful and exciting opportunities for the years ahead, and this Strategic Plan clearly provides a roadmap for Mercy Connect. We will continue to honour our strong Mercy mission, whilst celebrating our driven culture that is supported by an innovative, vibrant, Mercy Connect workforce. We are confident that this will enable us to meet these stated contemporary influences in a way that will be compassionate and supportive towards those we seek to serve. The participant remains and is always forefront of mind.

Since stepping into the Chair role I would like to thank the Board for all their ongoing support. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Michael O'Callaghan (former Chair / Director) who stepped down in March 2020, after almost 22 years of dedicated service. Michael has selflessly provided excellent guidance and support. This past year also saw the departure of the following Board Directors: Sr Helen Monkivitch RSM AO, Des Powell AM and Anthony McFarlane. Each have generously shared their expertise, time and passion for Mercy Connect whilst upholding and supporting our corporate values. With regretful farewells, we are fortunate to welcome the arrival of Sr Carmel Daley RSM to the Board.

Finally, my sincere thanks to our newly appointed, Chief Executive Officer, Trent Dean, together with the Mercy Connect staff and broader family for all the great outcomes that have been achieved for our participants, families / guardians and the wider community.

Together we grow.



Matthew Clancy
Chair

Chief Executive Officer Report Trent Dean

With devastating bush fires, torrential rain and flooding, and an unprecedented pandemic, the past year has seen our Mercy Connect family experience many significant professional and personal challenges. Yet, despite these very uncertain and turbulent times our staff, participants (including families / guardians) and supporters have remained fervently committed to our purpose of supporting people in need to live fulfilled lives. We continue to draw strength from the doctrine of Divine Providence, and the insights of the Venerable Catherine McAuley who observed that “God makes use of various means to further the accomplishment of his designs, some of which if we had a choice in the matter, would not be in accordance to our views, but which eventually turn out to be the most conducive to the work of the Almighty”.

During such times, we often find that community need increases as people experience additional social isolation, financial hardship, relationship breakdown, and dependence on drugs and alcohol. By comparison, disadvantaged persons in Catherine McAuley’s day were those who were deprived of Catholic education, those who had no roof over their heads, and those who were sick and in need of care. It is not surprising that Catherine recognised these situations and wanted to respond to them. The needs of today’s disadvantaged people may be somewhat different from those of Catherine’s time. But the love that inspired her response can be channelled in new directions by the same generous spirit which activated her. Throughout our shared world history, we have experienced many disasters and crises that have devastated entire countries and continents, resulting in a widespread suffering and loss. Yet, despite the very real pain and angst caused by such events, we have always managed to heal, rebuild, innovate and grow, demonstrating the true resilience of our collective human spirit.

Following a dedicated period of organisation-wide revitalisation, we are now ready to implement our 2021-2023 Strategic Plan, which aims to

achieve sustainable growth whilst continuing to meet local community need. There are many exciting opportunities and developments across the regions we service, and I encourage everyone to review our strategic priorities, and actively support the achievement of them.

At this time, I would like to personally thank Matthew Clancy (current Chair) and Michael O’Callaghan (former Chair) for their kind support and guidance throughout 2019-2020, alongside our Mercy Connect Directors and ISMAPNG Leadership Team. We are very blessed to have such committed and knowledgeable leaders providing good governance for Mercy Connect.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge our dedicated frontline and administration teams, volunteers and external partners for their collective efforts and commitment to serving those in need, which are reflected in the many wonderful stories, achievements and outcomes captured in this year’s Annual Report.

Together we grow.



Trent Dean
Chief Executive Officer

Royal Commission Into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

Background

The Disability Royal Commission was established in April 2019 in response to community concern about widespread reports of violence against, and the neglect, abuse and exploitation of, people with disability.

The Disability Royal Commission aims to:

- Prevent and better protect people with disability from experiencing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Achieve best practice in reporting, investigating and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.
- Promote a more inclusive society that supports people with disability to be independent and live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Response

With the raising of concerns and advocacy for people with disabilities, Mercy Connect is extremely supportive of the Royal Commission, and has provided opportunities for informed engagement for staff, participants, families and guardians.

An information session was held on Wednesday 13 November 2019 with guest speakers, Nicole Morgan, (Senior Associate, Minter Ellison), Nicki Pattern, (Director, Standards & Legal, Institute of Sisters of Mercy Australia and Papua New Guinea).

The forum's aim was to have an open and transparent discussion on:

- What a Royal Commission is.
- The likely impacts the Royal Commission will have on Mercy Connect and other disability providers.
- Available assistance for our participants, families, guardians and staff.

Next Steps

We will continue to provide support to our participants and look forward to the delivery of the final report to the Australian Government by 29 April 2022. Together, with other disability service providers, we openly welcome subsequent recommendations from the Royal Commission, which will be able to deliver a reform of services, laws, policies and practices that will enable a more just and equitable society for people with disabilities.



COVID-19 Pandemic

Background

In January 2020, Coronavirus (COVID-19) was confirmed in Australia; a highly contagious disease, that has resulted a worldwide pandemic, creating ongoing challenges for Mercy Connect.

Response

Our Infection Control Working Group promptly formed and has provided advice and assistance throughout the organisation to keep our participants, staff, families and guardians safe.

Following the activation of the Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan and the increased restrictions for Australia, Mercy Connect made the decision to close its offices and accommodation to non-essential visitors from 25 March 2020.

Whilst continuously monitoring state and Commonwealth notices, Mercy Connect has adapted to the rapid changes and restrictions, whilst being innovative in our approach to confronting circumstances.

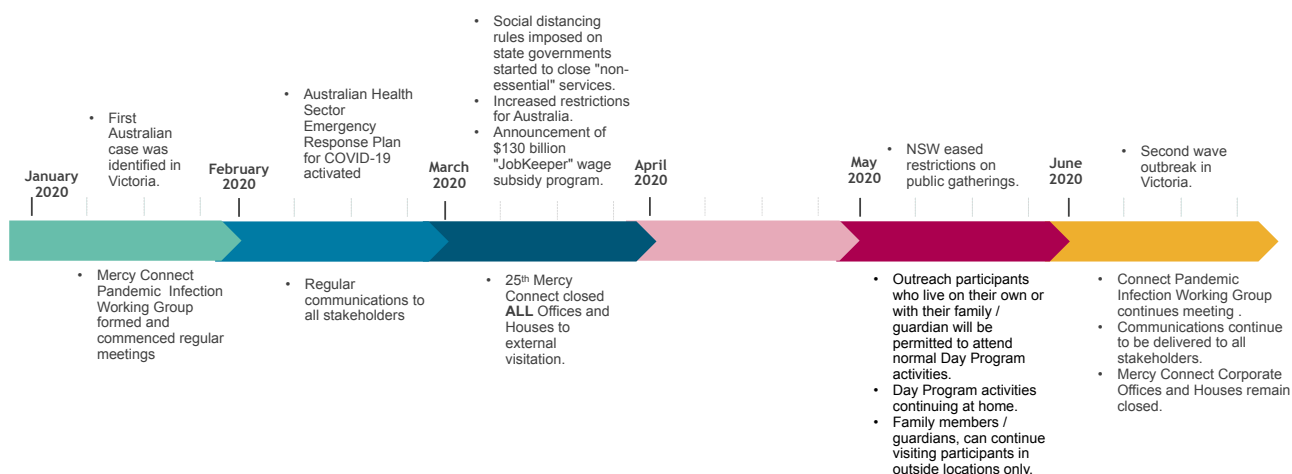
Mercy Connect has displayed consistent and compassionate leadership resulting in many innovative processes, policies and procedures.

Some successful outcomes include:

- Day Programs revised with increased safety and protection for participants.
- Increased Easy English instruction fact sheets. Advanced and improvements to existing policies and procedures.
- Advance training and development programs, Revised Disaster and Crisis Management Plans. Innovative remote working facilities and operations.
- Advancement in Information Technology Communications (ICT) including remote working capabilities.
- Cutting edge displays of creative expressions from our participants i.e. virtual dance competitions.

Next Steps

Mercy Connect would like to thank everyone for their continued efforts during these unprecedented times, and displaying a strong focus on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the participants and staff that we serve.



Communication & Engagement

24 

Newsletters produced

52 

Communique

50+ 

Team meetings

4 

Media releases

72,299

Website views by 13,231 users



8 

Hosted events



420+

Social media posts

66,332

Total reach via social media

10+



Community engagements



Mercy Connect participants and staff at the official commencement of the Carevan Foundation partnership.

Daniel's story Leaving a lasting impression at Wirlinga Pony Club

Creating innovative solutions to social issues may seem complex at times, but Wirlinga Pony Club and Mercy Connect staff are providing Daniel with the most valuable opportunity of living a fulfilled life.

Wirlinga Pony Club, based at Table Top, not only provides programs to educate young people to manage and ride horses and ponies, they are a leading example in teaching responsibility and team work.

The club promotes and encourages riders of all abilities and ages to attend, and since March 2020 have dedicated time and support to Daniel in participating in club activities.

Due to Daniel's intellectual disability, integrating with a vast group of people initially seemed daunting and near impossible.

With persistence and many hours of support from Mercy Connect's staff Helen and Barry, Daniel now wakes up every second Sunday keenly waiting to be picked up and taken to the Wirlinga Pony Club.

His display of excitement and eagerness to join the group is recognised and reciprocated by everyone. Club members and parents have graciously welcomed Daniel and they also look forward to seeing Daniel every fortnight.

"It is wonderful for their children to have Daniel join them every second Sunday," Pony club parent, Russel, said.

"Everyone is fortunate to have the opportunity to learn and further their knowledge of people living with an intellectual disability. Understanding the complexities has provided a greater appreciation for each of their own lives."

Mercy Connect disability support workers Helen and Barry volunteer additional hours to enable Daniel to participate and enjoy the moments at Wirlinga Pony Club.

"Daniel can be quite vocal, but his acceptance from everyone is just amazing. The club is commended on the integrated approach they had undertaken to make this opportunity happen."

This collaboration has been a two-way pathway of learning. Helen also communicates through sign language with Daniel, which many members are now learning, so they too can communicate effectively with Daniel. The experience and positive impacts made are a testament to everyone involved.





Section 1

Operations

Operations

“Due to COVID-19 the Day Program service was suspended... the team were able to develop a Day Program from home plan to ensure they continued to participate in meaningful activities...”

This year saw the introduction of the Executive Leader Operations role to strengthen and align the operations of the business. The focus being on the day-to-day and core business activities and combining Property, Rostering, Accommodation, Community Inclusion and Central West teams together.

The Accommodation Team supported 64 participants to live in residential homes across the Murrumbidgee, Central West and Narrabri locations. With a focus this year on ensuring Mercy Connect homes are updated and homely, with many of our 16 group homes and individual units receiving significant renovations.

Mercy Connect held the official Community Garden Opening at St John's where a tree was dedicated in remembrance of a valued employee. Many hours of planning and hard work have gone into creating this community area with garden beds, an orchard, composting bins, and a hen house, aptly named “Cluckingham Palace” (designed and constructed by the Mercy Connect Woodwork participants).

A key focus of the Community Inclusion Team has been building independence. This saw the creation and implementation of the Supported Wages Program in partnership with The Personnel Group. The successful program employed six participants to work in the Branching Out Garden and Maintenance Program (including cleaning services). The program included a course via the Indi School in Wodonga on how to manage their pay and budget, and has seen two participants obtain ongoing employment outside of the program.

In May 2020, a decision was made to transition out the Narrabri group homes. Families / guardians and participants were supported by our team and given the choice of several providers before selecting Kirinari. This was a successful and incident-free transition of service.

Due to COVID-19, all Day Program services were suspended to minimise risk of exposure to participants and staff. For participants who resided in our accommodation, the team were able to develop a Day Program from home plan to ensure they continued to participate in meaningful activities.

COVID-19 was also the catalyst to implement an interim employee roster to reduce the crossover of staff from house and programs and minimise the impact of possible contact with COVID-19. As the roster changes were made in line with the changing pandemic conditions, participants, families / guardians and staff should all be congratulated for their unified and collaborative approach, to ensure the ongoing safety of everyone.



Felicity Lawes
Executive Leader
Operations

Operations cont.

Key highlights

- ▶ Restructure of the Operations Team.
- ▶ Carevan partnership - participants providing meals to the community in need.
- ▶ Mercy Meals Program established, in partnership with FoodShare & Rotary Club of Albury.
- ▶ Bathurst site development.
- ▶ Supported Wages Program: successful placement of participants into paid employment.
- ▶ Property improvements across Mercy Connect.

81



Participants accessed Day Program services across 38 programs per week

39



Participants received support in their own home

64



Participants called a Mercy Connect group home their home



Property report

There was an increased focus on improving the quality of the Mercy Connect property portfolio throughout the year. A property plan was drafted and implementation commenced, to ensure that the standard of our homes improved the quality of life for residents.

One older property was sold, with two more planned in the near future. At end of the financial year, Mercy Connect continues to provide:

- 19 1-bedroom units.
- 16 group homes.
- 2 Supported Independent Living (SIL) vacancies.

Significant work has been undertaken to ensure robust systems and processes are developed to improve our planned and preventative maintenance as well as capital work for all properties. These processes and systems include emergency maintenance requests, contractor management and processes.

There was significant investment in the independent units with complete renovations being completed in three of the 10 Outreach units.

There was also significant investment in upgrading many safety features at our properties

including new fences and CCTV on Day Program and office sites.

There was also investment in the St John's site to maintain and preserve the heritage listed buildings.

Other works included:

Internal

- Whole house / unit renovations.
- New flooring and lighting.
- New blinds throughout.
- Installation of updated wardrobes.
- Updating of heaters.

External

- Installation of patios at some properties.
- Installation of new HVAC unit, providing refrigerated cooling for summer months.
- Installation of awnings and blinds.
- New garden irrigation systems.

Compliance

- Fire system re-established.
- Asbestos register created.





Section 2

Clinical Services

Clinical Services

“... this is the first survey of its kind for Mercy Connect and the disability community as a whole, with the entire survey recorded from the view and in the words of the participant...”

This has been another exciting and productive year for the Clinical Services Team. Our Behaviour Support and Support Coordination Teams continue to evolve and improve the delivery of evidence-based services under the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission framework. This is resulting in more efficient, effective and outcomes driven service delivery for our participants.

The Specialist Psychiatry Clinic that operates quarterly from our St John's site remains well attended by both Mercy Connect participants and those within in the community. The clinic provides an essential service that is not available anywhere else in the local community.

The newly formed Quality and Safeguarding Team has been promoting best practice and continuous improvement across the services we deliver. There has been a particular focus on health outcomes for participants resulting in improved practice and greater awareness of health monitoring and prevention for those we support.

The 2019 Mercy Connect Participant Satisfaction Survey gave the participants we serve a true voice. This is the first study of its kind for Mercy Connect and the disability community as a whole, with the entire survey recorded from the view, and in the words of, the participant. The findings highlight the experiences of participants covering a range of quality of life outcomes relevant to their lives.

Customer satisfaction in the disability sector is a powerful predictor of a person's lifestyle satisfaction and quality of life status. This is particularly relevant when people are engaged with an organisation with which they receive the majority of their services.

All information for the survey were collected directly from participants in their own words without proxy responses, using multiple communication tools to aid in the collection of responses where needed to increase the accessibility of the survey.

It highlights the need and opportunity for further investigation and supplementary studies to be conducted in this area in a similar manner, from the view of the participants we serve.



Caroline Cummins
Executive Leader
Clinical Services

Clinical Services cont.

Key highlights

- ▶ Continued partnership with Three Rivers University to support Allied Health student placements in the disability sector.
- ▶ Specialist Psychiatry Clinic continues to operate from St John's - first of its kind in the area.
- ▶ Introduction of the Quality, Risk and Safety Spotlight newsletter.
- ▶ New staff in Behaviour Support and Support Coordination teams due to increase in demand.
- ▶ 41% of participants due to increase in Coordination teams completed the demand inaugural 2019 Participant Satisfaction Survey.

75 
Participants accessed the Specialist Psychiatry Clinic

70+ 
Participants received Support Coordination services

60+ 
Participants received Behaviour Support services



Section 3

People & Culture



People & Culture

*“... the year has been a roller coaster of unpredictability...
the People and Culture team has continued to seek opportunities
which improve the quality and experience of staff...”*

When reflecting on the past 12 months, it is very easy to get caught up in the local, national and global challenges faced since early 2020 with bushfires and COVID-19, to the exclusion of many other important areas. These events have tested the resilience of so many and it has been difficult to think of what life was like beforehand and what achievements were made.

Yet, despite these challenges, this year has highlighted the many who continue to work in ways which reflect Mercy Connect's Values every day. The 'new look' Values were launched on 30 August 2019 and the accompanying Values statements and imagery were developed in consultation with staff. Each team also created their own behavioural statements to reinforce expectations of staff behaviours at work.

To fully embed the Values and associated behaviour and performance expectations, the Senior Leadership Team are responsible for consistently promoting a stronger team culture within the organisation. Feedback from our 2019 Employee Satisfaction Survey also highlighted that our teams believe that they would benefit from more consistent and trustworthy leaders. Subsequently, our Transformational Leadership Program was launched with the intention to improve the capability of the leadership group and provide better support to our respective teams, particularly through times of change.

And change we have had. We commenced a review of our rostering practices and after completing initial consultation with all staff, the review was put on hold due to the need to urgently respond to COVID-19 infection control needs.

This also required new and innovative ways to deliver training programs and induct new staff which has served to enhance the training experience for all. Mercy Connect's Learning and Development Manager developed a

comprehensive induction program with proven success and staff retention.

While this year has been an unpredictable roller coaster, I am proud to say that collectively the People and Culture Team has continued to seek opportunities which improve the quality and experience of staff while at work to keep them safe, happy and deliver the best possible outcomes for the people we serve.



Jessie Arney
Executive Leader
People & Culture

People & Culture cont.

Key highlights

- ▶ Relaunch of Mercy Connect Values.
- ▶ Development and Implementation of Mercy Connect's Transformational Leadership Program.
- ▶ WHS Committee review and support.
- ▶ Development of the Marketing and Communications Strategy.
- ▶ Commencement of rostering review to better meet the needs of participants and staff.
- ▶ Launch of the Whistleblower Policy and hotline.
- ▶ Positive response from staff to ongoing changes to COVID-19.

252

Employees



2,600+

Hours of training completed across all locations



73%



Satisfaction in Annual Employee Satisfaction Survey



Work, Health, Safety & Wellbeing

The ongoing investment in safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of our workforce relates to our goal of retaining and attracting quality staff to grow our workforce. As we need to run a competitive and efficient business under the NDIS environment, it is imperative that we work to minimise unintentional injury.

Key Work, Health and Safety (WHS) strategies for the 2019-2020 year included:

- Aon was appointed to assist Mercy Connect to develop and implement WHS strategies to reduce the risk of injuries to staff through the development of a mature safety culture, return to work programs and strategic claims review.
- Mercy Connect's Employee Assistance Program provided a range of supports to staff including confidential counselling, critical incident response mediation and debriefing.
- Over 100 staff and participants in Albury attended the Together We Grow Safely expo in February which was around WHS in the workplace.
- Distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect staff and participants from smoke inhalation during the bushfires in early 2020.
- Purchase and distribution of PPE and training of staff and participants in hygiene and infection control in response to COVID-19.
- Test and Tag program established across all sites.

85 
Staff injuries

5,700+ 
PPE distributed all locations

13.66% 
Employees utilised the
Employee Assistance Program

Section 4

Business & Finance



Business & Finance

“... we have invested in developing Information and Communication Technology maturity... to stabilise the technical and operating environment and to support growth and innovation”.

We are continually evolving within the NDIS environment and have achieved a strong surplus result for the 2019-2020 financial year.

We continue to design and implement new innovations and process improvements to facilitate productivity and efficiency gains, both in terms of internal and external processes.

Further investment was made into analysis and investigations of digitisation strategies as part of our strategic goal alignment, including engagement of external specialists to assist.

Our strategic goal of transitioning our current systems into new and digitised systems has begun its journey with preliminary work being performed in readiness to find best practice solutions in the market and have implemented ready for the next financial year.

We have increased the quality and governance over our documentation to ensure legal compliance with relevant legislations and NDIS Terms of Business, including service agreement review and amendment with accessible, easy-english versions being developed to support participant understanding.

A governance and compliance review has been initiated over Client Funds Trust Management, to confirm we have implemented full financial controls that ensure our participant funds are being managed in a compliant manner.

Mercy Connect's capital budget has included investment into our Digital Strategy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) governance which will form a key part of increasing productivity and efficiencies across the organisation which will in turn enable our growth strategy and accurate business intelligence reporting for a valuable decision-making framework.

We have invested in developing ICT maturity, including recruitment of a new ICT Manager with an ICT Officer and Business Analyst to join the team to stabilise the technical and operating environment and to support growth and innovation.

A focus has and will continue to be on upgrading infrastructure, systems and asset replacement programs under a portfolio of projects and initiatives. The ICT Investment and Digitization Strategy is in alignment with Mercy Connect's strategic priority areas of Capability, Innovation and Growth.



Di Flashman
Executive Leader
Business & Finance

Business & Finance cont.

Key highlights

- ▶ Quality insurance review and market comparison.
- ▶ JobKeeper registration and eligibility to fund staff retention and future organisational viability and development.
- ▶ Budget process development and redesign.
- ▶ New process implementation to measure missions supports more transparently.
- ▶ Internal audit process developed for delivery of supports and funding compliance.
- ▶ Payroll processing transitioned to People & Culture Team to enable single source of governance and quality assurance.
- ▶ Registered additional properties under the SDA.

\$330k



Invested into property maintenance

12%



Increase in total net assets

35



Facilities either owned or leased by Mercy Connect



Publications & Reports

Mercy Connect Publications

- Dean T (2020) Fundamental Right to a Meaningful Life. Link Magazine – February Edition. 38-39pp.
- Mercy Connect (2019) Mercy Connect Disability Support Worker - Information Booklet. 20pp.
- Mercy Connect (2019) Capability Statement. 10pp.
- Mercy Connect (2019) Strategic Plan.
- Mercy Connect (2019) Family Newsletter - September.
- Mercy Connect (2019) Family Newsletter - December.
- Mercy Connect (2020) Family Newsletter - March.
- Mercy Connect (2020) Family Newsletter - June.
- Stass E (2019) Closing the Communication Gap: Identifying Needs Associated with Communication between Participant Stakeholders Centered around Day Program Activities. Research Paper. 21pp.
- Staas E, Cummins C (2019) Mercy Connect Participant Satisfaction Survey 2019. 190pp.
- Staas E, Cummins C (2019) Fact Sheet: Mercy Connect Participant Satisfaction Survey 2019.

External Publications

- Just Mercy (2020) Mercy Connect Participants of Quilting Gifts - April.
- Just Mercy (2020) Participants thrive with sudden changes at Mercy Connect - May.
- Just Mercy (2020) Governance Formation Offerings Go Digital - June.

Presentations

- Dean T (2019) Incorporating VR technologies into our social services environment. Presentation to Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW. 11 December.
- Dean T (2020) Presentation to Wangaratta Rural City Council, Victoria. 6 March.

Students

Charles Sturt University

Amanda Gibson and Olivia Kohlenberg – Speech Pathology.

Project 1: Enhance participant outcomes through improved communication profiles prepared for each person accessing our service.

Development of a standardized template and training for staff to improve the quality of communication information documented for each participant.

Outcome: Communication Profile Template and video training package.

Project 2: Improve participant outcomes through accurate preparation of texture modified diet and fluids.

Training package developed and provided for staff in relation to the preparation of texture modified diet and fluids to facilitate adherence to International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) guidelines.

Outcome: Testing Kits for all accommodation sites; Standardised Mealtime Management Plan template; training video.

Ellen Stass

Social Work (Masters) Professional Qualifying Placement.

Project: Needs analysis of communication processes between participants accessing Mercy Connect Day Program services and relevant stakeholders.

Stass E (2019) Closing the Communication Gap: Identifying Needs Associated with Communication between Participant Stakeholders Centered around Day Program Activities. Research Paper. 21pp.

Ellie Walsh & Jade McKinnon

4th Year Physiotherapy.

Project: Reduce manual handling injuries involving staff by developing a number of manual handling practice instructions, providing recommendations in relation to the manual handling policy, and developed resource folders for service outlets.

Outcomes:

- A manual handling brochure, manual handling poster manual handling stickers.
- Copy of manual handling policy manual handling practice instructions.

Wodonga Tafe

Aneque Ludbey – 2nd Year Diploma of Community Services.

Project: Placement undertaken for Disability Support Coordination.

Partnerships, Collaborations & Donations

FoodShare

We have developed the Mercy Meals program where participants and their support staff collect food items on a weekly basis, prepare, cook and package healthy meals in bulk, and deliver them to participants who live independently and receive Outreach support.

Rotary Club of Albury Foundation

The Rotary Club of Albury has generously provided a grant to support and collaborate with the Mercy Meals program, to develop healthy and nutritious meals and deliver them to people in need.

Carevan

A small group of participants with the Carevan Foundation meet to create delicious and nutritious meals from donated foods as part of the 'Cooking and Caring' program.

Albury Wodonga Animal Rescue

Participants have the opportunity to go to the rescue centre and spend time engaging with the animals waiting for adoption.

The Personnel Group

Six participants are employed under a supported wages program, managed by the Personnel Group.

Lids 4 Kids

Participants and employees collect lids from various locations, with a group of participants using their skills to sort through the lids by colour and size. Lids are donated to Lids 4 Kids who volunteer their time to create prosthetic limbs for children.

Line Dancing Program

Community members volunteer their time, weekly, to teach line dancing to a group of enthusiastic participants.

Mercy Place

Participants and their support staff visit residents at Mercy Place on a weekly basis to make a positive impact on the lives of the residents.

Wodonga TAFE

Thirteen participants enrolled into Certificate I Transition to Work, and Certificate I Transition to Employment.

Albury City Council

Albury City Council provide free access to the Recycling Centre to the participants who engage in the Ecco Crew. The Ecco Crew volunteers time by helping the community through cleaning up various public spaces.

Victory Lutheran College

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning students attend the Learning Centre on a weekly basis, one term a year, to undertake work placement requirements. They engage with participants by planning and implementing a range of interactive activities.

Walla Pool

Participants from Catherine's Corner are given free access when undertaking swimming as part of their fitness program.

Life Without Barriers

Life Without Barriers contract our Supported Wage participants to perform garden maintenance.

Albury Wodonga Health

Participants volunteer their time for Meals on Wheels, led by Albury Wodonga Health. The group deliver meals to the elderly in the Albury region, three days a week.

Wild Choir

External musicians and volunteers join our participants to make up a choir called the Wild Choir. The group practice often and perform at a range of events throughout the year. The Wild Choir were invited guests at Wodonga Cube celebrating the International Day of People with Disability.

Partnerships, Collaborations & Donations cont.

With thanks

- Albury Manor House
- BDO
- Carevan
- Commercial Club
- CPR Communications and Public Relations
- Credible ICT
- Dean Phelan
- Department of Rural Health
- Desley Sparks
- Donovan Leadership
- FoodShare
- Fraynetwork
- Hadar Homes
- Harwood Andrews
- Huntsman Recruiting
- IGA Springdale Heights
- Kathleen Carlyon and Keith Davies
- La Trobe University, John Richards Centre for Rural Aging Research
- Mercure Albury
- Michael Wedding
- MinterEllison
- Mitta Mitta Canoe Club
- Murray River Quilters
- Neural Networks
- PANDAID
- Regional Disability Advocacy Service
- Rotary Club of Albury
- Rotary Club of Wodonga
- Shiftworks
- Snap Printing
- Stephanie and Phil Berick
- Three Rivers University
- Tierney Property Group
- Valley General Hospital
- Whiskk
- Wirlinga Pony Club

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