



# Annual Report 2021 - 2022



# Acknowledgement of Country

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In the spirit of reconciliation, Mercy Connect acknowledges First Nations 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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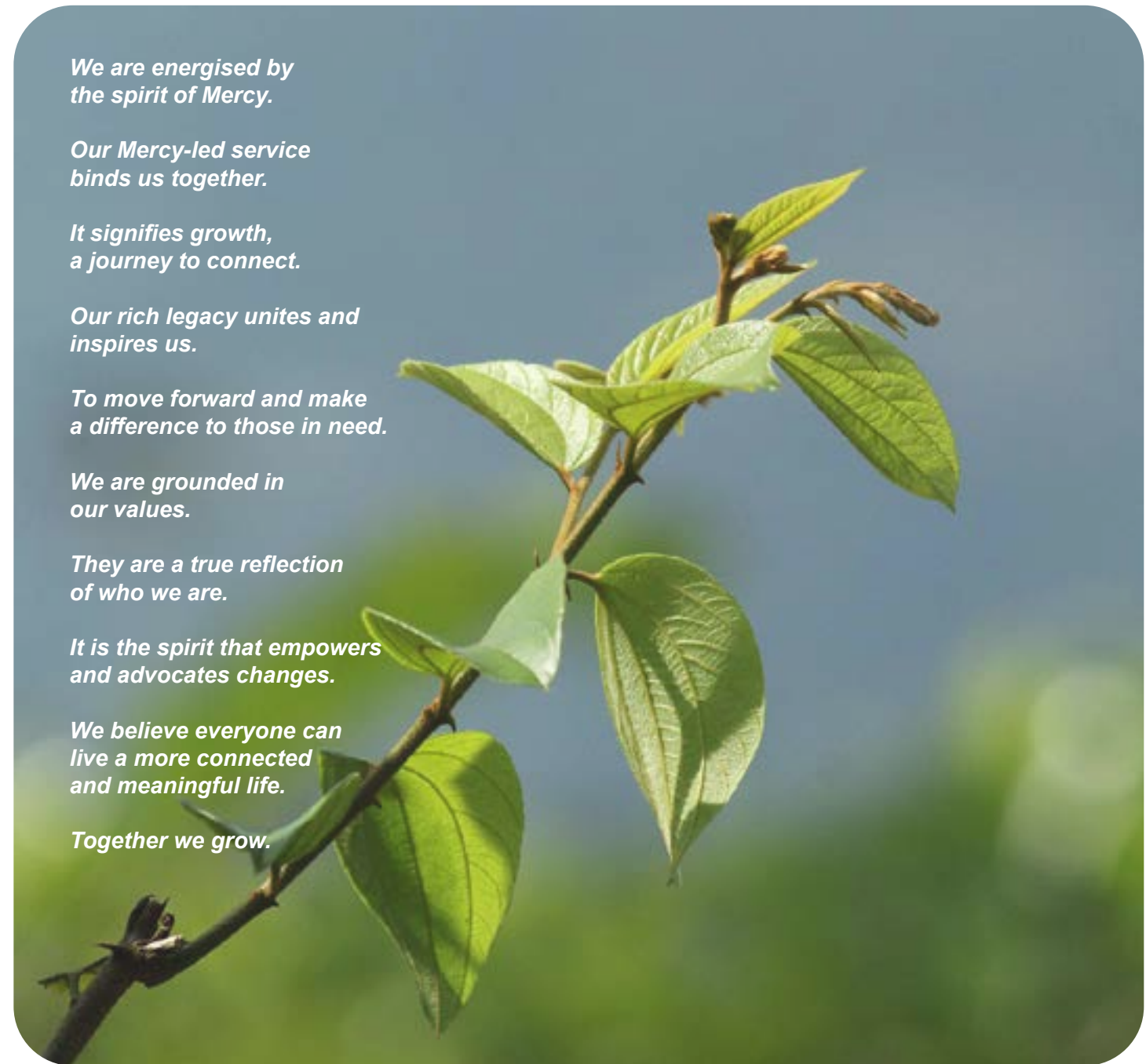
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# Our Purpose

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 binds 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 wellbeing 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.

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



## Compassion

*Supporting and listening with kindness and understanding.*



## Hospitality

*Welcoming each other with openness and a smile.*



## Respect

*Accepting and treating each other with integrity.*



## Innovation

*Seeing opportunities and creating new solutions.*



## Teamwork

*Working together with a shared view of success.*



## Accountability

*Choosing courage and taking ownership of our actions.*

# Our History

## 1868-1882

**1868** - The first Albury community of the Sisters of Mercy arrived in Albury, NSW.

**1869** - Land donated by John Frauenfelder to Albury Catholic Parish for the building of a Chapel and Boarding school at Newtown (Thurgoona, NSW).

**1880** - First internment at Newtown (now known as St. John's) Cemetery.

**1882** - Sr Mary Ignatius Murphy, Foundress of Sisters of Mercy in Albury together with Fr John Dunne, Parish Priest of Albury opened the Newtown school with 32 students.

Fifteen acres of land were further purchased, establishing a farm to provide for the needs of the Convent.



## 1885 - 1893

**1885** - Advertising commenced for girls to attend middle classes at the Newtown school.

Classes aimed to provide plain English education and training in household duties for children from struggling families.

**1887** - Fr Patrick Dunne appointed Parish Priest of Albury.

**1890** - Additional school rooms, dormitories and bedrooms for the Sisters were added to the existing building at Newtown.

**1893** - "Annual Fair Day", later known as "Band Sunday" commenced. This event was created in response to the Albury community, to provide funds to Newtown Convent. Albury City Band provided entertainment at this event for nearly 100 years.

Newtown Convent now known as "St John's Orphanage".

## 1901 - 1961

**1901** - Sister Mary Ignatius died at St John's Orphanage and is buried at St John's Cemetery. Over the years many sisters, priests, orphans and friends of St John's have been buried at the St John's Cemetery.

**1903** - Opening of St John's Orphanage new school with double storey extensions and renovations.

**1957** - The new St John's school opened replacing the original building from 1903.

**1961** - Opening of new chapel.



## 1978 - 1998

**1978** - St John's Orphanage closes with the Sisters of Mercy relocating to group homes in Lavington, NSW. The service was renamed "St John's Family Care Centre".

St John's, Thurgoona, renamed to "Guadalupe House" with the Mother of God Brothers providing support to men with physical and intellectual disabilities.

**1996** - St John's Family Care Centre renamed as "Mercy Centre", later incorporated as "Mercy Centre Lavington Inc". Support services expanded to include accommodation and Day Programs to children and adults with disabilities and psychiatric illnesses.

**1998** - Mercy Centre opens two new locations in Lavington, NSW:

- Corporate offices at Kambora Court.
- Catherine's Corner Day Program Centre Urana Road.

## 2002 - 2011

**2002** - Mercy Centre opens new service in Orange, NSW.

**2007 to 2009** - Mercy Centre provided a range of services in Coffs Harbour, Narrabri, Armidale, Rutherford, Tamworth and Moree.

**2010** - Sisters of Mercy repurchased Guadalupe House at Thurgoona from Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

Restructuring and refurbishing of the building occurred.

The building was renamed "Anne's House", in honour of Sr Ignatius (Frances Anne) Murphy.

**2011** - Mercy Centre Lavington Corporate Offices relocate to Anne's House, Thurgoona, NSW.

Official blessing and opening of Anne's House.



## 2016 - 2022

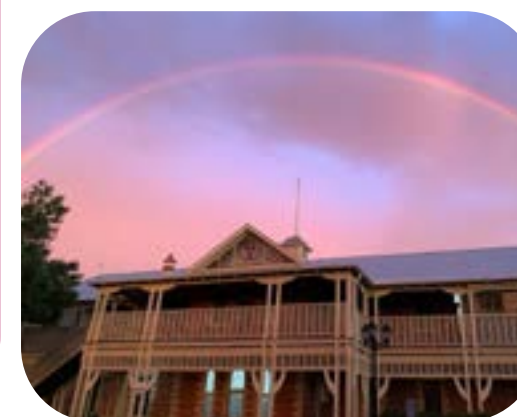
**2016** - Mercy Centre Lavington Inc. renamed as "Mercy Connect Limited" with rebranding to reflect our core role in supporting individuals to lead meaningful lives in their communities.

Mercy Connect relinquished services in Tamworth and Coffs Harbour to focus on the North-East and Central West regions.

**2020** - Opening of Community Garden, St John's, Thurgoona, NSW.

**2021** - Mercy Ministry Companions officially take on the roles and responsibilities performed by the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISM PNG).

**2022** - Opening of Waratah Place (new accommodation) and Acacia House (previously known as the Learning Centre), Lavington, NSW.



# Strategic Plan

As a Christian organisation, in the Catholic tradition, and underpinned and driven by the Mercy ethos, Mercy Connect will develop and drive the organisation in 2021 – 2023 through the following Strategic Priority Areas:

- Capability
- Innovation
- Growth

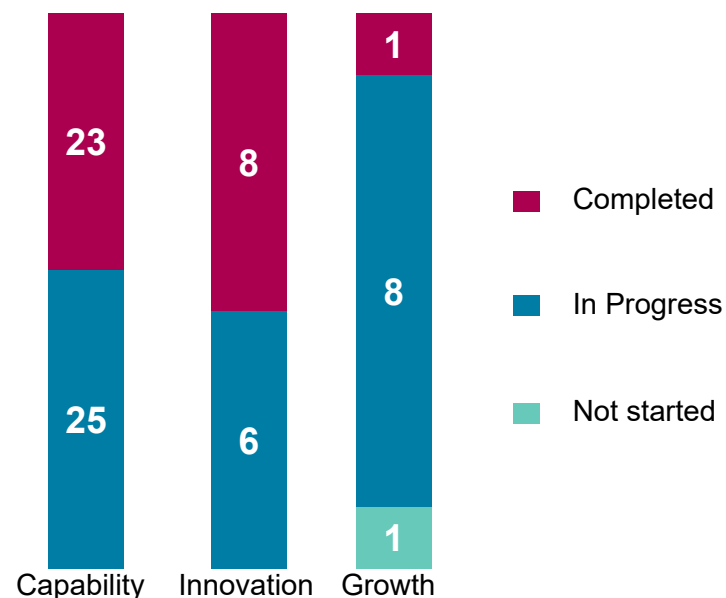
## Strategic Priorities

Mercy Connect has a long history of supporting those with disability, including mental illness and other co-morbidities. A diverse range of services are offered within the broader Albury-Wodonga and Central Western regions, to meet existing and emerging needs.

We operate in a dynamic, evolving and rapidly changing regulatory environment that is largely funded by a consumer-led model. This is an everyday experience for service providers. Responding to participant wants and needs has implications for service planning and personnel recruitment and development. In addition, technical advancements and digital developments calls for greater investment in these technologies.

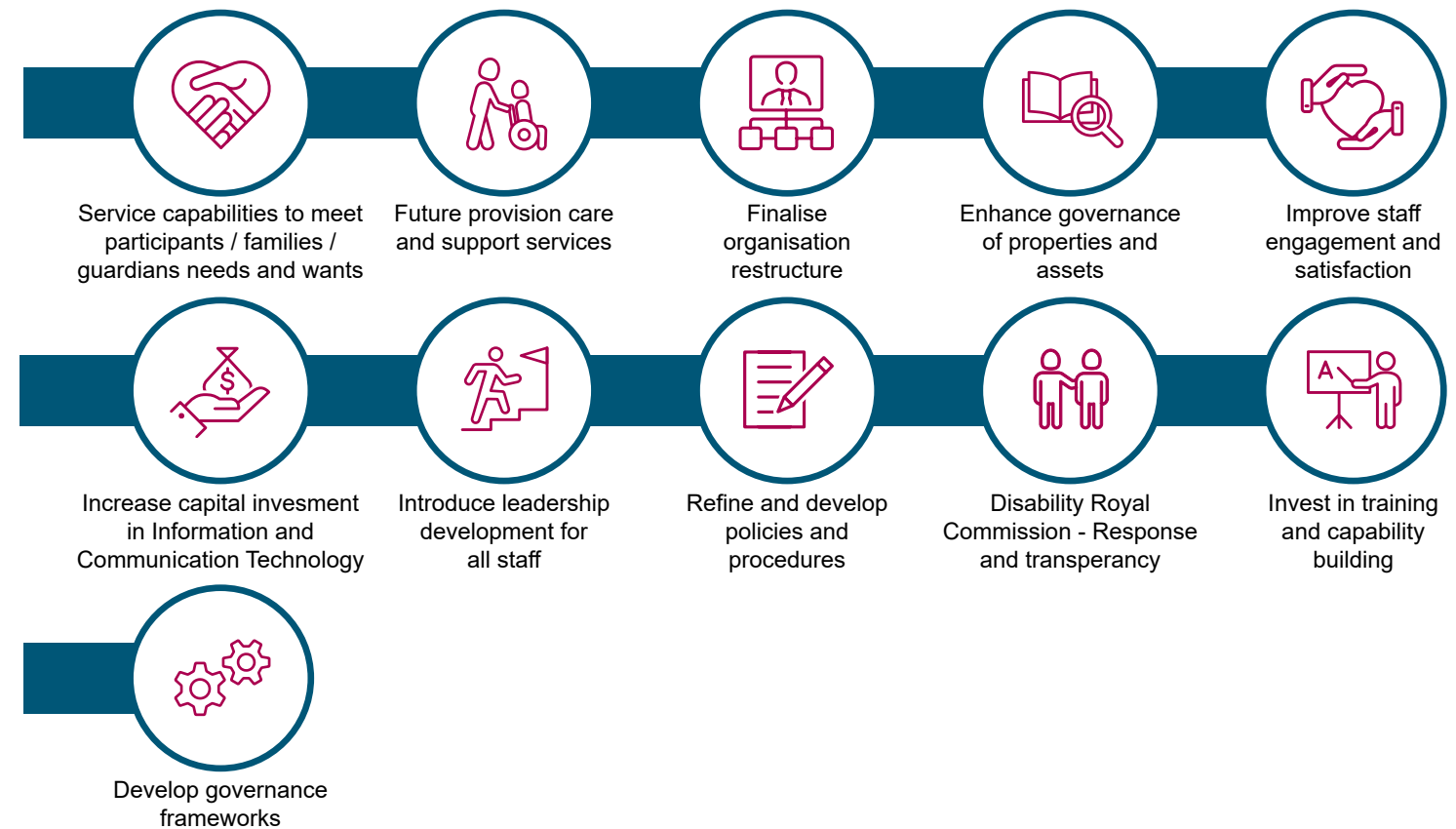
Demographic and social changes are part of our everyday world. These influences are monitored carefully and consequently, planning and service delivery models are altered continuously and incrementally as changes are identified.

We are past the midway point of the Mercy Connect Strategic Plan for 2021 - 2023. The Strategic Plan outlines how the organisation will progress and evolve. In the past year a significant number of strategic priorities have been achieved, with many more in progress.



*“You should remember that not to advance is to go back.”*  
Catherine McAuley

# Capability



## KPIs met in 2021/22

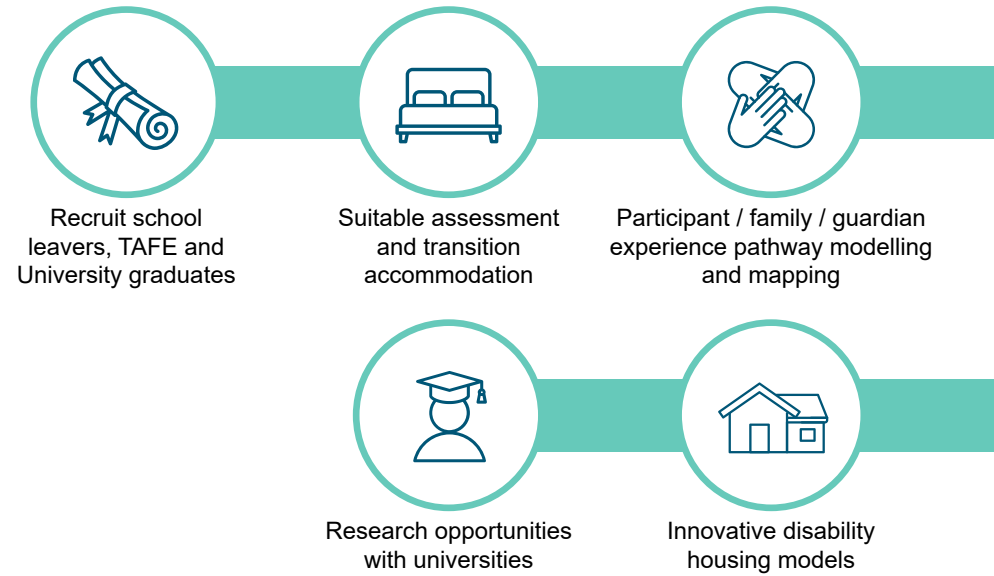
- Introduction of procurement procedures and processes.
- Increased grant funding received, and alternate income sources.
- Annual Staff survey reported increased overall Staff Satisfaction results.
- Improved delivery of Community Inclusion / Day Programs
- 100% of property maintenance and capital works activities appropriately project managed.

### Professional Development Opportunities

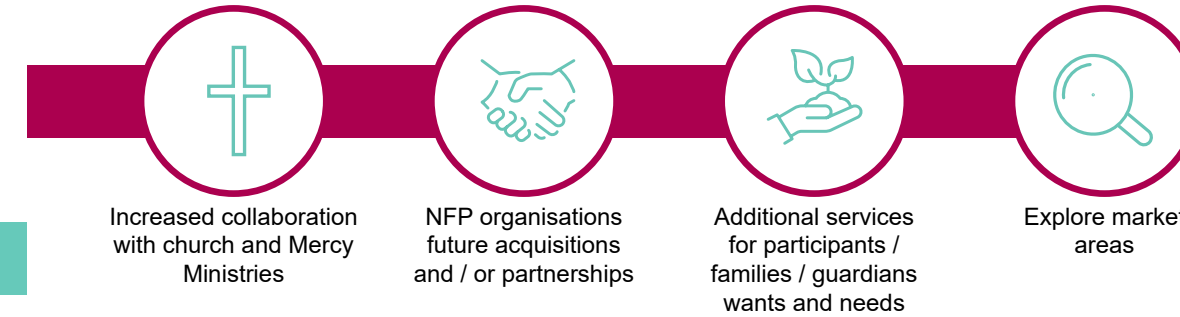
Mercy Connect continues to promote and provide all staff with professional development opportunities. Our dedicated Learning and Development Team has developed a range of programs, in collaboration with Registered Training Organisations.

Core and specialised training is specifically designed and delivered to our frontline staff. In addition to core skills development, Mercy Connect has supported over 55 staff to complete a Certificate IV qualification, including Leadership & Management, and / or Business Studies and Disability. These numbers contribute to nearly 25% of Mercy Connect staff enrolled in or having completed a qualification of their choosing.

# Innovation



# Growth



## KPIs met in 2021/22

- Delivery of two purpose built housing sites; Waratah Place and Acacia House using an innovative community housing model.
- Delivery of research projects from student placements and collaborations.
- Supported introduction of sedation pilot program delivered by Albury-Wodonga Health for people with Disability.
- Incorporation of best practice, innovation and research into participant service outcomes.
- Development of Community Inclusion Facility plans for St John's Campus, Thurgoona NSW.

## Research Findings

Mercy Connect continues to research and explore innovative methods and practices to support and care for its participants. The innovative design of 'IMercyVE' sees increased accessibility for flexible training for the health workforce in rural, regional and remote areas.

Through our commitment and collaborations, Mercy Connect is publishing the research findings from 'IMercyVE' in well-respected journals and the findings were presented at three conferences: the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability Conference (Inclusive Participant Satisfaction Survey); Allied Health, the Nursing and Midwifery Symposium & Rural and the Remote Health Conference (Partners in Health; Innovative Student Service-Learning Placements).

Mercy Connect is proud of the opportunities to undertake research and explore innovative alternatives of its practices for the benefit of participants. It is equally important to share this ground-breaking knowledge with practitioners and other organisations for the benefit of their participants.

## KPIs met in 2021/22

- Introduction of Health Passports for all participants.
- Hosted first virtually delivered Psychiatry Clinic.
- Completion of students' studies in falls prevention, manual handling and communication tools.
- Development of specific core skills training for teams.
- Year-on-year increase in number of participants being supported.

## Henty Respite

Mercy Connect and the Henty Respite Trust signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to deliver and manage Avondale Place, a short-stay respite home in Henty NSW. Avondale Place will offer families and carers in the Greater Hume and Lockhart Shires and their surrounds, respite care for loved ones with a disability or older people who require care and assistance.

Mercy Connect welcomes the new partnership and the opportunity to provide essential respite services. With construction underway, the home will benefit people across the region and will replace previous long-distance travel to access such support.

Avondale Place has been carefully designed to offer peace and tranquility and a sense of belonging. The innovative design will meet the latest guidelines for respite and disability care, as well as meeting sustainability and energy efficiency goals.

## Chair Report



Like many organisations, Mercy Connect has faced several challenges across the last year, including; COVID-19 impacts, government regulations and changeover, reduced economic growth and staff restructures. We remained committed to support the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with a Disability, and welcomed the final report: *'Public Hearing 12: The experiences of people with disability, in the context of the Australian Government's approach to the COVID-19 vaccine rollout'*. Mercy Connect ensured that all staff became fully vaccinated, trained and suitably equipped to provide high-class care to keep our participants safe.

Our governance structure underwent a change, with the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea creating a new Ministerial Public Juridic Person ('MPJP') named Mercy Ministry Companions ('MMC'). Transformation continues so as to deliver Mercy-led support to each ministry within MMC, in the areas of health and aged care, education and community services.

On behalf of management, staff, participants, families, and guardians, I express my appreciation to the previous Board members, who have served and encouraged Mercy Connect's mission for many years. Their dedication, support and confidence has guided and led Mercy Connect to become the organisation that it is today.

Mercy Connect delivered positive outcomes from its Strategic Plan. Our Foundress, the Venerable Catherine McAuley quoted *"The simplest and most practical lesson I know is to resolve to be good today, but better tomorrow"*. Mercy Connect, through leadership, professional development, innovative research, best practice and technological advancements, has effectively demonstrated that one cannot progress and achieve success without change.

We were proud to open Waratah Place, Lavington, a purpose designed and built accommodation based on feedback received from people living with disability. The facility offers further choice and control to meet housing needs. Three more major developments for the Albury-Wodonga and Central West regions are underway.

Increased engagement with local providers and community groups reflects our shared vision. Their generosity and support shows they care about, and are invested in participant wellbeing. Provision of a commercial kitchen to prepare meals for those in need; improved community gardens and social clubs which provide fulfilment and pride, reflects the compassion that is shown to our participants.

The successes, achievements and advancements across the year were not possible without the efforts of our committed and dedicated staff. It is with great pride that Mercy Connect was recognised with three major awards: Murray Riverina Outstanding Community Organisation, Albury-Wodonga Business Awards for the categories of Excellence in Health, Education and Disability and Outstanding Not for Profit Community Organisation. These awards provide clear affirmation of how Mercy Connect responds to local need, in meaningful ways, despite ongoing adversity.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Trent Dean, the Executive Team and all staff and volunteers who collectively have supported our organisation throughout these challenging times. Together we will continue to grow and keep discovering how to change for a better tomorrow.

Together we grow.

**Matthew Clancy**  
Chair

## Chief Executive Officer Report



In 1841, the Venerable Catherine McAuley was buried in the convent garden at Baggot Street shortly after her death, making it holy and sacred ground. In 2019, just 25 years after the restoration of the Convent of Mercy, the sacred garden was renewed and rededicated, with blessings and celebrations to mark the 192nd anniversary of the House of Mercy opening. During both periods of restoration work, the sacred garden was filled with heavy machinery, building materials, and labourers shouting instructions over the sound of relentless construction noise. However, in the midst of these times of significant transformation, the grave of Catherine McAuley stood firmly in place; resolute yet peaceful and calm.

A clear comparison can be drawn from the imagery that this anecdote evokes and the current position, and future direction, of Mercy Connect. Despite the seemingly endless 'noise' of COVID-19 cases and outbreaks, the continuing war in the Ukraine, increased cost of living pressures and inflation, an uncertain political landscape, reduced NDIS supports and funding, and increased staffing and participant challenges, our Mercy Connect family has continued its journey of revitalisation. In the face of ongoing transformation and change, Mercy Connect has remained steadfast and resilient whilst ensuring the provision of compassionate and Mercy-inspired services.

There have been many positive outcomes achieved over the past twelve months by our participants and staff; many of which are proudly documented in this year's Annual Report. As such, I encourage everyone to spend some quality time reviewing, and reflecting upon, the wonderful stories and achievements contained herein.

Given our governance structures underwent a significant change late last year, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to past Mercy Connect Board members, and the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, who have supported Mercy Connect's mission over many years. Their dedication and commitment have guided and allowed Mercy Connect to become the organisation it is today. As we said farewell, we also warmly welcomed our new Mercy Community Services Australia Directors, and Mercy Ministry Companions Trustee Directors. We look forward to Mercy Connect continuing to flourish under the governance and support of these new entities.

I would also like to recognise and acknowledge our Executive / Management teams, dedicated staff and teams, volunteers, donors, external stakeholders and local businesses for their unwavering commitment to support those in need to live fulfilled lives. Their continued good work is greatly valued and appreciated.

Finally, let us never forget the good advice offered by our Foundress, Catherine McAuley, that "We should be shining lamps, giving light to all around us".

Together we grow.

**Trent Dean**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Governance - Our Board

1 July 2021 - 3 December 2021



Mercy Connect Limited



**Matthew Clancy**  
Chair  
2020 - current  
Director  
2017 - current



**Carmel Daley rsm**  
Director  
2020 - December 2021



**Sr Lorraine Phelan rsm**  
Director  
2018 - December 2021



**Judith Doughty**  
Director  
2017 - December 2021



**Marguerite Ryan**  
Deputy Chair  
2020 - current  
Director  
2017 - December 2021

3 December 2021 - Present



Mercy Community Services Australia Limited



**Matthew Clancy**  
Chair



**Brian Keane**



**Bridgid Connors**



**Elizabeth Moloney rsm**



**Ella McPherson**



**Kerry Brettell**



**Louise Reeves rsj**



**Marcelle Mogg**



**Mark O'Connor**



**Michelle Cotter**



**Shoba Martin**

# Organisational Chart - Our Team



Mercy Community Services Australia Limited

Mercy Connect Executive Team



**Jessie Arney**  
Executive Leader  
People & Communications



**Caroline Cummins**  
Executive Leader  
Clinical Services



**Trent Dean**  
Chief Executive  
Officer



**Felicity Lawes**  
Executive Leader  
Operations



**Tom Krause**  
Chief Financial  
Officer

People & Culture

Behaviour Support

Accommodation

Finance

Learning & Development

Support Coordination

Community Inclusion

Information & Technology

Marketing & Communications

Quality & Risk

Participant Welfare

Assets & Property Maintenance

Work Health & Safety

Clinical Risk & Safeguarding



## Communication & Engagement



**17**  
Newsletters



**79**  
Communiques



**21**  
Newspaper  
articles



**9**  
Television &  
Radio stories



**11**  
Hosted Events



**28,510**  
Total reach via  
social media



**62,450**  
Unique website  
page views



**29,618**  
Unique website  
users

## Participant artwork to feature in art exhibition

The Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA) has selected Mercy Connect to take part in the 2023 Open Call program.

The Open Call Program presents the work of artists from the Albury-Wodonga region, providing them with opportunities for artistic growth and professional development.

The exhibition will showcase the artwork created by our participants. Artwork will depict how their art depicts how they see living in the region, their favourite locations and include pros and cons of Albury Wodonga border life whilst living with disabilities.

Members of the art group creatively express themselves by participating in a variety of art activities which use a range of mediums, including sculpture, acrylic, water paint and collages.

Mercy Connect will continue to work collaboratively with MAMA to provide the Albury-Wodonga community with the opportunity to have exposure to a talent base that has previously and traditionally not had an opportunity to showcase their talent to a mainstream audience.

Everyone involved in this project is excited about the opportunity to create and publicly display their pieces.

In the meantime, the artists will spend time preparing for the exhibition by working on new pieces and will spend time on their chosen themes.



## Participant Welfare Officer



Participant welfare is at the heart of all we do. For this reason, the Participant Welfare Officer role was established twelve months ago to monitor the quality of our services from a participant's perspective and to undertake activities to improve the welfare and wellbeing of participants in our service.

Lee O'Connor has worked with Mercy Connect for 25 years and this role has provided her the pleasure and privilege of getting to know many more of our participants as she works alongside staff to improve the quality of life of those in our services.

In addition to conducting a significant number of environmental home audits and health file reviews,

a wide range of social activities were organised to support participants to expand their social networks and experiences. Events this year included: a wood fire pizza event, Christmas party with Santa, numerous movie nights, weekly AFL Club gatherings, restaurant nights, and a visit to the Wizard of Oz production.

While it has been a full year, we expect the coming year will be even bigger. Planning is already under way for a range of exciting opportunities and projects to improve the welfare and wellbeing of participants to live full and meaningful lives.



20

Organised social events



225

Participants engaged in social events throughout the year



10

Environmental audits conducted with follow up visits.



### Driving towards independence

Obtaining a learner's permit for some might be easy and just a norm that one does when of age. But for some people it means much more. Not being able to drive can be a significant barrier to accessing the community and being involved in activities of daily life, which can lead to isolation and disconnection.

Through support and perseverance, two participants at Mercy Connect have been successful in achieving their goal of obtaining their learner's permit. With the generous support of Baker Motors Albury, both participants are now able to take regular driving lessons under the instruction of Milton from Hillside Learner Driver Tutoring.

Mercy Connect is extremely proud of their individual achievements and looks forward to seeing them both achieve their next milestone of obtaining their provisional licence.

## Volunteering & Grants at Mercy Connect

Participants continue to enjoy the many volunteer programs that recommenced earlier in the year. These include the Carevan, Mercy Meals and Meals on Wheels groups which remain popular as ever. Participants and staff love the concept of giving to others, and each of these wonderful programs provide these opportunities, not only to give back, but also to connect with members of the community.

The Football Club has also continued to thrive thanks to the good work of staff and volunteers. A generous donation from the Border Trust enabled the purchase of a Smart TV so that live games can be watched.

Donations from Dahlsens Albury provided the opportunity for the working group to replenish and build additional garden beds in the Community Garden.

The Rotary Club of Albury generously donated \$60,000 which has allowed us to build a brand new commercial kitchen at the St John's Campus. They also volunteered their time with some hard-working members from the Thurgoona Men's Shed to demolish our old kitchen. Due to this generosity we will see an expansion of volunteer programs.

Marg Pont, a digital trainer at Wodonga TAFE, volunteers two days a week to provide assistance to our Community Inclusion participants, teaching them new technology skills.

Mercy Connect would like to acknowledge the generosity from many local groups who have kindly provided their time and monetary donations to assist its community programs.



# Work Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Over the past year, excellent progress has been made into the development of a safety culture at Mercy Connect. The newly formed WHS Committee, consisting of representatives from each location, has enabled opportunities for constructive discussions and decisions to be made in relation to the provision of safe workplace environments.

Overall, the number of staff injuries reduced by 33% compared to the same period the year before. The number of Workers Compensation claims reduced by 61%.

Reasons for the decline in injuries can be attributed to:

- Restructure of the frontline model to create teams with increased supervision and training specific to their needs.
- Clearly assigning WHS roles and responsibilities and providing relevant training (Fire Wardens, Officers, WHS Committee Members, Crisis Management Team).
- Updating and implementing WHS policies, guidelines and other relevant documentation.

Other initiatives implemented during the year include:

- Publication of the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy (in September 2021), ahead of the mandatory requirements under the 'Public Health (COVID-19 Care Services) Order 2021 [NSW] (PHO) made under the Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)'.
- Crisis Management and Communication Plans activated in January 2022 due to increasing COVID-19 cases in the region, impacting participants, staff and overall operational delivery of services.

Staff were further supported by:

- Provision of PPE and Rapid Antigen Test kits.
- Mandatory face masks in all settings (including corporate offices).
- Access to on-site vaccinations in conjunction with local health agencies.
- Mercy Connect's Employee Assistance Program.
- Successful transition of Mercy Connect's Workers Compensation Policy to an alternate provider.

**97%**  
Staff completion of  
Foundations of WHS  
Training modules



**93%**  
Feel safe as they go  
about their work

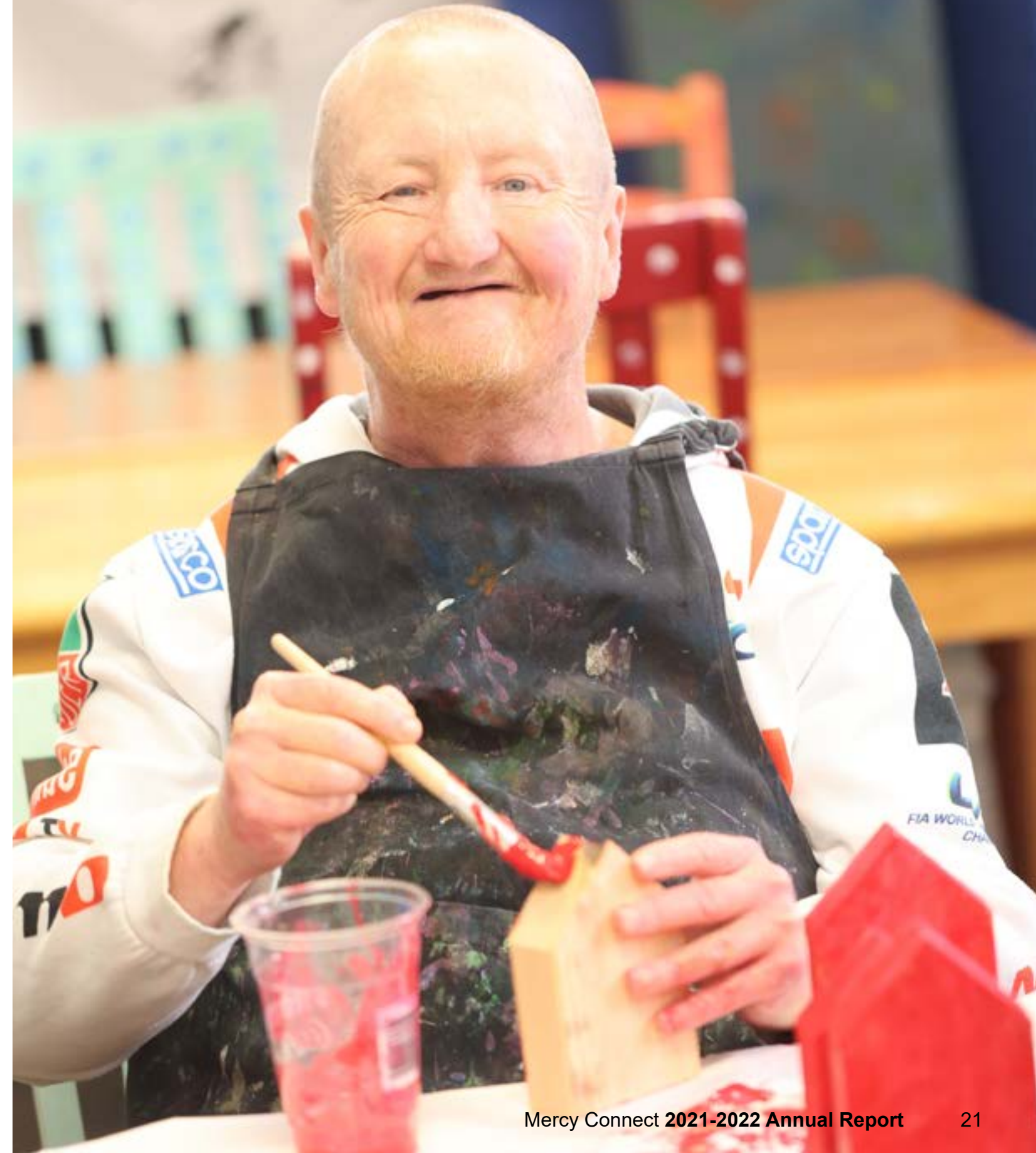


**42,000**  
PPE units distributed  
across all locations



Injuries & Workers Compensation Claims	2021 - 22	2020 - 21
Register of Injuries	41	61
Workers Compensation Claims	9	23

# Operations



# Operations



Over the 2021 - 2022 period, there continued to be a range of challenges thanks to the global pandemic. During these challenging times, it was affirming to witness staff, participants and families continuing to live our values and support each other.

Mercy Connect developed a strong pandemic response plan which enabled our participants and staff to continue their daily lives as safely as possible. In many cases our team simply got on with the job and found creative ways to continue to engage and support residents.

Mercy Connect was able to provide efficient and effective COVID-19 responses including:

- COVID-19 vaccination clinics onsite at St John's.
- PPE training for all staff with a tailored resource manual of standard protocols.
- Sourcing Rapid Antigen Tests for participants and staff.
- Direct access to the COVID-19 response team at Albury Wodonga Health.
- Engaging the Disability Liaison officer for Central West and Albury Wodonga Health.
- Working with Murrumbidgee Health to assess worksite practices for improvement.
- Partnering with Albury Wodonga Health to trial the sedation pathway offering a stress-free vaccination option for participants.
- Using Microsoft TEAMS to communicate with each other regularly.

The Operations Team has had a key focus on quality improvement. This has seen several new initiatives rolled out to improve the management of health and wellbeing for all residents.

There has been an increased focus on systems improvement, ensuring that the organisation has timely, accurate and detailed information, which enables the dedicated support teams to spend as much time as possible providing hands-on supports.

Rostering has remained a significant challenge for the organisation, with frequent staff shortages caused by COVID-19 and other illnesses. In 2021, the organisation converted to a new staffing structure which has significantly assisted in being able to safely continue to manage services and continue to provide support at all times. With the growth in services we have welcomed new Team Leaders and Assistant Team Leaders to our team with many of our high performing Assistant Team Leaders being promoted to a Team Leader role when the opportunity has arisen. The structure provides consistency of support for participants and the opportunity for growth and development for our support team.

Due to the success of the Albury structure change, the Central West Team has recently aligned its structure and rosters.

Two new Supported Independent Living homes opened in Lavington, NSW. Acacia House welcomed two new residents and Waratah Place welcomed eight new residents. Everyone has settled incredibly well with the new homes looking lovely with everyone's personal touches. A new resident at Sioux Court was also welcomed which has been a lovely addition to the team.

Further, there were a number of significant renovations in some of the older properties. Thank you to all residents, staff and families who remained patient during the renovation work.

The Community Services Team has continued to provide a high level of support to a range of participants across the community. They have continued to think creatively and ensure that regardless of the situation, programs continued to engage and increase their community inclusion programs. The team created a range of virtual connections and provided day programs at home supports.

**Felicity Lawes**  
Executive Leader Operations

## Computer Whizzes

In this modern world, where most people use IT and the internet for daily activities, communications and social interactions, it is important that Mercy Connect supports participants to gain access, understanding and skills in technology.

With the generous support and donation from Ideas in Tumut, our Community Inclusion Team has created a new program, to improve participants' digital and numerical literacy and computer skills.

This program involves a very special volunteer, Marg Pont, digital trainer at Wodonga TAFE, who volunteers two days a week to provide assistance to the participants to acquire new skills.

*"They have amazed me with their level of participation"* - Marg Pont.

Participants have loved engaging with the new technology and eagerly look forward to the classes, where opportunities for development, progression and creativity are endless.

*"This is the first time I have used computers, and I love it!"* - Participant.



**13**  
New vehicles purchased



**73**  
Participants accessing Community Inclusion services



**59**  
SIL or Accommodation Participants

# Clinical

# Services

## Clinical Services



Together we grow! What an important acknowledgement to reflect on at this time of the year. Without growth and progress, it is difficult to promote improvement and achieve exceptional outcomes for the people that Mercy Connect serves.

The Clinical Services teams are committed to innovation and collaboration and improving the lives of Mercy Connect's participants. This year the team's focus has been to evaluate, improve and progress the services that the organisation delivers. Furthermore, through partnerships with local universities, the team is developing innovative ways to ensure the health and wellbeing of participants are supported through evidence-based practices and processes.

As part of this commitment, the Quality and Safeguarding team continues to develop, grow and support a robust clinical governance framework to protect the human rights, health and wellbeing of all participants. This year has been a particularly busy one for the team, with a full review of the Quality Management and Risk Frameworks having been completed, in addition to supporting the organisation through two external audits.

Due to the significant growth in referrals, Mercy Connect has expanded its Behaviour Support team from three to six members. The team now comprises six practitioners with a mix of Advanced, Proficient and Core skill sets. Due to this growth in the team, a new team leader position was introduced which is an exciting and much welcomed addition to the team.

Mercy Connect understands how important it is to listen to participants to inform and ensure the ongoing development of its services. One way that the organisation listens is through the annual participant and family satisfaction survey.

To ensure that as many participants as possible can have a say, our accessible survey framework utilises a range of visual communication tools to promote understanding and provide a range of ways for participants to have their views recorded, even those with little or no speech. This year's survey saw the greatest number of responses so far with 43% of participants directly providing their thoughts about the services that they receive from Mercy Connect.

To enable participants to progress and achieve their goals, the Coordination of Supports team has focused on strengthening participants' abilities to coordinate, implement supports and participate more fully in the community. The Support Coordinators aim to empower participants to increase their independence and build their confidence in the community as they work towards their goals. To do this, the team has worked hard to keep up with the changes affecting participants and their NDIS plans, as well as improving processes to ensure that the services provided are effective and of high quality so as to maximise participant outcomes.

With the ongoing challenges and uncertainty of COVID-19, this year has seen the introduction of telehealth to enable ongoing access to Mercy Connect's specialist psychiatry clinics. These two-day clinics operate quarterly and provide a vital service to support individuals in the community who require specialist mental health assessment and intervention. These clinics continue to be well attended by participants who are directly supported by Mercy Connect, in addition to community members who are external to our service.

**Caroline Cummins**  
Executive Leader Clinical Services

# Clinical Services

## Support Coordination guiding the way

With support from an experienced Support Coordinator, Simon has been able to turn his life around with access to the right supports.

When Simon first started working with the Support Coordinator, he was reluctant to engage with services and was not confident in the community. Now, due to the person-centred supports he has been connected with, Simon enthusiastically engages with services, manages his own bank account, is saving for a holiday, attends the local gym and has access to an interpreter to support him when needed.

Simon has recently been able to go on a short break to visit Comicon and he attends Auslan signed movies. His staff have reported that Simon appears to be much happier since accessing Coordination of Supports which has helped him to connect with his community and achieve his goals.



**79**  
Participants accessed Mercy Connect's Specialist Psychiatric services



**81**  
Participants received behaviour support services



**9/10**  
Families would recommend Mercy Connect services

# People and

# Communications



# People & Communications



Upon review of the past 12 months, it is really pleasing to see how many of the initiatives we commenced during 2020-2021, have come to fruition. The impact of COVID-19 continues to be ever-present and in spite of this, the commitment of staff to deliver outstanding services and supports to Participants in our care, has been unwavering.

On the back of significant changes to frontline operations in Albury in 2021 (which were replicated in Orange in mid-2022) the creation of unified teams has led to greater consistency and increased quality of services provided to Mercy Connect participants. The new cluster model has enabled us to design and deliver training programs specific to the needs of staff and participants.

In addition to core skills training, last year, 27 staff enrolled in a Certificate IV in Leadership and Management; one in Certificate IV in Business Studies and 30 are enrolled to commence their Certificate IV in disability commencing in August 2022. These numbers contribute to nearly 25% of Mercy Connect staff enrolled in or having completed a qualification of their choosing.

Our revamped Marketing, Communications and Community Engagement team were kept extremely busy with targeted events and campaigns designed to increase our presence and brand in the community.

During the year we increased our print, radio, TV and social media coverage by with local media agencies taking an active interest in initiatives such as the development and opening of new homes in our regions. Internally, the launch of the Mercy Connect intranet has improved access to information needed by staff and our commitment to having fun was fulfilled with an earlier than usual annual dinner dance. Now known as "Dancing with our Stars," the event was once again held online with Albury DJ Steve Bowen providing the entertainment.

For the fourth year in a row our annual survey showed an improvement in employee satisfaction from 71% (in 2018-19) to 79% (in 2021-22). Throughout the past year we also rolled out six Values 'Pulse' Survey's which provided valuable staff feedback at various points throughout the year. The surveys also provided an opportunity for staff to recognise their peers by nominating colleagues and teams who demonstrate our values on a daily basis.

Lee O'Connor, Mercy Connect's Participant Welfare Coordinator was awarded with the annual Shining Lamp Award, having received an overwhelming number of nominations from her peers throughout the year.

Feedback gathered from staff surveys also enables us to prioritise initiatives to match the needs of our staff and reinforces our commitment to providing a safe and healthy work environment. To this end, this year Mercy Connect partnered with students from the Western Sydney University Online, providing them with an opportunity to design Human Resources and Marketing related projects related to their studies, and that meet a specific organisational need.

The focus of these projects has been the development of employee wellbeing and diversity and inclusion strategies, as well as strategic marketing campaigns. So, watch this space as these ideas are brought to life.

**Jessie Arney**  
Executive Leader People & Communications

## A Lasting Legacy

In September 2021, Mercy Connect established the Sister Scholastica Scholarship to pay tribute to the work and volunteerism of Sister Scholastica rsm and to recognise over 70 years of her faithful and Mercy-led service.

Each year, the recipient will be a female student from a school located within the regions in which Mercy Connect operates, and the student will receive \$1,000 as a contribution to their education.

Last year's scholarship recipient reported a positive impact that the scholarship made on her and her studies: Gavin Dykes, Principal at Xavier High School where the inaugural scholarship was awarded, stated that *"This scholarship has had an amazing impact on the student's ability to succeed at Xavier and move a step closer towards achieving her post school options"*.

As Saint Scholastica is the patron saint of education, this is a fitting way to recognise Sister Scholastica rsm and continue her legacy at Mercy Connect.



**79%**  
Satisfaction in Annual Employee Satisfaction Survey



**287**  
Number of employees



**6500+**  
Hours of training completed across all locations

# Business

# and Finance

## Business & Finance



2021 - 2022 was a challenging year due to issues that were similar to those experienced in the wider Community Services and Healthcare industry. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic interferences, mandated vaccinations and global conflicts causing unsettlement, all significantly contributed to significant resource and labor shortages, placing heightened pressure on the Australian economy and cost of living. More recently, the change in government has seen the importance and investment into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) restored with a promising outlook into the Scheme's future and success.

Mercy Connect reported a surplus for the financial year, demonstrating resilience and strong fiscal management, noting the external factor impacts absorbed throughout the year. Recent positive changes to the NDIS, including improvements to SIL and acknowledgement of previous years' shortfalls will assist Mercy Connect to maintain financial sustainability.

Midway through the financial year the Business and Finance Team successfully transitioned to a new cloud based Financial Reporting Solution. This has resulted in improved and more efficient systems, with greater stability, accessibility and governance controls in place. The biggest advantage, that has had a major impact across the organisation, is access to useful data and insights that are available as a self-serve functional tool which enables real-time fact-based decisions to be made.

The key strategic priorities of Capability, Innovation and Growth have continued to progress, with an increase in the digital resilience of Mercy Connect through the implementation of stable connections across all sites, a cloud-based telephone system, a connected intranet and improvement of server stability and recoveries.

Most significantly, the replacement of the Enterprise Application Platform will see a connected, accessible, cloud-based and state-of-the-art solution delivered across the organisation. The expected completion date is mid-2023.

Mercy Connect successfully transformed the previously known Learning Centre facility into two supported living spaces, which has been well received by both new residents. In order to meet the growing needs of the community, Mercy Connect also opened a state-of-the-art shared facility complex, 'Waratah Place' in Lavington, which includes five independent villas, two shared facilities, a commercial kitchen and social hub. While supporting those with disabilities to live fulfilled lives, these successful innovative projects enable Mercy Connect to continue to provide for and meet the needs of the community. In addition, Mercy Connect continues to respond to the community's need for affordable and appropriate accommodation. Similar projects to occur in 2022 / 2023 include: a shared living complex in Orange, a Transition House and Community Inclusion Facility at the St John's Campus, Thurgoona and multiple strategic partnerships that will further Mercy Connect's physical presence and ability to fulfil the needs of the communities where Mercy Connect operates.

**Tom Krause**  
**Chief Financial Officer**



## Business & Finance

### It's time to grow! Our Digital Transformation Journey

Mercy Connect has undergone a major digital transformation in the last year across the organisation. It is a well-known fact that value is driven by our customer experience. During the year the Digital Transformation Team introduced staff and participants to a new world of connectivity. The changes include the roll out of Microsoft Teams that provides secure, instant communication; development of an Intranet as a single source of information with access to policies and documents; and a new state of the art telephone system that has brought mobility to office staff, with a single number connecting to multiple devices.



**48**

Properties either owned or leased



**\$350K**

Spent on digital innovation uplift



**\$3.7M**

Investment into building suitable properties

## Partnerships, Collaborations & Donations

### With thanks

- Abbeyfield Australia
- Albury City Council
- Baker Motors
- Border Trust
- Bowen's Entertainment
- Boys to the Bush
- Bunnings (Albury, NSW)
- Carevan Foundation
- Carter & Co
- Commercial Club Albury
- CPR Communications and Public Relations
- Dahlsens Albury
- Dean Phelan (Uplift Centre)
- FoodShare
- Gail Kerrison
- Goods - 360
- Henty Respite Trust
- Huntsman Recruiting
- Ideas (Tumut)
- La Trobe University, John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research
- McGrath Builders
- Monumental Ice Creamery
- Murray Art Museum Albury
- Minter Ellison
- Neural Networks Consulting
- Online Education Services
- Peards Albury
- Premier Building & Construction
- Quest Wodonga
- Rotary Club of Albury
- Snap Printing
- The Personnel Group
- Three Rivers Department of Rural Health: Charles Sturt University
- Thurgoona Men's Shed
- Thurgoona Country Club
- Tierney Property Group
- Verto
- Western Sydney University Online
- Whiskk
- Wodonga TAFE

**Corporate Office**

30 Bottlebrush Street  
Thurgoona, NSW, 2640

**Central West**

10 Illamatta Way  
Orange, NSW, 2800

P: 02 6043 3500

E: [enquiries@mercyconnect.org.au](mailto:enquiries@mercyconnect.org.au)

W: [www.mercyconnect.org.au](http://www.mercyconnect.org.au)

ABN: 45 075 648 378

