



Annual Report 2022 - 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

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 and present.

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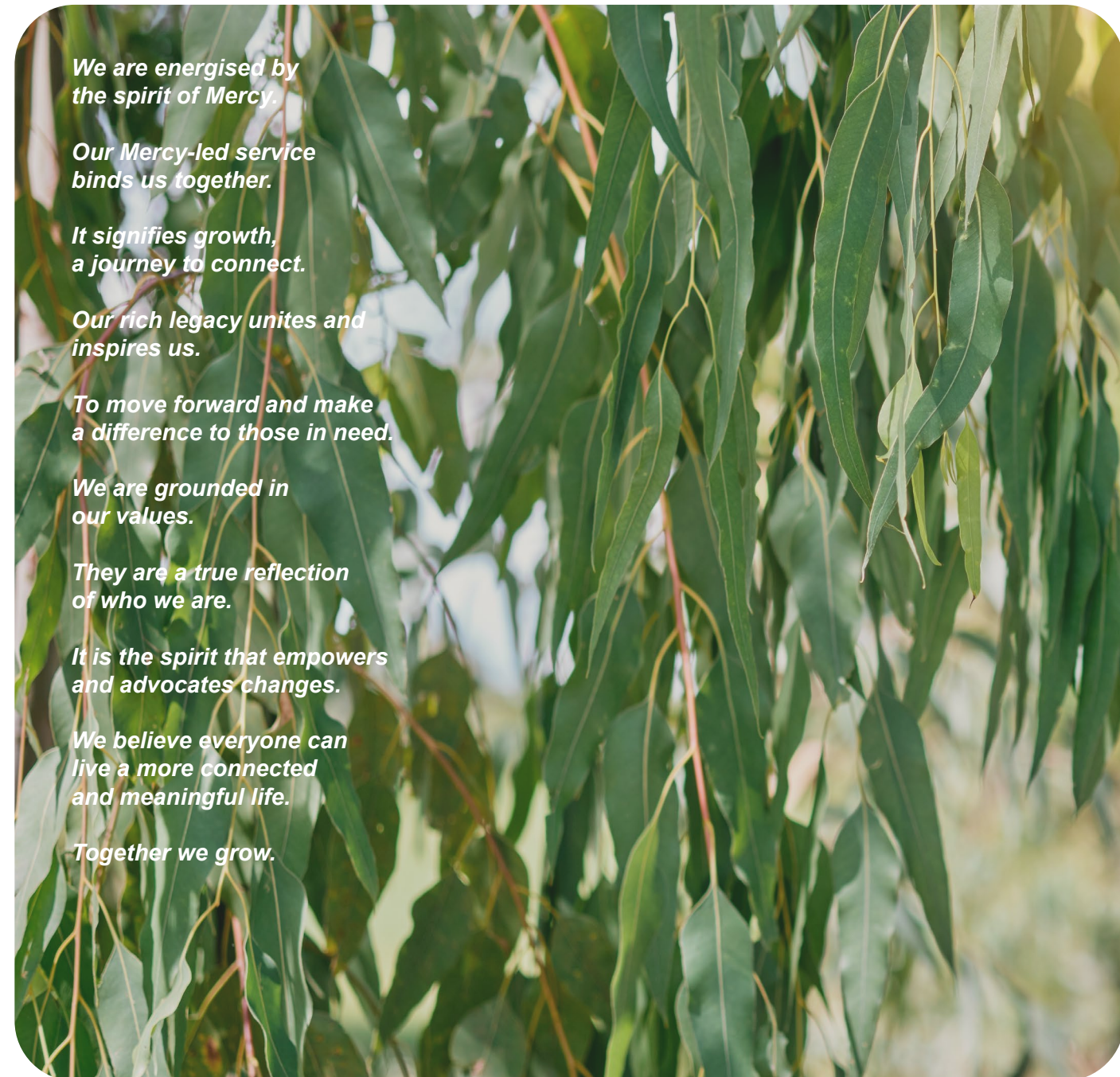
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Our Purpose

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 safely with a shared view of success.



Accountability

Choosing courage and taking ownership of our actions.

Strategic Plan

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

- Capability
- Innovation
- Growth

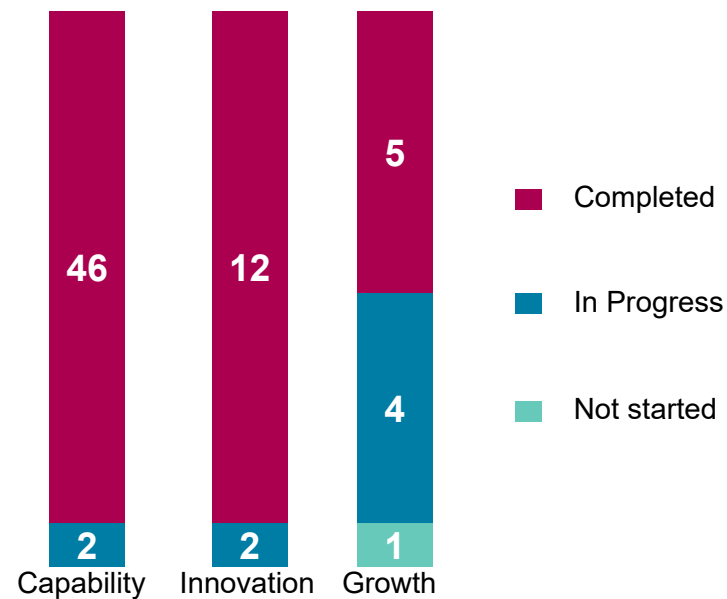
Strategic Priorities

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.

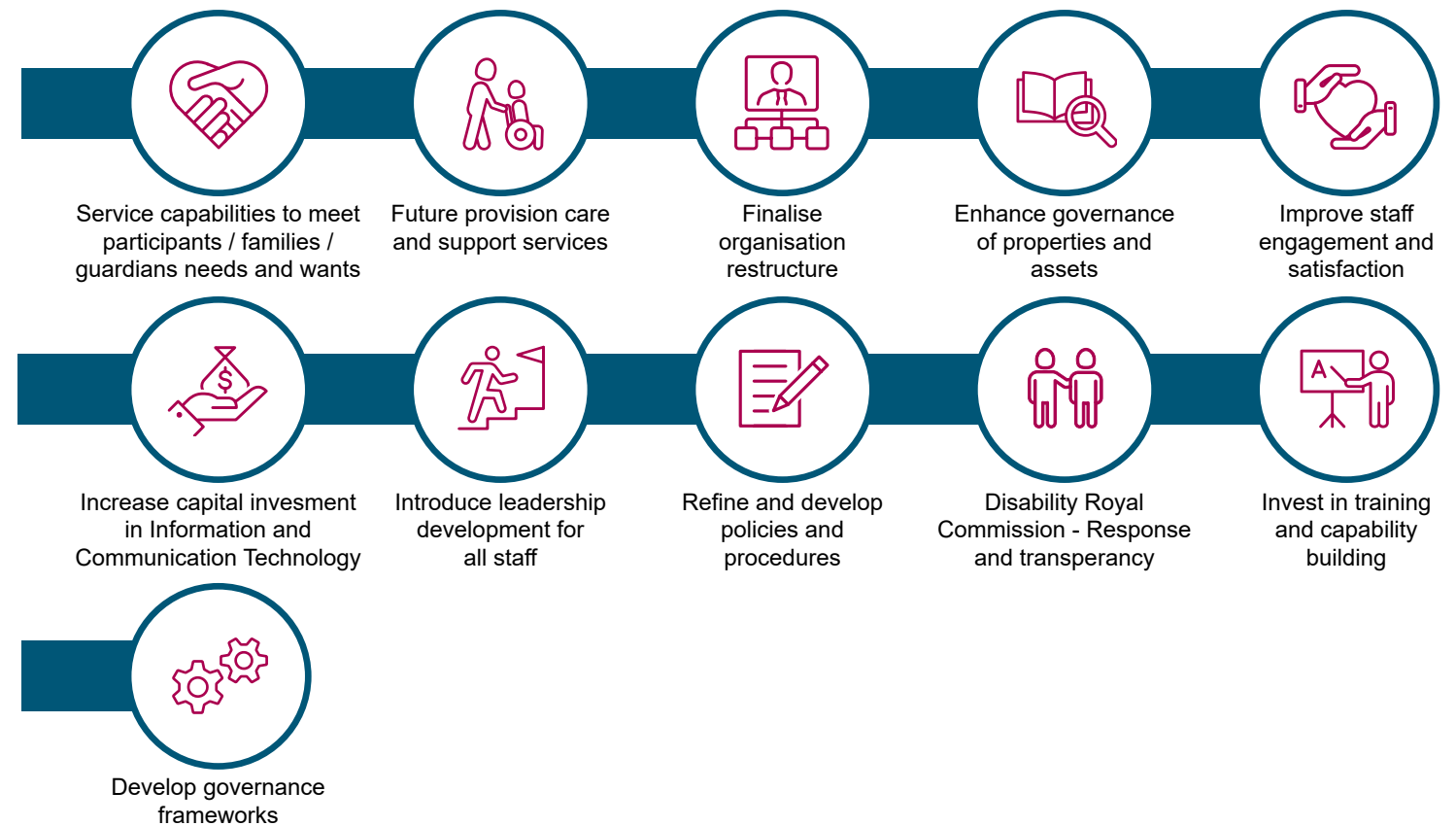
The completion of our three-year Strategic Plan 2021-2023 marks a significant milestone in our organisational journey. By prioritising Capability, Growth, and Innovation, we have achieved notable outcomes, positioning our organisation for long-term success. We remain committed to sustaining our progress, leveraging the momentum gained, and embracing future opportunities.



“We must strive to do ordinary things extraordinarily well.”

Catherine McAuley

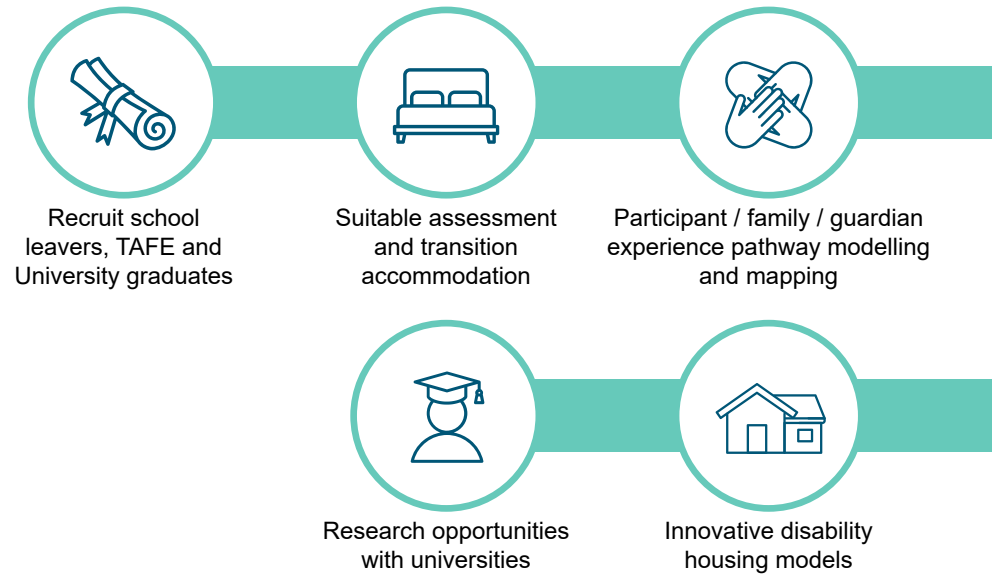
Capability



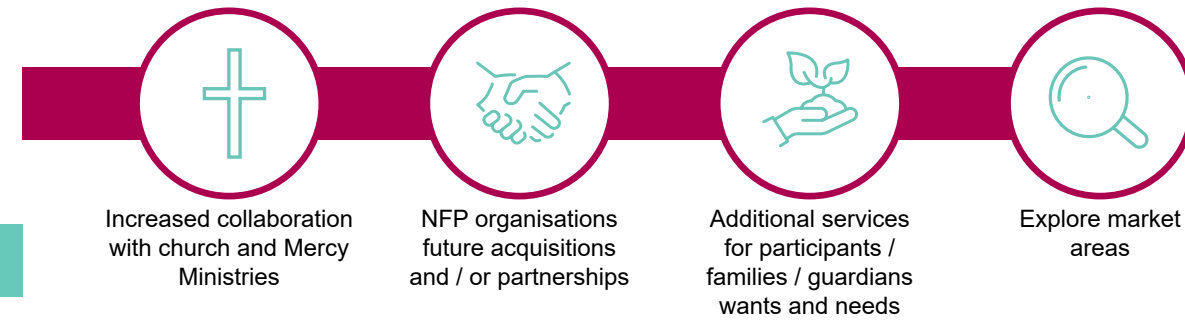
KPIs met in 2022/23

- Improve Staff Satisfaction**
 Introduced formal succession plans; delivery of Mercy led formation activities which are embedded throughout the organisation. Annual Staff Survey 81% staff satisfaction (compared to 78% 2021-2022). Annual and quarterly peer recognition program for staff living Mercy Values and making positive contributions.
- Property and Assets**
 Recruited property and asset expertise. Annual review of property management and maintenance schedule. 100% compliance with relevant property standards and legislation. Annual Property Audit conducted. Project Management processes and documents created.
- Leadership and Development Programs**
 Annual development and training plans and programs and plans for all staff. Introduction of succession plans for key leadership roles. Delivery of leadership programs and professional development opportunities.
- Improve Financial Sustainability of Programs**
 Increased grant funding received, and alternate income sources (approximately \$70k for 2023). Engaged a Registered Training Organisation resulting in government traineeship subsidies to be received over the next three years.

Innovation



Growth



KPIs met in 2022/23

Publications of Research Findings

IMercyVE research paper published in Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities. Presented at three conferences;

- Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability Conference (Inclusive Participant Satisfaction Survey).
- Allied Health, Nursing and Midwifery Symposium (Innovative Student Service Learning Placements).
- Rural and Remote Health Conference (Innovative Student Service Learning Placements).

Innovative Disability Housing Models with Alternative Funding

Successful collaborations with Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and Upper Murray Family Care (UMFC).

Adequate Support Services

Partnerships with Acacia Training, Gateway Health and other local employment providers contributed to strong attendance at all May Information Sessions. Recruitment campaign for Avondale Place, Henty NSW. Recruitment of school leavers and vocational training.

Social Impact Framework

Successfully delivered a disability focused framework that ensures we remain focused on our core mission, deliver meaningful services, and continually improve our efforts to positively impact the lives of individuals with disabilities.

KPIs met in 2022/23

Collaborations

Developed partnerships with UMFC, DFFH, developers in Cowra, Rotary Club of Albury, Carevan and FoodShare Albury-Wodonga. Partnerships with Acacia Training, Gateway Health and other local employment providers contributed to strong attendance at staff recruitment Information Sessions.

Increase Participant Intake in Growth Areas

Increased participants in Abbeyfield facility, Wagga Wagga and Waratah Place, Lavington. Increased participants from DFFH for respite services.

Improved Health Outcomes for Participants

Two-day psychiatric clinics delivered at full capacity each quarter. Lumary system commenced assisting in improving health supports. Health passports for all participants introduced.

Expansions of Services within Northeast Victoria, Murrumbidgee and Central West Region

Management of Avondale Place, Henty and Abbeyfield, Wagga Wagga. Attendance at regional exhibitions.

Chair Report



It is with great pleasure, and a sense of accomplishment, that I present to you the Board Chair Report for the Mercy Connect Annual Report. This year has been marked by significant achievements as we finalise our Strategic Plan 2021-2023, and work to deliver a new Strategic Plan that will guide Mercy Connect's ongoing delivery of high-quality support and services for people with disabilities.

Aligned with our Mercy ethos and the teachings of Catherine McAuley, our commitment to the quality of care remains steadfast. We understand the profound responsibility we hold in enhancing the lives of those who trust us for their well-being. Our teams have been tirelessly working to ensure that every participant receives the highest levels of care. We take pride in constantly seeking opportunities for improvement, whether it is through ongoing learning and development, implementing evidence-based practices, or incorporating participant feedback. Our dedication to continuous improvement is a testament to our promise of creating a nurturing environment that fosters growth, independence, and happiness.

Over the past year, we have pursued our vision for growth, innovation and excellence. Our intensive commitment to providing suitable and affordable accommodation has been a monumental effort that involved dedicated teamwork, and an unwavering commitment towards service improvement.

Through thoughtful discernment, strong financial stewardship, and the unwavering commitment of our staff, we have successfully modernised our housing infrastructure through renovation, and a dedicated capital works programs that has delivered a new Transition and Assessment facility called 'Basil House'. These achievements position Mercy Connect well for the future, as we continue making a meaningful impact in the lives of those we serve.

One of the highlights of this year has been our successful collaborations with various organisations, paving the way for further innovation and service impact. Collaboration with the Henty Respite Trust has seen the delivery of Avondale Place, providing respite accommodation and independent living options. Further collaborations have also evolved in our Central West region, resulting in another capital works project located in Cowra. These two new collaborations, together with our continuing partnership with Abbeyfield Australia in Wagga, only solidifies our commitment for better affordable accommodation options. These partnerships have allowed Mercy Connect to share resources, expertise and best practices, ultimately enhancing the quality of care we provide for people with disabilities. We are excited about the potential of these programs to create a more inclusive and supportive community for individuals with disabilities.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Trent Dean, Chief Executive Officer, and his dedicated teams and staff, whose passion and hard work have been the driving force behind our achievements. I also extend my appreciation to our partners, supporters, and stakeholders who have shown unwavering faith in our mission. As we look ahead, we are excited about the prospects of further growth, innovation, and collaboration. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities, enriching our community in the process.

Together we grow.

Matthew Clancy
Chair

Chief Executive Officer Report



This year I had the privilege of visiting the House of Mercy in Dublin to help deepen my understanding of the life and times of Sister Catherine McAuley; the Founder of the Sisters of Mercy. Despite thinking I was already well-read on her legacy, I was profoundly humbled to discover there was so much more to Catherine's story. Born in 1778, she lived during a time when Ireland was deeply divided by social inequalities and religious discrimination. As a woman of faith and privilege, Catherine recognised the need for systemic change to address the suffering and poverty around her.

Catherine's first act of courage was to challenge the existing social structures by opening the House of Mercy, on Baggot Street in 1827; a refuge for women and girls experiencing homelessness, unemployment, and abuse. This act challenged the prevailing norms of her time, as women were expected to be confined to traditional roles and not actively engage in social issues. By providing shelter, education, and healthcare, she empowered women to overcome societal barriers and regain their dignity. Despite her conviction, Catherine faced significant obstacles and criticism from both the Church and wider society. She encountered resistance from those who believed that religious institutions should focus solely on spiritual matters and not engage in charitable works or address social injustices. In the face of this opposition, she displayed immense courage by persisting in her mission, even when her own personal fears arose.

And, it is Catherine's periods of doubt that make her story all the more relatable and inspiring to us now. She similarly worried about the financial sustainability of her endeavours, especially during times of economic uncertainty. Nevertheless, she relied on her deep faith and trust in God, recognising that she could make a difference by taking small steps towards justice and by inspiring others to join her cause.

Catherine's approach to addressing such societal issues also highlights the importance of collaboration and community engagement. Indeed, here at Mercy Connect we highlight this important sentiment through our oft-repeated phrase, 'Together we grow'.

As we reach the end of our current three-year Strategic Plan, and begin launching our new Strategic Plan, I am pleased to note the many wonderful outcomes have been achieved by Mercy Connect which are documented in this year's Annual Report. Importantly, these achievements were only possible due to the compassionate and committed work of our Executive, Management teams, dedicated staff and teams, volunteers, donors, external stakeholders and local business partners. I remain very grateful for everyone's selfless dedication to supporting those in need to live fulfilled lives.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the Mercy Community Services Australia Directors, and Mercy Ministry Companions Trustee Directors, who have provided us with ongoing support and governance to ensure Mercy Connect continues to flourish and grow sustainably.

Together we grow.

Trent Dean
Chief Executive Officer

Governance - Our Board



Organisational Chart - Our Team



Emerging Leaders

In 2022, Mercy Connect collaborated with Training Services NSW and The Management Edge (TME) to deliver a Certificate IV in Leadership and Management to existing leaders and emerging leaders.

Of the 25 leaders and emerging leaders, 16 graduated in October 2022. The commitment and dedication shown by all those who graduated is a testament to the quality of the training and the significance attached by everyone to successfully complete it.

While enrolled, two participants were internally promoted from Assistant Team Leader to Team Leader positions, and a third was promoted following graduation. Additionally, another participant was promoted to a role within the Corporate Office. Throughout the recruitment process for these positions, each candidate could directly cite content from their training and provide examples of where they have applied their learnings on the job.

Additionally, and more importantly, feedback from other stakeholders validated that the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom were evidenced in the workplace.

Being able to deliver the course on-site also significantly increased collaboration between participants. This was especially important given that most of those enrolled are shift-workers and may not necessarily see each other regularly.

Other participants included employees from Mercy Connect's Corporate Office and shared knowledge and experience was created between frontline workers and those who work behind the scenes. This collaboration piece has been particularly important when working on corporate-wide projects, including the recent implementation of new rostering and client management systems. The skill sets obtained by participants in the Certificate IV of Leadership and Management has improved leading our teams through change management processes.

To celebrate the achievements of this group, Mercy Connect held a graduation ceremony, inviting staff, distinguished guests, including the local Federal Member of Parliament, and family members to attend.



Digital Transformation



Mercy Connect has undergone a remarkable year of digital transformation resulting in moving services to a completely cloud-based model. This year has been defined by groundbreaking achievements that have catapulted our organisation into a new era of efficiency, innovation, and competitiveness.

Our journey began with the successful implementation of Lumary, a state-of-the-art, cloud-based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This platform has not only streamlined our interactions with participants but has also enabled us to personalise our approach, leading to enhanced participant satisfaction and loyalty. The Lumary CRM has provided invaluable insights into participant behaviours, enabling us to tailor our products and services to meet their evolving needs effectively.

The integration of Skedulo, a cloud-based rostering system, has redefined our workforce management practices. By leveraging real-time data and intelligent scheduling algorithms, we have optimised resource allocation and reduced inefficiencies. Our teams are now equipped with the tools to deliver top-notch services, even in the most dynamic and challenging environments.

One key achievement this year has been the successful migration of our Microsoft services to the cloud. This transition has unlocked new levels of collaboration, scalability, and accessibility. Our workforce now enjoys the freedom to work seamlessly from any location, while our IT infrastructure has become more agile and cost-efficient. This move has positioned us at the forefront of modern business practices. This strategic decision has not only reduced operational overheads but has also improved data security and compliance. Our reliance on outdated systems is now a thing of the past, paving the way for more efficient and streamlined processes.

We also introduced the new Mercy Connect App, a testament to our dedication to innovation. Through the creation of Power Applications, we have empowered our teams access to information on demand. The Mercy Connect App exemplifies our commitment to enhancing stakeholder engagement, enabling users to access our services effortlessly and stay informed.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the uplift in our cybersecurity measures has been paramount. Our investment in advanced cyber security technologies has fortified our defenses against emerging threats, safeguarding our sensitive data and ensuring the trust of our participants, partners, and stakeholders.

Matthew Taylor
Business Intelligence & Innovation Manager



55,000+
Intranet Visits



7
Cloud based tools and systems deployed



1,100+
IT tickets resolved

'Together We Grow' - A Mercy Connect Podcast

In March 2023, we were delighted to announce the release of our very own podcast "Together We Grow". The podcast serves as a platform for exploring the world of disability, featuring interviews with guests who share their stories and insights. It has reached beyond Mercy Connect, engaging the wider community and fostering unity among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

The podcast's impactful stories have touched the hearts and minds of listeners, offering inspiration and valuable lessons. It has provided insights into the experiences of our guests and promoted personal growth.

In just a few short months since its launch, "Together We Grow" podcast has resonated deeply with listeners, igniting meaningful conversations around disability and inclusion.

The stories shared by our guests have created a unique insight and understanding to those living with disability

Through collaborative partnerships, the podcast has amplified its reach and connected with a broader audience. Moving forward, the Together We Grow Podcast aims to expand its impact, incorporating more diverse voices and exploring new avenues for engagement. It remains dedicated to empowering the disability community and creating positive change in our community. As we step into the future, we are committed to nurturing this growing community of change-makers and amplifying their voices.



Communication & Engagement



14
Media Activities
(Print, Radio, TV)




7
Podcast Episodes



15
Hosted Events



124,516
Total reach via
social media



44,592
Unique website
page views



17,941
Unique website
users



Avondale Place

Avondale Place is a newly developed respite facility located in Henty, NSW. This remarkable achievement represents Mercy Connect's commitment to expanding our services and meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities or frail health and their families and carers.

Avondale Place is a state-of-the-art facility that offers two forms of accommodation to support both short-term and long-term residents. It includes a four bedroom respite care centre, providing a haven of rest and care for up to three individuals at a time.

Additionally, the facility encompasses up to four two-bedroom independent living units, offering a more permanent solution for residents requiring ongoing support.

Operated by our dedicated team of trained care workers, the respite care centre at Avondale Place ensures that residents receive the highest standard of care and support. Equipped with cutting-edge technology and facilities, Avondale Place adheres to the latest guidelines for respite and disability care, prioritising the safety, comfort, and well-being of our residents.

The development of Avondale Place in collaboration with Henty Respite Trust showcases Mercy Connect's dedication to creating lasting, positive change in our communities. Working together with the Henty Respite Board, we successfully designed and developed the facility, while Mercy Connect



assumed responsibility for managing the accommodation. By providing a local respite option, Avondale Place significantly reduces the need for families and carers in the Greater Hume and Lockhart Shires to travel long distances for support. This not only fosters a sense of belonging and community within a small-town setting but also eases the burden of travel.

Avondale Place is designed to be inclusive and support individuals and families facing various challenges. Our aim is to provide the necessary care and support to those seeking assistance, regardless of their circumstances.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated team, supporters, and stakeholders for their invaluable contributions to the success of Avondale Place. Their generosity enables us to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals and families in need, as we continue to build a more inclusive future together.

We take immense pride in the official opening of this remarkable facility and the opportunities it presents to support those in our community who require respite care. With your ongoing support, we will continue to create a better and more inclusive future for individuals with disabilities or frail health and their families and carers. Together, we build a brighter tomorrow.



Participant Welfare Officer



It has been a privilege to continue in the role of Participant Welfare Officer and to walk, and work, alongside participants and staff of Mercy Connect. This role plays a vital part in monitoring the welfare and well-being of participants and is one of the safeguarding mechanisms in place to ensure participants live in a safe and appropriate environment and are free from abuse and neglect.

One way the welfare of participants is supported is through the facilitation of a range of social activities throughout the year. These events provide opportunities for participants to meet new people and hopefully make new friendships as well as to engage in activities that they may not typically have access to.

This year we held our second annual wood fire pizza evening where participants brought along their favourite toppings and were encouraged to top their own pizzas which were cooked in the Albury City Community Wood Fire Oven at Hovell Tree Reserve. We were fortunate to have Monumental Ice Creamery come along as well which provided a very 'sweet and delicious' end to the evening.

Other events included a Halloween party, regular movie nights at the newly established Social Hub, the weekly AFL social group, the newly created Men's Group, and attendance at Carols by Candlelight. As always, the Mercy Connect participant Christmas party was another fun-filled night and great way to end 2022. We were fortunate to have Santa make a special appearance and distribute gifts to all participants.

The process of quality environmental audits continues to evolve and improve in order to create safe environments for participants to live and thrive. These monthly audits assist in monitoring the quality of services provided while creating an opportunity to engage with participants directly to understand what's working, and not working, for them. A number of improvements in participant environments and care have been implemented through the completion of

these audits. Another way Mercy Connect engages directly with participants is through the annual Participant Satisfaction Survey. This year has seen a greater involvement that ever before with 53% of participants providing feedback on how well we are doing. This is an important tool for Mercy Connect to gather information and understand what participants want from their service. This is often where the ideas for many new activities and programs are generated for the coming year.

Last, but certainly not least, Mercy Connect was successful in receiving funds to purchase equipment and establish an outdoor cinema on the grounds of the St Johns, Thurgoona. In the warmer months, this will provide a fantastic opportunity for participants and others to enjoy a movie under the stars while appreciating food and drinks prepared in our newly refurbished commercial kitchen.

This year has been a consolidating year for my role with many positive impacts being achieved to help participants lead meaningful and fulfilled lives and I am looking forward to an even better year ahead.

Lee O'Connor
Participant Welfare Officer



25
Organised social events



250
Participants engaged in social events throughout the year



20
Environmental audits conducted with follow up visits

Tom's Journey

Tom's goal has been to get a job, wear a uniform and be like other men of his age. Well, for Tom, this has been a journey of learning, challenges and developing new skills.

Once he found a job, an ongoing struggle has been to ensure that he arrives at work on time as he finds it difficult to get up and going in the mornings.

Through the provision of travel training support by Mercy Connect, and Tom's own persistence, he has been able to consistently arrive at work on time using the local taxi service and therefore, maintain his employment.

Although this mode of transport initially helped him to achieve this goal, it became expensive over the

longer term when used to get to and from work twice a week. So, to address this issue, Tom decided it was time to get the bus - at least in the morning.

After researching bus timetables and where the bus would leave from, Tom identified that he needed to be at the bus stop by 8.10am. For the past four months, Tom has been able to successfully take the bus to work each morning.

Due to this achievement, he has now decided it is time to catch the bus back home in the afternoon. So, he has asked Mercy Connect staff to support him to catch the bus home from work "one time" and has confidently advised that after that "I can do it myself!". Well done Tom!



Work Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Mercy Connect continued its commitment to promoting and sustaining a safe and healthy workplace, one that values inclusion and ensures a healthy, resilient and capable workforce.

The successful transition of workers compensation claims to EML / icare led to improved service and support with claims management and return to work outcomes for injured staff. Mercy Connect also continues to collaborate with AON to identify opportunities for improvement in the delivery of initiatives aligned with the WHS framework.

As such in 2022-23, a key focus was to review and update existing arrangements, policies and procedures for work health and safety (WHS) and wellbeing to align them with the structure, composition and organisational priorities of Mercy Connect.

Initiatives undertaken to support this included:

- New incident and reporting system (FOLIO) that is user friendly for the frontline and also allows for more robust investigations and analysis of incidents.
- Continued monitoring and support for COVID-19 outbreaks for participants and staff ensuring available PPE and risks are mitigated.
- Increased WHS committee engagement to support the organisation in all safe work practices.
- Replacement of the Workers Compensation support to EML / icare which has increased better outcomes for our injured staff.

100%
WHS Committee meetings held as scheduled



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



St John's Kitchen

Mercy Connect was thrilled to open its newly renovated Community Inclusion Kitchen at St John's Day Program, made possible by the generous grant funding from the Rotary Club of Albury. The opening signifies a significant advancement in providing people with disabilities the opportunity for community engagement and personal growth.

The upgraded facility features high-quality equipment, purpose-built cabinetry, and improved storage options, ensuring functionality for individuals with disabilities.

The Community Inclusion Kitchen aims to provide valuable skills development and learning opportunities for program attendees. Through cooking activities and workshops, participants can acquire new skills, explore their creativity, and gain confidence in the kitchen. These experiences expand horizons, enhance independence, and boost self-esteem.

Creating a safe and inclusive environment is a top priority for Mercy Connect. The newly renovated kitchen reflects this commitment and empowers Mercy Connect participants to flourish and reach their full potential.



It serves as a hub for personal growth, achievement, and lifelong skill development, enabling program attendees to lead fulfilling lives and contribute actively to their communities.

Mercy Connect extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Rotary Club of Albury for their generous support. Their partnership has been instrumental in making the Community Inclusion Kitchen a success. The Rotary Club's dedication to improving the lives of people with disability is commendable, and their contribution exemplifies their commitment to fostering inclusivity and empowerment.

The newly renovated kitchen represents progress and serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration for the future. With continued support from organisations like the Rotary Club of Albury, Mercy Connect is poised to make an even greater difference in the lives of those it serves.

Mercy Connect proudly celebrates the opening of its newly renovated Community Inclusion Kitchen, a testament to our dedication to creating a more inclusive community.



Operations



Operations



It is hard to believe that another year has come to an end. The year has flown by and has been full of achievements. The focus of the Operations Team throughout 2022-2023 has been equally focused on care, quality and consistency.

The work completed in previous years with regards to team structures and tailored training for specific service areas has enabled the Operations Team to stabilise. With excellent retention figures for our support staff and improved staff satisfaction results, it has been pleasing to see the outcomes of dedicated teams. Each team have markedly improved care standards and support to participants across the service. This improved care is evidenced by improved participant satisfaction results, increased goal achievement outcomes, a decrease in behaviours of concern and reduction in reportable incidents.

A new Client Relationship Management System and rostering system have been rolled out across the organisation. The new technology has enabled access to vital participant information in live time which assists Mercy Connect to provide a higher standard of support for individuals. The way in which the operations staff have embraced the new technology is to be applauded.

We have continued to maintain positive working relationships with a number of important local organisations such as Carevan, Food Share, TAFE, North Albury Rotary, Men's Shed and a range of other charities. Each partnership has provided our participants a sense of belonging, care and support that is integral to ongoing well-being.

The opening of the new commercial kitchen at St John's is an important and welcome addition to the Community Inclusion (Day Program) facilities.

This will lead to new and improved programs to support participants to develop work ready skills such as coffee making, commercial cookery and hospitality skills.

The 2022-2023 year has seen an increase in general referrals for all Mercy Connect services. There has been a significant increase in demand for Respite and Children Services. As such staff were provided with relevant and tailored training to support the growth in this area. Services are now available in both Albury and Henty with additional beds planned for 2023-2024.

We are looking forward to expanding our services in the coming year with the planned opening of new homes and a very important transition support service.

Due to the new homes and programs, recruitment and training will be high on the agenda for 2023-2024. It will also be important for the Operations Team to continue to balance the ongoing challenges of operating quality services with the contracting funding of the NDIS, a challenge we look forward to.

Felicity Lawes
Executive Leader Operations

Project Connect

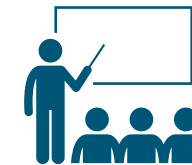
We are delighted to announce the successful completion of Project Connect, delivering a state-of-the-art cloud-based customer information management (Lumary) and rostering system (Skedulo).

This milestone represents a significant advancement in our operational efficiency and customer service capabilities. Through meticulous planning and the dedication of our talented team, we have established a centralised and dynamic system that provides real-time access to accurate data, optimises resource allocation, and ensures the security of our participants information.

This achievement reinforces our commitment to innovation and positions us as a leader in our industry, poised for long-term growth and enhanced customer experiences.



165
Total Participants



10+
Specialised workshop
training programs



180+
Number of referrals



Clinical

Services

Clinical Services



This year our Clinical Services Team has supported more people living with disability and mental health issues than ever before. As always, the teams continue to strive to deliver services that maximise outcomes and improve overall quality of life. They are continually looking for more effective, efficient and simpler ways of delivering services, while focusing on the best possible experience for the people we serve. As a result, this year has seen the introduction of a range of innovative solutions to streamline work processes and service outputs.

One significant innovation this year, has been the introduction of our new risk management system, FOLIO. This platform is enabling Mercy Connect to effectively manage our key risks and quality processes while improving access to information and risk insights for leaders across the organisation. Since the implementation of this new system, there is improved accessibility to lodge an incident for frontline staff, the time required to manage incidents has reduced and leaders have access to more tools to increase productivity.

This past year has also seen the further development and refinement of Mercy Connect's Social Impact Framework. Measuring social impact is an important tool for determining the value our organisation delivers to its participants as well as the community more broadly. This year Mercy Connect has engaged in a range of activities to add significant value to people's lives. Activities include the building of secure and appropriate homes; ongoing recognition through scholarships and awards; numerous social events for participants to connect with others and programs that contribute to the well-being of the wider community such as Meals on Wheels and working with the Carevan Foundation to create nutritious meals for those in need.

Behaviour Support and Support Coordination teams continue to delivery high quality services to people and their support networks in their homes and in the community. The Behaviour Support team considers the person's whole life to understand what is needed to improve quality of life and reduce restrictions. This year the team have introduced innovative ways to measure and capture data as well as train plan implementers to build capacity and effect positive change to people's lives.

Finally, this year we continued to deliver much needed mental health clinics to people living in regional areas through our quarterly specialist psychiatric clinics. These clinics provide individuals with essential dual diagnosis services to those living in the local region where access to these services is scarce. The clinics continue to be well attended and will continue to be provided for Mercy Connect participants as well as those in the community.

It has been an amazing year where the Clinical Services Team continues to go above and beyond to develop and deliver quality services that are innovative and effective to enable the best possible care and outcomes for the participants we serve.

Caroline Cummins
Executive Leader Clinical Services

Clinical Services

Helping people to achieve their goals

Alex* was referred for Mercy Connect behaviour support services in the latter part of 2022. At this time, his goal was to be able to access regular respite so he could build on his independent living skills and also to give his family a much deserved break.

Unfortunately, due to his long term dependence on his family to regulate his emotions, this goal seemed virtually unachievable. His family were struggling with his ongoing care and were considering relinquishment.

However, with input from behaviour support, the family and his support network have been able to implement strategies to assist Alex to achieve his goal. He is now attending respite weekly and is successfully building his support network outside of his family.

**Alex is not his real name and has been used to protect his privacy.*



People and Communications



6000+

Hours of behaviour support services delivered



77

Participants accessed Mercy Connect's Specialist Psychiatric services



62

Quality initiatives were successfully deployed

People & Communications



Mercy Connect's tagline "Together we grow" was central to the success of many of the initiatives undertaken by the People and Communications team during 2022-23.

Our Learning and Development Team, in partnership with Training Services NSW and Registered Training Organisation (RTO), The Management Edge (TME), led to over 40 staff gaining a formal qualification in either Certificate IV in Leadership and Management, or Certificate IV in Disability. Other qualifications commenced or completed include the Diploma in Leadership and Management and Certificate IV in Information Technology.

Additionally, ongoing collaboration between the Learning and Development and Operations teams has contributed to an impressive 98% completion rate of mandatory training for all employees.

Our Marketing and Communications Team was extremely busy, supporting targeted events and campaigns designed to increase our presence and brand in the community. In addition to our social and local media stories, we ventured into the world of podcasts, and since January 2023, have released seven podcasts, interviews with guests who provide insight into their lived experience of the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme). All podcasts are available to download and listen to on Spotify.

We also collaborated with celebrated author, speaker, and business leader Andrew Jobling, for a life-changing workshop filled with powerful mindset strategies. More than 60 staff and community members attended one of two workshops and were treated to practical tips on how to make 2023 a 'Year of Joy'.

The partnership between the Henty Trust and Mercy Connect led to the opening of Avondale Place and the employment of nine Henty community members who will provide much needed respite care to those in local communities. Additionally, Mercy Connect worked with RTO, Acacia to design and deliver a pre-employment program specifically developed to successfully support the new Henty workforce in the disability sector.

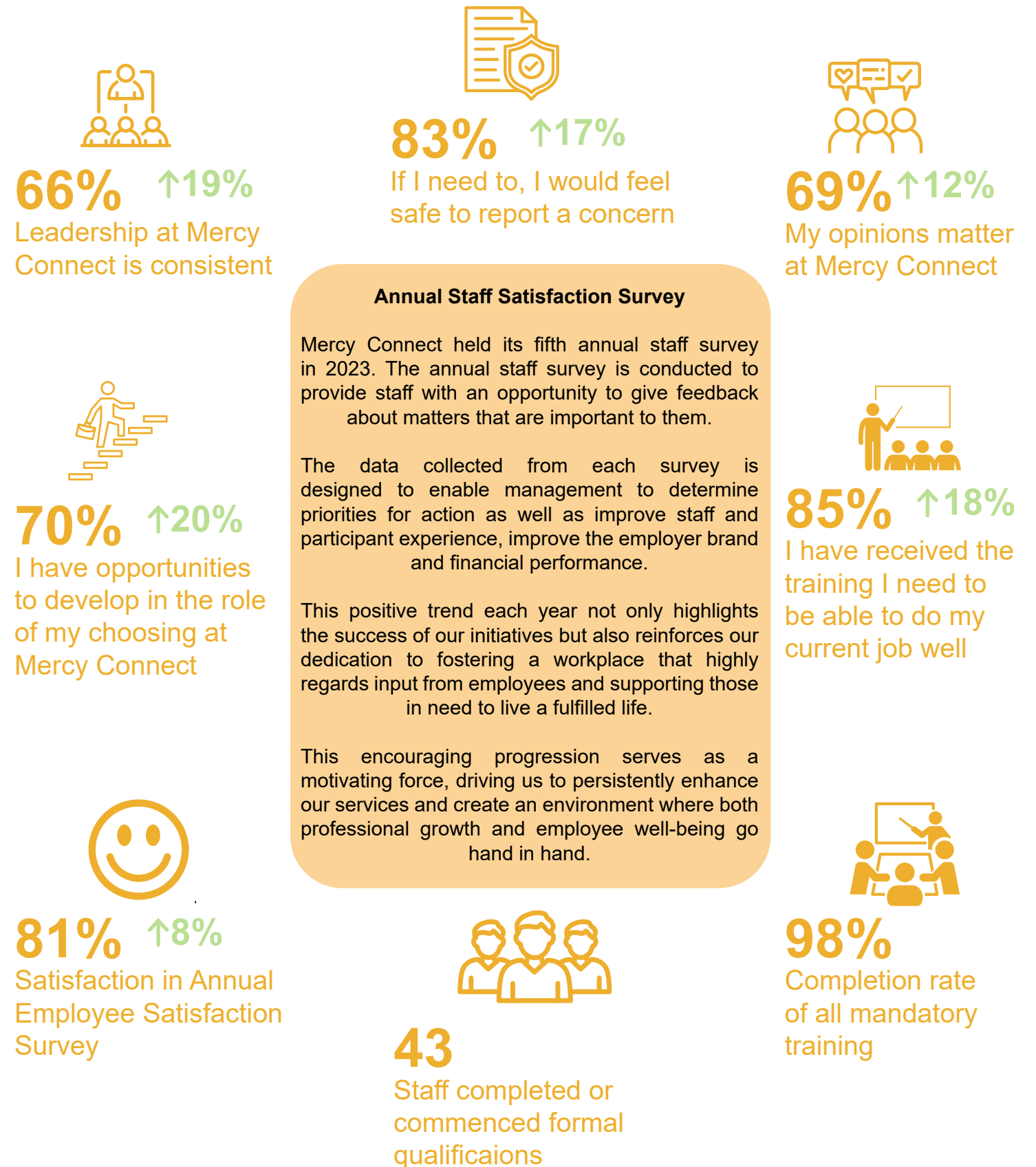
For the fifth year in a row our Annual Survey showed an improvement in employee satisfaction from 79% (in 2021-22) to 81% (in 2022-23). In the five years since the staff survey's introduction, a range of initiatives have been specially designed and implemented to address feedback provided in surveys.

Some of these initiatives in the past year include hosting of quarterly Town Hall meetings and promoting Microsoft Teams to improve communication between teams; rolling out of new rostering and client management systems to make life easier on the frontline; and to support staff to obtain formal qualifications related to their career plans.

Kylie Orell, Mercy Connect's Community Inclusion Team Leader, Central West was awarded the annual Shining Lamp Award, having received an overwhelming number of nominations from her peers throughout the year.

Jessie Arney
Executive Leader People & Communications

Staff Satisfaction Survey: 5 year progress report



Business

and Finance



Business & Finance



With the direct impact(s) of the COVID-19 pandemic limited to the first half of 2022, our Business and Finance Team has successfully achieved a range of positive outcomes over the past twelve months. Although 2022-23 was a challenging financial year for Mercy Connect, our overall performance remained consistent with industry benchmark data that includes results of other high-performing disability providers. Nonetheless, Mercy Connect remains committed to the ongoing improvement of our overall financial position, to ensure sustainability of services and programs and our Mercy-inspired missional focus.

Mercy Connect has continued to respond to the ever evolving NDIS funding environment whilst maintaining safe and high-quality supports for those people we serve. The NDIS review announced by the Federal Government, and its subsequent recommendations due in late-2023, which remains a critical assessment that is hoped will ensure the ongoing sustainability of the NDIS and the wider disability sector.

Subsequent to transitioning our Workers Compensation Insurance over to icare last year, Mercy Connect will soon be included in the Loss Prevention and Recovery scheme (still within icare) which realises reduced premium costs due to Mercy Connect's overall reduction in, and improved management of, Workers Compensation claims. This is an important achievement which recognises our ongoing commitment to delivering safe work environments for our staff.

In line with our strategic priorities of Capability, Innovation and Growth, we have continued our digital transformation of Mercy Connect through Project Connect, which has seen new rostering and care management systems successfully introduced across the organisation. With minimal

disruption to our staff, this is an incredible achievement which is the result of great collaboration, communication and teamwork involving many staff, departments and business units. Other digital improvements include: improved transport records management; cloud uplift including file migration; enhanced cybersecurity protocols and firewalls.

Mercy Connect has remained committed to continued investment in its capital works projects, for existing and newer properties. Significant renovation work has been delivered at various Albury-based properties, to ensure the homes and units are accessible, safe and comfortable for our residents going forward. Two units formerly owned by the Sisters of Mercy were recently purchased which will provide secure and affordable disability accommodation for those seeking a place to live.

At the time of writing this the new Transition and Assessment facility in Albury, 'Basil House', is complete and ready to be utilised by two residents (for periods up to six months). Construction work is progressing well for the new Orange-based disability facility, called 'Grevillea Place', with an expected completion date of late 2023. Grevillea Place will provide accommodation for up to nine residents, and includes an onsite activities space. Using the generous donation provided by the Rotary Club of Albury, we have successfully opened our newly renovated kitchen at our St John's Campus.

Tom Krause
Chief Financial Officer

Business & Finance

'Basil House' New Transition Housing

Mercy Connect was pleased to open the highly anticipated 'Basil House'. Basil House will offer safe and secure interim housing for people with disability who need additional support to meet their longer term needs

Basil House will offer a range of options to support individuals in need, with services available 24/7. The facility is suitable for those needing to further develop areas such as social and independent living skills, to enable full transition to the community, or people with disability who require short-term crisis accommodation and associated supports due to significant changes in their personal situation.

Designed to cater to people of all ages with high or complex needs, Basil House will serve as a haven for planned assessment periods of up to six months.

Basil House prioritises the development of skills such as social and independent living, empowering residents to reintegrate into the community and achieve their personal goals and desired outcomes.



51

Properties either owned or leased



2

New Development properties constructed or under construction



\$2.8M

Investment in Capital Works Projects

Partnerships, Collaborations & Donations

With thanks

- Abbeyfield Australia
- Albury City Council
- Amaranth Foundation
- Andrew Jobling
- AW Commercial
- Baker Motors
- Balance Accountants and Advisers
- Bickerton Masters
- Bowen's Entertainment
- Bruce Law
- Bunnings (Albury, NSW)
- Carevan Foundation
- Carter & Co
- Chambers Whyte Design and Print
- Commercial Club Albury
- Crown Furniture
- Dahlsens Albury Wodonga
- Dean Phelan (Uplift Centre)
- FM Clarity
- FoodShare
- Harwood Andrews
- Henty Respite Trust
- Huntsman Recruiting
- Ideas (Tumut)
- La Trobe University, John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research
- Lifeline
- McGrath Builders & Associates
- Monumental Ice Creamery
- Murray Art Museum Albury
- Minter Ellison
- Neural Networks Consulting
- Online Education Services
- Phil Day Plumbing
- Quest Wodonga
- RehabCo
- Renascent
- Rotary Club of Albury
- RSM
- The Management Edge
- The Personnel Group
- Three Rivers Department of Rural Health: Charles Sturt University
- Tierney Property Group
- Training Services NSW
- Transgrid
- Verto
- Western Sydney University Online
- Whiskk
- Wodonga TAFE
- 2AY Radio

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mercy
connect *together
we grow*

