

ANNUAL REPORT  
**2021**



Registered  
NDIS Provider

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### Vision

Optimum personal recovery and wellbeing.

### Our Purpose

To provide opportunity for people living with mental illness and/or complex needs to enjoy a meaningful life by strengthening self-identity, personal responsibility and hope.

### Our Guiding Principles

Recovery-orientated practice is a partnership where the person with the lived experience is the expert in their recovery and our staff bring their understanding and expertise to support this journey.

- Person centred
- Respect and dignity
- Acceptance of diversity
- Reflective practice
- Strengths based approach
- Flexibility and innovation
- Collaborative partnerships
- Community connection and participation
- Skilled, supported and informed workforce
- Evaluation, planning and continuous improvement



## CHAIR/CEO REPORT

**Once again, this report documents the excellent results for our clients whilst COVID-19 continued to have an enormous impact on everything in 2020/21. However, it is with a combination of disappointment and frustration, that we must also report that another year has been dominated by the COVID-19 global pandemic.**

Our community has experienced significant concerns about all aspects of health and wellbeing. There have been numerous extensive lockdowns resulting in frustration, confusion and despair and in addition, there has been a widespread and substantial economic loss to organisations and individuals alike.

Therefore, it is not surprising that our organisation has been dramatically affected by these extraordinary circumstances. Indeed, it is reasonable for us to suggest that our very reason for existence has seen us at the proverbial pointy end of responding to the mental health issues that have been a regrettably predictable and widely reported outcome of the pandemic. Nevertheless, our Mentis Assist team's adaptability, professionalism and resilience have continued to push forward towards a time when these issues will be behind us.

Our people from all levels within the organisation have been working conscientiously and drawing upon 35 years of organisational experience to stay focused on our core services within a changing work environment. It has enabled continual delivery of our organisation's purpose and ultimately met our commitments to our stakeholders, to the extent permitted under the externally imposed restrictions.

For our organisation, the local and global effects of COVID-19 continuously provided us with serious challenges. We have certainly needed to identify how we can change our service delivery and administrative functions to meet the circumstances of different service expectations and capabilities in the best way possible. In this regard, it is pleasing for us to say that 18 months into the pandemic, the flexibility of staff and clients has been increasingly responsive and very obviously characterised by a can-do attitude.

An unexpected component part of the altered service environment for health service provider organisations such as Mentis Assist, has been the challenge of encouraging and supporting Covid-19 vaccinations for our staff and clients. It is widely accepted that vaccination reduces the risks of severe disease, hospitalisation and death. Accordingly, it is our belief that we have an obligation as a provider of services to people who are significantly marginalised and vulnerable in our community to share information that will both guide and support their choice. Such responsibility clearly extends to our employees who are providing these services directly.

## Information Technology

In the past year, we have undertaken an enormous amount of work and investment commissioning a range of new Information Technology systems to move our organisation to a higher level of corporate efficiency. Pleasingly, undertaken with support from the Victorian State Government Department of Health. Essential components of this work have been implementing new systems in Financial Management, Payroll, Recruitment, Human Resources and Training. In addition, we are currently introducing Client Management, Rostering and Notification Systems.

Considered to be cutting edge platforms, they are all cloud-based, integrated and include a mobile app accessible for all staff and clients. This investment forms a solid foundation for our experienced and committed team to expand services to the community in an increasingly efficient manner.

The combination of effective governance and management has enabled a process of regular asset replacement to provide us with an almost immediate response to delivering services in a COVID-safe manner by utilising the digital arena. As we worked to bed down a virtual mountain of information, procedures and physical resources, we found that service provision became more frequent and more flexible, particularly so during the second half of the pandemic.

## Covid-19

The pandemic and its consequence of frequent lockdown uncertainty are certainly taking a toll on everyone in the organisation and those in our key stakeholder groups. However, as we have said previously, our service exists to provide support for our community's most marginalised, isolated people with severe and enduring mental health issues. These people are particularly vulnerable in trying to manage the new factors that are currently impacting their lives. Understandably, these factors have implications that extend back through our support staff, who now have to take the additional external influences into account in their everyday work.

Our Stepped Care and Early Interventions Psychosocial Support Response programs have both had their contracts extended. This pleasing outcome has generated a great sense of relief for staff and clients alike. Likewise, our Linkages and Social Support programs are continuing to provide a quality service.

Our involvement with the NDIS has continued to have its inherent challenges. However, the experience gained in delivering services under this government initiative has increasingly revealed a need for cautious, ongoing analysis and supervision to ensure optimal cost-effectiveness from an organisational perspective.

Despite many negative aspects of the past twelve months, it is our pleasure to say that staff investment and overall commitment during the pandemic has been outstanding.



Notably, our organisation benefited from Commonwealth and State Government assistance initiatives for part of the period from a financial perspective. This form of assistance has contributed to the organisation remaining viable during the 2020-21 financial year. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to continue to adopt prudent budgetary strategies and careful financial monitoring processes to ensure future viability in an ever-tightening funding environment.

Our Board of Directors and our Senior Management team continue to provide sound direction and leadership to the organisation as it grows in terms of the demand for services and the context of escalating reporting requirements, and an increasing expectation of continuous quality improvement.

We are now drawing our attention to the exciting new challenges and opportunities arising from the recent Royal Commission in Mental Health in Victoria tabled in parliament in March 2021. It is an opportune time for us to consider our involvement in shaping and being a part of a new mental health system. In this regard, the Royal Commission's final report includes 65 recommendations. It sets out a 10-year vision for a future mental health system where people can access treatment close to their homes and within their communities. This unprecedented investment by the Victorian and Commonwealth Government in Mental Health and Wellbeing support is reassuring and an essential recognition of what needs to happen.

In conclusion, we acknowledge and thank our executive and management staff, board directors, all staff and every person and entity that has contributed to our proud organisation through the difficult times we have experienced in the past year, which may continue to in the future.



**Peter Brookhouse**  
Chair, Mentis Assist  
Board of Governance



**Terry Palioportas**  
Chief Executive Officer



## DIRECTOR OF SERVICES REPORT

Welcome to my report on the operations of our services over the financial year 2020/21. Like many organisations, this has been our most disruptive year in all our 35 years of operating. The global COVID-19 pandemic's on and off periods of shutdowns affected our services, staff, and participants in many ways. Much has changed, yet the principles underlying our service provider and advocacy organisation approach remain the same. We believe our organisational principles will help us interpret and respond to a new post-COVID environment where old thinking and behaviour patterns are challenged.

Due to this one in a 100-year event, we activated our Business Continuity Plan, which required the management group to meet weekly to discuss and modify our services to

keep our doors open for the people who need us now - more than ever. Mentis Assist remains committed to providing recovery-oriented services for people with severe and complex mental health issues.

We have been agile enough to embrace the digital space, though acknowledging that our frontline support is essential for some of Victoria's most marginalised people, many with severe and enduring mental health issues and associated psychosocial disabilities. So we made sure we implemented COVID safe training for staff, PPE, and management and support systems whilst regularly maintaining communication channels with clients, staff, the sectors in which we work and the wider community.

## THE STEPPED CARE PROGRAM

### Mental Health Integrated Complex Care (MHICC)

The Mental Health Integrated Complex Care (MHICC) program consolidated its position, providing high-quality care to a very challenging group of clients. We maintained our staff with no departures. We looked after 176 clients in that period and assisted around 15% of those to access NDIS packages. The COVID outbreak saw staff respond professionally and flexibly to provide virtual support, with a marked increase in contact numbers during the initial outbreak, as the clients needed additional support.

### Accessible Psychological Interventions (API)

The Accessible Psychological Interventions (API) program continued to experience high demand levels with the associated intake and managing flow through challenges. As a result, the staff have remained unchanged and have provided services to 231 clients during this financial year.

## National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

One of our key areas of focus over the past 12 months has been continuing to refine and grow our National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) program. We continue to provide Core Supports, Recovery Coaching and Support Coordination to over 500 NDIS clients with significant psychosocial disabilities. Our NDIS program is now our most extensive program, being 50% of our income and staffing as an organisation.

Over the last financial year, we have worked with more than 1000 people who experience mental health issues or those who support or care for a person in their family or community. Our focus in most of our work is to assist people within their community and homes, develop positive self-identity and self-esteem, build and strengthen family and friendship networks, develop life skills, and provide support to engage in education and work.

## Social Support Programs – Access & Support, Home Support Packages, Linkages, Planned Activity Groups, Flexible Service Response.

Funding from both State and Federal Governments allows us to provide social support and referral services to both under 65-year-old and over 65-year-old clients. These clients may require short term supports to remain living independently in the community, benefit from our social support groups (when not restricted by Covid lockdowns), or need longer-term case management and linkage to appropriate services to meet complex needs.

Some of our notable outcomes have been to assist numerous clients in accessing My Aged Care with home care packages or local council home supports. We have also arranged assessments through clinical mental health, occupational therapy, pain management and other allied health services for many of these clients to assist them to stay in their homes for longer.

Our Linkages program has successfully provided allied health supports and case management services to some of our more complex clients, those with mental health issues and complex physical conditions. This support often extends to deep cleaning services, hoarding issues, and managing and maintaining overgrown gardens.

All our Social Support programs have been working to support clients during lockdown periods. While much of this support has been remote, we have provided essential outreach services to assist clients in attending urgent medical appointments. We have also worked closely with local community support centres in our catchments to help with food and financial assistance for clients.



## Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR)

Funded by the Victorian Department of Health and in partnership with Peninsula Health, our Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response supports highly complex clients coming from case management through our Area Mental Health Service at Peninsula Health.

Outcome measurements indicate EIPSR staff are assisting clients to meet their support needs with the highest achieving areas being: finding suitable accommodation, information on condition and treatment (psychoeducation and management of symptoms), reducing or managing drug and alcohol use, telephone support (accessing one and how to use), safety to self and others, transport within the community, and linkage with other services, in particular accessing and transitioning to the NDIS.

“ We have worked with more than 1000 people who experience mental health issues or those who support or care for a person in their family or community. ”

## Our workforce

Mentis Assist is a genuinely diversified organisation, providing programs and services across various areas and communities. However, as we reflect on the past year, what has particularly struck us is every staff member's vital contribution towards delivering our organisational strategy.

In June 2021, we undertook a staff wellbeing survey. We were pleased with the results, especially in learning that 80% of staff are proud and fulfilled in their work. In addition, 75% of staff felt Mentis Assist supported them well, and 90% of staff think the work they do makes a positive difference in the life of their clients.

In releasing the survey results, we have committed to our staff to strengthen our workplace culture. We look to instituting a culture of success in the coming years by genuinely listening, hearing and acting on our staff voice. We have laid down critical foundations across the organisation to ensure our management teams constructively listen and respond to the concerns of their staff. For example, when training was identified at an organisational and occupational level, we have sought to provide staff with suitable opportunities. Also, where improvements can be made to supervision and everyday support, we will implement change.

In a year like we have just experienced, it is hard to list all those we need to acknowledge. Thank you to our management team and staff at Mentis Assist for their continued dedication to supporting clients and each other in very trying times.

Moving forward into a new year, Mentis Assist will only continue to grow. Just as being defined as an essential service has characterised us this year, 2021-2022 will begin the programs emanating from the Mental Health Royal Commission. It's a year we look forward to.

Mentis Assist has proven over the past 18 months that we are flexible, adaptable, responsive and resilient, despite relentless challenges.

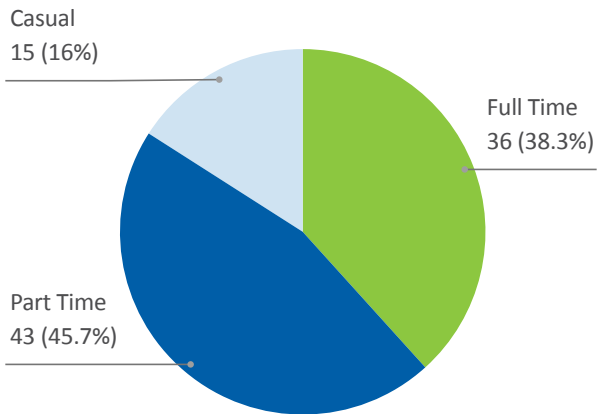
Finally, thank you to the Board for your acumen and oversight, wise counsel and clarity of direction in these unprecedented times.

### Mark Smith

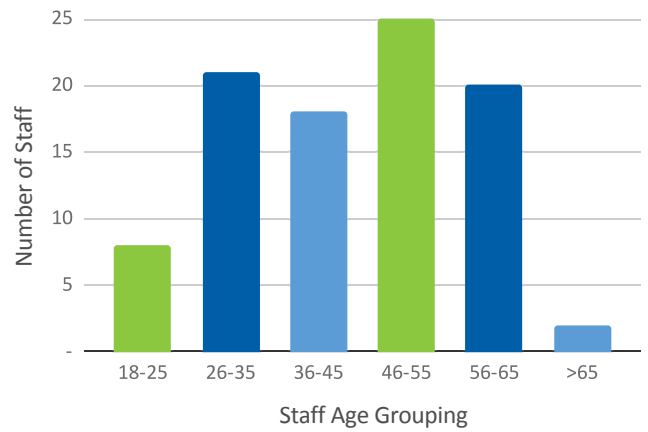
Director of Services



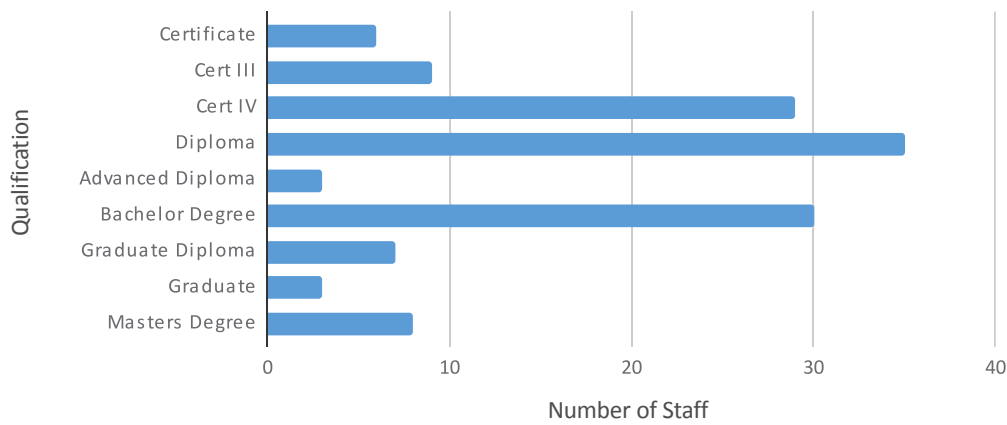
### Number of Staff by Employment Type



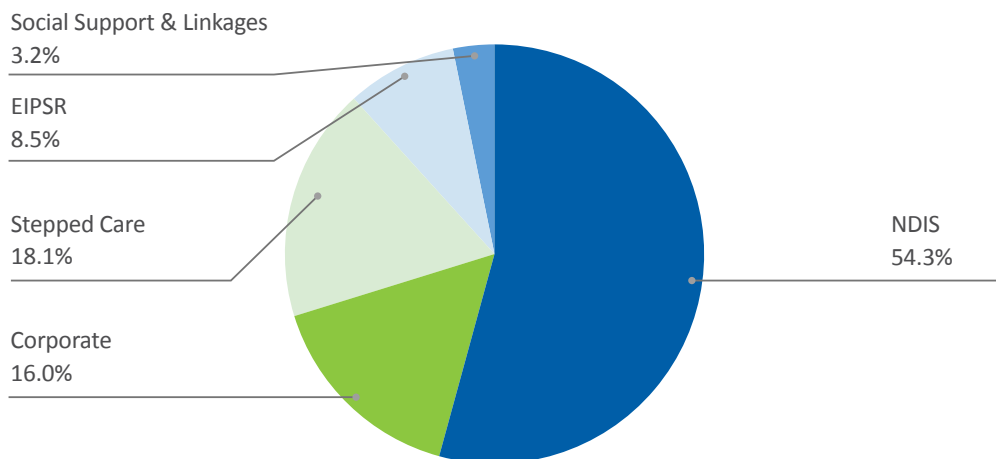
### Number of Staff by Age Group



### Number of Staff by Qualification

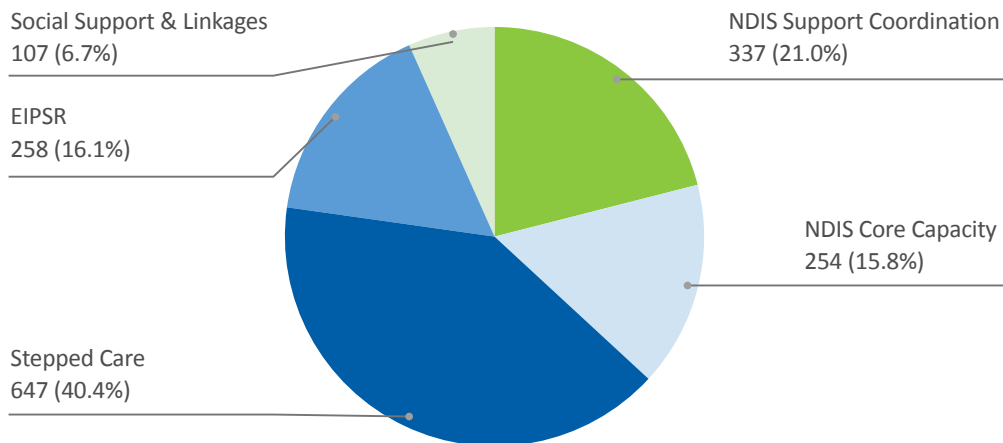


### Number of Staff in each Department

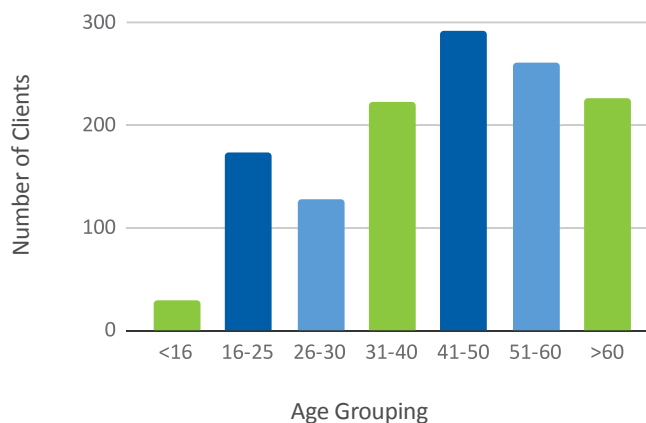




## Number of Clients Supported in each Program



## Number of Clients by Age Group



### NDIS SUPPORT COORDINATION



**21,043**

Total number of contacts



**11,222hrs**

Client support hours

### NDIS CORE SUPPORTS



**10,459**

Total number of client visits



**15,879hrs**

Client direct support hours



**1.52hrs**

Average time spent per client visit

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic continued for the entirety of the 2020-21 financial year, a strong focus on optimising services offered across our programs, a sustained focus on budgetary efficiencies and government assistance allowed an operating surplus of \$472k to be achieved.

Total service delivery Income reduced from the previous financial year primarily due to the reduction of revenue due to COVID-19, the cessation of one component of our stepped care program, and the discontinuation of the Carer program. The organisation continued to navigate the uncertain times brought on by the pandemic through prudent financial decision making, alongside Federal and State Government assistance, which was provided for much of the financial year. With the Federal Government financial initiatives, NDIS maintained a similar result to the previous financial year; this is testament to the flexibility and focus of the team to continue to provide somewhat modified online and 'face-to-face' services in a challenging environment. The organisation will return to more regular operations once permitted to do so under government advice.

There was a reduction in Total Expenditure throughout the financial year, with payroll expenses reducing significantly due to staff shortages in several programs, an experience felt across the mental health sector during the pandemic.

The organisation's Balance Sheet position saw an increase in its asset base, with liabilities remaining relatively steady year-on-year. Total Equity has increased to \$2,050,342 throughout 2020-21.

With another year of uncertainty now behind us, the organisation looks forward to continuing its growth and delivery of high quality mental health services to the community.

| Summary Statement of Profit or Loss |                     |                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                     | 2021                | 2020                |
| Commonwealth Govt. Grant Income     | \$ 2,416,620        | \$ 4,337,554        |
| State Govt. Grant Income            | \$ 2,659,009        | \$ 1,700,754        |
| NDIS Income                         | \$ 2,075,215        | \$ 2,138,385        |
| Client Program Income               | \$ 20               | \$ 2,157            |
| Interest Received                   | \$ 7,894            | \$ 30,019           |
| Gain on Disposal of Assets          | -                   | -                   |
| Sundry Income                       | \$ 1,135,287        | \$ 473,569          |
| <b>Total Income</b>                 | <b>\$ 8,294,045</b> | <b>\$ 8,682,438</b> |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>               | <b>\$ 7,821,188</b> | <b>\$ 8,559,571</b> |
| <b>Profit/(Loss)</b>                | <b>\$ 472,857</b>   | <b>\$ 122,867</b>   |

| Extract of Balance Sheet |                     |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                          | 2021                | 2020                |
| Total Assets             | \$ 4,014,848        | \$ 3,659,518        |
| Total Liabilities        | \$ 1,964,506        | \$ 2,082,033        |
| <b>Net Assets</b>        | <b>\$ 2,050,342</b> | <b>\$ 1,577,485</b> |

*your* MENTAL HEALTH matters

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