



# Annual Report 2024

# Contents

Chair/CEO Report	3
Director of Clinical Services Report	5
Director of Community Services and Business Development Report	7
Data and Charts	10
Financial Review	12

## 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

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to highlight key achievements and challenges that have shaped our journey. It has been a year of both growth announcements and tough decisions, each playing a vital role in guiding our organisation towards a more sustainable future.

This year also brought a significant change in our service offerings as we made the difficult decision to withdraw after six years of providing services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Since launching NDIS services in April 2018, we have been dedicated to delivering high-quality support to our clients. Over this period, we made significant adjustments to our systems and staffing, investing significantly in enhancing our business processes and procedures and continually improving our model of service.

However, like many NDIS providers, we faced substantial challenges, particularly with the NDIS funding model and overhead costs associated with service delivery. Despite our best efforts to explore avenues for making the service financially sustainable, we were unable to overcome these hurdles. This year we supported over 365 NDIS clients and provided almost 20,000 hours of NDIS service; yet the ongoing financial strain led our board and executive team to reevaluate the sustainability of continuing these services.

Ultimately, we made the tough but necessary decision to discontinue our NDIS service provision, acknowledging the considerable financial losses we incurred each year from this service line. The transition away from NDIS resulted in a significant financial loss this year. This includes not only the challenges of sustaining high quality service delivery but also the costs associated with withdrawing from the NDIS, which involved substantial costs including redundancies and other associated charges.

One of the most significant milestones this year was our successful tender for the **Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program (CPS)**. This program, funded by the Commonwealth Government through the Southeast Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN), officially commenced on 1 July 2024. The CPS program will enable us to expand our services across the entire Southeast of Melbourne, allowing us to reach even more individuals.

A key component of this expansion is our consortium partnership with **Kindred Clubhouse**. This collaboration brings together two organisations deeply committed to supporting individuals with lived experience of mental health. By joining together, we aim to address the mental health needs across the catchment area, more effectively leveraging our shared knowledge, resources, and passion for making a difference.

This year, our organisation, alongside other Victorian mental health service organisations, shares a deep disappointment with the Victorian Government's failure to continue to invest adequately in the critical reforms recommended by the Royal Commission. While we recognise the broader financial constraints affecting the entire state, it is vital that mental health services do not bear the brunt of these limitations. These shortcomings not only hinder the progress of the much-needed reforms but also delay the realisation of transformative changes that could significantly improve mental health outcomes across Victoria.

We would urge the government to reconsider its funding priorities and commit to the necessary investment that will ensure the Royal Commission's recommendations are fully implemented. Only with adequate resources can we ensure these reforms reach their full potential and provide the support our community desperately needs. These shortcomings will only pose additional challenges and further delays to the progress of the reforms.

“ ”

*One of the most significant milestones this year was our successful tender for the Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program (CPS)*



This year, we are again incredibly proud to recognise the outstanding efforts of our corporate sponsor, **Peninsula Hot Springs**, for their remarkable contribution to our **Breaking Barriers program**. As the organisers of the 6th annual **Ride for Relief** charity cycling and walk event, they have once again demonstrated their commitment to mental health by raising an impressive amount of funds to ensure the continuation of this vital service for another year. The Ride for Relief event has become a cornerstone of our fundraising efforts, and Peninsula Hot Springs has been instrumental in making it a success. Their dedication to supporting mental health in our community goes beyond financial contributions—they have fostered an environment of awareness, compassion, and active involvement.

Through their leadership and hard work, Peninsula Hot Springs has helped to ensure that the **Breaking Barriers** program can continue to provide critical services to those who need it most. Their support enables us to break down the stigma surrounding mental health and offer the resources necessary for individuals to thrive. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Peninsula Hot Springs for their unwavering commitment and exceptional efforts. Their involvement makes a tangible difference, and we are fortunate to have them as a partner in our mission.

This year, we would also like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of Kevin Clarke, who has served as a director on the board for the past nine years and as chair of the Finance Committee. Kevin's financial expertise and dedication have been instrumental in guiding our organisation through both prosperous and challenging times. His deep understanding of finance, governance, risk and unwavering commitment have been key to supporting our financial stability and growth. We are incredibly fortunate to have had Kevin's guidance and support, and we extend our heartfelt thanks for his outstanding service.

We also extend our gratitude to our dedicated staff, especially during the challenging period of ending the NDIS program. Your resilience and commitment were truly remarkable as we managed this transition. Your hard work ensured we continued to deliver support and uphold our care standards during this difficult time.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the new opportunities the CPS program brings. The enthusiasm and dedication our new team brings towards this program are truly inspiring. We will take this time now to regroup and assess our current resources and strategies while awaiting further developments from government. This reflection will help us better align our efforts and ensure that we continue to deliver the highest quality of support and services that we have provided for almost 40 years.

Finally, our sincere thanks to the board, partners and funding bodies for their steadfast support throughout this period as we navigate these changes together. Your guidance and commitment have been invaluable as we move forward into this new chapter.

**Paul Burness**  
Board Chairman



**Terry Paliopotas**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Director of Clinical Services Report

## Mental Health Service Delivery

We continued to deliver four programs under a stepped care model throughout the year. A lot of time was spent working closely with the consortium and governance group for the Frankston Local making sure we were delivering on the mandate. An extremely popular program became very busy during this year with its offer of an extensive range of services of clinical and non-clinical, including system navigation, peer support, and a range of other services not usually on offer from traditional Mental Health – such as exercise physiology, dietician and art therapy.

Our **Accessible Psychological Interventions (API) program** continued to be inundated across the region with high numbers of referrals. Being only one of a few free services delivering sessional therapy across the Peninsula, demand often outweighs supply. A short story below captures some of the work being done here daily.

Our **Mental Health Integrated Complex Care (MHICC) program** continues to assist people who have more severe and enduring mental health issues with the associated complexity that often ensues.

Our state funded **Early Intervention Psychosocial Support program (EIPSR)** continues to work closely with our partners at Peninsula Health providing nonclinical recovery care to people exiting state funded services.

We've worked hard this year to try and integrate the different programs for easy access to clients so they can receive the right care that meets their needs, in the right setting at the right time. We continue to advocate strongly to the funding bodies calling for and offering to lead a review of the current services to make sure they continue to be fit for service. A lot has changed in Mental Health over the past five years, and we think it's now time to take a step back and see what needs to be changed to meet the demands of the future.

We have continued to invest in our workforce assisting numerous staff to enrol and complete further studies and have been able to maintain a near 100% staff occupancy for the entire year.

## Model Of Care Review

Early in 2024, Mentis partnered with the Dept. to deliver a session launching '**Our workforce, our future**' which is a capability framework for the mental health workforce. The framework includes seven principles relating to practice and defines the 15 capabilities that outline the knowledge and skills required to deliver safe and effective care, support and treatment. During the year we also received the new **Mental Health and Wellbeing Act** with its 13+ principles.

With these two groundbreaking documents, we commenced work reviewing and updating our internal **Model of Care** overarching document which will bring all the principles together, align them with Mentis core values and set the direction for the future service delivery.

## Internal Focus

Ensuring our processes, review mechanisms, tools, policies, documents and governance structure continue to be robust and up to date allows us to continue to deliver high quality care across the range of programs. Our Clinical Governance committee reviews, monitors and advises the organisation on important issues pertaining to client care. Having access to a range of highly qualified and experienced clinicians ensures that all staff can be supported in the work they do.

## Future Planning

Moving into the last year of the current contract offers an opportunity to step back and allow for better ways of working into the future. Exciting opportunities lie ahead to make sure all our programs are current and meeting the needs of the community and those that refer to us.

**Michael Sillekens**  
Director of Clinical Services



## A Client's Story

Robert is a 35-year-old male, referred to our MHICC program by the Local Area Mental Health & Wellbeing Service due to symptoms of severe depression and anxiety.

He had a history of trauma and substance abuse, which complicated his mental health condition. He had previously presented to the emergency department after feeling suicidal and after a period of follow up from the HOPE team, was referred to MHICC.

Upon referral, an initial assessment was conducted. A care plan was developed to address his needs and goals. This care plan included cognitive-behavioral therapy to address anxiety, regular medication monitoring after recently commencing antidepressants, a physical health assessment looking particularly at sleep and diet, and regular check in with the care coordinator. Secondary goals of gaining meaningful employment, addressing social needs, accommodation and ongoing substance use were added to the care plan as his treatment was reviewed. The care coordinator facilitated a referral to WISE employment and the SECADA and assisted in warm handovers to facilitate access and engagement.

Throughout the treatment, Robert's progress was regularly monitored, and the treatment plan was adjusted as necessary. His wife was offered support and attended sessions sporadically. She didn't require ongoing referral to carer support programmes which were offered. After a year of therapy and support, Robert's condition improved significantly, and he was ready for discharge.

The discharge pathway involved a comprehensive plan to ensure continuity of care. His GP, who had remained involved for the duration, was informed of the exit and a discharge summary was sent to him. Outcome measures were monitored during the episode of care with a decline in the K10+ total score from 32 on entry to 15 on exit.

He continued his engagement with the employment agency and had started a TAFE course upskilling to become a forklift operator. His substance use had ceased completely, his moods had improved, and he reported feeling more in control of his emotions. He also developed healthier coping mechanisms to deal with stress and triggers, reducing reliance on substances. Overall, the quality of life improved, and Robert and his wife felt more hopeful and positive about the future.

Robert reported feeling supported and understood throughout his journey. He stated that he appreciated the personalised care and the regular check-ins, which made him feel seen and heard.

From the clinician's perspective, working with Robert was a rewarding experience. Despite the challenges presented by his complex needs, seeing their progress and improvement was a testament to the effectiveness of comprehensive, personalised mental health care. The clinician was able to use skills attained in recent professional development in advanced CBT to good effect. Group supervision with other clinicians allowed for reflection and sharing of skills. The only frustration voiced by the clinician was the inability to have Robert reviewed by a psychiatrist for the medications. A 291 request was obtained by the GP, but they were unable to access a psychiatrist willing to assist in a timely manner and this remained outstanding.

“ ”

*Overall, the quality of life improved, and Robert and his wife felt more hopeful and positive about the future.*

# Director of Community Services and Business Development Report

The year in review has been a period marked by significant achievements, strategic expansions, and challenging transitions. Once again, our commitment to delivering quality mental health services to our community has guided us through these developments, enabling us to continue making a meaningful impact in the community we serve.

## Highlights

One of the most notable achievements this year was our successful tender submission for the delivery of the **Commonwealth Psychosocial Support (CPS) program**. This **Southeast Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN)** funding expands our service reach to cover the entire Southeast Melbourne Primary Health Network catchment. Our services now encompass the Local Government Areas (LGA's) of Frankston, Mornington Peninsula, Kingston, Casey, Cardinia, Dandenong, Bayside, Glen Eira, Stonnington, and Port Phillip.

The CPS program is designed to deliver flexible, person-centred support and system navigation to individuals with severe and complex mental health needs. CPS focuses on the broader social determinants of health, providing tailored psychosocial supports that empower clients to achieve their personal recovery goals. The CPS supports are not only about addressing immediate challenges but also about building capacity and long-term resilience. Our approach in delivery of CPS is grounded in the principles of recovery-oriented, trauma informed practice. We prioritise the strengths, aspirations, and autonomy of clients, ensuring that they remain at the centre of the decisions affecting their care.

In the delivery of the CPS program, we have formed a new consortium partnership with **Kindred Clubhouse**. The Clubhouse offers a restorative environment for those whose lives have been significantly impacted by mental illness, providing the support of a recovery-focused community that shares the belief that mental illness is treatable. The Kindred Clubhouse operates under a peer-run, led, and governed, international model, designed to support individuals living with mental illness. Through their involvement in the Clubhouse, members gain access to opportunities to reconnect with friends and family, pursue employment, engage in education, and access the services and supports needed for their personal recovery journey.

“ ”

*In one of our biggest ever recruitment campaigns, the CPS funding facilitated the recruitment of 21 new positions*

The aligned values of this partnership offer a more integrated lived and living experience approach to our mental health supports. In a few short months, this collaboration has already shown promising results, and we are already instigating the set-up of satellite Clubhouses to enhance the breadth and depth of services available to our clients across the SEMPHN region.

In one of our biggest ever recruitment campaigns, the CPS funding facilitated the recruitment of 21 new positions, enhancing our workforce and capacity to provide comprehensive psychosocial support to an 'in need' population who have significant mental health issues, complex needs and generally no other source of funded supports.





## Highlights Cont.

In the spirit of collaboration, we also developed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with Peninsula Community Legal Services for the establishment of a new 'Legal Clinic'. We are now able to offer clients streamlined access to a lawyer for legal advice and casework in areas of law including; fines, tenancy, infringements, victims of crime, summary criminal, debt, family law, family violence, guardianship and administration, and more.

In addition, we have been building our informal partnerships with other complementary services to support the diversity and often complex needs of our clients. This has included co-locating in office spaces with Windana as specialists in alcohol and drug services, and connecting with new service providers in our expanded catchment area. We have been networking with local councils, community centres, and of course representing Mentis Assist on numerous community of practice network meetings with other mental health providers to collaborate on best practice for client care.

We continue to work with WAYSS and Housing Choices Australia to support clients in our nominated Transitional Housing Program, and we have representation on Housing Networks in both Frankston and Mornington-Peninsula to stay abreast of, and address the issues of housing insecurity and homelessness.

In other program developments, we introduced counselling services as part of our Breaking Barriers service offering, which has been a significant step forward in addressing the complex needs of clients on the Southern Peninsula. The counselling services have been well-received, offering clients a safe space to explore and manage their mental health challenges and develop recovery goals. This program and the counselling component complements our existing suite of Social Support services.

The increasing complexity of the clients we serve through our Social Support programs has been both a challenge and an opportunity. We have responded by enhancing our staff training, for example, in areas of Family Violence and in Elder Abuse Awareness, to ensure our team is equipped with the skills and knowledge required to meet these evolving needs. Our successful Aged Care audit for the Commonwealth Home Support Program is a testament to the quality and effectiveness of our services, affirming our commitment to maintaining high standards of care and support.

Another significant organisational milestone was the re-introduction of face-to-face all-staff meetings. These meetings have been instrumental in providing a sense of connection, community, and collaboration among our staff, which had been difficult to maintain during the prolonged period of remote work. The return to in-person meetings has revitalised our team spirit and reinforced our shared commitment to our vision and purpose.

## Challenges and Transitions

This year also brought some difficult decisions, most notably the closure of our NDIS services after six years of dedicated service delivery. This decision was not made lightly and was driven by a thorough review of our strategic direction and resource allocation. While it is disappointing to cease these services, staff were fully committed to supporting clients through this transition and ensured they were all connected with the alternative supports they needed.

## **Legislative and Sector Developments**

In alignment with the requirements of the new Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2023, we have been enhancing our commitment to inclusive, culturally safe, and person-centred mental health services.

To ensure we are embedding the key changes of the Act into our service delivery we have commenced with a focus on, Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Lived and Living Experience, and Supporting Individuals through improved Carer connection.

We focused on strengthening our engagement with First Nations organisations, by actively working to develop partnerships that respect and honour the cultural knowledge and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We hope to continue to grow these connections and collaborations to ensure that our services are culturally responsive and meet the unique needs of First Nations peoples.

We are also deeply committed to embedding lived experience into every aspect of our service design and delivery. To this end, we have appointed a Mental Health Peer Ambassador who provides invaluable insight to our program design and a lived experience lens to both staff and clients. Through our Participant Advisory Group (PAG), and our partnership with Kindred Clubhouse we are actively involving individuals with lived experience of mental illness and recovery in key decision-making processes. In doing this, we ensure our services reflect the realities and needs of those we support. This co-design approach empowers individuals with lived experience to shape services that are meaningful, accessible, and effective in promoting recovery and wellbeing.

In addition, acknowledging and supporting carer involvement in the lives of clients has been a focus. We recognise the critical role carers play in the mental health journey of their loved ones, and where a client consents, we actively engage with carers to ensure their voices are heard and their insights are integrated into service planning and delivery. Through consultation, care coordination, and involvement in co-design initiatives, we ensure that carers are valued partners in the care and support process. We have also updated our systems to ensure we are recording where a carer is involved and ensure we provide links to relevant referral to carer support services where appropriate.

While these efforts fulfill our obligations under the Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Act, more importantly they also enhance the quality, inclusivity, and responsiveness of the care we provide to all members of our community.

## **Looking Forward**

As we move forward, we are committed to building on the successes of this year while addressing the challenges and embracing the opportunities that no doubt lie ahead. Our strategic priorities will continue to focus on expanding access to services, enhancing the quality of care, and fostering partnerships that enable us to better serve our community.

In closing, I would like to extend my gratitude to our dedicated Mentis Assist staff, board, and partners who have worked tirelessly to support our service to clients and uphold our organisational goals. Your support, hard work and ongoing commitment has been the driving force behind our achievements this year.

Sincerely,

**Jayne Parish**  
**Director of Community Services  
and Business Development**



# Staff Information

July 2023-June 2024



**69**  
Employees (EOFY)



**110**

Total of employees throughout the year



**12**

New employees during the last 12 months



**10%**

Have been with us for over 10 years



**50**

Average age

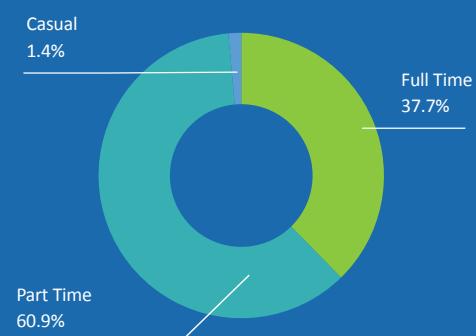


**61%**  
Staff work part-time

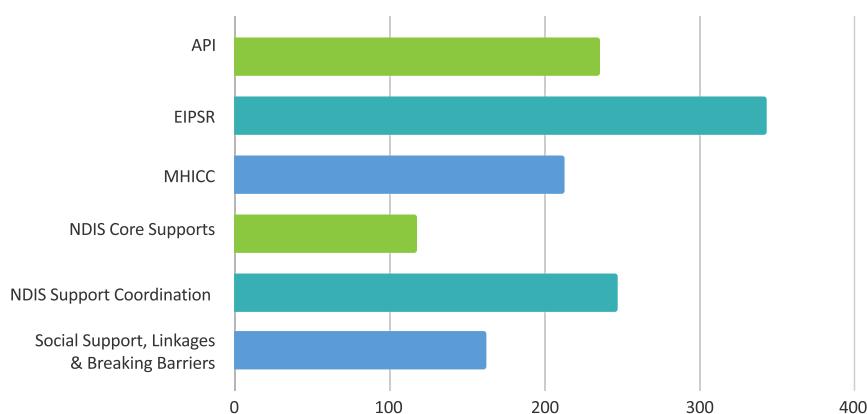
Staff is Made up of

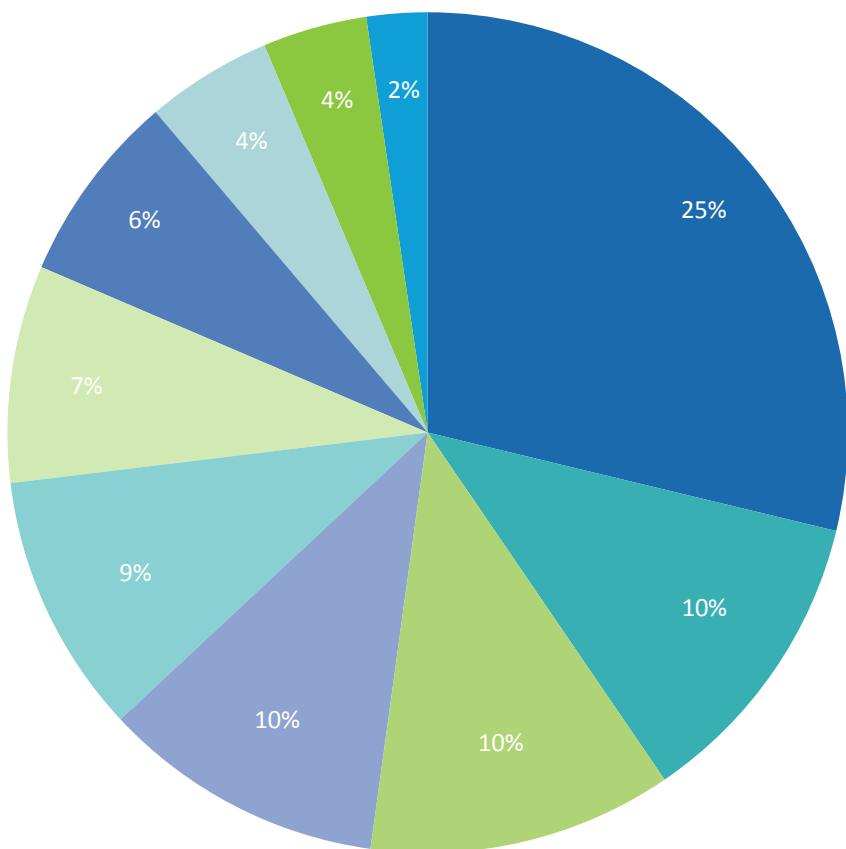


Number of Staff by Employment Type



Total number of Clients Supported during the year by programs





### Top 10 Principal Diagnoses Across Programs

Depressive disorder NOS	25%
Bipolar disorder	10%
Mixed anxiety and depressive symptoms	10%
Anxiety symptoms	9%
Personality disorder	7%
Schizophrenia	6%
Other psychiatric diagnosis	4%
Post-traumatic stress disorder	4%
Depressive symptoms	2%
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	2%

## Summary Program Information

Year ending 30 June 2024



**1320**

Clients Supported during the year  
(excluding the Frankston Local)



**560**

Total number of new  
Clients during the year  
(excluding the Frankston Local)

# Financial Review

In what was a challenging year operationally for the organisation and wider mental health sector, the difficult decision to cease the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) program after six years of sustained effort was made in the latter part of the financial year. Regrettable as it was, the decision was necessary given the negative financial impact NDIS was having on Mentis Assist. The deficit for 2023/24 of \$674,555 was largely due to NDIS.

Total service delivery Income decreased primarily due to the reduction of NDIS revenue. All other programs including the new Frankston Local program, which commenced in the previous financial year, had a positive influence on both service delivery and finances. Looking forward, another new program commencing 1 July 2024, the Commonwealth Psychosocial Support (CPS) program, which focusses on supporting individuals with lived mental health experience, and allows the organisation to have a considerable presence and wide-ranging array of programs on both the Peninsula and southeast regions of Melbourne, improving our financial position.

Total Expenditure increased throughout the financial year due to the costs associated with discontinuing with NDIS, namely by way of redundancies to staff aligned with this program and a reduction in Corporate support personnel. A focus on optimisation of expenditure continues as the organisation moves into the next financial year.

The organisation's Balance Sheet position saw a reduction in Total Equity throughout 2023-24 to \$1,484,735 due to the losses both through the operation and cessation of the NDIS program.

With the commencement of our new program from July 2024, Mentis Assist is focussed on providing an expanded service offering to a larger cohort of individuals across the southeast of Melbourne, further enhancing the already sound and respected reputation of Mentis Assist in the mental health sector.

Summary Statement of Profit or Loss		
	2024	2023
Commonwealth Govt. Grant Income	\$2,496,261	\$2,551,713
State Govt. Grant Income	\$4,100,397	\$4,322,513
NDIS Income	\$1,729,936	\$2,476,485
Client Program Income	\$2,923	\$2,278
Interest Received	\$80,473	\$19,923
Gain on Disposal of Assets	\$29,136	\$18,182
Sundry Income	\$340,934	\$329,426
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$8,780,059</b>	<b>\$9,720,520</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$9,454,614</b>	<b>\$9,358,976</b>
<b>Profit/(Loss)</b>	<b>(\$674,555)</b>	<b>\$361,544</b>

Extract of Balance Sheet		
	2024	2023
Total Assets	\$4,022,720	\$4,035,016
Total Liabilities	\$2,537,986	\$1,875,725
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,484,735</b>	<b>\$2,159,291</b>



*your* MENTAL HEALTH matters

---

23-25 Yuilles Road, Mornington, 3931  
T 1300 MENTIS (1300 636 847) F 03 5970 5055

info@mentisassist.org.au  
[mentisassist.org.au](http://mentisassist.org.au)