

ANNUAL REPORT

2019



Registered  
NDIS Provider

For better mental health

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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

**In the past year, Mentis Assist has worked hard in providing services and programs to support people with their mental health. We celebrated a number of significant outcomes that will enable us to continue delivering client-driven quality services within an environment that is challenged by significant reforms.**

Key to much of this success was the development and implementation of new and innovative ways to strengthen our capacity to provide enhanced services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This included working closely with Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in Melbourne's outer east, south-east and bayside regions to offer the federally funded Stepped Care Model, ensuring our clients receive the right care and support they need to meet their individual needs. Our goal is to ensure those who seek our support have access to the most appropriate services — including the ability to step up and step down to different levels of care as they move along their recovery journey.

Throughout 2018-2019, we supported 2,380 clients across our programs, including 1,572 clients under the Stepped Care Model. Our ongoing collaboration with PHNs will continue to inform and refine our approach to 'stepped care'.

As we transition the remaining clients from our Mental Health Community Support Services and Partners in Recovery programs to the NDIS, it's important we take the time to reflect and celebrate the incredible achievements of both programs. Each has been exceptional in the support they have provided people with severe and persistent mental illness, ensuring each client was linked to the most appropriate community service.

Staff from both programs are to be congratulated for the care they have taken while working with clients and their families to guide and support their move to the NDIS.

### Adapting to change

An expected 2018-2019 financial year deficit was due in part to mental health services moving to the NDIS and therefore requiring organisations like ours to adapt our cultural and system processes to a new service model. This additional expenditure was planned for and, against projected lower financial returns than in previous years, funded for by our organisation's retained earnings.

Despite this, we saw the cost as a necessary financial investment. A key driver of this investment was a responsibility to not lose the intangible asset of our goodwill and extensive knowledge and experience in the mental health care space. With a long and proud history of over 30 years in providing services, we are committed to seeing Mentis Assist retain its outstanding reputation within the communities in which we operate.

To offset some of the financial deficit and to assist with our transition to the NDIS, in May 2019 we successfully applied to the state government through its NDIS Transition Support Readiness Grant for Community-Managed Mental Health Providers. This funding will be used to adjust our business operations, strengthen our workforce, including the retraining of existing staff to adapt to a new service delivery model, and implement new business systems. Once implemented, we are confident of our organisation's ability to deliver sustainable, quality NDIS-funded support to people with a complex mental health disability.



### Workforce support

We are committed to investing in our staff through a range of initiatives to support them to do their jobs effectively. To assist with this, we have been creating new invoicing, rostering, tracking and marketing systems. The automation of processes is paramount for continued growth, allowing us to provide accurate and immediate data that is funder/client driven, risk alert and ensures employee safety. In a globally shifting and commercially driven market, our business transformation has been well implemented and we are confident of long-term sustainability.

To meet the growing demand for our services, we increased both employees and our community presence. Along with welcoming 60 new staff, we opened two additional offices, one at Narre Warren and a new head office at Frankston. Key to both sites is their high visibility and accessible locations for clients and staff.

### Valued partnerships

We continued to develop our community partnership with Peninsula Hot Springs, whose strong advocacy work for mental health awareness and wellbeing complements our own goals of empowering people with complex mental health needs to seek the support they need to enjoy a meaningful life.

Our partnership was further strengthened in October 2018 when we were honoured to be the beneficiary of the Peninsula Hot Springs' inaugural 'Ride for Relief' charity event. Held on the spectacular Mornington Peninsula, the event raised over \$18,000 for Mentis Assist. Like the many federal, state and local government funding bodies who support our work, we are incredibly indebted to the ongoing partnership of Peninsula Hot Springs and for its continued belief in the difference we are aiming to make.

It is appropriate to note the retirement of three long standing members of our Board of Directors: Sue Kavanagh, Elain Bakker and Warren Cecil. Each resigned from the board during the year and we take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks for their valuable contribution to the governance of our organisation over many years. Similarly, we also thank the staff and volunteers who left us throughout the year.

Of course, none of our achievements would be possible without the combined contributions of our staff, volunteers, supporters and Board of Directors. Each is pivotal to the ongoing success of Mentis Assist and the quality of services we provide to our clients.

As we look to the year ahead, we will continue to seek out ways in which to improve the lives of all those who seek our support. And while we acknowledge the many reforms facing our sector, improving people's lives is at the heart of what we do. Despite the challenges, it's an exciting time to be in mental health services, with much opportunity for innovative services and programs. We are committed to working in collaboration with government and other community organisations to deliver services that meet both client and sector expectations.

“Of course, none of our achievements would be possible without the combined contributions of our staff, volunteers, supporters and Board of Directors.”



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



**Terry Palioportas**  
Chief Executive Officer



## DIRECTOR OF SERVICES REPORT

When the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System delivers its interim report in November 2019 (and final report in 2020), Mentis Assist will be among many mental health service organisations to welcome its recommendations. We look forward to a time when the stigma and discrimination around mental health no longer exists and people living with mental illness have easy access to the support they need to enjoy a meaningful life.

With an estimated 45% of Australians aged 16 to 85 experiencing a mental health condition in their lifetime, it comes as no surprise that the services and programs provided

by Mentis Assist have increased by over 65% in the past two years. Last year, the number of people accessing our services increased 129%, to 2,380.

From our work in the late 1980s and into the 1990s we have been a consistent voice in supporting the deinstitutionalisation of mental health services across the Mornington Peninsula and a strong advocate for increased client choice and control over how they receive support. The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and its advocacy for client choice is one which strongly aligns with our organisation's own ethos.

### A NEW ERA

Historically, Mentis Assist services were available only to those with a long-term psychosocial disability or mental illness. However, over the years, clients have told us that with early intervention support the likelihood of them developing a significant disability or experiencing considerable disadvantage would be markedly reduced.

Therefore, in the past year we worked to diversify the range and breadth of services to meet this demand for early recovery-oriented services.

In April, 2019 we were successful in an open tender to provide Early Intervention Psychological Support Response (EIPSR) to individuals experiencing mental illness and living in the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula regions. EIPSR is a new support model for people receiving adult mental health services and who either do not qualify for the NDIS or are experiencing a delay or difficulty in accessing the scheme.

The new initiative means we can support up to 120 individuals over a short or medium-term basis who need assistance to live independently and safely in the community through assistance with accessing community services, practical daily living skills, managing their mental health and support to transition to the NDIS.

Working with Peninsula Health to deliver EIPSR, we are confident the program will be especially beneficial for those with emerging, episodic and persistent mental health issues.

With the anticipated growth to come from implementing new services, we expanded our focus to support a more diverse population. However, this decision wasn't without its risks. New programs offered through Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and the state government, while welcomed and relevant, often receive limited funding and short-term contracts, making it difficult for us to plan long-term for a client's continuity of care, and workforce planning.

However, we recognise that with the demise of many previously block funded programs we need to move to early intervention, prevention and clinical supports. This was boosted with federal government funding through PHNs to introduce interventions under the Stepped Care Model. Mentis Assist now supports over 1,500 clients through Stepped Care programs in Melbourne's outer east, south-east and bayside regions.

These changes will enable us to build a stronger and expanded presence in early intervention, stepped care, psycho-social rehabilitation and prevention services further enabling us to address the needs of people with mild and moderate mental health issues. We also continue to provide valued services to the carers of people with a mental illness and to older people (aged over 65).

## Working with the NDIS

At Mentis Assist we understand there is no simple, one size fits all solution to what are often complex, multi-faceted issues. This philosophy underpins all areas of our work and the people we support – those affected by mental health issues, people living with various types of disability, their families, friends and the wider community.

Much of our work over the past year has focused on refining our participation in the NDIS. As the scheme was never designed to replicate or replace the state-funded, community managed mental health service system, we have had to work hard to manage this integration.

The NDIS design, especially its support packages (we provide core support and support coordination), has created challenges. The scheme's structure - defined in the awarding of money and identified goals in a package for clients – assumes a permanent disability and ongoing support. However, this premise is difficult to reconcile with our vision and mission of supporting an individual's wellbeing and ultimate recovery. Many of those we support significantly improve their lives to the point where they can successfully exit our services (in fact, 70% do within three years or less). This success occurred because of the many support programs we provided, which quickly built an individual's capacity and confidence to independently manage on their own.

But we acknowledge the need to work within the NDIS framework and believe in building successful partnerships to improve the delivery of our services and, more importantly, to achieve the best outcomes for the individuals and their families that we support. We will continue to support clients in whatever way we can, either through the NDIS, or helping them to access the most appropriate services.

## Accreditation results

In March 2019 Mentis Assist underwent the stringent three-yearly accreditation review process. Our high results bear witness to sound organisational governance, board leadership, policies and practices and the talent, professionalism, heart and commitment of our staff.

We were successful in achieving reaccreditation in:

- National Standards for Mental Health Services
- Health and Community Standards

We were extremely pleased with our results, with the accreditors noting that Mentis Assist met all the criteria to a very high level.



## Our workforce

Mentis Assist is committed to developing and strengthening a respected, valued and skilled workforce across all levels and services of the organisation. This is at the forefront of all we do. We recognise the significant and important role our workforce plays in helping us to achieve our vision for an inclusive community where every person can safely imagine, set goals, create opportunities and reach their own personal potential.

There are many challenges in recruiting, retaining and supporting a workforce with appropriate competencies without compromising the quantity and quality of support available. We have worked hard to acquire the right people and tools to meet these challenges.

Delivering services across an expanded and larger geographic footprint has also been difficult for our organisational systems and procedures, requiring us to make a significant financial investment to strengthen our capacity for today and well into the future.

Program managers, team leaders, coordinators and staff are to be congratulated for their efforts and I am confident we have developed the correct workforce structures to continue to adapt to the changing requirements of our community.

**Mark Smith**  
Director of Services

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

**In a financial year of sustained organisational growth, including the first full year of NDIS operations and expansion of stepped care services to the outer east region of Victoria, a budgeted result has been achieved.**

In light of these additional services, Total Income increased from the previous financial year. NDIS income increased steadily throughout the year as the organisation facilitated the change to fee-for-service, from previously departmentally (DHHS) funded client services.

Total Expenditure also increased year on year, with additional employee and administrative costs enabling all services throughout the organisation to be established and grow to meet client demand.

Total Assets and Total Liabilities both increased overall, with the organisation receiving DHHS grant funding to support the continued growth of NDIS beyond the first year of operations.

Taking into account the year end deficit, Total Equity has decreased to \$1,454,618.

Following a year of immense growth, the organisation is well-equipped to tackle the 2019-20 financial year and consolidate its footprint in the NDIS and stepped care environments.

Summary Statement of Profit or Loss		
	2019	2018
Grants	\$2,043,915	\$2,639,835
PHN - Income	\$4,178,376	\$2,008,024
EIPSR - Income	\$304,125	-
NDIS Income	\$848,555	\$13,038
Client Program	\$3,160	\$4,587
Interest Received	\$45,622	\$62,555
Gain on Disposal of Assets	\$17,160	-
Sundry Income	\$27,249	\$1,831
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$7,468,162</b>	<b>\$4,729,870</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$7,958,354</b>	<b>\$4,595,971</b>
<b>Profit / (Loss)</b>	<b>(\$490,192)</b>	<b>\$133,899</b>

Extract of Balance Sheet		
	2019	2018
Total Assets	\$3,545,063	\$3,209,323
Total Liabilities	\$2,090,445	\$1,264,513
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$1,454,618</b>	<b>\$1,944,810</b>

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