



# 2014

## 59th Annual Report

## *Our Mission*

To create an environment where people can achieve their aspirations.



The **Ascent** Group

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## CONTENTS

## PAGE

Chairman's report	2
Chief Executive Officer's Report	4
Treasurer's Report	6
Governance & Leadership Profiles	8
Support, Events and Awards for 2013 / 14	10
Print Pack Post	12
Acacia Park Enterprises	13
Transition to Work	14
Community Living Services	15
Lifeskills Participation	16
Respite	18
Home and Community Care	19
Drought Assistance Initiative	20



**Australian  
Disability  
Enterprises**  
More than just good business



*home and community care*

A JOINT COMMONWEALTH AND STATE/TERRITORY PROGRAM  
PROVIDING FUNDING AND ASSISTANCE FOR AUSTRALIANS IN NEED



**Human Services**  
Ageing, Disability & Home Care

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2013/2014

The most significant, though sad event of our 2013/2014 year was the death of our long serving Chief Executive Officer Kevin Mead.

Kevin's near fifteen year tenure guided our organisation through a period of significant change, namely from the less competitive block funding model of service to the more competitive individualised funding phase we are now entering.

His contribution was immense.

Over the period of Kevin's illness & up until the appointment of our new Chief Executive Officer our staff & senior management team, particularly Finance Controller Michelle Cooper & Acting Chief Executive Officer Di Gray worked tirelessly under difficult conditions.

On behalf of the Board I thank them for their outstanding contributions.

The Board conducted a thorough search & has been fortunate to obtain the services of Peter Westbrook as our new Chief Executive Officer. Peter is a very experienced executive with many years of senior level management in the disability area.

During the year we have concentrated on preparing for the coming changes in the disability sector as a result of the soon to be introduced National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Our balance sheet has been strengthened & we have again shown a creditable working surplus. I am confident that we will be able to remain a provider of quality service & be the provider of choice in the New England area.





As you are no doubt aware under the NDIS individual funding packages will allow each person to decide which products & services they would prefer in an open market situation.

This freedom of choice though poses some difficult issues for both individuals & service providers. The government has expressed concerns that peoples' expectations may be too high, but has also expressed concern that service providers may tend to over servicing which could lead to serious financial losses.

The NDIS pilot schemes currently being run have to date shown a divergence between the hourly rate the government believes service providers should charge & the hourly amount service providers claim they need to cover expenses. Hopefully a sensible solution will be found that is satisfactory to all parties.

I have already mentioned our staff & their contribution but I would like to thank my fellow Board members, families, carers, sponsors & supporters for their dedication during the past year.

Lastly I would like to thank all those individuals whom we support for their co-operation & resilience. We really exist only for them.

I commend this report to you.

**Huntly Gordon**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huntly Gordon', written in a cursive style.

Chairman

## CEO'S REPORT 2013/14

The strength of the Ascent Group, as a provider of Quality Community Services, has really been proven over what has been a very difficult year for the Organisation and the Board of Directors. Upon taking over the CEO responsibility in July I was immediately delighted to see that, despite the unexpected leadership and Management changes that had occurred during the year, the frontline support staff had maintained the high standard of support services to people with disability that the Organisation has been proudly providing in the Armidale Region for nearly 60 years.



There is currently great change occurring within the Disability sector following the commitment in July 2013 by the Commonwealth and all State Governments to Implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). During the year the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) was set up and has delivered the scheme through four trial sites: the Hunter in NSW, the Barwon region in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. As at 30th June 2014, the Agency had approved 7316 new plans for people with disability, allowing them access to the reasonable and necessary support they require to lead an ordinary life.

To remain sustainable and relevant, in this rapidly changing market driven environment, the focus for the Ascent Group in the immediate future can be best described in four major themes:

### **Transition**

While the National Disability Insurance Scheme is being rolled out towards a planned full implementation by 2017/18, our current funding contracts with the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, due to expire in July 2015, have been extended initially for a further twelve months. The contract extension is however conditional upon the implementation of a Quality Management System and verification, by an approved third party, of the organisational performance against the NSW Disability Service Standards.

During the next twelve months we will begin structuring all service delivery to increase the emphasis on individualisation and alignment of support to costed and agreed budgeted service plans.

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme**

While it is not anticipated the full roll out of the NDIS into the Armidale Region will be before 2016 – 2018, we have begun the planning process. A Strategic Plan review was undertaken in July 2014 and we have aligned our strategic direction to the Industry Development Fund NDIS Roadmap, identifying seven Key Objectives to be achieved in order to deliver a Market Based Business.

These Key Objectives cover the following domains and will underpin the structural, operational and cultural improvements we will be implementing into the Organisation over the next two years:

- **Strategy**
- **Governance**
- **Clients and Market Focus**
- **Financial Sustainability**
- **People and Capability**
- **Information and Knowledge management**
- **Quality Management and Improvement**

### **Innovation**

It is often said "Change brings Opportunity" and it is with this in mind we will be "looking inwards" to review the delivery of programs and services, based on feedback from clients, carers and staff with an emphasis on increasing individualisation and quality standards.

The innovation agenda will also mean intensifying "looking outward" to ensure we are responding to need and are providing contemporary and relevant services that position us as a Provider of Choice in a competitive marketplace.

### **Community Involvement**

During 2015 we will be celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year and acknowledging the support given to the Organisation by the Armidale Community and surrounding New England Region.

Community support, in the nature of families and clients, volunteers, donations, partnerships with other disability providers and local businesses, will be as important in future years as it has been in the past, to support our clients in their achievement of full inclusion in the community. We will continue to rely on the local business community for support in Acacia Park Enterprises. We will rely on local education providers, sporting and service clubs, family support, social groups and volunteers who work closely with the people with disability we support.

The Ascent Group has an incredible history and, I believe, an equally bright future. I am looking forward to working closely with all involved to introduce the changes that are required to position The Ascent Group as a prominent provider of Disability Services and Individualised Support.

In concluding, I would like to thank everyone I have met or spoken to over the phone since taking up the role of CEO, who have been encouraging and have welcomed my family and me to Armidale.

**Peter Westbrook**



Chief Executive Officer



# TREASURER'S REPORT 2013/2014

## Financial Performance

During 2013-14 The Ascent Group recorded an operating surplus of \$156,212, with the profit on the disposal of assets contributing \$109,361 to this result.

This compares favourably to the 2012-13 surplus of \$129,744. This result has been achieved despite the loss of the profitable Disability Employment Services contract in March 2013.



In summary, the operating results for the year are as follows:

	2013-14	2012-13
Total Income	5,486,980	5,800,871
Total Expenditure	5,330,768	5,671,127
<b>Surplus</b>	<b>156,212</b>	<b>129,744</b>

While total income has fallen, due to the loss of the Disability Employment Services which was worth \$499,467 in 2012-13, revenue from other Government grants, business services, trading and investment income has improved.

During the year we have also been able to contract expenditure on employee benefits (down 3.9%) and supplier expenses (down 10%). This positive result reflects the focus the organisation has placed on becoming more efficient with the resources available, and positioning the organisation for anticipated changes in funding arrangements under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

## Financial Position

A summary of the Financial Position of the company as at 30 June 2014 is as follows:

	2013-14	2012-13
Current Assets	1,532,090	1,381,453
Non-Current Assets	2,278,019	2,240,463
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>3,810,109</b>	<b>3,621,916</b>
Current Liabilities	1,123,970	1,080,518
Non-Current Liabilities	329,985	341,456
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,453,955</b>	<b>1,421,974</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>2,356,154</b>	<b>2,199,942</b>

These results demonstrate that we remain in a sound financial position, with net assets of \$2,356,154 at financial year end. This includes Cash and Cash Equivalents of \$1,390,098 providing sufficient liquidity to cover the Company's current liabilities, including employee entitlements.

The level of employee entitlement has been a focus for the Finance Committee and strategies are being developed to reduce the levels of these liabilities.

### **Cash Position**

During 2013-14 cash increased by \$314,462 by the end of the financial year. Net cash from operating activities was \$260,733, driven by lower supplier and employees costs. Proceeds from the sale of assets, which included the sale of 95 O'Dell Street Armidale, exceeded our capital investment in property, plant and equipment by \$66,606, even with the our capital investments increasing from 2012-13 due to the capital work on the Ascent Café.

The current ratio (that is current assets divided by current liabilities) provides an indicator of our ability to satisfy our obligations in the short term. During 2013-14 our current ratio improved to 1.36:1 from 1.28:1 in 2012-13, reinforcing that the organisation is in sound financial position.

### **Outlook**

A conservative operating profit of \$62,208 is budgeted for 2014-15. Moderate capital expenditure has been budgeted for, with a program of capital improvement being implemented. Both budgets will be reviewed in early 2015 to incorporate changes to operations and directions being set in the new three year Strategic Plan.

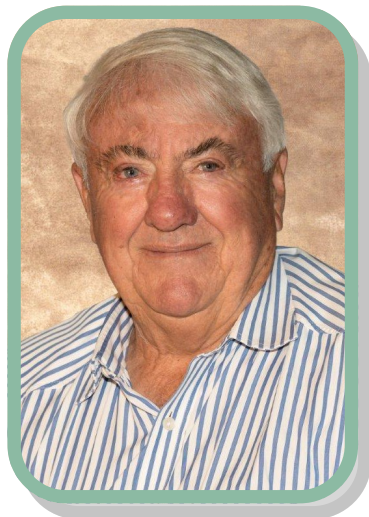
The Finance Committee is focussed on ensuring the long term viability of the organisation, this encompasses the need to build on our working capital and increase our liquidity. Improving our revenue sources and streamlining our service delivery, including our corporate activities, will be key themes during 2014-15.

### **Will Warrick**



Treasurer

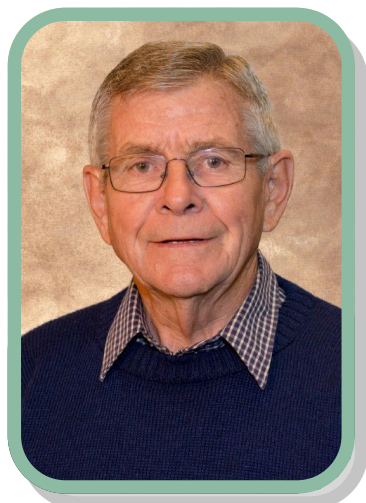
## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



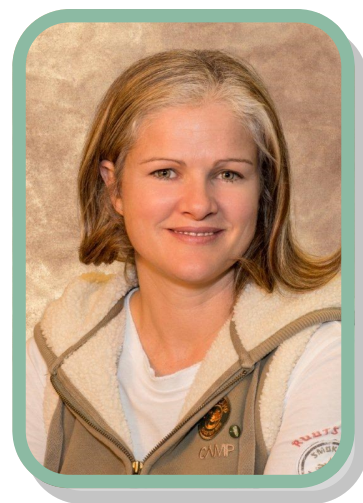
< **Huntly Gordon** accepted the role of **Chairman** of The Ascent Group in 2006. He has been a member of the Board since 1995, serving as Vice President also on the LifeSkills Participation Advisory Committee. He has a background in law, managed the family grazing property at Ben Lomond with his wife, Cath and has recently retired to Armidale. Their son Alasdair is a client of The Ascent Group



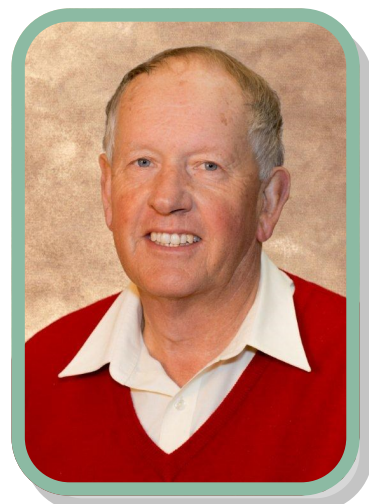
**Ruth Blanch** > has been a member of the Board since 1995 and has served on both the Supported Employment and Open Employment Committees. Ruth has been very active in the Armidale community and has held the positions of President of both Special Olympics and the Country Women's Association. Ruth's son Greg is a supported employee of The Ascent Group. Last year Ruth chaired the Quality Improvement Committee.



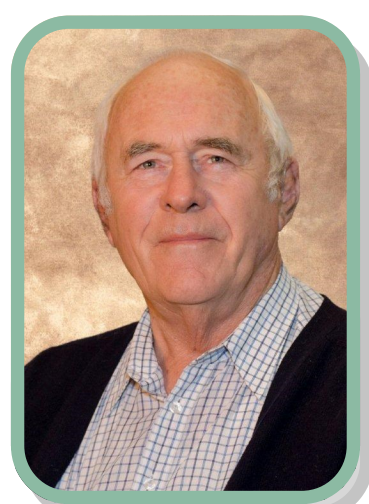
< **Rick Mills** joined the Board in December 2000 and has served on the Business Services Sub-Committee. A third generation Armidalian, Rick has strong ties to the business community, including as a former Director of Richardson's Hardware & Agriculture, also as former Director ABS Building Society for over 30 years and Chairman since 1993. Rick has been a member of Armidale North Rotary Club since 1971, and was previously a member of the Board of Rusden Enterprises from 1978 to 1982.



**Caroline Coupland** > Joined the Board in 2013, following a working career in the USA and Italy, but mostly as a private sector lawyer in Australia with Baker & Johnson, Deacons (now Norton Rose) Slater & Gordon and six years as a Lawyer in the Compliance Directorate and the Investment Management Team at ASIC. Raised in North Queensland, Caroline moved to Armidale in 2012 with her husband Sam and their three children. Their daughter Charlotte has Williams Syndrome and through providing her support Caroline has gained an immense understanding of the challenges experienced by people with disability and the issues currently facing the sector.

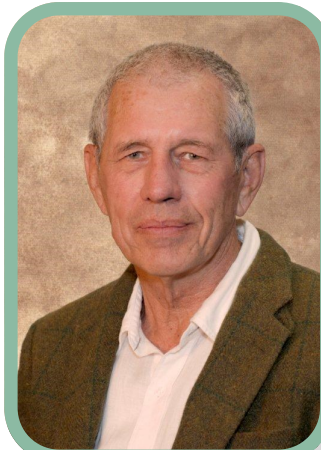


< **Will Warrick** joined the Board in January 2013. During the last few years Will has held the position of Treasurer. Will is a qualified Chartered Accountant (1985-2011) and has a Bachelor of Financial Administration. Will was a Partner with Roberts and Morrow retiring in 2011. Will is on Ascent's Management, Planning and Finance Committee.



**Brian McRae** > joined the Board in November 2011. Brian has practiced as a Veterinarian and Business Manager. Brian's son Matthew is a client of The Ascent Group. Brian has also been a Director of Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Homes.

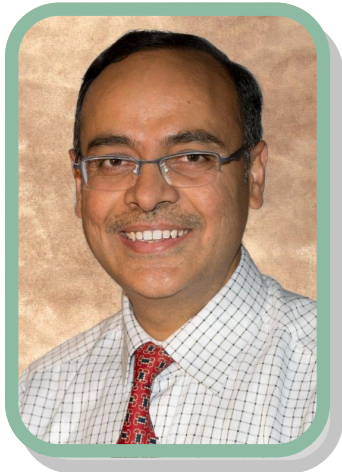




**< Ray Phillips** was originally elected to the Board in 2005. He has been employed with NSW Police Force and now NSW Corrective Services. Ray continues the strong connection between the Phillips family and The Ascent Group. Ray is the nephew of Jack Phillips, who, along with several local families, was the driving force behind the establishment of the organisation in 1955.



**Dr Jane Habib >** joined the Ascent board in 2013. Jane completed a degree in Naturopathy at Southern Cross University in 1999 and then went on to study medicine, graduating from Queensland University in 2004. Jane worked at the Cairns Base Hospital as an Intern for 6 years. Jane is currently a GP at Integral Health here in Armidale. She loves general practice, and her special interests are preventive health, chronic disease management, women's health and tropical medicine.



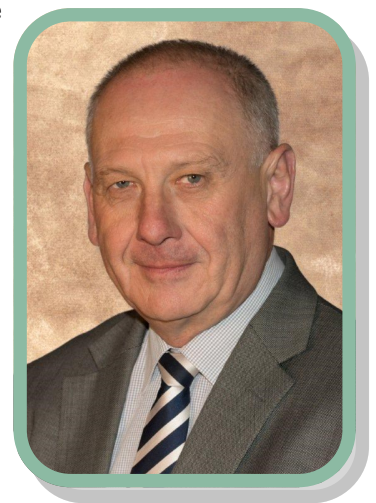
**< Dr Ashfaq Khan** joined the Ascent board in mid-2013. Dr Ashfaq Ahmad Khan is a Senior Lecturer in Accounting at the UNE Business School, University of New England. He teaches and researches in the areas of financial and management accounting. Dr Khan completed his Masters and Bachelors in Pakistan and started off his professional career as a commercial banker in 1995. He served Pakistan's commercial banking sector for eight plus years before coming to Australia in February 2003. He completed his Doctorate degree from University of Wollongong in 2008 and worked at a university in Oman as Assistant Professor before joining the University of New England in early 2010. He is also a CPA.

## EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Peter Westbrook >** was appointed to the position of CEO in July 2014 and has extensive Executive Management experience gained over 27 years working in Senior positions with prominent Disability Organisations, also in Public administration and small business. Peter has an outstanding record in delivering strategic change with project outcomes that have ensured customer's requirements have been satisfied and relationships with Government agencies established and developed.



**< Michelle Cooper** joined The Ascent Group in April 2010 as the Finance and Corporate Services Manager and prior to this was the Finance Manager for another local not-for profit. Michelle has extensive experience in Commonwealth Government, working for the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for 11 years and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for 4 years. At the ABS Michelle was the Assistant Director for Corporate Planning before moving to head up the International Trade in Services compilation section. Michelle holds a Bachelor of Economics and a Graduate Diploma in Financial Management from the University of New England, a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and is an Member of CPA Australia.



## SUPPORT, EVENTS AND AWARDS

### Thankyou morning tea at Walker House

A "Very Special" thank you morning tea was held in February to thank representatives from the Greater Building Society for their outstanding donation of "\$50,000" to Walker House and to acknowledge the support received from the Armidale community in making this visionary, purpose built project a reality.



# THANKYOU.

NEWCASTLE PERMANENT  
**CHARITABLE  
FOUNDATION**

Here for our community



### Opening of the Ascent Café

Another major event in February was the Launch of the Acacia Park Café marked by an official "Cake Cutting Ceremony" to thank the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation for their generous donation of \$95,000 which made this "State of the Art" Hospitality Training facility possible.



## SUPPORT, EVENTS AND AWARDS ..... continued

### The Art Show

In May, our Art Show at Acacia Park Cafe showcased the talent of the Artists within Ascent.

The event attracted the attention of Hon. John George AJAKA, MLC Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra. The Minister visited "OUR SHOW" along with local MP Adam Marshall Member for Northern Tablelands and presented awards to "The Artists"



### Business Chamber Awards Winner

After becoming a finalist in the 2013 Armidale Business Chamber Awards and winning the Employer OF Choice Category, we progressed as a finalist in the New England North West Regional Awards.

At the prestigious Gala Awards Presentation in Tamworth The Ascent Group was announced "Regional Winner 2013" NSW Business Chamber Employer of Choice.





# ACACIA PARK ENTERPRISES

## PRINT, PACK, POST

The Team at Acacia Park have reported another busy year for all of our Supported Employees. Business strengthened with our Print Pack Post operation which supported the investment in new high speed, high resolution full colour Konica Digital Printing technology.

The new equipment has greatly improved the capability and capacity of the business while providing the opportunity for enhanced skill development of our staff.



## PACKAGING & ASSEMBLY

We package and assemble customer supplied products for distribution through their supply chain, this has provided a range of activity for our staff including assembly collating, inserting and despatch of goods





## CONFIDENTIAL

## DOCUMENT DESTRUCTION

This service has continued to provide many Armidale businesses with a cost effective and secure means of disposing of sensitive and confidential data, in an environmentally friendly manner.

The final product, after destruction, is fed into our Recycling system and combines with other collected material to be compacted and sold to our customers for export or local remanufacturing.



## TRANSITION TO WORK

Transition to Work is a two year program offered to school leavers with a disability to develop the skills, confidence and qualifications needed to get the job they want.

Throughout the year the program was a great success delivering positive learning and work experience outcomes for six participants.

Training and support has been individually tailored to provide the best opportunity for each participant to achieve their own employment goals.



Local businesses supported the Program by offering Work Sampling placements in:

- Hospitality**
- Administration**
- Personal Fitness training**
- Manufacturing**
- Metal fabrication**

The practical experience was underpinned by the delivery of accredited training and achievement of industry accredited certificates.





## COMMUNITY LIVING

### SUPPORT

Our homes in Armidale have continued to provide caring and supportive lifestyle environments for 17 people with disability who need full time support to live a healthy, happy and active life.

Well-being and safety is managed with a balance of motivation to achieve the best of the residents' abilities through inclusive community activity and participation.

The year was busy with local community involvement in activities of choice which included, horse riding at Harlow Park, sailing at Malpas Dam, music therapy and drama.

Trips away from Armidale were made to the Ability Inc. Self-Advocacy conference Lake Ainsworth near Ballina, Holidays to Coffs harbour and the Gold Coast were a great success and provided ongoing interest and memories when all the photos were printed and put into albums.

Links were maintained with the Special Olympics through regular training and participation in Carnivals at Port Macquarie and the Central Coast



### DROP IN

During the year we have provided "Drop In" support to 15 people with disability who are living independently in the Armidale Community.

A range of flexible and individualised services, which are delivered to their home, continue to ensure personal needs are met and they can be active participating members of the community.



## LIFESKILLS PARTICIPATION

Our Lifeskills Participation programs proved very popular throughout the year with demand for the leisure, recreational pursuits and therapies achieving record levels. Programs were designed by the people with disability who then, with support, worked towards achieving their own Life Skill goals.

The centre based programs provided at "Leone's Place" included arts and crafts, gardening, exercise and gym, cooking, games and IT based activity using Ipad's and computers.



The Community access programs that were most popular and requested were horse riding, day trips, and social outings just for coffee and shopping.

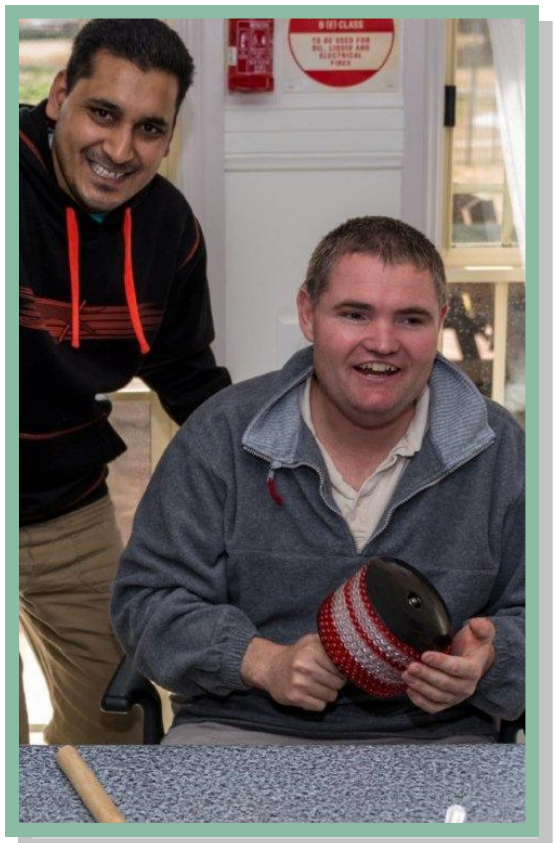




Music therapy at NECOM with Natalie was in high demand by all who had the opportunity to participate.

Unfortunately the lack of available sessions has limited the number of people being able to enjoy the pleasure and benefits of this activity.

Cooking groups at PCYC have been very participative and proven to be more popular and have greater rewards for the participants than an evening merely watching My Kitchen Rules.





# RESpite

Throughout the year our Carer Respite Services provided planned short term breaks for families and other unpaid carers of people with disability and for people with mental health issues

**Flexible Respite** services were offered through the year to **Older Carers**, over 60 years, or for indigenous carers, over 45 years. Support has been provided for planned short term breaks and delivered across the following diverse range of options to suit individual need:

- **Centre based**
- **Overnight stays in our purpose designed cottage**
- **Day activity**
- **In home support**
- **Peer support**
- **Group or recreational holidays**
- **Community support**



**Mental Health Respite** services are available to primary carers of people with mental health issues and or disability

**Leisure Link** offers individual and group programs including art, sport and social activities for children between the ages of 12 and 18 living with disability for:

- **Weekend support**
- **Holidays**
- **After school support**
- **Evening and leisure activity**

All respite recipients received a tailored and focused support program to best suit individual needs and where possible satisfy carer requests.

## HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

Uralla HACC conducts four programs in the Uralla Shire for older people living in their own homes and for younger people with a disability.

### The programs include:

- **Centre Based Day Care**
- **Social Support**
- **Community Transport**
- **Home maintenance and Gardening service**

Without our valuable volunteers we could not deliver these critical services.

Jacque has been a volunteer for over four years. She has driven people to various appointments and places, assisted them with shopping and visited them in hospital.

Jacque says, "I've always considered myself lucky in life and it seems only natural to help others when I could. Volunteering gives me satisfaction and purpose and a sense of belonging in the community."

One of our clients says, "I look forward to coming on Mondays to be part of the activities such as bingo, gardening, craft theme days and outings. I enjoy playing bingo and being amongst friends the best. The outings are good, I enjoy it when we go to the movies or out for lunch.

I was struggling with my weekly shopping and getting to medical appointments. Now I have a volunteer each week to assist me with my shopping. A volunteer also drives me to medical appointments in Armidale when I need to go. This means I'm still independent and don't have to rely on my family who all work."

If you would like to become a volunteer or receive services, please call our Coordinator, Catherine on **6778 3503 or 0437 900 044** Monday to Wednesday.



***"We value the contribution of our volunteers"***

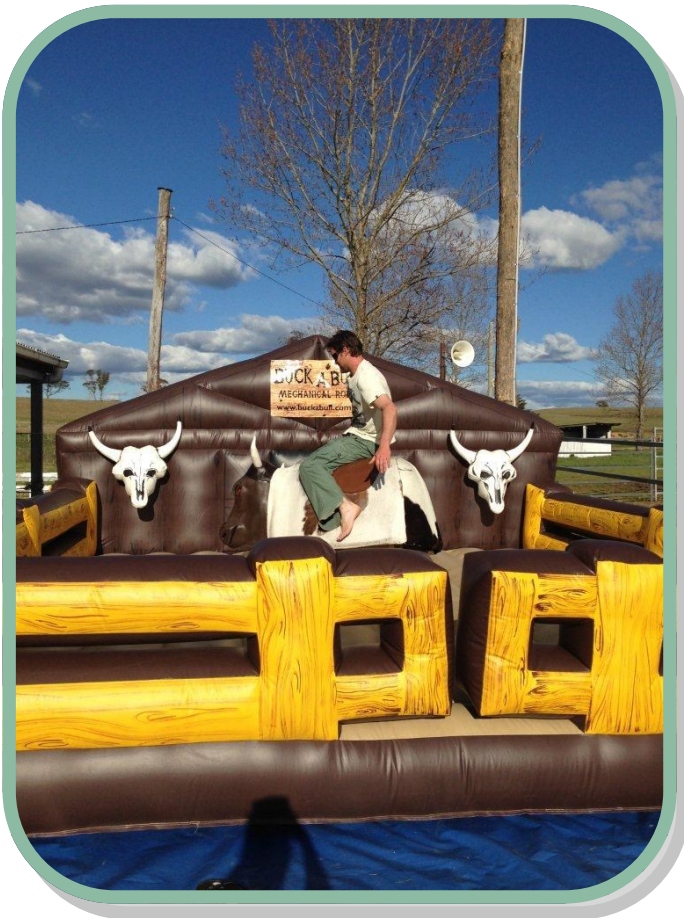


# DROUGHT ASSISTANCE INITIATIVE

## Social and Community Support

The Ascent Group was contracted earlier this year by the Australian Government to organise funded social events for communities in the New England and North West Region of NSW who have been affected by the drought.

Since then our Project Manager Lauren Davies has been working in local communities across the region to design and hold community events which support rural communities to stay connected socially during tough times, while also increasing awareness of mental health, wellbeing and promoting a range of services and supports that are available.



### ***Our major successes***

- **Camp Draft in Yetman**
- **Walcha Drought Buster Big Bash**
- **Rural Women's day at Glen Innes**
- **Nowendoc Camp draft**
- **Mingoola Family Fun Day**





The Ascent Group provides a range of services across New England and North West for people with a disability or who are socially disadvantaged.

**We are...** a Not for Profit, non-government, community organisation with a charitable status.

Altogether about 300 people with a disability are receiving a direct service.

#### **We Provide**

**Employment** - Australian Disability Enterprise

Acacia Park Enterprises:

Recycling and Shredding of office paper and Cardboard collection

Print Pack Post – Printing, mailing and packaging service

**Accommodation** – 11 separate living units across Armidale

**Day Programs** – For school leavers with a disability.

Also assist adults who are not able to access employment and require high support.

**Respite** – Provide Respite care in and out of home

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP ?**

#### **Direct payments can be paid to**

NAB Armidale NSW 2350

**BSB—082 407 Account # - 64111 8228**

**Account Name - The Ascent Group Australia**

Please use your name & DONATION as a reference

#### **Cheques can be sent to**

The Ascent Group Australia

P.O Box 18

Armidale NSW 2350

**Donate Now** – Your gift will ensure we are able to continue providing that “extra” support for people with a disability to lead the life they choose. If you require more information on making a donation please call our Reception on 02 6776 8977



2

We are Transitioning.....



### **Acacia Park Enterprises**

**Print Pack Post**

**Secure Document Shredding and Recycling**

**Transition to Work**

**13 Myrtle Drive Acacia Park Armidale**

### **Disability & Community Care Services**

**Community Living Services**

**Respite Care Services**

**Home & Communi-**

**ty Care**

**Life-**

**skills Partici-  
pation**