

ASCENT GROUP 62nd ANNUAL REPORT

# reaching higher







**The Ascent Group continues to grow and evolve in meeting the ever changing needs of people with disability to achieve their goals and to live a meaningful life.**

Since 1955, our services have developed in response to the needs of the people for whom we provide support.

Today we provide quality support to people under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Supports are being provided broadly across the NDIS, and we ensure our participants are provided with choice and control over their lives to pursue their aspirations and achieve their goals.

#### OUR VISION

We aspire to be the leading provider of Disability Services and Community Support in the New England and North Western NSW.

#### OUR MISSION

We provide quality support for people with disabilities, to enable the pursuit of their goals and aspirations.

#### OUR PARTICIPANTS

We support people with a disability, their families, their carers, and others identified with need of our support.





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## REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

### Chairman's Report 2016/2017

**It is my pleasure to present the Chairman's Report to this the 62nd Annual General Meeting of The Ascent Group.**

You will recall that the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) came into effect on July 1 last year & that Ascent was one of the first service providers involved. This has meant we have been very busy since that date assisting participants in transitioning into the NDIS. The transition of existing participants is now nearly complete. In addition we have gained a number of new participants, including those formerly serviced by Care For Children. The participants & staff of that organisation have now largely been incorporated into Ascent.

The transition process I have referred to has not been an easy one & has involved a huge amount of time & effort by our executives & staff.

The deficiencies in the NDIS & its' Agency have been well documented & include poor communication, poor planning, poor I.T. systems & lack of skilled staff.

From July 1 next year there will be a large influx of new participants into the NDIS & we must be ready to provide services to those who wish to use us. A serious issue being experienced by all service providers is that of finding enough disability care workers. It is estimated that by 2020 there will need to be, in Australia, an additional 20,000 such workers which in fact will be one in five of all new jobs created in Australia. This shortage is affecting us & will continue to do so although we are making every effort to overcome this problem through recruitment drives & staff training. Otherwise we are very sound in the areas of financial strength, management systems & skilled & dedicated staff.

In finishing I would like to thank our staff, senior management & fellow Board members for their dedication & hard work during the year & I wish all our participants the very best in this, their new world.

I commend this report to you.

Huntly Gordon  
CHAIRMAN



REPORT FROM THE CEO

## 2016-2017 The year of transition

**This year has been one of significant achievement for Ascent and records a milestone with our transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It has brought about positive change for all the people we support and has moved the Organisation into the new era of service provision.**

After two years of extensive preparation in “readiness” for the transition to the NDIS, we began the year with a high degree of confidence, energy and excitement as NDIS planning meetings, with the people we support and their families, commenced.

The now well-publicised issues that confronted the NDIS from the outset of the transition implementation, on 1st July 2016, around Communication, Plan accuracy, Portal access and System functionality required a significantly more intensive and flexible approach that was anticipated to bring about the positive result we have achieved.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution made by all Ascent staff throughout the year to bring about a successful “Transition Result” for the organisation. Our prime objective, now achieved, has been to ensure the accuracy of all NDIS Plans delivered to the people with disability for whom Ascent provides support. This has been a significant achievement undertaken in a developing environment while still maintaining the daily delivery of high quality support and additionally providing support to new participants.

### Ascent Care for children

A highlight of the year has been the merger between Ascent and Care for Children with Disabilities Inc. Care for Children has been operating in the Armidale region for over 30 years, providing much needed respite support for families who have a child with a disability. Ascent Care for Children is now providing support, as a registered NDIS provider, daily, in the evening or on weekends.



### Strategic Development

During the year a new strategic review was undertaken to develop an initial two year view reaching out to five years. The immediate goals set for implementation, which have been delivered during the year, included:

#### ■ TRANSITION

The successful transition to the NDIS for all people with disability supported by Ascent

#### ■ SYSTEMS

The implementation of a fully integrated client information and business management IT system to support the NDIS business model

#### ■ MARKET POSITION

A refresh of the Ascent brand. The new look maintains the visual connection but with a fresh logo design using contemporary colours to communicate who we are and what we can do to support our customers' aspirations to *Reach Higher* and achieve Great Outcomes.

### Looking Ahead

Having completed our transition to the NDIS, we remain optimistic about the further roll out of the NDIS and the opportunities it will no doubt offer people with disability and their families into the future.

During the year ahead we will be focusing on continuing workforce development, improved quality management and customer service to support the maturing new business model.

We are now anticipating the response and resources we will need to provide in order to meet the full roll out of the NDIS which is planned to commence from 1st July 2018 and continue through to a completion by 2020.

There will be “Exciting Times Ahead”.

Peter Westbrook  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

TREASURER'S REPORT

Financial Performance

During 2016-17 the Organisation has managed a significant change in our business model, transitioning the majority of our business to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The move to the NDIS has meant a shift away from the traditional grant model to a more user pays environment. To accommodate this change the Organisation has implemented a new management and finance system, which went live on 1 May 2017.

The Organisation was well placed for the transition to the NDIS, with a solid cash position at the beginning of the year. Over the year our cash position has decreased slightly with a decrease in cash of \$65,146, however the final cash position remain strong with \$1,526,552 in the bank.

The Organisation recorded an operating surplus of \$296,953, with both revenue and expenses increasing during the year.

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

	2016-17	2015-16
Total Income	7,046,035	6,560,469
Total Expenditure	6,749,082	6,214,473
Surplus	296,953	345,996

Financial Position

A summary of the Financial Position of the company as at 30 June 2017 is as follows:

	2016-17	2015-16
Current Assets	2,090,440	1,763,570
Non-Current Assets	2,344,589	2,305,894
Total Assets	4,435,029	4,069,464
Current Liabilities	911,633	843,094
Non-Current Liabilities	323,829	323,756
Total Liabilities	1,235,462	1,166,850
Net Assets	3,199,567	2,902,614

The Organisation remain in a sound financial position, with net assets of \$3,199,567 at financial year end. This includes Cash and Cash Equivalents of \$1,526,552 providing sufficient liquidity to cover the Organisation's current liabilities, including employee entitlements.

Cash Position

During 2016-17 cash decreased by \$65,146 by the end of the financial year. Net cash from operating activities was \$164,860. Investment in capital activities exceeded the proceeds from the sale of assets by \$212,620.

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 2016-17 our current ratio improved to 2.29 from 2.09 in 2015-16 thus confirming the Organisation's sound financial position.

Outlook

The uncertainty surrounding the financial implication of the NDIS has largely been resolved, however we now need to mature our business model and operations to capitalise on the changes occurring in the industry. This will mean continuing to focus on maintaining our strong financial position into the future.

Will Warrick  
TREASURER

Board of Directors and Senior Management Team



Huntly Gordon, Chairman



Rick Mills, Vice Chairman



Will Warrick, Treasurer



Ruth Blanch



Caroline Coupland



Brian McRae



Jennifer Bailey



Hugh Beattie



Theresa Smith-Ruig



Peter Westbrook,  
Chief Executive Officer



Michelle Cooper, Finance  
and Corporate Services



# NDIS

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the new way of providing reasonable and necessary support for eligible people with permanent and significant disability, their families and their carers.

Ascent is a registered provider for the NDIS. This scheme aims to extend funding for disability services, ensuring all people in our community have access to the assistance and specific services they would like to receive.

Ascent is now providing Quality support across the spectrum of the NDIS, and we are striving to ensure our participants have choice and control over their lives to meet their goals and aspirations.

During the year we assisted all the people we support and their families to transition to the NDIS by negotiating and receiving their "First Plan". This process has been complex and a testing experience for all. The year ahead will see these plans undergo the annual review process to determine the ongoing levels of support required. Ascent is continuing to work closely with families to negotiate the NDIS systems and the complex Plan review process.

Ascent specialises in:

- Assistance with daily life
- Accessing the community
- Providing social and recreational support
- Finding a job and career development
- Coordination of supports
- Behaviour management
- Plan management
- Carer respite

Ascent's philosophy has always been founded on person-centred planning principles and the flexible delivery of services. We are in a strong position to respond positively to NDIS initiatives and to continue enriching the lives of children and adults living with a disability.



## Care for Children

Ascent is now providing quality support to children with disability and their families. Assistance is provided with personal activities and support to develop life skills or to participate inclusively in the community.

During the year Ascent Care for Children has been developed to support the merger with Care for Children with Disabilities Inc.

Ascent can offer families a comprehensive choice of supports designed to suit individual requirements.

We can also offer a choice of professional support staff who can work with you, in your home and in the community.

Individual support can be available to you daily, in the evening or on weekends. We will

work with you to plan your regular support requirements and respond to your shorter term needs.

At Ascent, we believe that family involvement is essential for the wellbeing and happiness of the children we support and is at heart of what we do.

We encourage young people to plan for an exciting future, by supporting them to build valuable skills for life, work, and community involvement.

Activities may include art, music, sport or social activities and are offered on an individual or group basis.





## ACACIA PARK ENTERPRISES

### Finding & Keeping a job

Ascent specialises in providing Supported Employment opportunities for people with disability at Acacia Park Enterprises.

Acacia Park Enterprises provides supported employment for around 40 employees who live with disability. We are committed to providing ongoing quality employment and training opportunities for our employees. A diverse range of job opportunities are available to match a wide array of career aspirations.

Our business activities include Digital Printing, Car Detailing, Grounds Maintenance, Cleaning, Secure Document Destruction and Recycling.

During the year we have again enjoyed great support from the Armidale Central Rotary Club who have provided leadership training and mentoring for the Employee Committee.



## Ascent Digital Print

Ascent Digital Print is kept busy providing a high quality service to our valued customers.

To ensure our ability to continue to meet our customers' ongoing requirements a printing equipment and technology upgrade has been recently undertaken. The new equipment additionally provides our customers with a fast document scanning and retrieval service for the storage of archived documents to minimise expensive hard copy storage costs.

A Job at Ascent will:

- Identify and assess your strengths and work skills.
- Create an individual training plan to increase your skills.
- Teach you how to do the job.
- Pay you a wage for the work you do.
- Support you with your career development.

Jobs available in our commercial services include:

- Digital Printing, copying and mail out service
- Secure destruction of confidential documents
- Recycling of office paper and cardboard
- Car Detailing
- Grounds maintenance and cleaning





## Housing and Supported Independent Living

Ascent provides general assistance with daily life and activities to enable people with disability to live inclusively within their local community. Our support is designed to meet individual needs and maximise independence.

Support is designed around your NDIS plan to meet your individual needs and achieve outcomes.

Support can be provided on an outreach basis, where staff can assist you in your own home with specific tasks, such as budgeting, cooking, domestic chores and managing appointments.

Formal support may only be for a small part of everyday life, with other activities being managed independently or with assistance from networks of your family, friends and community. Formal support could be for as little as 1-2 hours per week.

Higher intensity accommodation support can be provided for up to 24 hours per day within small group home residences, where residents require medium to high levels of assistance to complete basic self-care and domestic routines. Staff may provide one-on-one support with all daily household activities, as well as facilitating social and leisure opportunities in the community. They may also assist with tasks like banking, shopping and attending appointments, and with accessing activities such as supported employment.



## LifeSkills & Community Participation

Ascent specialises in providing support to adults living with disability, injury, or social disadvantage to achieve their goals, increase their independence, and participate as a valued member of their community.

We can offer you a range of services that will support you in learning everyday skills including:

- Improved daily living skills in the community
- Improved relationships
- Increased social and community participation
- Improved life choices
- Transport to access daily activities

Support can be provided individually or in group activities both centre based or in the community.







## Individual Skills Development

**We can offer you centre-based skills development support to learn and participate in activities independently.**

### Group support or activities

Activities are designed to allow you to participate in a wide range of enjoyable activities such as cooking, gardening, music, art and craft, sport or fitness.

### You are supported to access the community and events

We provide skill development for you to become more independent and improve your skills in:

- Cooking
- Budgeting
- Time Management
- Travel
- Social interaction
- Caring for health and wellbeing
- Being independent in everyday activities
- Communication with others

We work in partnerships with many local organisations such as NERAM (New England Regional Art Museum) and NECOM (New England Conservatorium of Music) to deliver a wide range of activities and programs.

We have a specialist Clinical Team comprising a Registered Nurse, Behaviour Specialist and Psychologist who work with families and participants to develop personalised medical and behaviour plans, supports and strategies.

## Ascent Community Care

**Ascent Community Care operates Commonwealth Home Support Programs (CHSP) in the New England Region for older people living in their own homes.**

Ascent Community Care programs, are available for people who are :

- Over 65 years old
- Over 55 years old for Indigenous People
- Living at home
- Needing assistance to maintain independence

The Ascent programs include:

### Centre Based Day Care

This group meets each Monday at the Uralla Community Centre and participates in activities of their choice. This may include exercises, gardening, bingo, craft, puzzles, and several other options. Activities vary according to the wishes of those attending. There is also a monthly outing and special themed days. Morning tea and lunch is provided and usually cooked fresh on the premises by volunteers.

### Social Support

The Social Support program is a volunteer-run service, which offers assistance within the person's home or for community access. Help is individually tailored to each person's specific needs. These services can include letter-writing, making phone calls, shopping, attending a concert, a daily call to check on well-being, and so on.



### Community Transport

In addition to our other useful programs, Ascent Community Care volunteers provide transport to and from a client's home and any appointment they may have. This can include medical appointments, dates with friends or family, attendance at the Centre Based Day Care program, or any other social occasion.

### Minor Home Maintenance and Gardening Service

Sometimes you only need a little bit of support to continue living in your own home. This service aims to keep the user's home and yard in a safe, tidy and habitable condition by performing small but necessary chores. In the garden, this can include mowing lawns, pruning plants, and other maintenance. In the home, tasks may include changing light bulbs, replacing tap washers, cleaning gutters, and sweeping chimneys.

### Flexible Respite

Respite care is about offering support to both you and your carer. Ascent can provide supervision and assistance to you when it is needed. Your carer may or may not be present during the delivery of this service.





## How can you help?

There are many ways for you to be involved or to support our work including—Providing us with Ideas and Feedback, Using our Services, Becoming a Member, Volunteering, making Donations of money or goods and Bequests. Your contribution, however large or small, is truly appreciated.

If you would like to donate, your generous donation will ensure we are able to continue providing that “extra” support for people, who live with a disability, to lead a normal life. Donations can be made to:

**Direct Deposit:** National Australia Bank

**BSB:** 082-407

**Account:** 64111-8228

**Account Name:** The Ascent Group Australia

Please use YOUR NAME and “DONATION” as reference.

Alternatively, please forward cheques to:

The Ascent Group  
PO Box 18, ARMIDALE NSW 2350

**Thank you for your kind consideration**







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