



the Journey Continues

ASCENT GROUP 63rd ANNUAL REPORT



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For over 60 years Ascent has provided quality support for people with disability to live a meaningful life and be valued in their community.

During 2018 we continued to provide these quality supports. As a Registered NDIS Provider of Choice, we provided a broad range of personalised supports which guaranteed flexibility to meet the individual need of people with disability and helped to achieve the goals they had set for themselves.

We have worked closely with people with disability during their NDIS Plan reviews to assist them to receive the reasonable and necessary supports that are required in their daily lives, in achieving personal goals, increasing independence and learning new skills.

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.

Chairman's Report 2017/2018

It is my pleasure to present the Chairman's Report to this the 63rd Annual General Meeting of The Ascent Group.

The past year and in fact, the past two years have seen a complete change in the way the disability sector operates in Australia and we have been at the forefront of that change. Peter, in his Chief Executive Officer's report will detail how we have re-acted to that change and will set out the areas of our involvement with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

There has been much publicity about the shortcomings of the NDIS, I refer particularly to the individual planning area and especially the plan review process. These shortcomings are well known, however there is one area where huge difficulties have been experienced of which participants and their families may not be aware. I refer to the difficulty experienced by providers, such as Ascent, in claiming and receiving payment for the support services provided. This has meant that the end of every week the Agency owes considerable amounts of payments to service providers, causing ongoing financial stress. The situation is gradually improving but continues to be a constant headache for service provider senior management.

All in all Ascent has come through the transition period and the continuing evolution process, in relatively good shape, both financially and culturally. This result has come about, mainly through the competence, dedication and the hard work of our senior management, executive staff and direct support workers. They have my sincere thanks.

The number of people with disability for whom we are providing support daily is continuing to grow and this gives us confidence that we continue to provide quality support and that Ascent is meeting new market demand for support services. We are however, not resting on our laurels as we continue to respond to need and look for ways of delivering improved high quality support while offering a satisfying work environment to our dedicated staff.

On a sad note for Ascent, our longest serving Board member, Ruth Blanch, after 20 consecutive years of service has decided to retire. Thank you Ruth for your outstanding contribution to this organisation.

In conclusion I would like to thank all my fellow Board Members for their dedicated contribution during the year.

I commend this report to you.

Huntly Gordon
CHAIRMAN



Chief Executive Officer's Report 2017-2018

2017/18 has been a very demanding year operationally as we successfully concluded transition to the NDIS, experienced the first annual review of individual plans for the people we support and prepared for the “full NDIS rollout” which commenced on 1st JULY 2018.

The rapid build out of the NDIS has been extremely challenging for us as an Organisation in dealing with the continual introduction of procedural changes mostly implemented to correct system inadequacies and process failures. Despite these developmental frustrations we remain optimistic for the future of a mature and functioning NDIS that will deliver greater outcomes for more people with disability.

It is pleasing to be able to report that during the year we have been able to work closely with the people we support and their families to ensure that they have been able to get the best out of their plan reviews and enjoy full utilisation of their plans. We have additionally been able to provide direct support for new recipients of NDIS packages, we have been able to provide Support Coordination for more participants and we have commenced the provision of Plan Management Support to a growing number of new entrants into the NDIS.

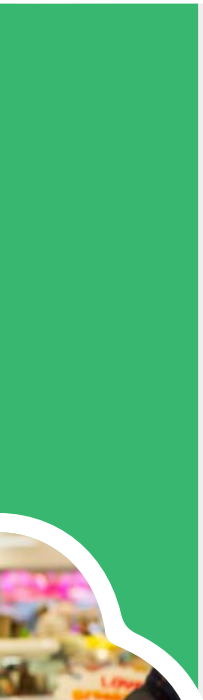
The contribution made throughout the year by our Administration Team, our Service Managers and their Team Leaders has been outstanding. The cultural change for a Provider Organisation that the NDIS is influencing, could not be achieved without this high level of commitment and competent leadership.

While we have necessarily focused much attention throughout the year on the management and administration of the NDIS, we have also concentrated, more importantly, on the fulfilment of our Mission. “to provide quality support to people with disabilities, to enable the pursuit of their goals and aspirations”.

I wish to acknowledge the significant contribution made by all of our direct support workers and thank them for their dedication during the year, as it is through them that we continue to provide Quality Support to over 230 people with disability.

The year ahead promises to again be interesting as the NDIS continues to grow and provide packages for new entrants into the scheme. The developments we have made over the last year have positioned us well with capacity and capability to offer quality support to more people with disability, their families and carers.

Peter Westbrook
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Financial Performance

During 2017-18 the Organisation has concentrated on developing our financial practices within the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) environment. The change in environment has created the need for a greater focus to be placed on managing income.

Our use of new management and finance systems continues to mature, with greater reporting and performance monitoring now a key focus.

The Organisation recorded an operating surplus of \$52,625, with both income and expenses increasing during the year.

The Organisation remain in a sound financial position, with net assets of \$3,252,192 at financial year end. This includes Cash and Cash Equivalents of \$1,492,126 providing sufficient liquidity to cover the Company's current liabilities, including employee entitlements.



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

	2017-18	2016-17
Total Income	8,384,010	7,046,035
Total Expenditure	8,331,385	6,749,082
Surplus	52,625	296,953

Financial Position

A summary of the Financial Position of the company as at 30 June 2018 is as follows:

	2017-18	2016-17
Current Assets	2,123,916	2,090,440
Non-Current Assets	2,310,080	2,344,589
Total Assets	4,433,996	4,435,029
Current Liabilities	884,216	911,633
Non-Current Liabilities	297,590	323,829
Total Liabilities	1,181,806	1,235,462
Net Assets	3,252,192	3,199,567

Cash Position

During 2017-18 cash decreased by \$34,426 by the end of the financial year. Net cash from operating activities was \$157,271, offset by investment in capital activities of \$173,323.



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 2017-18 our current ratio improved to 2.40 from 2.29 in 2016-17.

Outlook

Over the past financial year, the Organisation has largely adapted to the financial practices of the NDIS environment whilst maintaining its strong financial position. Whilst there are continuing changes still occurring within the NDIS that are still causing some uncertainty, we remain financially well placed to work through these as they occur.

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 NDIS is now fully available across NSW to help eligible people, who are living with disability, get care and supports they need to enjoy an ordinary life in their community.

Ascent is a registered provider for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providing Quality support to over 230 people with disability.

During the year we successfully assisted all the people we support and their families to either implement their first NDIS Plan or to undergo the first annual review of their NDIS Plan.

Ascent provides a broad range of support including:

- Assistance with daily life
- Accessing the community
- Providing social and recreational support
- Finding and keeping a job
- Behaviour management
- Carer respite

Additionally

Ascent can provide you with Support Coordination to help you understand your NDIS Plan and work out the best way to spend your funds so that you can achieve your goals.

Ascent is providing Support Coordination services to help people with disability to understand their NDIS Plan, help to create links in the community and work out the best way to spend the funds in their NDIS Plans so they can achieve their goals.

Plan Management services are also available, these are providing the option to maximise the flexibility of an NDIS Plan without the administrative burden of self-management.



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.

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.



Ascent Digital Print

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

Our state of the digital printing system and equipment provides our customers with a fast turnaround, high quality printing service. We also offer a high speed document scanning and retrieval service for the storage of archived documents to minimise expensive hard copy storage costs.

Getting 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.

Ascent can provide support with daily life and activities to enable you to live inclusively within your local community. 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.



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
- Need 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 & 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, sweeping chimneys and so on.

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



reaching
higher



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