

Working together for better outcomes

Whether we work with specialists to deliver programs or engage a qualified baker to run classes, it's all about collaboration to make us stronger.



Participant Ben Howard, a footy lover, taking part in a training session with Wests Tigers during a school holiday program.

The most empowering aspect of the NDIS is that people with disability have choice. Choice to undertake activities of their choosing at a time, and in a place that suits them. The trend to greater participant choice was becoming apparent long before the first NDIS plan was prepared, and we have long since had programs outside of regular hours, running activities that better support aspirations of people with disability. The NDIS has played a significant

role in improving this and in extending it to everyone.

To achieve better outcomes, we have habitually reached out to experts and other organisations to help us with program content and pedagogy, and to bring together the skills of our employees with those of others in an environment of continuous improvement.

Whether we work with specialists like Liz Dore and NSW Family Planning to ensure relationships and

sexuality is addressed with teenagers and young adults with intellectual disability in a respectful, appropriate and safe environment, or if we engage a qualified baker and pastry chef like Margaret Ross to run weekly baking classes, it's all about collaboration.

The slogan 'stronger together' holds equally true, in collaborations that take place out of sight, where it is often on more than one level. For the development of our computer-based money handling learning program, for example, we collaborated with Financial Literacy Australia and the Office of the Public Guardian, who provided funding for research and development and who acted as advisors on a proof of concept, and we engaged assistive technology provider Tecuris to develop the learning management system on our behalf.

This edition of the newsletter introduces more collaborators – ambassadors, corporate partners, community champions, local clubs and more. They play an indispensable role in our ability to improve existing and design new activities, and to meet the ever-growing demand for better resources – all of which is vital to achieving better outcomes.

A Message from the CEO

During the 2017-2018 financial year all but seven of our participants transitioned to the NDIS, after a small number had already changed over before July 2017. We are hoping to finalise the support agreements and quotes for those last participants in the coming weeks, while ensuring they can continue to access support.

A procedural shortcoming of the transition to the NDIS means that for a period of time, participants are not funded and effectively excluded from accessing support. We took the view that this is not acceptable and guaranteed continuity of support without funding. While we have to pay the wages of our staff, we are not guaranteed to recover the costs of support provided during this changeover period. This placed Participate Australia under significant financial stress.

However, we acknowledge that the last year has also been incredibly tough on families who had to deal with the uncertainty of the transition to the NDIS, while we were implementing new systems and procedures to support this transition. This proved to be a great challenge, which further impacted on families and participants and which required from many of our staff a commitment of significant hours of work on weekends.

Despite these challenges and thanks to the patience of families and the resilience of our teams, Participate Australia closed the past financial year stronger than anticipated.

As expected and as has been the experience of every other NDIS provider, some participants exercised their choice by taking their NDIS plan to a different provider. Nine of our participants have done so, and another six have relocated out of the Sydney area. At the same time we have been able to bring 25 new participants on board and we have increased

the total number of hours of support that we provided in our core business by 18% to 119,246.

Overall we provided 238,081 hours of support (+8.1%). This includes consolidation of arrangements at RASAIID, where residents continued to settle into independent living, work and other day activities. This growth occurred despite a very significant drop in brokerage income, which is managed differently under the NDIS and will further decline as the remaining population of people with disability in NSW is transitioning.

These are robust growth figures that place Participate Australia in a strong position as we enter year two of the NDIS. It will be a year during which we will focus on consolidation of business processes, on tailoring activities and programs to enable the greater achievement of aspirations of the individual and on engaging with families to learn what other changes we need to make to enable and support the right to choice and the achievement of goals.

More, and more detailed figures will be contained in our annual report and released on the occasion of the 2018 AGM. Please pencil the date in your diary – Wednesday, 17 October 2018 – as we would be delighted to celebrate the great achievements of the first year under the NDIS with you and with participants, carers and staff. This year's AGM will be held at Wests Ashfield to cater to the ever growing number of guests.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Jerry McNamara
Chief Executive Officer

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Participate Australia supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and our employees are bound by the principles for which it stands. The Convention's purpose is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Inclusion at the world congress

In May, two founding members of Participate Australia's Self Advocacy Group: Genny Haines and Rohan Fullwood, travelled to Birmingham, UK, to attend the Inclusion International 17th World Congress. The congress brings together self-advocates and disability organisations from all over the world to celebrate their achievements, to learn from and inspire each other. This year, nearly 1,000 delegates attended the World Congress from 70 countries.

Genny found the conference inspiring and was excited to share experience with us.

"On day one we had a preliminary talk by a long-time advocate from New Zealand, Robert Martins. Robert's talk was so inspiring and powerful that everyone stood up and gave him a standing ovation; this set the tone for the conference on making change.

The points which most stood out for me throughout the conference were making change whilst working with your disability, and showing the world that your disability does not define you as a person. Throughout the conference, I heard from advocates from different countries that people with a disability want to eliminate the institution mentality that has influenced



the way how they have been treated. People with a disability want to have a say in getting the right support not only for their specific disability, but also for who they are as a person no matter whether they're at home, in the workplace, or in their local community.

The World Congress was absolutely amazing. Meeting people from other countries and being able to hear about medical developments around the world was a great experience for me. I would love to go again and I would recommend it to anybody. It's challenging, and a real eye-opener."



Cooking Club is a sizzling success

Participate Australia, in partnership with Canterbury Leagues Club have proudly run a second Cooking Club in their commercial kitchen, with Head Executive Chef Stephanie Azar. Six dedicated participants spent six weeks with Stephanie learning a range of new recipes and cooking techniques.

All participants graduated from the class and were presented with their certificates by Chairman of Canterbury Leagues Club, George Coorey.

We thank Canterbury Leagues Club for their continued



support and we look forward to working with them to extend this exciting program in 2019 and beyond.



Participate Australia Open Day

Participate Australia held an Open Day on Saturday 16th July to show current and new participants the range of activities that we run on a regular basis. Participants were able to try homemade treats by volunteer baker Margaret,

enjoy a sausage sizzle lunch, and attend Zumba, yoga, computer and art classes all for free! The day was a great success and was proudly supported by Wests Ashfield.

State Member for Strathfield, Jodi McKay MP, and the federal candidate for the seat of Reid, Sam Crosby also paid us a visit on that day and discussed the challenges that the NDIA brings, and how they could play a role in supporting us.



Bake with love

Margaret is a volunteer baker who runs a weekly baking class with some of our Day Options participants. Because of Margaret's love for our participants and for what she does her classes have increased from a handful of participants every week to a kitchen full of people wanting to roll pastry, fill tart shells, ice cupcakes, bake scones and participate in baking dozens of other treats.

Everyone in her class is included and made to feel welcome and important in the kitchen. By including everyone in the baking class she has added a lot of joy to our participants. At the end of the class they all sit around a communal table and enjoy their baked treats with a cup of tea.

We appreciate Margaret's commitment to our participants and thank her for her ongoing contribution to Participate Australia.



Cheers to the Townie

No doubt you've read before about our incredible relationship with Newtown's favourite local, the Town Hall Hotel (the Townie)! Publican Michael Hoyle has been running a weekly meat raffle and joker poker for years and since 2014 Participate Australia has been the lucky beneficiary of their generosity. All proceeds from the sale of raffle tickets each Thursday are donated to us and have been used to directly benefit participants.

Over the years, the Townie has become our most significant

individual donor. Donations in the last financial year alone were \$54,975. Since we commenced our relationship with the Townie we have received over \$196,000 in donations.

This is extraordinary and we thank Michael and his crew for their incredible support. Most importantly, we thank the patrons of the Townie, who have been loyal and dependable supporters for many years now.

In response to the call for drought relief, Participate Australia and the Townie

agreed to split the proceeds from August and Michael made a donation of \$5,000 to the Buy a Bale campaign on behalf of the patrons of the Townie. We are incredibly proud to partner with an iconic local pub that takes its responsibilities as a good citizen seriously, and reaches out to farmers who are doing it tough.



Putting the IT in Community

Information Technology is omnipresent in all parts of life these days. This becomes especially apparent when technology fails us, as we experienced earlier this year. Preventing such failures from taking place in the first instance through an upgrade of IT infrastructure and new equipment can be quite expensive.

With the introduction of the NDIS, providers have had to adapt their systems to make them compatible with new necessary requirements. This required an investment of around \$100,000 for a new enterprise resource management system at Participate Australia. In the coming two years we will further improve our IT infrastructure and invest \$200,000 to ensure our staff have the tools they require to provide prompt and efficient support and to become more agile, to better respond to changing circumstances



and higher expectations of our clients.

For the last five years we have worked with local IT service provider Intranet Technica, who maintain and service our network and hardware, keep our software up-to-date, ensure we are protected from malware and other threats, and backup all of our data daily to guarantee business continuity through comprehensive and quick disaster recovery if that ever became necessary.

But that's not all that they do. Business partners Joe and James Trazzera and their team have an innate ability to explain issues and recommend solutions in a language we understand. And they quietly provide a significant amount of work free of

charge, undertake refurbishments at no cost and donate equipment when they can, even though there are no tax incentives for these in-kind donations.

In May and June this year alone, Intranet Technica's free support amounted to a value of almost \$5,000, including 37 hours of labour in-kind. "We do our best to take care of our not-for-profit clients and don't always charge them for all the work that we do", says James Trazzera. "It's a way of giving back to the community." As if this weren't enough James' dad, with whom he founded this company, has also been making very generous personal donations to Participate Australia every year.

On behalf of Participate Australia, we thank everyone at Intranet Technica for being a great community supporter and a generous business partner.

..... Making Money Easy

Participate Australia is currently working on a learning management system (LMS) called Making Money Easy, which is designed to assist people with an intellectual disability to be able to use money in every day financial transactions.

We are working closely with Tecuris, a technology provider, who aim to use technology to help improve social inclusion and minimise isolation. Our goal is to bring our existing paper based resources to life by including a range of interactive exercises, videos and games that are designed to engage each participant to their maximum potential.

We are currently developing and testing the LMS, which we aim to release in early 2019. We thank Financial Literacy Australia for their generous support of this project.



Financial Literacy Australia



**Participate
Australia**

Annual General Meeting

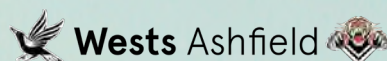
**Board and Management
cordially invite you to the
35th Annual General Meeting**

Wednesday, 17 October 2018

Wests Ashfield
115 Liverpool Road, Ashfield NSW 2131
Onsite parking available

Refreshments from 5:30pm
Proceedings commence at 6:00pm sharp

Proudly sponsored by



For catering purposes, please RSVP
before 10 October 2018 by calling 02 9799 4333
or by email to rsvp@participateaustralia.com.au

Meet our new ambassadors

In addition to Alex Blackwell, Ellen Fanning and Jacob Liddle, we are delighted to introduce two new ambassadors, James O'Loghlin and Mariam Veiszadeh.



James O'Loghlin is a television and radio presenter, author, MC, speaker and comedian. James began his career as a corporate and criminal lawyer, whilst simultaneously pursuing stand-up comedy. He did comedy shows all over the country, wrote for Andrew

Denton on 'Triple M' on radio, and as Logies host.

James hosted various radio programs from 2001 to 2014 on ABC Local Radio and another six years presenting a national Sunday evening show. He has also hosted four television shows, including 'The New Inventors' on ABC-TV.

He is the author of nine books. His first novel for children, 'The Adventures of Sir Roderick the not-very- Brave', was awarded best book for 8 to 10 year olds at the 2014 Speech Pathology Awards and shortlisted for the NSW Premiers Award for Children's Literature.



Mariam Veiszadeh is a lawyer, diversity and inclusion consultant, contributing author and a social commentator. Mariam has been a fearless advocate for the past decade, championing the rights of minority groups in an endeavour to normalise 'difference' or rather, normality.

Mariam's work around diversity and inclusion has been recognised with various awards including Elle Magazine Malaysia Change Maker 2015, alongside the likes of Michelle Obama and Angelina Jolie and she was named Role Model of the Year and Woman of the Year in the 2015 Australian Muslim Achievement Awards.

Through Mariam's ambassadorial roles she advocates for equal opportunity and inclusion for all people within our society regardless of race, creed, religion, economic status, societal position, physical or intellectual disability.

Farewell and welcome

In August, we farewellled Shellay Mandla. Shellay joined Participate Australia in 2014 as a support worker and gradually became a team leader, and then a Support Facilitator where he was able to effectively support a number of our families and show his skills at supporting people with complex support needs.



Shellay is known for his kind, gentle and thoughtful character and has been a generous colleague who always has time to help someone in need.

We wish Shellay the best of luck and success wherever he goes.



In the meantime, we are pleased to welcome two new staff.

Denise McKay joined our Corporate Services

Team as a Coordinator, People & Culture. Denise has been an HR practitioner in the Not for Profit sector for more than a decade after some twenty years indirectly exposed to human resources functions from her involvement with payroll, workers compensation and work health and safety in large commercial organisations.

Denise's HR experience in the Disability Sector has given her a sense of purpose and, and Denise has gained a lot of job satisfaction from making a difference to the lives of people with disabilities.

Denise's focus at Participate Australia is to develop our people and encourage them to be and stay engaged with our vision and continue to provide exceptional services to those we interact with daily to add value and meaning to their lives.

Away from all things HR, Denise enjoys spending time in the

kitchen cooking for her family and friends, reading, travelling, movies and walking.



Luke Palmer is our new Support Facilitator. Luke joined Participate Australia as a support worker in 2016 and has

shown a deep understanding and passion to support carers, families and individuals with disabilities. During his time here he has also been involved in supporting local charity Street Growth, helping individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds through community gardening. Luke has also worked in school holiday programs in Central Australia with indigenous communities engaging with music, sport and various other recreational activities. In his spare time Luke likes to play music, take photos and play badminton.

Ombudsman critical of NDIS Plan Review

Late in August, the Ombudsman released a report into the handling of NDIS Plan reviews, which found that some participants wait up to nine months for a review to be completed.

The report found that a third of all complaints to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) are about undue delays with the completion of reviews. This is not surprising, when the NDIA in February this year reported that staff were dealing with about 8,100 reviews, while receiving some 620 new requests every week.

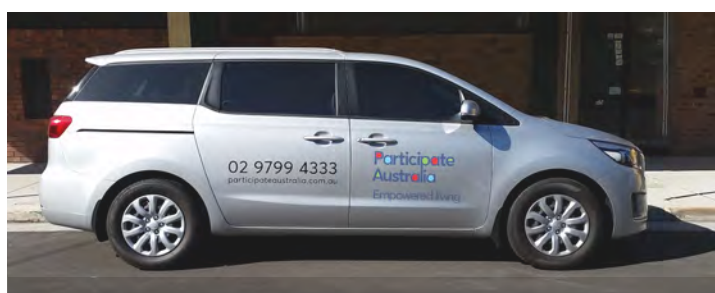
These delays – and the uncertain outcomes of reviews – are a source of more unnecessary stress for participants and families. They can also cause significant financial stress for providers.

Participate Australia in most instances provides continuity of support to participants whose plans are under review, because we understand that support needs don't stop just because a plan is being assessed. With some 400 participants currently accessing services at Participate Australia, a considerable number of them will have their plan examined at any given time.

During this period, providers are unable to bill for the support provided (in other words, we're not getting paid for the work that we do). In some cases may never be able to recover all the costs incurred during

this period, for example when a plan is reduced and insufficient funding remains to pay for services already provided.

In some months, Participate Australia can be owed upwards of \$150,000, while paying wages and other recurring costs, such as superannuation, rent, insurance premiums or utility costs. To help us manage these periods better, please let your support coordinator know if your NDIS plan is scheduled for a review.



A new 8-seater people move has been added to our fleet, to be used to transport our participants between their homes, our centres, and to activities. Our new vehicle has been branded with the Participate Australia logo, phone number and web address on both sides so now you can see us moving around in the community. The new vehicle is funded by the Australian Government.



Funding received

We would like to acknowledge the very generous donation and funding we have received since our Winter newsletter in June.

Funder	Description	Amount
Perpetual Trustees	School Holiday Program	\$96,500
Wests Ashfield	Health and Wellbeing Program	\$15,000
Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club	Social Life Skills Development Program	\$13,500
Canada Bay Club	Inclusive Fitness Program	\$7,000
Canada Bay Club	Sustainable Performing Program	\$6,000
Multicultural NSW Grants	Swimming and Aqua-aerobics Program	\$8,000
Canterbury Bankstown Council	Healthy Cooking Program	\$5,000
Canterbury Bankstown Council	Horticulture Program	\$4,000
Canterbury Bankstown Council	Swimming and Aqua-aerobics Program	\$3,000
Club Burwood RSL	Teen's Art Club	\$2,500
Club Burwood RSL	Family Fun Day	\$2,500
Transport for NSW	Road Safety Training	\$4,970
City of Canada Bay Community Grant	Sports Club	\$1,000

Supporters

Commonwealth

Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
Department of Social Services

Government of NSW

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Family and Community Services
Transport for NSW

Local Government

City of Sydney
Burwood Council
City of Canada Bay
City of Canterbury Bankstown
Inner West Council
Strathfield Council

Other Program Funders

ANZ Staff Foundation
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Australian Chinese Charity Foundation
Canada Bay Club
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Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club
Canterbury Leagues Club
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Town Hall Hotel, Newtown
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West's Ashfield

Support Participate Australia

Supporting Participate Australia with a donation is easy...

Visit participateaustralia.com.au, or complete and return this form.

Your donation helps us continue with services that nurture greater autonomy and help people with disability lead more fulfilled and engaged lives.

We guarantee that your donation goes towards these programs and that it will have a direct impact on the people who access our programs.

All donations of \$2 and more are tax deductible (CFN 14593; ABN 39 136 853 895, ACN 613 814 654)

YES, I would like to make a donation to Participate Australia.

Your support will provide:

\$50 — 1 hour of 1:1 support

\$120 — 1 day group outing

\$250 — 1 day of 1:1 support

Other: \$_____

I would prefer to give a regular gift of \$_____ to be automatically charged to my credit card every:

month quarter six months year.

Become a member

Members are eligible to vote at the Participate Australia AGM, join a subcommittee, and access and borrow books, DVDs and other resources free. Please apply now for 2018/2019.

\$20 Individual / Family membership

\$50 Organisational membership

Dr Mr Mrs Ms Miss

Name

Organisation

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Postcode

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Donation / Membership Payment Details

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Please debit my credit card. VISA Mastercard Amex

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Return to: Participate Australia, PO Box 210, Croydon NSW 2132