



Annual **Report**

Focal Community Services

2022-23

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Our People

Board of Directors

The Board of Focal are accountable for the performance of our organisation. The Board's work is underpinned by meaningful engagement with our community, instilling a culture that supports our purpose. Directors attend up to 16 Board and Sub-Committee meetings each year. They volunteer their time and expertise to help guide the organisation.



Zane Ali
Chairperson

Zane brings over 15 years of experience in executive leadership roles overseeing finance, corporate services and business development functions in the aged care, refugee, multicultural and disability sectors. Zane is passionate about innovating the way traditional services are delivered and challenging the status quo.



Rob Newman
Treasurer

Rob is an organisational psychologist specialising in governance and organisational culture. 35 years ago, his first job was as a support worker with QLD Wattle League (renamed Open Minds). Working mostly in the corporate world now, Rob joined Focal because he wanted to again be part of an organisation that makes a difference in the community.



Brianna Barry
Board Member

Bianna brings over a decade of professional experience, having worked in many related roles, including support coordination, for the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), and in direct management and senior leadership positions in supported accommodation, service delivery, and operations.



Jillian Fox
Board Member

Jillian is an accomplished senior executive whose strategic leadership and management experience is drawn from multiple areas. Her focus is strategic and innovative service development, with strong commitment to values and governance.



Tanya Miller
Chief Executive Officer

Tanya's initial journey with Focal began in 2004 when she joined us as the very first CEO, leading us through a transformative transition from voluntary management.

During her initial tenure, she brought many important initiatives to life, such as our Vacation Care / Out of School Hours program and Horizons group. Tanya's visionary leadership also played a crucial role in establishing our beloved Canning Street sites and championing the NDIS.

Before returning to Focal in 2023, Tanya moved into senior executive roles within specialised fields like mental health, homelessness, and family services.



Senior Management Team

Our senior management team brings a wealth of experience to the table, enabling us to make informed decisions and deliver quality services.



Patty Hitchenor
Community Development



Deb Thomas
Quality and Compliance



Kerri Siebenhausen
Client Services



Toni Schaumberg
People and Culture



Cathy Schilpzand
Corporate Services



Kelly Butler
Support Coordination



Riddhi Devia
Financial Controller

Message from the Chairperson

This year, the Focal team provided support services to over 656 clients through individual and group support services.

As we enter our 50th year supporting the community, first and foremost we would like to start by acknowledging and thanking all our employees, volunteers, members, donors, supporters, clients and families of Focal for their unwavering dedication to our organisation contributing to our deep and rich history in supporting the community and those living with disabilities.

As I reflect on the last 12 months, I am immensely proud of the resilience, flexibility, tenacity and adaptability of the organisation to respond to change presented both internally and challenges that have presented throughout the sector.

As a human services organisation, it's our people that have risen to the occasion tackling challenges head on, finding ways to harness the opportunities, and continued to deliver individual tailored support services enriching the lives of those throughout our community.

Operationally this year, the focus has been on strengthening our Governance and Quality Management framework as we respond to administrative reform, reshaping our organisation to be more responsive to client needs providing a better service experience, enhanced investment into cyber security, and an investment into antiquated systems and applications.

These back of house investments have supported the expansion our service offering enabling us to reach a broader range of individuals with diverse needs and abilities. This year, the Focal team provided support services to over 656 clients through individual and group support services.

Through our new basketball and dance programs we have been extremely proud to continue to strengthen our partnerships with local businesses, clubs, agencies, stakeholders and community-based organisations. Allowing us to offer more diverse activities and enhanced community engagement initiatives through sport programs.

Although the Organisation's financial performance was representative of a challenging year for Focal and more broadly the sector, Focal remains in a sustainable financial position with strong Net Assets and liquidity. Over the next year the focus financially will be on enhanced efficiency and realising value derived from this year's investments.

This year, we also welcomed back Tanya Miller to our organisation as CEO. Tanya has been working closely with our team to gain a deep understanding of our organisation's operations, culture, and opportunities. We are so humbled to have someone of Tanya's calibre leading our organisation as her strategic vision, passion for our purpose, collaborative approach whilst keeping our clients at the centre of everything we do, will be instrumental in driving our mission forward and the services we provide to the community.

In closing, although the last 12 months have been challenging for Focal due to significant change, the right foundations are now in place to help strengthen the organisation as we move forward into 2024.

Once again, I would like to thank all of those in the Focal Community for their ongoing dedication to our great organisation.

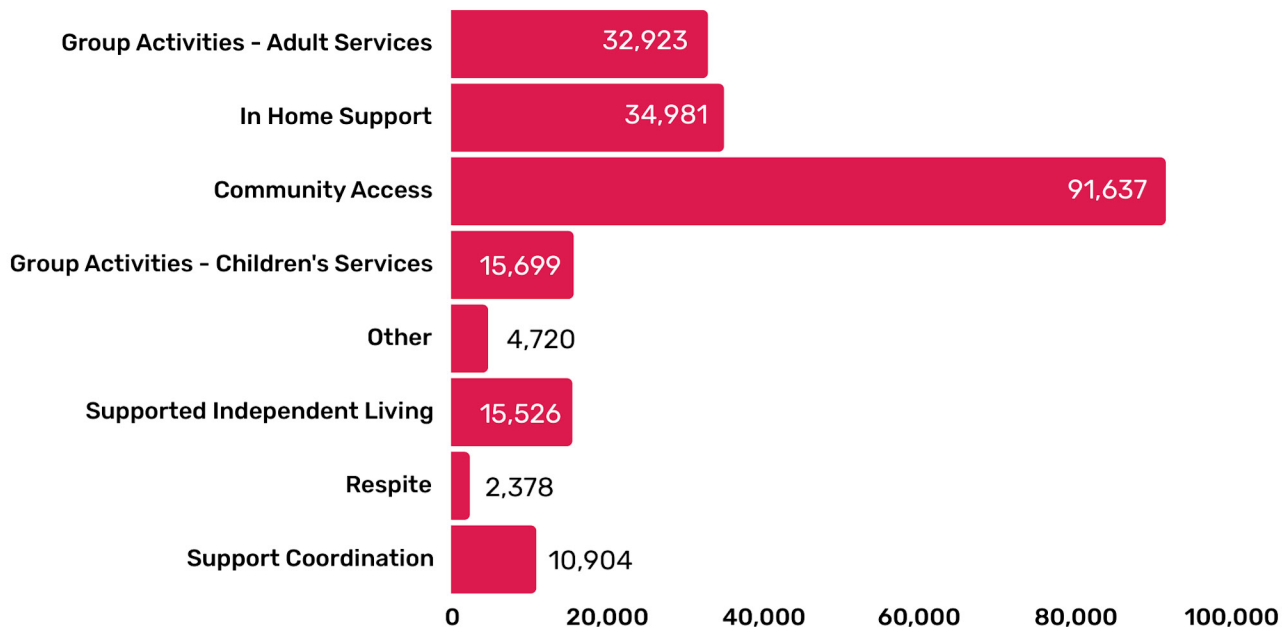


Zane Ali
Chairperson

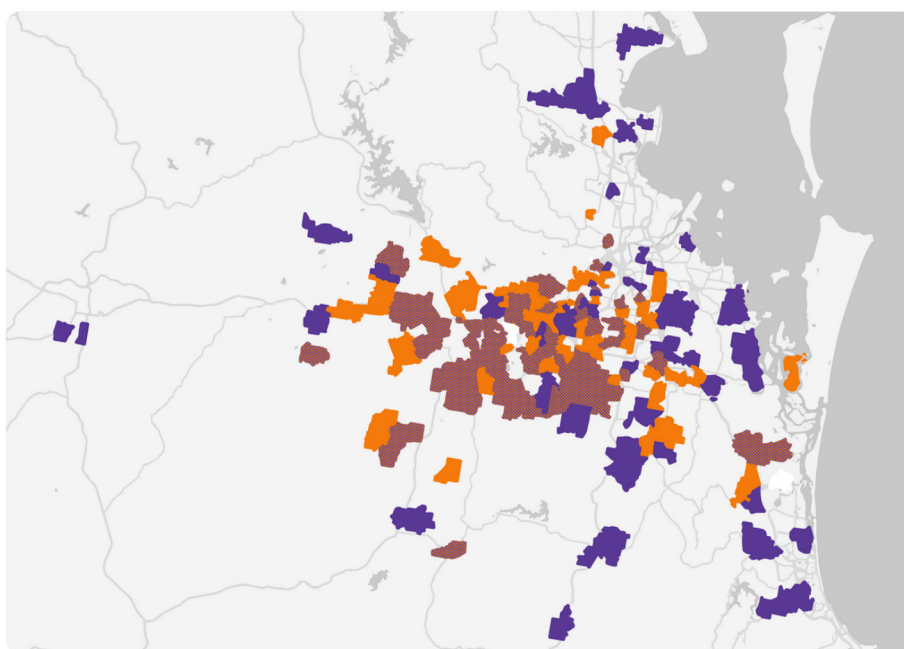
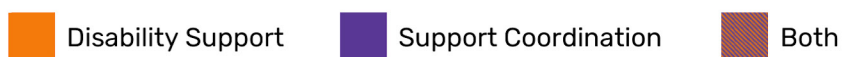


2022-23: Snapshot of the Year

Hours of Support Provided



Support Coverage Map



Message from the CEO

Focal Community Services is a vibrant service provider with many decades of experience.

This year we adopted a theme of transformation for our annual report. This acknowledges that 2022-23 has been a year of change as Focal worked to be responsive to NDIS client needs and the NDIS system itself. It has seen the complex implementation of new software systems and some rework of office teams as an ongoing effort to meet the need in the most efficient way. As a sector there is a continuing issue with workforce and skill shortfall and we continue to need to find creative ways to address this. This is coupled with ongoing administrative reforms by NDIS placing a strain on our teams.

We were proud to successfully undertake our mid-cycle accreditation audit with no non-conformities and the auditor summary reporting "Focal Community Services is a vibrant service provider with many decades of experience". We value the importance of being a registered provider with third-party oversight of our quality management systems. However, this year also saw the decision taken to deregister as an Aged Care Provider due to the burden of dual reporting requirements.

From passion to purpose

As we enter our 50th year I would like to honour the many who have paved the way to creating the organization that we are today. Focal began as a collection of Ipswich individuals passionate about improving outcomes for people living at Challinor Centre (Friends of Challinor Aid League – FOCAL).

My own journey with Focal started in 2004 just following the 30th year celebrations. The tentative journey from an advocacy organization into becoming a service provider was underway and with the introduction of Disability Service Standards there was a need to transform our operations.

Now, as then, it is the hard work and commitment of so many that leads to successfully meeting the challenge. I am incredibly proud to work alongside the Focal family of employees, volunteers and Board in partnership with clients, families and our community. I would particularly like to acknowledge the Board for their support and commitment during this testing time.

The transformation we see in those we support highlights that it is a journey worth taking.

The heart of our journey

Throughout this report you will see the highlights of a year's work with client's stories at the heart of that work. This year saw the delivery of more than 200,000 hours of support.

The majority of this continues to be the work of coming alongside individuals of all ages supporting their goals and aspirations closely followed by our broad range of activities bringing people together to learn together, building connections and confidence.

While we continue to be challenged in transforming Focal into a financially viable NDIS provider the transformation we see in those we support highlights that it is a journey worth taking.

The organization has commitment to the needs, hopes and dreams of people with a disability in its very DNA and will continue to have that as our guiding star.



Tanya Miller
Chief Executive Officer



Celebrating Individual Growth

We are dedicated to supporting the growth of each unique individual in practical ways.

At the heart of Focal's way of working lies a deep commitment to collaboration. Finding ways to support growth through empowering and uplifting each unique person as we walk alongside them.

It is our privilege to identify and implement creative strategies to support them on their journeys.

These stories highlight that, even in the presence of personal or social barriers, transformations happen when we provide support through safe, flexible connections.

Focal's five core values are demonstrated every day in the lives of our people. Here are some of their stories:



Commitment



Responsiveness



Connection



Growth



Safety



Collaboration



Tailored and Goal Driven Success

With support coordination we tailor our approach, making it all about the clients specific needs and goals. Each day the support coordination team see outcomes from this approach. Everyday miracles like the person supported to overcome challenges, who gradually began exploring the world beyond their comfort zone. The progress made, from museum visits to community engagements, reflects Focal's unwavering **commitment** to supporting this client on their path to independence.



A Responsive Approach to Creative Expression

Exploring opportunities to further artistic expression saw four Art Cookies members tender submissions in the Ipswich Show art competition, securing 1st, 2nd, and 2x 3rd place prizes. Their achievements emphasise how Focal adapts and responds to individuals' unique interests, demonstrating our **responsiveness**.



Community Connection for a Confidence Boost

Our hubs foster a strong sense of community. When we support with the aim of building confidence this is an intentional approach that highlights the value we place on **connection**, so clients, like one who joined Stepping Out and has become a frequent hub visitor, feel comfortable interacting with peers and forming strong bonds within their community.



The Power of Consistent Support

Thanks to the reliable support of a dedicated worker, a client was able to establish trust and actively engage in various activities, develop meaningful friendships, and enjoy a variety of new foods. These accomplishments directly align with identified client goals, and show how personalised and consistent support can be a catalyst to personal **growth**.



Preparing for Post-School Life

The focus of Clem's journey recently has been on the transition into life after school. Supporting Clem in various settings, each presenting new experiences could have created more challenges than successes. However, having a dedicated network and **safety** embedded in Focal's support sees a young man who is well-prepared for his post-school life.



Niche Service Enables Growth

Focal's **commitment** to delivering specialised and valuable services is evident in our after-school care program; a niche product designed to meet the unique needs of families. Focal's after-school care isn't merely a service; it's a platform for **growth**. Engaging their boys in this service enabled the parents of one family we support to return to work, with both children showing improvements in behavior, life skills, and social connections within the program.



From Aged Care to Rental Independence

A client's determination to transition from aged care to private rental became a reality with the support coordinator's assistance. A suitable property within budget was secured, leading to a successful rental application. This outcome marked a significant achievement, restoring a great deal of independence, and made possible through key **collaboration** between the client, support coordinator and real estate community.



Commitment to Collaboration

Partnerships allow us to expand our offerings and ensure comprehensive services are in place for those we support.

In our work, collaboration is a core value; it's a cornerstone of our commitment to our clients. It's about working together to create a supportive ecosystem that benefits everyone involved, especially those we support.

Importantly we recognise that we are only a part of people's lives. Everyone we support has other people in their lives – family, carers, health and support workers, school, community groups, friends and neighbours.

At Focal, we see it as important to foster positive working relationships with the full breadth of local schools, other service providers, clubs and businesses that offer services beyond what Focal provides. Every year these partnerships allow us to expand our offerings and ensure comprehensive support is in place for those we support.

School partnerships

Our longstanding relationships with schools such as Western Suburbs Special School, Claremont Special School, Ipswich Special School and Sunnybank Special School continue to be invaluable.

The latter two continued to be safe and convenient locations for our After-School and School Holiday Programs. They provide a supportive environment for families, making it easier for them to access services for their young people.

A newer relationship has formed with Mount Ommaney Special School. The strategic location of the Mount Ommaney Community Hub positions us to support students graduating from Mount Ommaney Special School. This collaboration ensures a smooth transition and continued support for these students as they move on to the next phase of their lives.



A collaborative approach ensures that our partners can meet the diverse and ever-changing needs of our clients.

Our partnerships with schools go beyond the physical location. This year we were again invited to annual school leaver information days at multiple local schools including Goodna Special School.

We had the chance to deliver presentations at Claremont and Sunnybank Special School to transitional students. These events offer us the opportunity to engage with families and students, discussing their hopes and dreams beyond school and how Focal might be able to help them achieve those goals.

Disability Sector Collaboration

Collaboration is an integral part of our Support Coordination and Community Development team's work. This collaborative approach ensures that they can meet the diverse and ever-changing needs of our clients.

We actively participated in various events and hosted several provider meetings.

Our presence at Ready-Set-Connect events, Ipswich Disability Interagency, and private disability networking events allowed us to build strong relationships with other providers and support an informed community.

We firmly believe that networking is essential for expanding the circle of outstanding providers available to our clients.



We attended
12 events
and networks

Community Collaboration

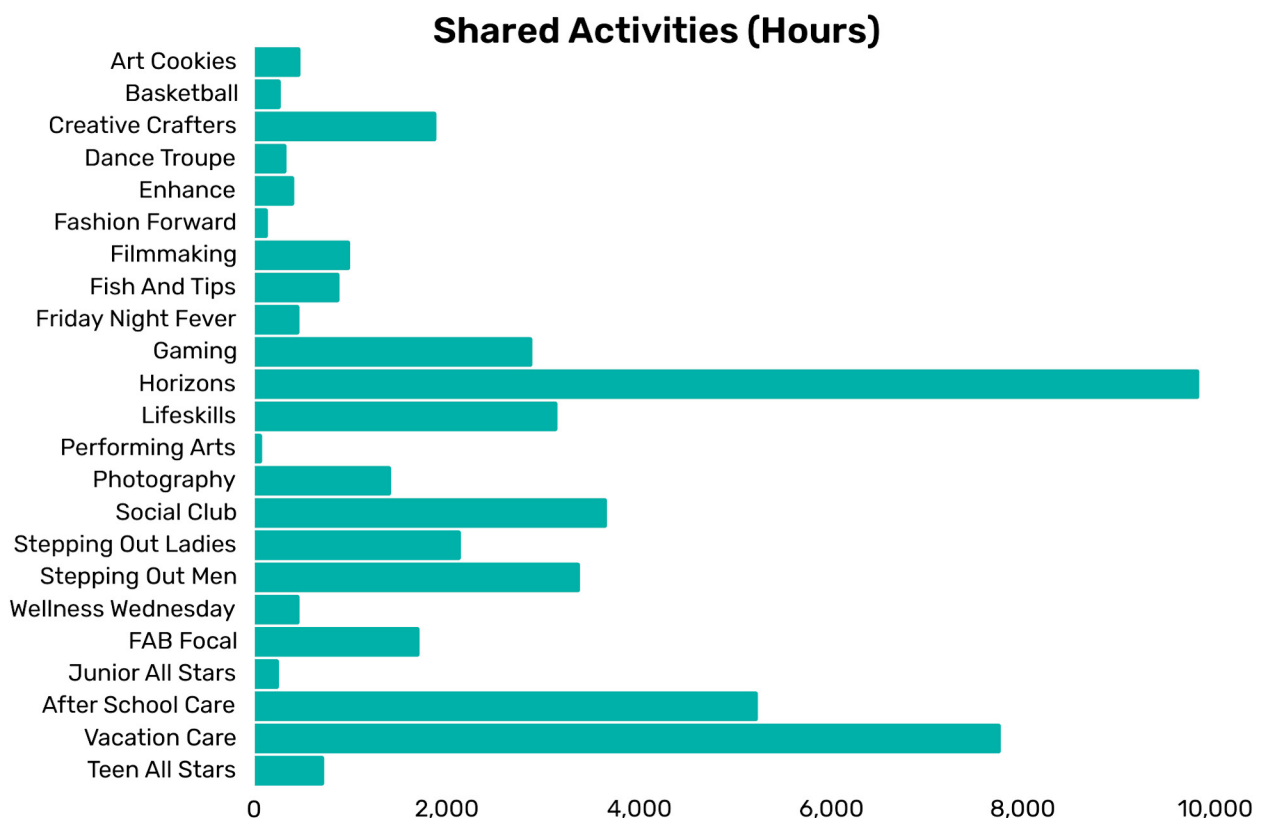
In February, a significant partnership was established with Ipswich Force. This saw the formation of the Focal Force basketball team as a new program addition. This disability-specific basketball initiative offers our clients a safe space to practice and apply their skills fostering both physical health and team spirit.

We also partnered with Performance Plus Dance Centre (PPDC) to create a Performing Arts program for adults and children with disabilities. This program provides a unique opportunity for our clients to explore dance, acting, and singing, under the expert guidance of Ally Rafferty, a teacher at PPDC, and Jess Howman, a member of our Focal team who holds qualifications in musical theatre.

We've actively engaged the wider community through participation in events like the Ipswich Show, Source Kids, Brisbane Disability Expo, and Ipswich Fresh Futures.

Our connection with West Bremer Radio began to unfold and eventually led to a weekly interview segment on the station. We've been able to engage with the Focal and wider community through this platform.

In sum, collaboration is not just a commitment; it's a lifeline for Focal and our clients. It's about working together to provide the best possible support and provide our clients with opportunities they might not have access to otherwise.





Fostering our Community Spirit

We are building a strong sense of community both within and around Focal.

Over the past year, we've been actively working to nurture our Focal community both among our clients and staff. Our Canning Street location saw subtle but impactful changes, thanks to the combined efforts of our enthusiastic clients and dedicated staff. These improvements included upgrading the Sandpit (removing bark, installing new sand, and a cover), organizing multiple working bees to declutter inside and out, and installing a new basketball hoop.

In early 2023, we introduced Client Connect as a way of creating a responsive direct contact point for those we support and their family members. While still in the early stages it has received positive feedback from clients and their families as an initial and simple point of communication.

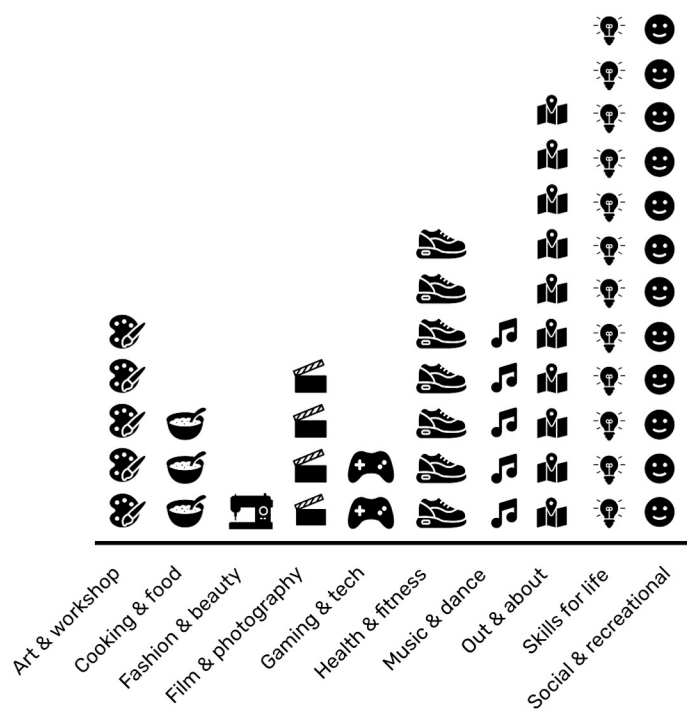
Sharing Activities and Common Interests

Focal is dedicated to providing a comprehensive selection of activities tailored to meet diverse interests and objectives. Our programs are designed to cater to different age groups, including children, teens, and adults.

These activities encompass a spectrum of interests such as cooking, building, performing arts, social skills development, and learning about our wider community. Focal remains committed to ensuring that individuals of all ages find suitable and meaningful avenues to pursue their goals within our inclusive activity programs.

Our Horizons group, has taken a community-based focus, encouraging participants to get out and about more than ever before, which has become a significant highlight within the group.

Number of Groups by Activity Theme





Bringing Clients and the Community Together

At Focal, our core goal is to create more opportunities for our clients and staff to connect and engage with the broader community.

To achieve this, we've organized a series of successful events, including staff and client picnics, a joint staff and client State of Origin gathering, a monthly Social Lunch at Booval Hub, and an outstanding client Talent Show.

These events have been met with enthusiasm and are instrumental in fostering an inclusive atmosphere at Focal.

By actively engaging our clients and the community through these initiatives and events, we are building a strong sense of community both within and around Focal, enriching the lives of our clients and enhancing our workplace culture.

Celebrating a 50-Year Legacy

In the coming months, we will be celebrating our 50th year anniversary. This milestone will be a celebration of Focal's rich history and its ongoing impact in our community, especially in giving a voice to people with disabilities.

Focal's unwavering commitment to excellence remains at the core of our mission. We will continue to evolve and adapt to ensure that every client receiving services from Focal feels safe, supported, valued, and empowered to achieve their needs and goals.

In conclusion, this year has been one of significant growth and transformation for Focal. We are grateful for the dedication of our staff and the support of our community partners. With a focus on inclusivity and continuous improvement, Focal looks forward to another year of positive impact and service excellence.

Strengthening Focal for the Future

In late 2022, Focal embarked on a journey to adapt and improve in response to an ever-changing environment and address both existing and anticipated challenges.

Feedback from our support workers and the community was instrumental in this process.

Our commitment to a brighter future for Focal has led to significant changes, including investments in new systems and an internal restructure. The rationale behind these changes was simple: adaptability and growth.

We recognised that to continue serving our clients effectively and efficiently, we needed to modernise and streamline our operations. This meant embracing change, even when it brought initial challenges in the transition process.

Towards the end of the financial year we began implementation of several new systems including:

- A new payroll system to simplify the administrative functions of payroll, allowing our staff to focus more on quality and compliance
- A finance system which will provide better insights into our financial health, and enable us to make more informed decisions

- A new client management system aiming to equip our staff to navigate the complex landscape of the NDIS space with greater ease, ensuring clients receive excellent services, even in the face of challenges like price tightening, application delays, and plan reductions.
- A new Human Resource Management System to streamline Human Resource and payroll processes and enhance communication within our team.

The new systems we've put in place have already begun contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of our services. They allow us to better manage our resources, streamline processes, and provide more tailored support to our clients.

These improvements position us for sustained success, offering long-term benefits and sustainability.

One of the most notable aspects of our internal restructure was the establishment of two new teams – Quality and Compliance and People and Culture. These teams were born out of a clear need to enhance our services and workforce management.

Quality and Compliance

The creation of the Quality and Compliance team is a significant milestone for Focal. It signifies our commitment to continuous improvement, growth, and transformation.

This team is pivotal in ensuring our services meet and exceed industry standards. Our goal is to make every interaction with Focal a positive and lasting one for our clients and stakeholders.

Compliance isn't just a requirement; it's a promise we make to our clients. By focusing on quality we are proactively assuring that we maintain the highest standards of safe and effective service in alignment with NDIS Standards and Practice Guidelines.

People and Culture

Recognizing the challenges we faced in the labour market, including a high staff turnover rate and elevated health-related absenteeism, we realized the importance of reshaping our approach to workforce management. The establishment of the People and Culture team was a key step in this transformation.

The team's mission is to create an environment where our employees can perform at their best. We've revamped our recruitment processes to focus on client-specific hiring and initiated improvements in our induction program. We've established a training pathway focussed on building workforce capability and enhancing the quality of service.

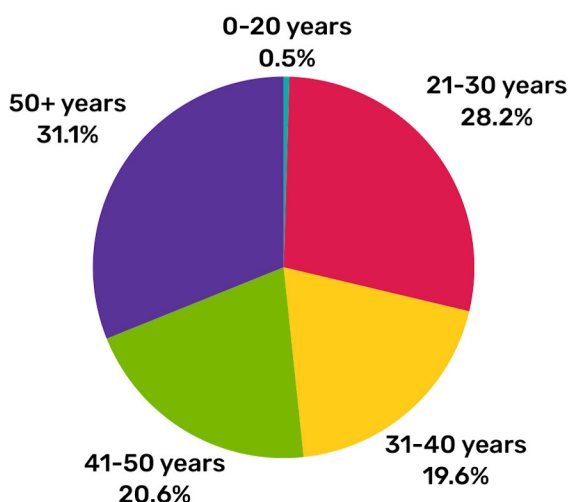
We also introduced our internal customer service unit, 'Employee Assist.' This team serves as the first point of contact for all employee inquiries and maintains regular contact with each employee to follow up on their well-being and job satisfaction.

We are proud to continue supporting local jobs, with over 220 employees actively engaged in the organization. Our commitment to best match support workers to client preferences has led to increased diversity in our workforce, enriching our organizational culture.

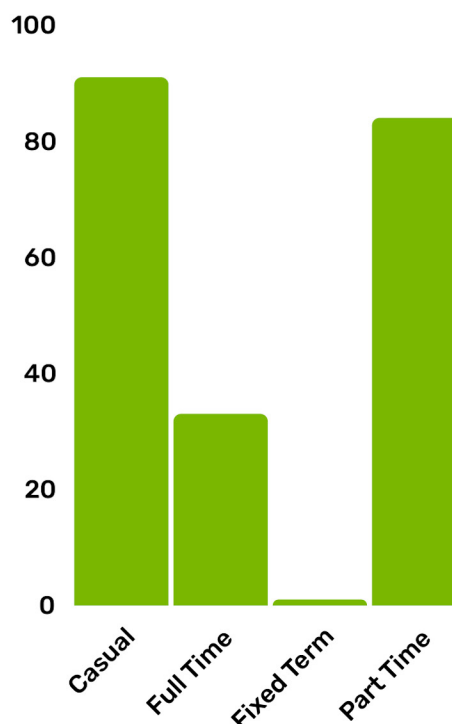
These changes are all part of our commitment to delivering exceptional disability support while strengthening Focal for the future.



Staff Diversity - Ages



Staff by Employment Type



Message from the Treasurer

I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30 June 2023.

Financial Performance

Our financial performance for the year was representative of a challenging year for Focal and more broadly the sector, with an operating deficit of - \$868,266, compared to a surplus of \$580,923 in the previous year. This deficit is primarily due to an increase in operating expenditure. In particular increased staff costs and the implementation of new systems and technology to bring the organisation up to contemporary standards have been costly for us this year. However, we expect many of these investments to improve organisational efficiency into the future.

Our revenue for the year was \$13,303,388, an increase of \$892,356 from the \$12,411,032 received in 2021-22. While the increase was pleasing, it does not offset this year's higher expenses.

Despite the operating deficit in 2023, the organisations' financial position remains strong, with net assets of \$3,405,269. Focal also has a strong cash position, with cash and cash equivalents of \$2,426,614 and a liquidity ratio (current ratio) of 2.67 at the end of the financial year. So while this year has seen increased expenses that outpaced revenue, Focal remains a financially stable organisation with sufficient assets and cash to pay the bills.

Financial Risks and Opportunities

Like all not-for-profit community organisations, Focal faces a number of financial risks to its' sustainability. Chief amongst these risks for Focal are:

- **NDIS as a primary source of funding:** It is an ongoing challenge to deliver services within the NDIS price limitations particularly to outlying areas. This coming year we will continue to seek operational efficiencies to manage this.
- **Workforce:** Recruitment and retention of suitably skilled and qualified staff remains challenging and costly for the disability sector. Focal remains committed to exploring innovative, efficient and effective ways to attract quality talent whilst investing in our existing workforce to ensure they are engaged and well supported.
- **Aging Assets:** Focal has several properties, vehicles and other assets we use in the delivery of our services. As these assets age it is important for us that they remain serviceable and safe, so into the future we expect our budget for maintenance and replacement will be larger than the past few years.

Looking Forward

Focal is focused on continuous improvement including:

- **Expanding our service offerings:** Focal is recognised for our programs, and clients who access these have always been an important part of our organisation. We will continue to look for opportunities to build new activities and services that will have a high demand amongst clients.
- **Efficiency gains through Technology:** While our new administration and IT systems are only now being bedded down, going forward we expect to see improvements, and therefore lower costs, in areas such as rostering, client onboarding, finances and staff management.

Focal is well-positioned to overcome the challenges it faces and to capitalize on the opportunities that are available. Our organisation has a strong financial position, an experienced management team, and a loyal client base. I am confident that we will continue to grow and prosper in the years to come.



Rob Newman
Treasurer

Acknowledgements

Focal acknowledges the support received from each individual, business and stakeholder.

Focal is grateful for support received in the form of donations, grants and funding, partners in the community, volunteers and our members. We extend our thanks to everyone who provides us with support.

- Ipswich City Council
- Department of Education
- Western Suburbs Special School
- Claremont Special School
- Ipswich Special School
- Sunnybank Special School
- Mount Ommaney Special School
- Goodna Special School
- Performance Plus Dance Centre
- Ipswich Basketball
- Councillor Paul Tully
- Russell Swinton
- Ipswich Show Society
- West Bremer Radio
- Patty Hitchenor's Just Singing
- Cambrian Hall
- Ulysses Bike Club
- Booval Fair and their retailers:
 - Big W
 - Woolworths
 - Vibe Nail Studios
 - Pet Barn
 - BWS
 - Louis Fruit Market

Focal would like to honour one of our life members Pat Sherlock who passed away recently. Pat was a warm and creative man who lived next door to our first Focal Hub in Warrawong Street.


Pat joined our Focal team for many years as a volunteer imparting his passion, skills and creativity to the clients within our handyman group. His commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of our clients was truly remarkable.



Pat Sherlock
Life Member

Focal Community Services

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