

Executive Officer report 2018 -2019

The 2018-19 year has been a pivotal one for HOPES Inc as an organisation as we fully transitioned to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) as did all of our Laetare Court residents.

A brief look at my EO's report for last year showed us planning, consulting, trialling and negotiating on where and how HOPES could fit into the new NDIS landscape and stay viable. The challenge of moving from a small, contextualised and block funded organisation to a fee for service business model has required some shifts in thinking. I am cautiously optimistic that we have found a way to do this while still maintaining the essence of a cooperative and peer supported accommodation model; one that at least philosophically fits comfortably within the NDIS.

Our approach of advocating for our model, remaining small and agile and maintaining our focus and profile as a disability specific organisation has helped as new questions and challenges arose in the transition process. At this stage, post transition to the NDIS, HOPES is now not only providing accommodation supports but also coordination of support services, group programs and individual capacity building supports. It is important to acknowledge the input of our residents and their families and advocates in these choices as we seek to deliver supports our residents and other clients both need and see us as well placed to provide.

Against the organisational backdrop, we also had the challenging task of assisting those of our residents who wanted it to go through the process of seeking NDIS eligibility, assessment and intake and engaging in the goal setting process that predates an individual's first plan. We could write a book about this process and issues around it but suffice to say, without the patience, good humour, perseverance and goodwill of our residents, staff, family members and local area coordinators (LAC's) it would have been a different experience. A big thanks to all of the residents who have cooperated throughout and been patient while issues and serious questions have been worked through. Not easy when it involves both your personal supports and housing situation.

Thanks to Alison and our Board – each and every one of you with your input and participation in the newly formed sub committees – you’ve embraced the significant challenges the year has offered, from adjusting to new meetings structures to examining HOPES as an entity; how we operate, what we value and the changing sector in general as we move forward. I have felt both supported and challenged as Executive Officer and appreciate the opportunity to raise not only operational imperatives but the ‘bigger picture’ themes for consideration.

Eliza and Karen, thanks for your hard work, perseverance and preparedness to wear so many hats in the course of your working hours. The residents, our Board and I value your input and flexibility, integrity and good humour (just don’t expect any leave to be granted for the next year!) Also, thanks to Kate, our swim group leader who brings her unique knowledge and ideas of how we can improve the program.

Our volunteers Sue, Carolyn, Mark and Alex thank you – you’re a pleasure to have around, your input is greatly valued, and we don’t want to lose who we are or where we’ve come from and you all help that greatly.

As we approach Laetare Court’s ten-year anniversary next year, we continue to grow and challenge ourselves as a cooperative. We will also need to look beyond our present services to offer more and to seek new opportunities. Our current residents prove what a cooperative living housing model can be and the genuine engagement with people with a disability about their life goals and choices has resulted in new accommodation models and locations being actively sought – it’s now up to us to try to expand our HOPES Vision to make this a reality for more people.

Chris Oriel

EXECUTIVE OFFICER