

Presidents' Report 2018-2019

This year has been an interesting one for HOPES as our state funded block grant funding ceased and we transitioned to a Commonwealth funded NDIS model.

As an organisation we have spent a great deal of time over the past two years planning for this event and considering future options so we were well positioned for the challenges we are facing.

Strategic Planning

The Board and staff had a very productive strategic planning day in early February to update our strategic plan and determine our priorities for the next three years. We refined our vision and attempted to be clearer about the outcomes that we wanted to achieve.

I think it is worth reporting the three key outcomes that the Board determined for our clients and residents:

- Access and participate in inclusive, accessible and well designed cooperative accommodation;
- Achieve personal goals and actively engage in a good community life; and
- Advocate for and promote cooperative community options.

These outcome statements capture the consensus of the Board discussions that HOPES needs to look at diverse ways to assist people with neurological conditions and acquired brain injuries and not just be restricted to provision of accommodation.

We also attempted to be clearer about the performance indicators that would tell us how we were performing in relation to each of these outcomes. The Board further decided to form four subcommittees to tackle different aspects of this work and ensure that skills and experience of Board members were well utilised.

I think our strategic plan (on HOPES' website) has been a useful tool in helping focus our attention on what is important and how we can make sure HOPES is sustainable and grows in directions that are consistent with our vision and philosophy.

Transition to the NDIS

In this context, we faced the transition to the NDIS! This involved managing many complex organisational issues as well as participating in the individual transition of all our Laetare Court residents to NDIS funding- no easy task!

Can I say (with a slight hint of smugness and a great sigh of relief) that we did it!

At a time when many of our fellow disability organisations have given up on the struggle of juggling their assets and funding and simply gone out of business, HOPES has survived and there is every promise that in time we will grow even stronger and more sustainable.

Having said that, I do not want to give the impression that this has been an easy process. Much time and energy from our staff and the Board has been spent this year in working out how the transition for all residents who wish to continue to live at Laetare court can occur and supporting residents and their families in the process.

Without the dedication, commitment and common sense displayed by our excellent team of staff - Chris, Eliza and Karen - HOPES would possibly be facing a very different future and our residents may have been facing the real possibility of looking for alternative living arrangements.

I am full of admiration for the way our Executive Officer, Chris Oriel, has managed this difficult year. Chris was exemplary in making connections with NDIS and Disability Services officials at all levels and ensuring that HOPES was never far from their minds and that continuity of funding at a sustainable level was achieved. He also worked tirelessly with our residents and their families to guide them through the NDIS planning processes. For a small organisation, I am sure that we had a disproportionate influence on the way the *lead tenant* component of NDIS funding was rolled out and the HOPES model was protected and promoted. Chris has the knack of being utterly charming and reasonable while also being extremely persistent and unswerving in achieving the result he wants!

Similarly, our wonderful administrative staff, Karen Fall and Eliza White, have taken on board the onerous task of navigating the NDIS portal to ensure the billing processes is implemented efficiently and that HOPES is paid for services provided, in a timely manner. This may sound easy but let me assure you that it presented numerous challenges and frustrations. Karen and Eliza have both aged several extra years in the process! It is also true that the administrative load that HOPES is carrying has substantially increased due to the NDIS and this has been absorbed into the workload of these amazing staff without complaint. Eliza and Karen have also increasingly supported Chris by assisting him in his other duties as well as agreeing to cover overnight and holiday coverage of our phone in case of emergencies.

Our Board has also risen to the challenge and actively engaged with the NDIS philosophical underpinnings and operational processes. In particular I would like to mention our Treasurer, Marion Cooper, who has taken a leadership role in ensuring that NDIS funding was accessed in a timely way and new budgeting and reporting arrangements were put in place so that the board was kept well informed of the changing financial landscape. We could not have managed without her!

All our staff and board have enthusiastically embraced the new requirements for provider registration and have devoted time and energy to understanding the documentation related to the *NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission*. We have workshopped the *Code of Conduct* at our Board meetings and updated our *Complaints Policy* and *Volunteers' Policy* in line with the requirements of this Commission.

Thank you to others

So you can see that HOPES is very lucky to have the staff and Board that we have! In addition to the people I have already mentioned I would like to thank:

- John Stubleby, who has provided wise counsel as HOPES has adapted to a hard nosed business model where everything we do has to have the source of funding appropriately identified. Who is paying for that? Is his constant catch cry!
- Harun Abdullah who so often brings absolute integrity, fresh eyes and a commonsense approach to complex issues;

- Sue Hodgson who remains the heart and soul of HOPES and devotes so much of her time to volunteer activities with residents and behind the scenes work to keep HOPES in the positive public eye
- Ros Calvert who fits in her duties to HOPES around a busy work agenda but is never too busy to provide advice and support when asked;
- Gill Whitehouse who has joined the Board most recently and is already contributing so much of her time and energy including attending a interstate conference to further her knowledge of neurological conditions and using her skills and experience as a physiotherapist to assist our residents.

I continue to be inspired and uplifted by our Laetare court residents and their families. Their capacity to make a real contribution to HOPES and the wider community while overcoming considerable personal challenges and the ups and downs of living with a disability is truly awe inspiring. They also make me think and make me laugh and make me count my blessings!

Thank you also to the wider community for continued support and encouragement and for helping in so many ways.

Alison Jacob

President

October 2019