



# 2021

Annual Report



**caringa**  
*A Complete Life*

# Acknowledgment of Country

Caringa acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of Australia.

We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging, and all indigenous peoples within the Clarence Valley and Coffs Coast regions.

**Bundjalung – Gumbaynggir -Yaegl**

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# Our Story

**Caringa Australia Limited (Caringa) is a diverse, mission-focussed, values-oriented and socially responsible organisation with its base in Grafton, NSW and operations across the Clarence Valley and Coffs Harbour Council areas. Caringa is a trusted and leading provider of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports and services.**

Caringa has been operating since 1953 when the community first raised funds to start a school for children with disability. Caringa is an innovative and professional organisation, offering people with disability a diverse range of supports and services.

We continue to evolve to meet contemporary demand and to co-design services and supports with clients. Caringa can provide services to all NDIS participants regardless of how your plan is managed (NDIA Managed, Plan Managed or Self Managed).

- ✦ Allied Health/Therapy (multidisciplinary)
- ✦ Support Coordination
- ✦ Daily Living Skills and Support
- ✦ Specialised Disability Accommodation (SDA)
- ✦ Social and Community Inclusion
- ✦ Plan Management
- ✦ Short-term Accommodation (Including Respite)
- ✦ In-home Supports
- ✦ Capacity Building
- ✦ Finding and Keeping a Job including:
  - Supported Employment
  - School Leaver Employment Supports
  - Customised Employment
  - Job carving
  - Micro-business Support

*Caringa Australia Ltd. is registered with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. **Registration No. 4-3LLO-1022.***

*Caringa is a Registered NDIS Provider **Provider No. 4050000721.***

*Caringa supports the experience and enjoyment of 'A Complete Life' with choice and independence.*

# Governance

Caringa's Board of Directors are all volunteers drawn from a diverse cross-section of the local community. They are generous with their time, knowledge and skills. The Board's role is Corporate Governance; they set Caringa's Strategic Vision and Focus for the future. All Directors are active on Board mandated Sub-Committees to actively implement good governance and sound financial and risk management strategies across the Company. Caringa's Directors are committed to contributing effective and contemporary skills to Caringa.



**Tim White**  
Chair



**Matthew Katon**  
Vice chair



**Deb Vlastaras**  
Director



**Katrina Austen**  
Director



**Phil Elliott**  
Director



**Marilyn Brien**  
Director



**Geraldine Gallagher**  
Director



# Mission & Values

## To support and empower people with disability

- ✦ We are person centred and community focused.
- ✦ We are accountable, ethical and financially responsible.
- ✦ We are making a positive difference in the lives of people with disability and their families.
- ✦ We value the individual strengths of the people we support and the people we employ.
- ✦ We provide appropriate and desirable working conditions to our staff.
- ✦ We support the rights of children and people with disability in all aspects of our service. We are one team with common goals.

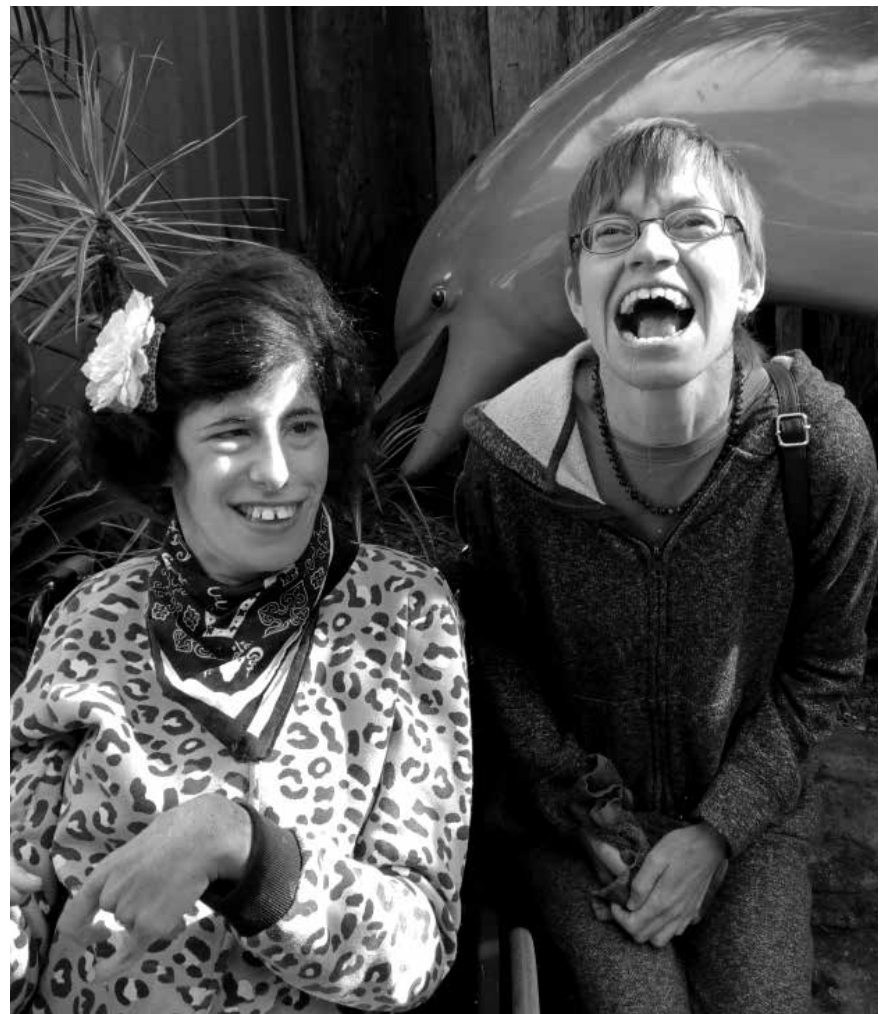
## Strategic objectives

- ✦ Caringa has a well-recognised and respected brand.
- ✦ Caringa has a professional culture that supports our clients and staff.
- ✦ Caringa will maintain and grow our customer base.
- ✦ Caringa has a sound governance framework.
- ✦ Caringa will establish and maintain effective systems.
- ✦ Caringa aims to operate at a 5% nett surplus.



Respect  
Accountability  
Empowerment  
Inclusion  
Commitment  
Rights  
Purpose





# Milestones



2020

2020

JUL  
2020

- Caringa consolidates its team from multiple locations into new head office at Fitzroy Street, Grafton

AUG  
2020

- Caringa Music Studio established – thanks Mitch Reynolds!!

SEP  
2020

- Appointment of Strategic Business Manager
- Caringa purchases Elland property

OCT  
2020

- Inaugural client-directed support worker interviews and selection
- Caringa is successful in securing Department of Social Services TVS Grant
- Launch of second Top Cuts Lawn & Garden team
- Inaugural Caringa Employment Expo – *A Complete Career*
- Client Services Coordinators acquire PART Training skills
- Steve McKimm and Kenn Payne are honoured with Caringa Life Membership

DEC  
2020

- Caringa celebrates International Day of People with Disability

NOV  
2020

- First sod turned in Bare Earth to Bounty
- Caringa embarks on Protect Together Program to enhance health, safety and wellbeing
- Successful completion of NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission surveillance audit.
- Caringa implements new IR-compliant on-call coverage system







2021

2021

**JAN  
2021**

- Launch of revised Holiday Experience Program for school aged NDIS participants

**APR  
2021**

- Caringa clients and staff participate in Surfability at Minnie Water

**JUN  
2021**

- Supported Employees Mark and David were encouraged and supported to achieve an Award wage by working at the races for Greyhound NSW.
- Finalisation of Caringa Vision 2031 and first three-year Strategic Directions 2022-2025
- Caringa welcomes Sean Austin and Mackenzie Harvison to the Senior Leadership team

**FEB  
2021**

- Inaugural Caringa Bare Earth to Bounty market staff at Grafton Twilight Farmers Market
- Caringa selected to participate in the Fair Work Commission's trial and pilot for a new Supported Wage System
- Ben Denmead records his first song at the Caringa Music Studio
- Rhythm and Movement Classes by Lynne Greives commence at the Castle Centre
- A partnership between Mid-North Coast Disabled Surfers and Caringa gets Dallas Brooks to the ocean and waves crash over him for the first time in twenty years
- Administration Traineeship is won by Rachel Pearce

**MAR  
2021**

- Launch and naming of The Castle Centre at 144 Fitzroy Street, Grafton in honour of Vince Castle
- Caringa commences implementation of DoneSafe

**MAY  
2021**

- Caringa opens new Supported Independent Living home in Yamba, NSW
- Development Application lodged with Clarence Valley Council for Queen Street redevelopment

# From the Chair

**I would like to start by saying thank you to all our clients and staff for achieving *A Complete Life* during this past 12 months. It has been a disruptive year for our clients with the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns and restrictions to travel and activities that we could all participate in. However, through all of this, from the look of the photos I see, and stories I hear, there has been lots going on with many outings, get-togethers and new activities within the home. Well done to all involved.**

While negotiating the Covid-19 pandemic Caringa Australia has not slowed down at all. We have managed to grow and introduce new and exciting parts to our business to provide further opportunities. One of these has been the commencement of a Supported Independent Living (SIL) house in Yamba. This has been a Caringa goal for many years and hopefully this will now help us to offer more services to the Lower Clarence.

Another new initiative, Bare Earth to Bounty (BE2B) has taken off this year thanks to the hard work of the BE2B team and a very good growing season. For those who are unaware, BE2B is a client-led market garden located at 1 Orara St. From there they have been supplying vegetables, herbs, fruit and seedlings not only to Caringa clients and staff, but also making appearances at the Grafton

Farmer's Market to sell their super fresh, healthy and local produce. BE2B provided employment opportunities for a number of clients who worked in the garden and retail experience through the sale of this produce. In large part this has been a success thanks to the hard work of Andrew Brown. Thanks Andy! BE2B is continuing to 'grow' and we look forward to seeing more from it in the coming years as we look at further opportunities to provide for our clients.

During the year we were lucky enough to sneak in the official opening of our head office at 144 Fitzroy Street, Grafton, now known as 'The Castle Centre'. This was to honour the exceptional service that former Chair and community stalwart Vince Castle has provided Caringa over many years. The opening brought together clients, staff, past and present directors, Member for Page the Hon. Kevin Hogan and members of the community. It was a great event and there were many comments on the day (and after) about how great it was to have this resource for Caringa and also commenting on what a great 'launch' it was. I would like to thank Vince and also his wife Pat for their hard work and continued support of Caringa. I am glad that you accepted the honour of having our new home named after you.

Covid-19 unfortunately put on end to the 2020 Caringa Ball planned for October. This was going to be a bigger and better launch to Jacaranda Festival than the much talked about 2019 Caringa Ball. I know many of our clients were disappointed that it could not go ahead. We are hopeful for 2021, Covid19 with conditions permitting.



**We have managed to grow and introduce new and exciting parts to our business to provide further opportunities**



The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC) has continued during the past 12 months and there have been interim recommendations made with more to come to ensure the health, safety and rights of people with disability. Client rights and safety remain the primary focus for Caringa and the sector. In response, Caringa is continually revising our policies and practice in line with the opinions and recommendations expressed to date. I would like to thank Guy Robertson especially for his work in ensuring we are complying with these changes as they come through and ensuring that all staff are current in this regard.

In the past 12 months we have seen the introduction of the 'Caringa Careers Expo', led by Chris Cormack. This was to encourage more individuals to join Caringa by giving them an opportunity to hear and see first-hand what working in the Disability Industry looks like. Thank you to Chris and the wider team who have been involved in these successful events. We managed to boost our workforce which was the goal. Many of these expos were booked out which was a fantastic result. It has been very difficult to find staff over a number of years through traditional channels, but these expos harnessed a different approach and allowed people to understand the role better, resulting in a more diverse range of applicants applying for the advertised positions.

As mentioned, this year threw many curve balls at all Caringa clients and the team. Thanks to the frontline staff and Outcomes and Practice Leaders for your dedication and flexibility when moving with the ever-changing goal posts to ensure everyone achieved, grew and remained safe. We could not have done it without you.

Thank you to our Therapy team: Angela Crompton, Chris Browne and Lisa Salter who have had a big 12 months on many fronts. This is a relatively new and growing part of our business and we are grateful for your efforts in providing these critical services to Caringa's clients both existing and new.

Our Senior and Corporate teams have all done an amazing job with significant changes in the way we operate within the National Disability Insurance Scheme's framework keeping everyone on their toes. All this while working directly alongside clients and community to ensure goals are being achieved and Caringa's best interests are at heart.

I would like to thank the Directors for their efforts and support this year. There have been many lengthy meetings and in-depth discussions and we have achieved a lot in this past 12 months. The work you all do is appreciated by me and is pushing Caringa to new heights.

We look forward to unveiling more exciting opportunities and outcomes over the months and year ahead. Thank you to everyone, staff and clients, who help make Caringa the amazing community that it is.



**Tim White** | Chair

# From the Chief Executive Officer

**Caringa shares the 2021 Annual Report with our clients, members, workforce and community. It presents the achievements of our organisation and our community.**

## **Financial year 2021 highlights**

- We finalised our redevelopment plans for Queen Street.
- We opened new services in the Lower Clarence comprising community supports and a new Supported Independent Living Home enabling Zackerie and Mitch to meet their goal of transitioning out of their respective family homes.
- We created something from nothing through Bare Earth to Bounty which converted an industrial site into an organic market garden providing additional employment pathways for clients and in so doing, fulfilled Brenden's dream of being able to work in retail.
- We assisted Dallas to move from Coffs Harbour to Tamworth to be closer to family.
- We participated in the Fair Work Commission's Supported Wage trial as it strived to find a fairer way to remunerate people with disability in supported employment.
- We committed to the continuing health, safety and wellbeing of our clients and workforce by committing to the Protect Together Program.
- We consolidated our office-based teams at our new headquarters in July 2020 and named it The Castle Centre in honour of life member and former Chair, Vince Castle in March 2021.
- We welcomed Marilyn Brien and Geraldine Gallagher to our Board of Directors.

- We created Vision 2031 and our first three year Strategic Directions plan in response to it.

## **Covid-19**

The effects of Covid-19 continue to impact Caringa's clients, workforce and community, and Caringa has focused its energies on keeping our clients and workforce safe and well.

- Timely and effective communications to ensure that numerous iterations of health and restriction of movement orders are understood and implemented.
- The development of a Pandemic Response and Crisis plan, which also includes a pandemic response and crisis team who can spring to action, as and when required.
- The creation and deployment of Personal Protective Equipment kits.
- A focus on promoting key messaging about the Covid19 vaccinations, including incentivising vaccinations.

## **The Disability Royal Commission (DRC)**

Caringa is a staunch supporter of the DRC and welcomes its findings and recommendations as an opportunity to learn and improve. Caringa has closely followed all public hearings to date and thoroughly reviewed the DRC's interim report and recommendations.

During the year, Caringa has revised its professional practice and support methodologies in line with the sentiments expressed by the DRC and in alignment with consumer and community expectation.

These expectations are a clear signpost to contemporary good and/or best practice and Caringa has taken a continuous improvement approach to upholding and instantiating the rights of people with disability.

## **A restated vision**

The Caringa Board finalised its Vision 2031, supported by Blue Bike. The vision: *People with disability experience a complete life within a community that respects and celebrates their individuality.*

Caringa's role in this is as an enabler, facilitator, champion, supporter and provider and there is much work to do. Concurrently, Caringa's Strategic Directions for the next three years set its objectives towards this goal:

- Caringa shapes and sustains an inclusive and progressive community.
- Caringa demonstrates its values in safe and professional behaviour in every area.
- Caringa nurtures and builds a culture of innovation and sustainable growth.
- Caringa measures activity in every area to improve outcomes.
- Caringa aligns processes and systems for purpose and for efficiency.
- Caringa adopts decision-making methodology that includes Business Intelligence data and risk.

Under this lies an ambitious implementation plan which will inch Caringa towards its three-year strategy and ten-year vision.

### The upcoming year

Over the coming year, we will concentrate on a mix of consolidation to improve professional practice and services to maximise client outcomes and goal achievement, and innovation to tackle, and with any luck, create solutions to complex problems and challenges. One such challenge is meaningful workforce participation.

Employment outcomes for people with disability (PWD) are a focus for our energies, and in particular, ensuring that pathways and opportunities exist for PWD to build their employment confidence and readiness. This entails supporting that confidence and competence and creating those pathways within and outside of Caringa as they currently do not exist. The ultimate aim is to provide supports for clients to work in non-segregated employment within community. This is an exciting space and Caringa has a plan.

### Thank you

My heartfelt thanks to the entire Caringa team who support clients to express themselves and enjoy *A Complete Life*. Every individual plays a vital part, regardless of their role. Whilst we have been fortunate in regional Australia to have escaped the sustained stresses and stressors as a result of Covid-19, it was still an uncertain and difficult year for clients, family and the workforce.

My small team of Executives, the broader Senior Leadership team, Coordinators at every level from Finance to Quality to Client Services, Caringa's therapists, Support Coordinators, Plan Managers, Outcomes and Practice Leaders and Employment Team Leader are some of the hardest working people I have had the privilege to work alongside. The entire workforce at Caringa Employment has had a terrific year and deserve the success that they have contributed to Caringa.

A special mention about Zachary Page, Client Services Manager who brings and puts the heart into all client-facing operations. Zachary is generous to a fault with his skills and time for all, care and concern for clients demonstrated on a daily basis and keeping it real for Caringa by his personal motto – "there are people at the end of every decision we make."

Caringa's Directors have performed an outstanding job in leading and governing the company through the continuing uncertainty of Covid-19, an evolving NDIs and creating our culture of deep respect for Caringa clients and community. A special thank you to Caringa Chair, Tim White who is a quiet and ever-present support for us all as we work together to deliver our mission and vision.



**My heartfelt thanks to the entire Caringa team who support clients to express themselves and enjoy A Complete Life**



**Rachel Choy** | CEO

# From the Chief Operating Officer

**The Covid-19 pandemic had a sudden and unprecedented impact on every facet of our operations across the 2020/2021 Financial Year. Faced with a major public health crisis we rapidly responded with regular meetings of our emergency response team. Caringa was ahead of the curve in ensuring the wellbeing of our clients and workers.**

We established new operating procedures and protocols, undertook a comprehensive review of our Covid-19 response planning framework, and maintained bulk stockpile of personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of clients and workers. This planning meant that in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak in a Caringa location we would not be at the mercy of the National or State PPE stockpiles.

As the crisis continued to unfold we maintained our increased levels of infection control and screening, responding with agility and keeping our workforce informed. Caringa leveraged the improvements we made in information technology and flexible working arrangements to enable services to be delivered throughout the pandemic.

Our initial reaction was swift and effective, however, our response matured over the year and moved from reacting to responding as we learnt from our experiences. We continue to be vigilant and actively monitor the Covid-19 situation closely knowing that

the local situation can change at any time. Caringa continues to look for ways that we can improve our emergency response procedures and communications while providing innovative supports to people with disability who just like anyone else have experienced the sometimes devastating effects of the pandemic.

We are acutely aware of the impact of social isolation on people with disability. Caringa rolled out social stories to further improve communications with clients while also increasing individual supports to mitigate negative impacts to overall wellbeing due to disruptions to group and community supports.

Over this period Caringa also put significant effort into safeguarding the jobs of supported employees, although a small number of these employees chose to stay home during the lockdowns. Caringa Employment remained open for business throughout while pivoting towards essential services delivery.

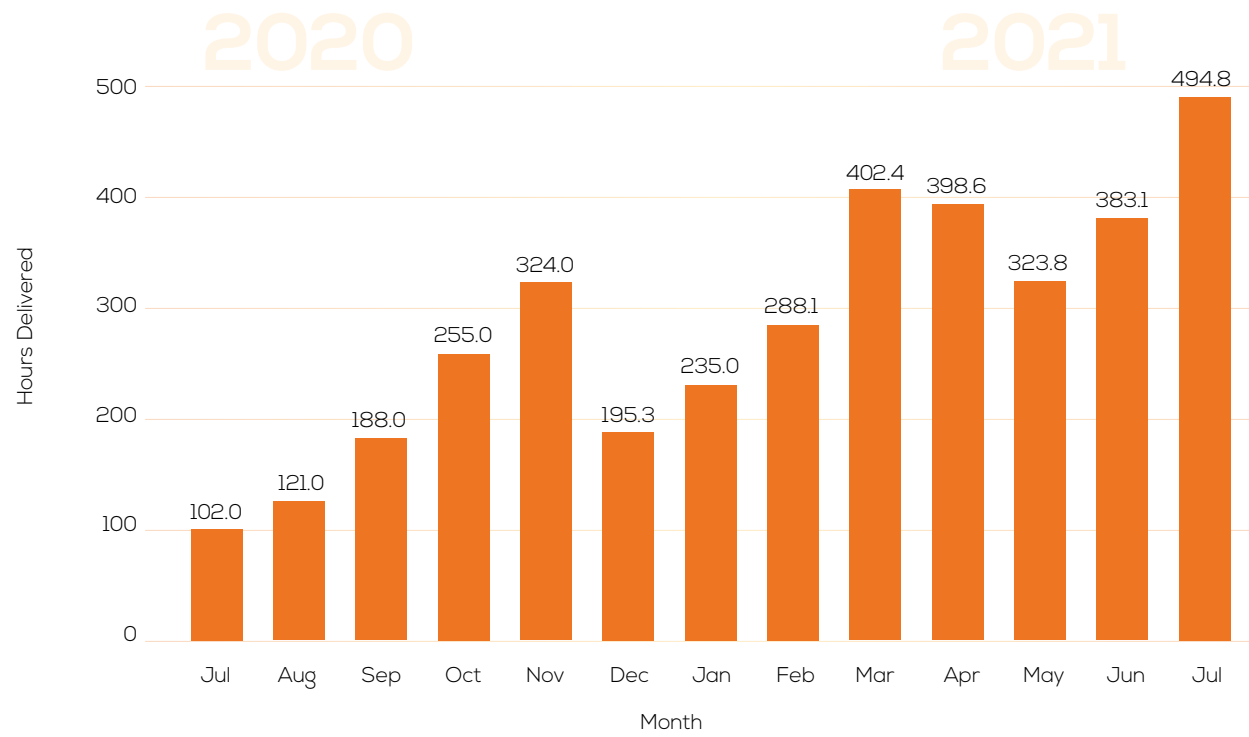
Despite the challenges faced across the year Caringa continued to grow, invest in our future, and move closer towards operational excellence. Our Support Coordination team doubled in size across this period. We now boast a team of 6 Support Coordinators who provide services to over 175 clients across the Clarence Valley and Coffs Coast. This growth is a testament to the reputation we gave for impartial quality service.



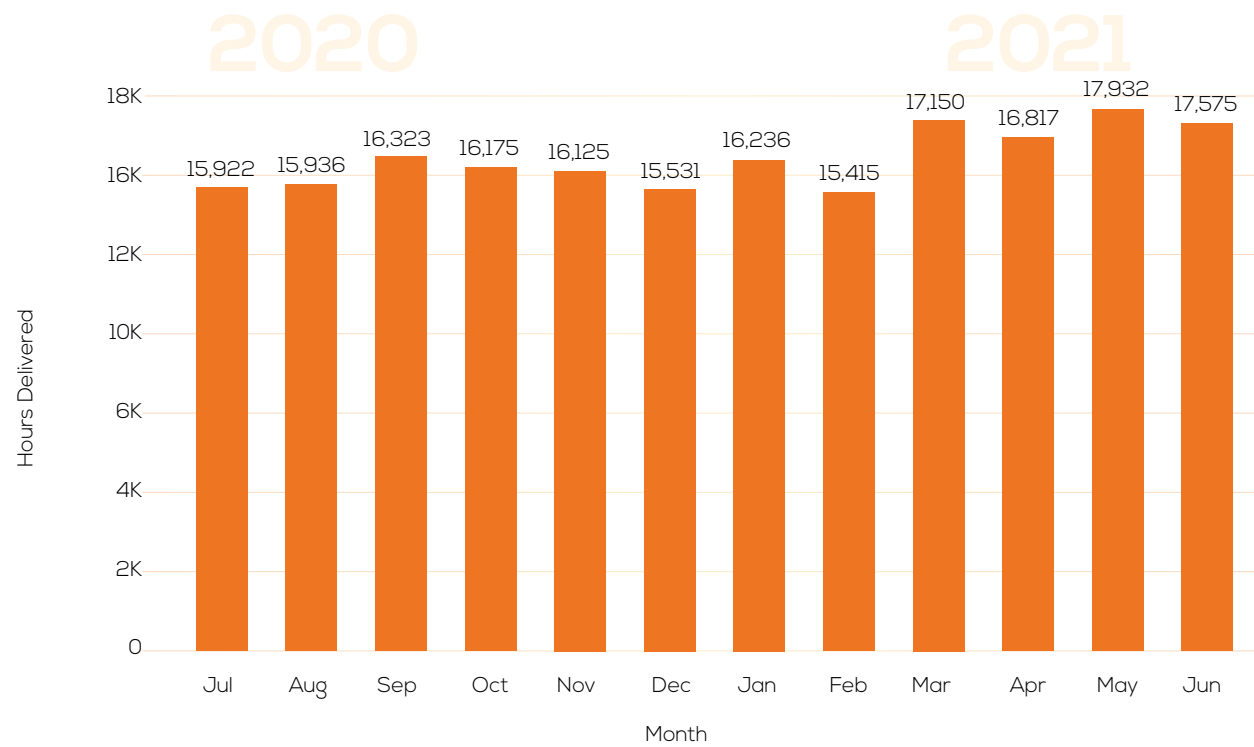
**As a mission led and values driven organisation, the most important achievement for our operations team is positive client outcomes**



### Support Coordination Hours

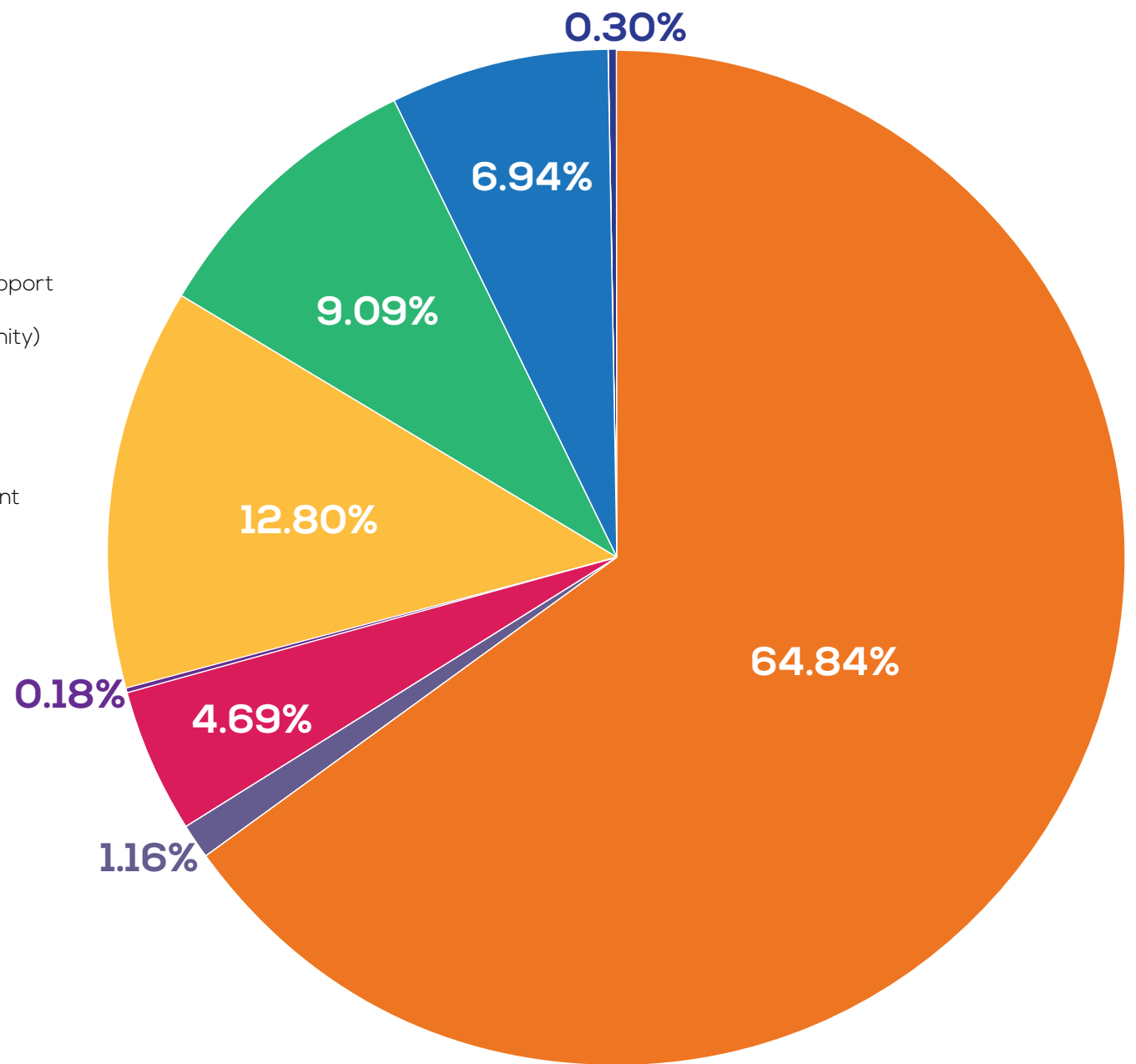


### Direct Support Hours



**Direct Supports by Support Type**

- Supported Independent Living (SIL)
- Temporary Accommodation
- Statutory Out of Home Care
- Group Based Social and Community Support
- Individual Supports (In-home & Community)
- Supported Employment
- School Holiday Program
- Customised & School Leaver Employment





Caringa delivered on its strategy by expanding into the Lower Clarence Valley region. We now operate a Supported Independent Living residence in Yamba in addition to several 'in community' and 'drop in support' models. Our operation in the Lower Clarence created an additional 20 permanent jobs in the Yamba and Maclean region. A sincere thank you to everyone involved in bringing this long-term goal to life.

Overall our operational strategy was one of consolidation, developing and supporting continual improvement and gold standard practice. Over the previous 3 years Caringa has experienced significant growth. It was important for the 2020-2021 FY that Operations focused on reviewing, improving and renewing our processes and systems in order to lay the foundation for future continued growth.

With consolidation and continual improvement in mind, Caringa partnered with ICARE in the implementation of ICARE's Protect Together (P2) program. This involved a comprehensive review of Caringa's WHS systems and assessment of Caringa's WHS culture, the outcome of which is a detailed action plan to guide work, health and safety improvement into the future. So far, significant progress has been made on the implementation of the P2 program, and this will continue through to the 2021-2022 financial year. The end goal is to deliver a higher level of safety for our workers, something we can all agree is vitally important.

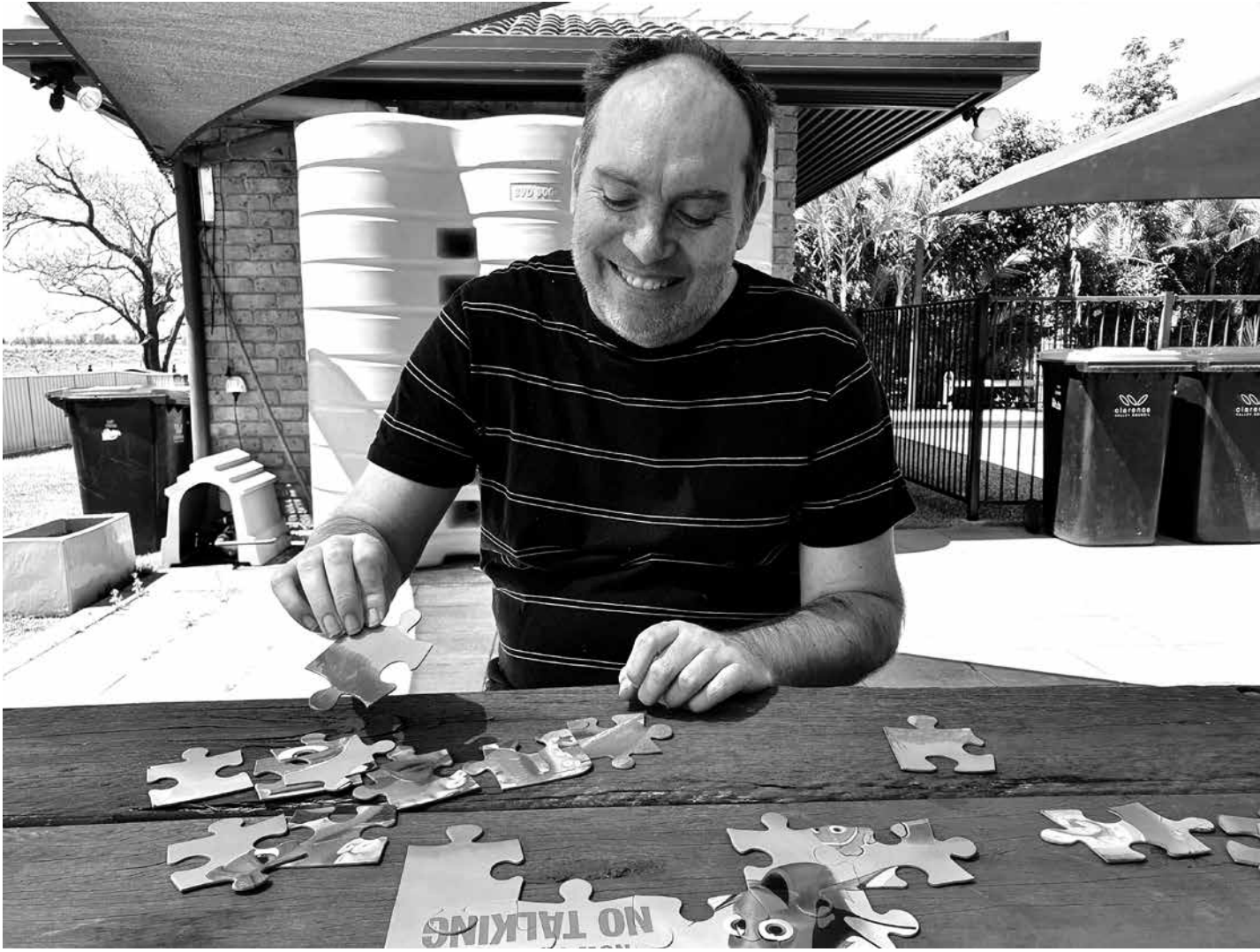
As a mission led and values driven organisation, the most important achievement for our operations team is positive client outcomes. Caringa is honoured to play a part in supporting clients to reach their goals and aspirations. Just a few highlights that I believe the entire team should be proud include:

- Assisted multiple clients with transitioning from the family home into supported independent living, allowing them the freedom of an increased level of self-determination.
- Providing a professional and highly sought-after music and music production program which has supported many clients with not only a creative outlet but also countless genuine Capacity Building outcomes.
- Assisted 2 Supported Employees to transition to non-segregated within community employment, and to earn full award wages.
- Delivered a successful series of School Holiday programs, helping our young clients and their families to feel valued and a part of the community while building valuable skills and resilience.
- Supporting clients to achieve their long-term dream of obtaining their driver's licence.

Our team support clients to obtain significant outcomes every day. Every successful outcome relies on each team member playing their part. I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone. We have all contributed to these success stories, and the broader success of Caringa this past year 2020-2021.



**Guy Robertson** | COO





# From the Chief Financial Officer

**When we run into a difficult time, like the COVID crisis, it helps us to see what's important and recalibrate. We learn about some of the areas of business that perhaps needed to be corrected all along, and it allows focusing on that. We realise that in times like these if we want to survive, we need to have the flexibility and agility to respond to quickly changing business conditions.**

During the financial year under review, we continued to embed our new structure designed to deliver on the promise of better services for the people we support.

Total revenue in the Financial Year 2021 was \$17 million, up 7.5% from previous year. To fuel growth and build capacity we budgeted for additional human resources which is reflected in the increased employee expenses. Thus, total expenses increased by 15%, resulting in net margin contribution of 4.8%, compared to 11.1% in the previous financial year.

With the structure in place we are now poised to continue on the upward growth trajectory. We are committed to growing a workforce and strive to become an employer of choice, by offering a safe, caring, and supportive environment for our people to grow their careers and develop skills to be an important member of the Caringa team.

Our long-term goal remains to build a sustainable capability to support the most vulnerable members of our community.

To continue to deliver improvements in supports and services, Caringa must be financially sustainable. We are pleased to report a net surplus of \$825 thousand for the 12 months to 30 June 2021.

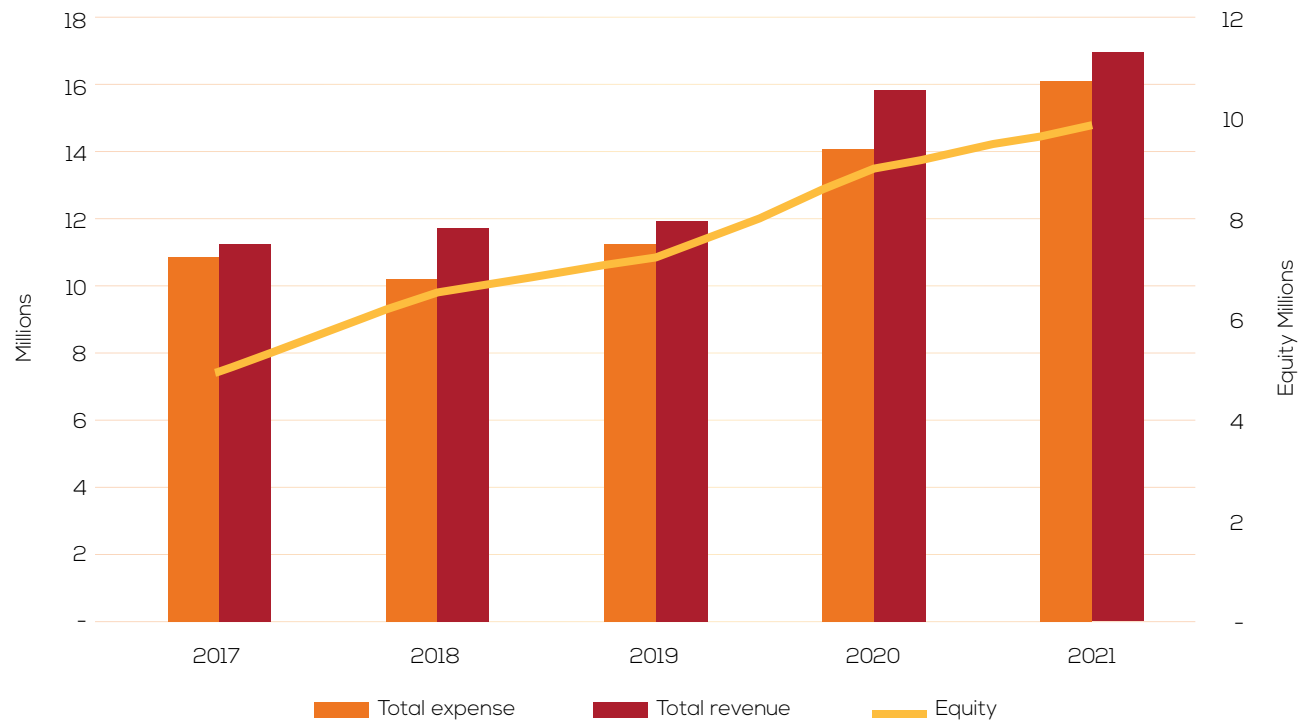
Although the year was a challenging one, we achieved this through effective cost management and by focusing on increasing organisational efficiencies. Our cash reserves continue to be adequate for meeting our long term and short-term liabilities.

The recruitment, training and retention of frontline support employees is critical to outcomes for and wellbeing of the people we support. To achieve this objective with increased efficiency, we invested in developing technology solutions. During the year we also reviewed and enhanced our risk management matrix to ensure that unexpected and unforeseen events do not disadvantage the organisation.

This has been a difficult time for many, yet clients and their families have been concerned for others, including our employees, as well as their loved ones. Thank you!



### Comparative Financial Summary



Summarised balance sheet	\$'000	
	30.06.21	30.06.20
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash and bank deposits	1,854	2,475
Inventory and receivables	273	500
Other financial assets	2,932	2,717
Properties, vehicles and equipment	8,403	7,589
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>13,462</b>	<b>13,281</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Payables and lease liabilities	704	554
Other liabilities	131	1,240
Employee benefits	1,788	1,419
Borrowings	958	1,012
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>3,581</b>	<b>4,225</b>
<b>Equity</b>	<b>9,881</b>	<b>9,056</b>

Income and expenditure summary	\$'000	
	2020-21	2019-20
<b>Income</b>		
Government funding and NDIS	14,993	14,146
Sales	858	816
Operating	592	458
Other	642	471
<b>Total income</b>	<b>17,085</b>	<b>15,891</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Staff and related	13,784	11,672
Operating and selling	1,263	1,259
Properties, vehicles and depreciation	1,067	792
Administrative	145	405
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>16,259</b>	<b>14,128</b>
<b>Surplus</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>1,763</b>





**As one of the region's leading disability service providers, we look forward to continuing to play a critical role in delivering safe, high-quality, and sustainable services for our clients**



The Executive and Leadership team of the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to plan and execute new ways of working in response to the challenging issues presented this year. I would also like to acknowledge our Board of Directors for their leadership and their extraordinary effort and professionalism during a demanding year. The Finance and Plan Management team at Caringa deserves special mention for the meticulous, accurate and timely work they do in the background throughout the year.

#### **Outlook for Financial Year 2022**

Caringa has been conservative in its approach to budgeting revenue and expenses, and that philosophy has continued in budgeting for Financial Year 21-22. The organisation's fiscal 2022 budget assumes that total revenues will increase by 5% from previous financial year. We expect a stabilisation of the business in 2022 while we engage in opportunities ahead of us. Based on the efficiencies created during

the year, which are non service impacting (for example, installing solar power), our cost saving targets and tight cash management, we expect to be operating at a 6% net surplus margin.

Caringa has sufficient capital, in the form of unrestricted reserves held in bank deposits and strategic investments. During lean periods of unutilised capacity, these reserves serve as a rainy-day fund that can help the organisation navigate through a revenue shortfall or operating deficit. At the same time, we continue to be focused on our core mission and values. This requires us to be good stewards of our assets and capital in service to our mission and values.

As one of the region's leading disability service providers, we look forward to continuing to play a critical role in delivering safe, high-quality, and sustainable services for our clients.



**Vishal Sharma | CFO**

# From the Chief Communications Officer

**In many ways the 20/21 financial year was a fantastic one for Caringa. As a team we successfully turned countless challenges into opportunities for growth and improvement. We were proactive when we could be, reactive when we had to be and everything in-between for every other minute of every day. From our clients to the frontline and right across the business, I have witnessed people at their absolute best.**

Over this period the bedding down of our enquiry pathway and associated communications was a major success and source of business improvement and pride. With a consistent and quality voice we were able to provide beyond good practice service to those contacting Caringa for the first time as well as existing clients and their representatives who may be navigating a change of circumstances. We oversaw more than 650 enquiries for different Caringa services with varying levels of complexity involved. In part, this success is reflected in the results of our 'Client Representative Experience Survey' with a 4.5 out of 5-star rating achieved when survey recipients were asked to rate their overall experience with Caringa. Let's keep pushing for that 5-star rating next year through quality outcomes and exceptional communication!

From a Community Engagement perspective, at a time where Community Engagement is a little counter intuitive, Caringa directed particular energy towards two areas of note being School relationships and recruitment.

On both fronts we had great success.

- Through proactively engaging with local schools we saw an increase in enquiries ranging from School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES), transition supports, therapy, community access requests and employment supports. We also hosted Disability Career information sessions for students as well as assisting schools with student/parent engagement around NDIS planning.
- In an effort to identify the next generation of quality employees Caringa ran a series of 'Career Expos' in Yamba, Grafton and Woolgoolga over a 6-month period. This provided a valuable opportunity for potential employees to hear from Caringa directly on a range of topics as well as linking with training organisation and ultimately applying for a position. Outside of the obvious recruitment goals, these events also provided an opportunity for Caringa to present our services and values to the broader community from which we also saw increased service enquiries as a result. A true win-win situation.

Our Brand and Marketing initiatives were, and will continue to be, a blend of strategic planning and tactical maneuvering. Across the year this was heavily influenced by the industry-wide workforce shortages and our real-time service demand understanding (thanks Mackenzie!). Long term, Caringa's brand is best served by delivering quality outcomes to our clients and presenting these real-world outcomes both internally and externally (when appropriate) via platforms like the Caringa website, Social Media, direct correspondence with stakeholders, traditional media and internal newsletters, as examples.

With this past year being no exception, we are constantly testing Caringa's ability to service current demand while identifying sustainable target areas for growth and service expansion.

This approach led a to a variety of marketing initiatives being launched using radio, print, social media and electronic direct mail to deliver our messages and various 'calls to action' while at the same time limiting the risk of 'over promising and under delivering'.

Caringa's 2021 Annual Staff Survey delivered some fantastic organisational insights with a very high engagement rate. These surveys play an important role informing decision making and highlighting areas of success, development and concern. We have also started a new and targeted rolling client survey catering to varying communication needs. We look forward to learning from, and presenting, these results as they come to hand across the next financial year.



//  
...this success  
is reflected  
in the results  
of our 'Client  
Representative  
Experience  
Survey' with  
a 4.5 out of  
5-star rating  
achieved

As part of the above-mentioned survey we ask employees "What is your favourite thing about working/volunteering in the disability industry?". I think it worthwhile to present some of the comments below as a reminder of what our community is all about:

- Seeing happy, active, enthused clients and supported employees, it makes coming to work a joy.
- The privilege to support and empower clients to achieve their goals and life aspirations.
- Supporting people to reach their goals, grow independence and go into the community with confidence and acceptance.
- Building meaningful connections with clients and helping them to achieve their goals. Big or small a victory is a victory.
- Working within a team with common goals.
- Knowing that my actions and professionalism are valued and make a difference to the lives of others.

//  
Just a handful of the 126 responses all of which had the same sentiments of care, respect, duty and resilience. Heartening to say the least. We really do work alongside some of the best.

Above are just a few areas of note from what has been a successful year across many measures. A special mention must go to my small but mighty team. Thank you, Mackenzie Harvison, Leiza Holland and Rachel Pearce for your dedication, patience, versatility and good humour. Along with everyone at Caringa, the positive waves of your contribution are felt far and wide across our communities. It is something to be very proud of.



**Glen McClymont** | CCO

# Our Caringa team

## FRONTLINE STAFF

Michael Akins  
Katie Alexander  
Todd Allison  
Andi Aman  
Uzodinma Ani  
Jamie Arthur  
Caleb Attwater  
Leanne Austin  
Alarni Baker  
Darren Barkess  
Josh Bartrim  
Helen Baucke  
Caitlin Beeston  
Melissa Benson  
Peter Bernard  
Lisa Berry  
Debra Billing  
Danielle Brady  
Rhiann Brady  
Andrew Brown  
Cylie Brown  
Gemma Brown  
Gemma Buckley  
Samuel Burke  
Glen Bush  
Brenda Bushell  
Lauren Cairns  
Nicholas Campbell  
Kirsty Caple  
Brett Cassie  
Annie Chapman  
Jason Chevalley  
Dale Clark  
Steffanee Colgrave  
Declan Collie  
Huan Collie  
Jeremy Cone  
Hayley Connolly  
Janelle Cook  
Jodi Corbett

Nathan Cotten  
Greg Cowan  
Randall Craig  
Danny Cropper  
Brean Cunningham  
Anthony Dahl  
Damien Deleuien  
Kirstie Dendle  
Kim Denovan  
Phitchaporn Dermprakhon  
Graham Dewberry  
Lisa Dickens  
Emma-Jane Donaghey  
Leanne Donnelly  
Paul Dunworth  
Kayla Dyson  
Simone Earle  
Kellie Eather  
Stephanie Eggins  
Taylan Ellis  
Kimberley Elwell  
Tara Eveleigh  
Brett Ewington  
Jacqueline Fabry  
Jayden Fahey  
Christopher Feeney  
Katrina Fengler  
Jade Franklin  
Michael Freier  
Carmen French  
Melissa French  
Peter Frendo  
Kerry Gallagher  
Rubilyn Garcia  
Natasha Golden  
Emily Graus  
Dannielle Green  
Kane Griffiths  
Jacinda Halcrow  
Pippa Hanson  
Catherine Hargans

Ken Harper  
Tamarra Harris  
Suzanne Harrison  
Peter Harvey  
Sahmon Harvey  
Holly Hastings  
Breanna Hatgjis  
Jodie Hatgjis  
Glenn Hawkins  
Misty Hay  
Brooke Heagney  
Mark Herring  
Diana Hill  
Julie Hinschen  
Ronald Horsfall  
Alysha Hoschke  
Jessica Huntington  
Kirsty Ingledew  
Brianna Jakob  
Erin Jessup  
Keiron Johnson-Heron  
Janice Johnston  
Elizabeth Jones  
Simon Kelly  
Anne Kingston  
Heidi Kruger  
Sophie Lambert  
Brennon Lavery  
Bridgette Lynch  
Mali Mandala  
Bianca Marscham  
Paul Marscham  
Melanie Martin  
Tiffany Martin  
Phillip McCarthy  
Grace McGuren  
Michael McKenzie  
Nicholas McKenzie  
Jessie McLachlan  
Fiona McLennan  
Daryn McPhee

Vicki McPherson  
Ryan McSwan  
Donna Mellalieu  
Jacob Mill  
Madalynn Millington-Carroll  
Nidhin Mohan  
Crystal Monkhouse  
Kristy Morrow  
Suzanne Moss  
Phillip Mullins  
Aaron Mumbler-Webb  
Jessica Munro  
Victoria Murray  
Cody Myers  
Maryanne Newton  
Ruth Neylon  
Sharyn Pateman  
Nicole Paul  
Lucinda Paxton  
Katie Pera  
Narelle Pera  
Kaitlyn Perdicaro  
Susan Polsen  
Natasha Porter  
Louise Potterton  
Courtney Powell  
Lance Predo  
Gary Pym  
Jenni Reimer  
Jacob Reynolds  
James Reynolds  
Katherine Reynolds  
Paul Riccobono  
Joseph Rigg  
Susan Roan  
Jason Robinson  
Jane Rooke  
Adam Rooks  
Melissa Ryan  
Sara Ryan  
Gene Schafer-MacDonald

Kym Schenk  
Wayne Seccombe  
Ronald Seckold  
Christopher Sheehan  
Jason Shoobert  
Anthony Shortt  
Samantha Shortt  
Carrie Silk  
Dianne Simmons  
Kyle Slater  
Stewart Smith  
Dane Spencer  
James Stanmore  
Vicki Stephen  
Hannah Straw  
Emily Sullivan  
Glenn Swift  
Brooke Thompson  
Kristie Tickle  
Ebany Tucker  
Clive Tullipan  
Michelle Turvey  
Deborah Vanzino  
Aaron Walker  
Kasey Walsh  
Kym Warren  
Donna Waterhouse  
Lesley Watkins  
Tammy Watts  
Leonard Westwood  
Shannon White  
Louise Williams  
Joseph Woodcock  
Tyler Wratten-Hancock  
Cassandra Wright  
Nicholas Yeates  
Eleanor Young  
Rose Knell  
Jessica Mulder

#### **THERAPY**

Christopher Browne  
Angela Crompton  
Lisa Salter

#### **SENIOR LEADERSHIP**

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Brennan Elks  
Ruby Grieves  
Danielle Lambert  
Zachary Page

#### **SUPPORT COORDINATORS**

Troy Dent  
Donna Jackson  
Lisa Mercy  
Sjane Shoebridge  
Nicole Tyler  
Anna Walsh

#### **OUTCOMES & PRACTICE LEADERS/ TEAM LEADERS**

Dean Broughton  
David Green  
Ashleigh Killmore  
Shayne Martin  
Paul McKenzie  
Daniel Trickett  
Julia Vize  
Sarah Warren  
Colin Wormald

#### **PLAN MANAGERS**

Catherine McSwan  
Clancy Pateman  
Adam Sanders

#### **SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES**

Ross Bailey  
Gary Baker  
David Barlow  
Jennifer Baxter  
Gregory Boothby  
Geoffrey Brotherton  
Tony Child  
Phillip Cochrane  
Lucy Conroy  
Nathan Cowling  
Beverly Dargue  
Jason Dickson  
Tye Dillon  
Nicholas Fares  
William Fares  
Brendan Ford  
Rodney Ford  
Robert Foster  
Daniel Gardem  
David Goodin  
Daniel Greenland  
Anthony Hayes  
Amy Hickson  
Nathan Hull  
Sarah Hure  
Brenden Jackson  
Sinead Johnson  
David Jones  
James Kavali  
Mark Kellerman  
Dorian Kennedy  
Kate Kratz  
Andrew Laidlaw  
Kyle Lawrie  
Angela McGrath  
Gavin Neale  
James Nixon  
Stephanie Nixon  
Moirra O'Connor  
Mikailah Passlow

Craig Perrett  
Edward Power  
Sarah Rapmund  
Wayne Smith  
Bradley Taylor  
Joshua Taylor  
Leonie Taylor  
Matthew Teale  
Samuel Venn

#### **CORPORATE**

Sean Austin  
Anthony Carthew  
Joanne Charlesworth  
Sharron Collett  
Melissa Gaddes  
Mackenzie Harvison  
Leiza Holland  
Kim Johnston  
Matthew Kelly  
Catherine Murphy  
Desan Padayachee  
Rachel Pearce  
Suzanne Pearce  
Martina Skinner  
Karen Wynn





# Bare Earth to Bounty

**Bare Earth to Bounty (BE2B) has been the creation of something from nothing, the transformation of bare rock-filled earth to a bounty of edible chemical-free delights and the transformation of lives and aspirations through participation.**

In September 2020, the Caringa Board reviewed and accepted a proposal Bare Earth to Bounty from Andrew Brown to convert unused land within the industrial site which is home to Caringa Employment into an organic market garden. In November 2020, Andrew commenced work to create an environment for cultivation. It was hot, back breaking, unglamorous work that comprised four solid weeks of rock removal from the planting site. Several clients toiled alongside him. It became clear that this patch was once a railway siding.

Initial efforts resulted in the establishment of four rows under cultivation. Infrastructure works were developed including the installation of water tanks to harvest rainwater, an irrigation system, soil improvement, various structures for propagation and the creation of bespoke seeding tables and equipment. This establishment phase was teamwork at its finest with significant inputs from many members of the Caringa Employment team, and in particular, Brennan Elks, Ryan McSwan and Aaron Walker.

The first crops of cucumbers, zucchini, tomatoes and beans were harvested only eight weeks later followed by pumpkins, a variety of melons and Asian greens. Within eight months, the garden produced sixty

varieties of fruit and vegetables, all grown with love and care. BE2B welcomes a number of clients but two stalwarts and standouts are Will Fares and Brenden Jackson who have been there from the beginning and a part of every BE2B milestone. One of these was the inaugural BE2B market stall held at the Grafton Farmer's Market on 4 February 2021. It provided an opportunity for Brenden and Will to sell the fruits of their labour and practice their sales and customer skills. Andrew was overhead speaking to a customer: "we're growing people out there." Caringa agrees.

At present 70 fruit trees and 25 habitat and specimen trees have been planted around the garden. There are 24 rows under cultivation featuring seasonal vegetables and a sugarcane patch which represents 3000m<sup>2</sup>. Every centimetre of arable space is committed to production. In May 2021, Mike Akins joined BE2B for one day a week to expand capacity.

BE2B would not be possible without the support from our local community who shop at our market stall each week. A special thank you to Robbie Hill from the Ulmarra Food Co. who has been a regular commercial supporter of BE2B produce. Thanks also to BE2B's top ten foundation customers who are Caringa workers and clients – Will Fares, Brenden Jackson, Joel Huddleston, Chris Cormack, Mick McKenzie, Sjane Shoebridge, Angela Crompton, Glen McClymont, Mackenzie Harvison, and Vishal Sharma.

// **Creating something from nothing and "growing people" ...** //

**What of the future?** A sugar cane press will showcase Pure Pressed Clarence Nectar being sugarcane juice and will be launched in the upcoming spring/summer season. The garden will keep growing, fruit trees will fruit and there will be sufficient quantities of food to launch raw and cooked food products. A BE2B curriculum will offer a competency pathway within the project and beyond for clients.

**The dream?** To transform BE2B into a Caringa Social Enterprise offering employment on Award wages to all workers with or without disability.



# Our Lower Clarence Expansion (SIL)

**In May 2021, Caringa realised a long-term goal in opening a Supported Independent Living residence in Yamba.**

This is a two-person residence and its establishment assisted two clients to achieve their long-term goal to transition from their family homes into supported independent living. A new and vibrant team local to the area was recruited especially to provide supports to these clients. The establishment of a new residence is never without its unique challenges arising from environment, a new team and individual client need.

The Caringa team pulled together on all levels to ensure that all needs and concerns raised by clients and their families were met to assist our new housemates settle in. Caringa now provides Supported Independent Living and community supports in the Lower Clarence! It is hoped that this will be complemented with a rich day program offering in the coming months and year.





VOIL

PAIX · AMOUR · BONHEUR  
PARIS





# Holiday program

**The Caringa School Holiday program provides school aged participants 7 years and over the opportunity to engage with their peers through exciting and interactive activities, experiences and learning.**

Held over each and every school holiday period, participants are provided a safe and supportive environment and are encouraged to build upon their social and emotional independence through a jam-packed program of fun and engaging activities.

Over the past year, participants of the Caringa School Holiday program have experienced the best of what the Clarence Valley and Coffs Coast have to offer with bush walks, whale watching and beach days soaking up the sunshine. They have developed skills in gardening, cooking and a huge range of art and crafts including felt-making, salt dough sculpting and tie dyeing.

Friendship, fun and adventures are the theme of the Caringa School Holiday Program. Check out some of the action!



# Our new home – Castle Centre Opening

**Caringa celebrated a significant milestone in our long history as we launched and renamed our headquarters in 144 Fitzroy Street, the Castle Centre in honour of long serving Director, ex-Chair, life member, patron and parent, Vince Castle. Local Federal Member for Page and the Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Kevin Hogan performed the task of unveiling the plaque at the front of the building.**

A large gathering comprising of Caringa workers, clients, members, parents and invited guests were all present to celebrate the building opening. It was an incredibly proud moment for Caringa but especially for Vince and his wife Pat. A fourth-generation cane farmer, Vince has been a driving force in our community within the cane industry as President of the Clarence Cane Growers Association and also as President of the NSW Cane Growers Association, positions he held for many years. Concurrently, Vince was a Director of Caringa for 15 years and Chair for 8 of those years. As Chair, Vince presided over three CEOs, steered Caringa across and through precarious financial circumstances and significant industry change as the NDIS was introduced. Today, Caringa has emerged stronger and more robust. Vince had a 100% attendance record for every Board meeting during his years as Chair and as Chair he was also involved in three standing sub-committees of the Caringa Board. In total,

that was 322 meetings of approximately 2 hours each during that time. We salute Vince for giving freely of his time and his commitment to Caringa for so many years. In receiving the honour, Vince spoke about how grateful he was for the opportunity to contribute to Caringa and was very touched by the gesture. Thank you Vince!

It was a pleasure to observe the community's reaction to Caringa's success and we are all proud Caringa employees. This building is a credit to all our frontline workers and to all our workers who come to work within its walls every day to support the operations of Caringa which in turn support clients to experience *A Complete Life*. It was a privilege and pleasure to see Vince Castle and his family enjoy this honour bestowed upon him by his Caringa family.





4

1. *Vince Castle*
2. *Brenden and Will presented Kevin and Vince with vegetables they grew from seed at Orara Street*
3. *Our new home*
4. *Kevin Hogan, Vince and Pat Castle*



**caringa**   
*A Complete Life*

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