



Connections

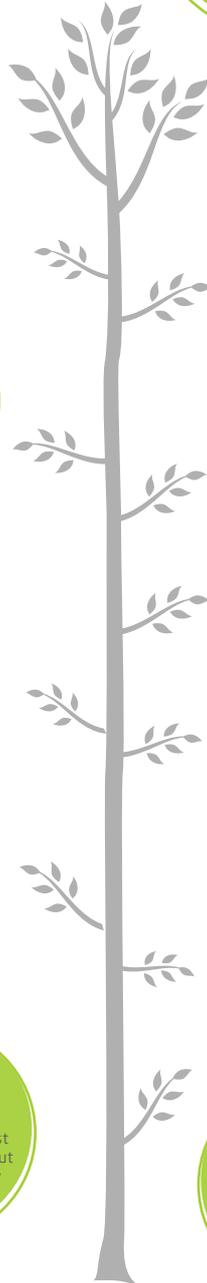
Opportunity & Choice
(formerly Oakleigh Centre)

How we connect

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



OC Connections History Timeline



2001
 Organisation provides 70 programs to 64 clients through its Adult Training Support Services (now Day Support)

2008
 New community centre and corporate office opens at 773 Warrigal Road

2016
 Organisation launches new name, OC Connections

2013
 Oakleigh Centre and state government announce joint funding to replace outdated Allen Street congregate care facilities with five supported living homes

2005
 Recreational services provide 50,000 hours of activities to more than 500 clients

1985
 Association changes its name to the Oakleigh Centre for Intellectually Disabled Citizens

1999
 The Residential and The Hostel residential facilities renamed 1 and 9 Allen Street

1977
 First opportunity shop opens

1972
 Official opening of first residential hostel in Allen Street, Oakleigh

1962
 167 children and young adults enrolled

1960
 The Oakleigh Sheltered Workshop opens (now OC Connections Enterprises)

1953
 Mothers' Club set up and raises almost \$665,000 throughout its 40-year history

1950
 A voluntary group of parents forms the Mentally Retarded Children's Welfare Association



New Era...

new name

Welcome to OC Connections' 2016 Annual Report, a report that heralds a new name and logo for what was the Oakleigh Centre.

As the National Disability Insurance Scheme signifies a new chapter in the sector's history, we thought it timely to match this significance with a new look.

Over the past year we have undertaken extensive research with many stakeholders, including participants, their family and friends, staff, volunteers, our Members and Board and broader stakeholders to gain a greater insight into our organisation, how it is perceived and how we need to position ourselves within a changing disability environment.

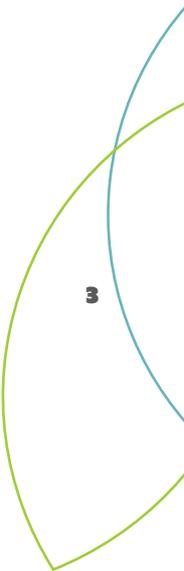
We are incredibly proud of our history and of the selfless parents who originally formed the organisation with one simple goal in mind: to find something better for their intellectually disabled children than what was being offered in the 1950s.

For many decades, those parents worked tirelessly to grow that goal and volunteered much of their time to take what simply started as 10 children attending an occupational play centre to what the organisation is today – one of Victoria's leading providers of disability services.

In acknowledging their contribution, we wanted a name that would retain some of the old and mix it with a new, more modern look. We also wanted our name to reflect what we see as crucial to success under the NDIS; that is, to ensure we connect people with disabilities to whatever is necessary to make their lives meaningful – be that services, friends, independent living, the community, opportunity to work or to simply enjoy the everyday things that so many of us take for granted.

And so the name OC Connections was born. OC acknowledges our previous name (Oakleigh Centre) but also stands for 'opportunity' and 'choice' – two words we believe are a right of every person with a disability. We see 'connections' as the thread that gently weaves the web of support needed to connect people to what they need to fulfill their goals and dreams. Within the OC letters a single leaf flourishes – signifying growth and potential for our organisation to further develop and expand.

We're looking forward to a new era in our history. 

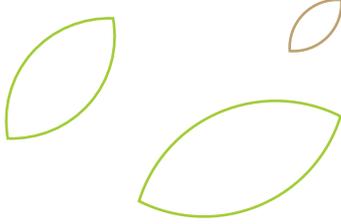




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About Us



OC Connections was established in 1950 by a small group of parents seeking support services for the special needs of their children with an intellectual disability.

From those small beginnings, the organisation grew and today provides a range of specialised and innovative support services to enhance the quality of life for people living with disability, and their families. Integral to enhancing lives is the encouragement to achieve maximum independence as active members of the community.

We provide (to people aged 18 and over):

- Supported residential
- Day support
- Recreation activities and holidays
- Supported employment

Our Vision

To enable people to live a life they choose within a society that values individuals for who they are, respects their rights and encourages participation in everyday life.

Our Purpose

We advocate for 'my life, my choice' and provide rewarding opportunities that support people to achieve this.

Our Core Values

To provide participants with choices they value, we must create meaningful opportunities that bring direction and purpose to their lives and enable individuals achieve lifelong goals and dreams.

We value:

Choice

The ability to choose how to live is central to everyday life. People feel valued when given the chance to make choices and decisions about what matters most in their life.

Opportunity

Our inclusive services focus on the person and their individual needs. We create and provide opportunities for people to develop and grow, pursue goals and live as independently as possible, at home and in the community.

Respect

We respect every person's right to make choices, and to be heard. We empower people to live life to the fullest and develop a sense of belonging, which encourages them to be active participants within their community.

Equality

We advocate for the disadvantaged, acknowledge a person's right to live life with dignity and equality and celebrate the joy of diversity. 



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CEO/President Report

How we connect, to each other, our community or opportunities that enrich our life, is fundamental to our emotional, physical and social wellbeing.

When work began last year on rebranding our organisation with a new name and look, particularly to complement sector changes expected with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), we asked our people – participants, their families, staff, Members and Board – what was key to nurturing and improving the lives of people with disabilities. Invariably the response was to provide a connection to whatever was necessary for them to live a good quality of life.

After many months of research and consultation, in June the Board approved (and Members subsequently endorsed) a name change from the Oakleigh Centre to OC Connections. The new name acknowledges the organisation's past, of which we are justly proud, and informs our view of the future – that our role is to connect participants and their families to services and programs that will enable them to live an independent and dignified life. The letters 'OC' reference both our previous name and the words 'opportunity' and 'choice', things we believe are essential to the lives of people we support.

In June, the Board also approved a new organisational strategic plan, which outlines our vision for an exciting new future supporting people with disabilities. We know an NDIS environment will require us to be more community based, where people accessing services will have greater control and choice over who their provider will be, and how they spend their support dollars. The plan highlights the importance for greater engagement with people who use our services, seeking their feedback about what they want and involving them in all aspects of program planning.

Preparing for the NDIS

There is no doubt the NDIS represents a massive change for the disability sector. While feedback from trial sites has been promising, as the scheme has only just begun its national rollout, we must prepare to be flexible and adjust services to ensure its success.

Over the past year, OC Connections has run a series of NDIS forums for participants, their families and staff to begin planning to transition to the scheme next year. Overwhelmingly, the greatest issue for those attending





these forums was anxiety relating to reassurance that a loved one would continue to be supported. It was heartening to see their relief knowing we would guide and assist where possible.

We have been diligently working towards NDIS readiness, particularly with workforce planning. This preparation was complemented by a grant resulting from a successful submission to the Department of Social Services to engage a consultant to review OC Connections Enterprises (OCCE) and identify areas that will assist transforming our supported employment for NDIS readiness and sustainable employment options.

New initiatives

We believe it's vital to provide participants with opportunity to pursue career goals or have access to engage in community activities and structure our programs to enable them to achieve this.

Through our supported employment division, OCCE, we expanded job opportunities with the launch of an innovative new social enterprise; a 'waterless' car wash service that gives supported employees the chance to learn new skills and gain workplace experience. Since launching in July 2015, we have gained significant contracts from Melbourne's Cheapest Cars and the City of Kingston, with plans to further expand the service in the coming year.

In May, following a successful tender, OC Connections was selected as Victoria's only disability services provider to participate in a Department of Defence supported employment initiative. From September 2016, six OCCE supported employees will work at the department's St Kilda Road barracks, providing administrative support.

To further prepare participants move into the jobs market, our day support program now offers the opportunity to complete a Certificate I in Transition Education. The course focuses on vocational and employment skills, personal and social development and independent living.

There has been a strong focus on co-design initiatives across our organisation, including the redevelopment project, brand change, client engagement projects and staff orientation. As an organisation, we achieve better results with higher quality when programs, services and activities are designed in partnership with participants.

Significant milestones

OC Connections' residential redevelopment project took significant steps towards completion, with work starting on the five supported living homes and one unit, each due to be completed by the end of 2016.

We continue to work with residents moving from the Allen Street congregate facilities as we prepare them to transition to community living. Involving people in every step of the redevelopment and seeking feedback about their preferences and choices, has been key to the project's success. To further prepare residents moving to the Clayton home, we teamed with the City of Monash to both celebrate the council's first 'Neighbour Day' and provide residents with an opportunity to meet their new street neighbours. A fun and popular sausage sizzle was held on site providing great 'meet and greet' opportunities.



Thanks to the outstanding work of Redevelopment Manager, Vicki Hayes, and wonderful support from the Department of Health and Human Services, we expect the homes to be completed ahead of schedule and are confident of a smooth and seamless move for all residents.

The redevelopment marks one of the most significant milestones in the organisation's history. Photographs and video recording the project will join a large collection of historical images and documents, discovered earlier this year. Recognising the significance of such a collection, we commissioned the Oakleigh and District Historical Society to review, assess and collate it, with a view to preserving and sharing it with the broader community.

Along with its historical significance, the collection highlights the message of changing societal attitudes towards disability and the work done by organisations, like OC Connections, to seek greater acceptance and equality for people with a disability.

Thanks to a City of Monash grant, the collection, which traces the organisation's history from its foundation to present day, will be presented in a public exhibition next year.

A word of thanks

OC Connections acknowledges that it is because of the dedication and commitment of staff and volunteers that we are able to provide the quality services that we do. Each is to be congratulated for the outstanding achievements gained in the past year and proud of the work they do. As the disability sector enters a new phase in its history, we can feel confident of its success, knowing we have the right structures and people in place to ensure our organisation continues to go from strength to strength.

We value and thank our donors and corporate partners who support our fundraising events and appeals, all of which provide much-needed money to buy equipment or fund valuable initiatives.

We also thank the OC Board and Members for generously supporting the many changes we have needed to embrace as we move with changing times and attitudes. We know such changes will deliver better lives for people with disabilities. 🍀

Therese Desmond, CEO

Maurice Pitard, President





“ “ *We believe it's vital to provide participants with opportunity to pursue career goals or have access to engage in community activities and structure our programs to enable them to achieve this.*”

Treasurer's Report

OC Connections delivered a net operating surplus of \$761,707 for the financial year ending 30 June 2016.

This compares to the previous years' net operating surplus of \$232,442.

This positive result builds on OC Connections' ongoing success and bodes well for the organisation as we move to a changed disability environment that incorporates the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

We have implemented a series of changes throughout the year, some of which have contributed to the surplus. Other key factors behind this result include increased income (\$959,218), containment of expenses to below the rate of increased income, and profit (\$203,728) from the sale of our Clayton home.

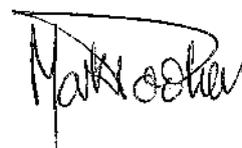
Along with this surplus, OC Connections' cash holdings increased by \$1,820,227 to \$4,059,128. Of this increase, \$690,000 is committed to the accommodation development. We will continue to monitor our cash position during the transition to the NDIS, under which this improvement has potential to diminish as participant payments will follow service delivery.

NDIS readiness

Over the past year, OC Connections has invested heavily in preparing for the NDIS. Part of this focus has included:

- Human resource management, education, learning and development
- ICT strategy and upgrade to financial systems and processes
- Marketing and branding
- Service model changes
- Staff and cultural changes.

Our accommodation redevelopment project continues to progress well and is on budget and ahead of projected timelines. We expect all residents to move from the Allen Street congregate facilities to their new homes by the end of the year. I would like to thank my fellow Directors Alan Bergman and Tony McAvaney for positively contributing to our success as members of the Finance and ICT committee. 



Mark Toohey, Treasurer



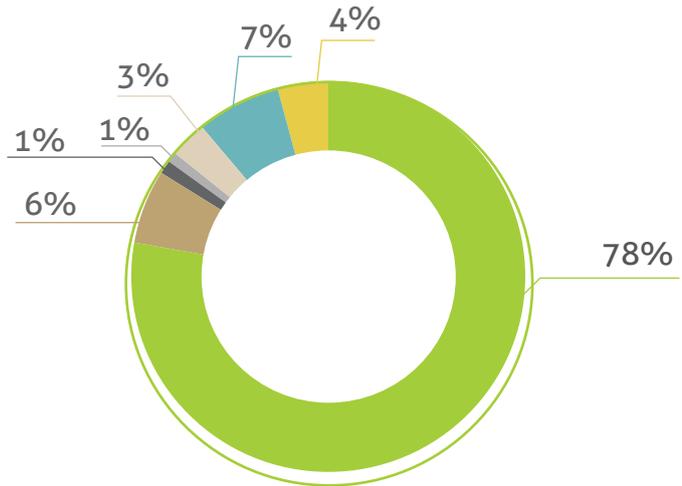


Financials

Sources of expenditure 2015-2016

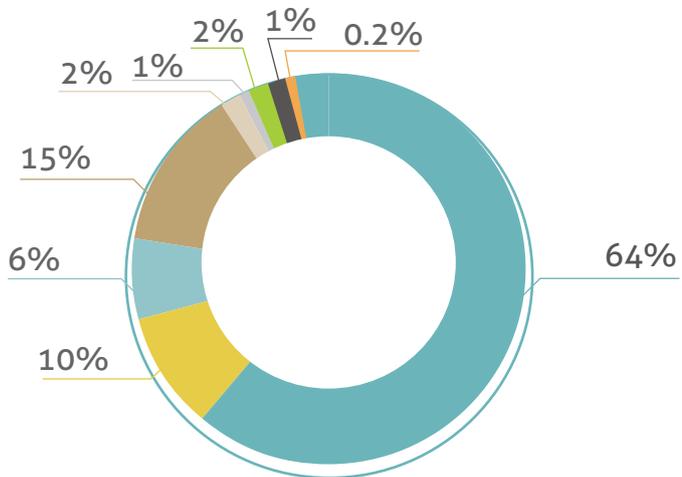
Expenses

-  Employment related
-  Occupancy costs
-  Communications
-  Motor vehicle costs
-  Depreciation
-  Administration & corporate
-  Program expenses

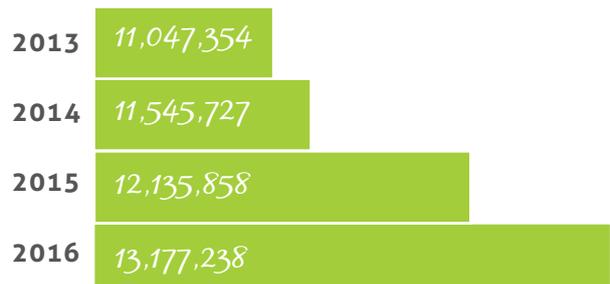


Income types

-  Government State Grant
-  Government Federal Grant
-  Service Provision
-  Government Subsidy
-  Fundraising
-  Sale of Assets
-  Packaging income
-  Rental income
-  Other



Revenue from ordinary activities



Board of Directors



Maurice Pitard (President)

Board since 2013

Board since 2013. Maurice has more than 50 years' experience in the real estate industry, with a background in property portfolio analysis, management and the acquisition and disposal of commercial, industrial and residential properties.

Maurice has been involved as president and committee member with a number of organisations, including the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV), Property Council of Australia and Melbourne Chamber of Commerce. Professional affiliates include AICD (Foundation Fellow); AIM (Fellow); API (Fellow), REIA; REIV; The CEO Institute (Fellow).



Tony McAvaney (Vice President)

Board since 2007

A qualified engineer and economist with diverse corporate experience, Tony has a long and personal history with OC Connections, originally joining as a volunteer (his late sister-in-law was supported by the organisation).

With proven commercial and business acumen, Tony's experience includes project management, business re-engineering, acquisitions and mergers, de-mergers, change management and leadership. He has held directorships with the First Option Credit Union Ltd and the Gus Theobald Foundation and was a Board member of Qenos Superannuation Pty Ltd.



Mark Toohey (Treasurer)

Board since 2014

Mark's extensive experience in finance, strategic planning and change management is supported by more than 26 years as an internationally experienced, commercial executive director and chief financial officer. He has a strong track record of enhancing shareholder returns and managing businesses through rapid growth, joint ventures and dispositions.

He is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia and CPA Australia, member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a Councillor at Victoria University.



Michael Boyce

Board since 2013

Michael has strong leadership experience in a wide range of services including health, information technology, banking, insurance, retail and petroleum. With positions that range from Managing Director/CEO to line management roles, Michael's leadership skills have been gained in public and private companies, specifically those undergoing significant change.



Dr John Cary

Board since 2008

John has had an extensive career in academic teaching, research and commercial consulting, in Australia and overseas. Formerly Head of the Department of Agriculture and Resource Management at the University of Melbourne, he has also held the positions of Principal Scientist, Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra, and Honorary Principal Fellow, School of Resource Management, University of Melbourne. He is currently an Adjunct Professor at Victoria University's Institute for Sustainability and Innovation, of which he was the inaugural Director.



David Admans

Board since 2013

David's career spans more than 40 years and includes strategic business planning, business development, corporate advisory work, policy development and implementation, project and contract management, complex financial modelling and business analysis. His roles have spanned the public, government, community and private sectors, including specialist roles with consulting firms and technology-based businesses. He is an Associate Fellow of the Australian Human Resources Institute and accredited facilitator of Team Management Systems (TMS).





Senior Leadership Team



Peter Willcocks

Board since 2006

Peter is a highly experienced and accomplished business advisor and legal practitioner and is a Corporate Group partner in the legal firm, Lander & Rogers. Throughout his 40 years in practice, Peter has taken on a broad range of corporate roles, most recently as Company Secretary and general counsel for an ASX-listed biotechnology company.

With expertise in mergers and acquisitions, capital markets, corporate law, corporate governance and commercial contracts, Peter brings an outstanding wealth of experience to OC Connections.



Therese Desmond
CEO



Carolyn Carter
Quality & Risk



Laurelle Edwards
Accommodation



Anne Beard
Day Services



Tony Hogg
Business Enterprises



Vicki Hayes
Accommodation
Redevelopment



Kit Wong
Strategy, Development
& Projects



Justin Bruce
Marketing



Alan Bergman

Board since 2014

Alan has more than 50 years' experience in business, primarily in the automotive sector as well as broad experience in business, finance, human resources, occupational health and safety, IT, recruitment and training. A frequent presenter at the prestigious Australian Automobile Dealers' Association (AADA) conference, Alan has held, and still holds, a number of private company directorships and Board memberships.

Delia McIver (resigned 2016)

Committees

Building, Development and Property

Michael Boyce
Therese Desmond
Laurelle Edwards
Ross Farmer
Vicki Hayes
Maurice Pitard (Chair)

Compliance, Audit and Risk

Carolyn Carter
Therese Desmond
Peter Willcocks (Chair)

Finance and ICT

Alan Bergman
Therese Desmond
Ross Farmer
Tony McAvaney
Mark Toohey (Chair)

Governance, Remuneration and Succession Planning

David Admans (Chair)
Therese Desmond
Maurice Pitard

OC Connections Enterprises

David Admans (Chair)
Alan Bergman
Therese Desmond
Ross Farmer
Tony Hogg
Greg Whitters

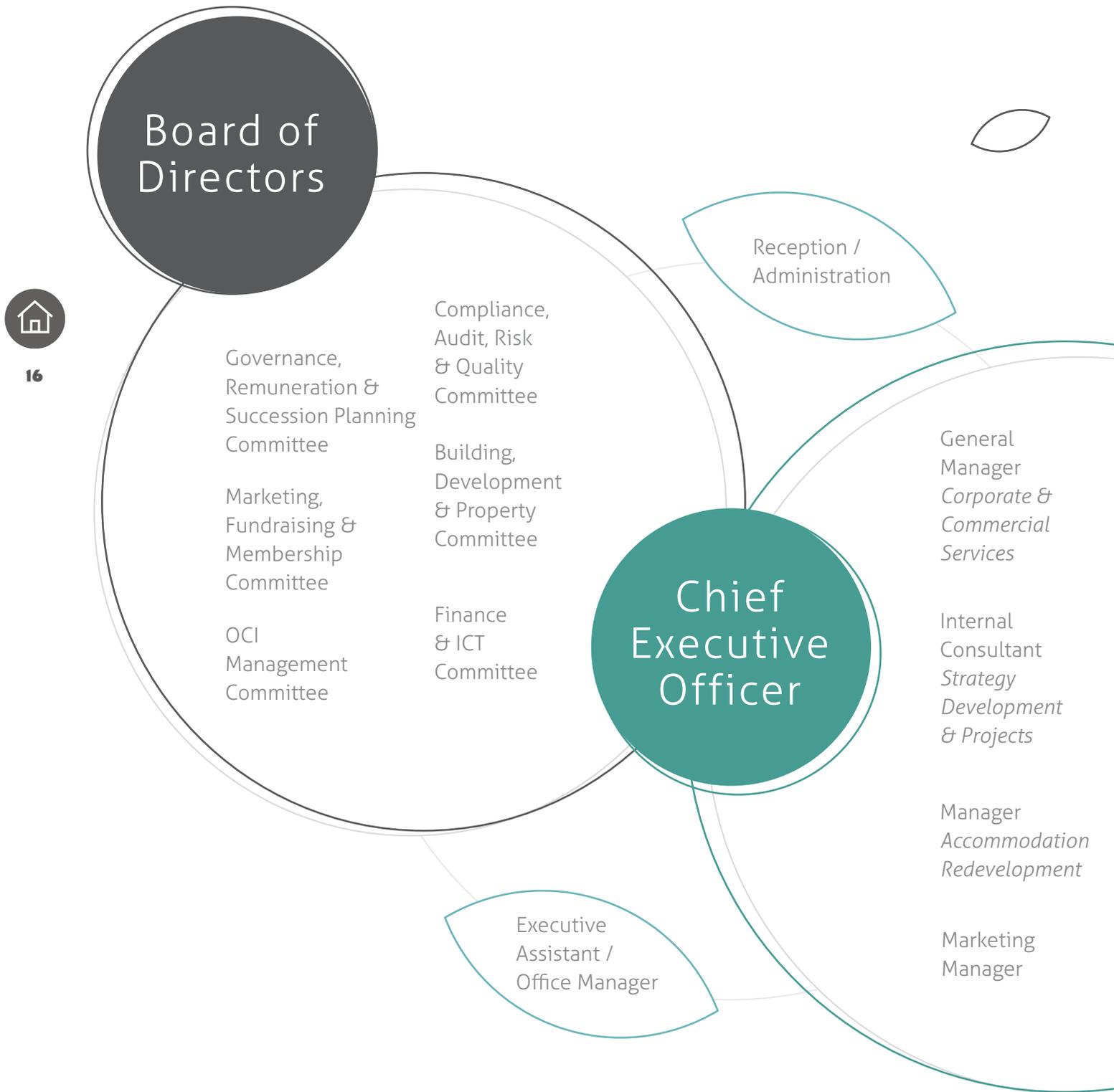
Independent members

Norm Rae (retired)
Stuart Richards (retired)
Tony Telfer

Marketing, Fundraising & Membership

Michael Boyce
Justin Bruce
John Cary (Chair)
Therese Desmond
Maurice Pitard

Organisational chart





honorary life members

- 1953** Mr Arthur J Levett
- 1953** Mr W Kennaugh
- 1954** Mr Frank P Halfpenny
- 1955** Mrs Muriel Price
- 1955** Mr Monte Benjamin
- 1956** Mrs Mollie Danby
- 1957** Mrs E M Rae
- 1960** Mr Allen G James
- 1968** Mr H W (Tom) Walsh
- 1971** Mrs Edna Wells
- 1975** Mrs Lois Ackerly
- 1987** Mr Roy Fryer
- 2000** Mrs Dorothy Curtis
- 2004** Mr F W (Barry) Callaghan JP
- 2004** Mr J A (Tony) Crute
- 2004** Mr David Hawkes
- 2004** Mr Les Murray
- 2004** Mr John Walker
- 2006** Mr Don Bain
- 2006** Mr Alastair McDonald

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Executive
Manager
Day Support

Executive
Manager
Quality & Risk

Executive
Manager
*Business
Enterprises*

Senior Manager
Accommodation



How we connect to...

Respect

The world is changing for people with disabilities. As the broader community comes to gain a greater understanding of acceptance and inclusion, people with disabilities are leading that change, advocating for their right to live life as everyone else, with the same opportunities and choices.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reinforces this change, providing the medium through which the disability sector will modify the way in which it offers services, and how people with disabilities will engage providers.

In Victoria, NDIS trials began in the Barwon region in 2013, and on 1 July 2016 the scheme began rolling out across the state (and country) and will continue to progressively do so over the next three years.

As a registered NDIS provider for metropolitan Melbourne, OC Connections is ready to provide services to participants from November 2017, when the scheme rolls out in eastern and southern regions.

Workplace planning

Through our NDIS Readiness Project, in 2015-2016 we launched a number of initiatives to increase NDIS awareness across the organisation. Senior staff and their teams were involved in self-assessments, high-level business analysis, rebranding activities and developing information material.

As part of this readiness project, we also:

- Appointed an Information Systems Manager to assess Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) services
- Redesigned services to include greater skills training for job readiness (Certificate 1 Transition Education) and increased supported employment opportunities (OCCE car wash and Department of Defence contract)
- Completed a Participant Engagement Strategy to provide a framework around how to best involve participants' families in designing, planning and providing services





- Added an NDIS FAQ section to our website, developed in consultation with participants and their families
- Initiated a Learning and Development Plan that outlines how we will support staff in managing change, understanding NDIS budgets and moving to a more customer-focused service model.

We also provided regular NDIS updates through the website and newsletters.

Forums

Throughout the year, we held eight NDIS forums, primarily for families to learn about accessing the scheme and preparing for change, particularly those relating to housing options, job readiness and skills development. All forums, which saw 176 people attend, featured guest speakers and opportunity to have concerns or questions answered.

Great connections

OC Connections' Day Support offers a range of activities and programs based on participants' personal interests and abilities. These can range from art and photography classes, to bowling, volunteering or enjoying weekend sporting activities.

We are fortunate to share many community partnerships which offer participants the chance to be involved in assisting with programs like Meals on Wheels, gardening or to enjoy regular outings at venues, like the Collingwood Children's Farm.

Thanks to a bequest from the Estate of H R Van Leeuwen we bought two computer touch screens and eight android tablets to assist participants with communication and to develop computer skills. We also bought a hot house and outdoor shade sail for the kitchen garden area.

“ OC Connections' Day Support offers a range of activities and programs based on participants' personal interests and abilities.”





New skills

In June, we engaged training consultants, Prioletti, to provide participants with the opportunity to complete their Certificate I in Transition Education.

The course, designed for people who require support with learning and/or social skills, enables participants to undertake learning activities that focus on independent living, vocational and employability skills, personal and social development and financial independence.

Art exhibition

Our second art exhibition in October 2015 drew wonderful feedback as impressed guests commented on the skills, talents and breadth of work produced by the art program's artists. The exhibition, organised by art teacher and disability educator, Val Rowe, was one of many highlights featured at the organisation's Open Day.

The exhibition was complemented by the launch of OC Connections' collection of Christmas cards, gift tags and wrapping paper featuring festive art work by three participants. The collection was available for sale online, at the organisation, or through participants and families.

Art work featured in the exhibition was available for sale, with money going directly to the artists. Artists who produced art for the Christmas collection were also paid and proceeds from the sales went to OC Connections.

Social scene

Our after-hours and weekend activities attract broad support, with the most popular being the dinner and disco at the Glen Waverley Community Centre. Drawing up to 140 people each week, the hall hire is subsidised by the Monash City Council.

Participants also enjoy attending the organisation's annual dinner dance held in May at Merrimu Receptions, Murrumbeena. The 2016 event received wonderful community support, including major raffle prizes donated by The Good Guys (Chadstone) and Hesta.

Tootgarook makeover

OC Connections' accessible holiday home at Tootgarook on the Mornington Peninsula offers families access to a home equipped with facilities suited to those with disabilities or the elderly.

A boost in occupancy rates throughout 2015-2016 resulted in a 49 per cent increase in revenue.

Thanks to a donation from the Carnegie family, the home's exterior and interior was revamped, with the resulting renovations drawing wonderful reviews from guests. The update provides an ideal opportunity to promote the home to the broader disability and aged care communities.

We also established an online booking system via our website, providing a quick and efficient way of booking the home for future holidays. 🍃



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“ The world is changing for people with disabilities. As the broader community comes to gain a greater understanding of acceptance and inclusion, people with disabilities are leading that change, advocating for their right to live life as everyone else, with the same opportunities and choices.”



How Beverley connects to... **community**

Diving into a large bag full of coloured balls of wool, Beverley eagerly reaches for a set of needles that hold her latest craft project: *"It's going to be a scarf,"* she cheerfully announces before turning her attention to knitting.

Sitting at a table surrounded by an eclectic collection of craft activities in progress, Beverley is one of nine people who regularly attend WavLink in Glen Waverley, a life skills and recreational program that supports learning and independent living opportunities for adults with an intellectual disability.

Around her others also enjoy putting their artistic and craft skills to the test, sewing lingerie and shoe bags, drawing or colouring in folios or even making pottery.

Travelling four days a week from one of OC Connections' supported living homes, Beverley loves nothing more than enjoying the chance to catch up with friends and spend time pursuing some of her favourite hobbies.

But such enjoyment almost came to an end last year when Beverley found it difficult to pay for her time at WavLink.

When she moved to OC's congregate facilities 12 years ago, she relied on personal money to fund participating in the program. As funds declined, she could no longer afford to attend and as a result spent increasingly more time isolated at home.

Noticing a marked change in Beverley's mood, OC registered her for disability support and in late 2015, she received a support package with funding to pursue community activities.

Asked what she would like to spend the money on, Beverley didn't hesitate in saying she would love to go back to WavLink.

Since returning in February, Lexi Clarke, who manages the support home where Beverley lives, has noticed a marked change.

"Beverley seems much happier, particularly in seeing her friends again. It's so important that residents have the opportunity to get out of the house and into the community where they can connect with their friends. And it's really important that people are involved in activities that are meaningful to them." 





“It’s really important that people are involved in activities that are meaningful to them.”



How we connect to...

Choice

OC Connections is committed to investing in our people, ensuring a culture of accountability, honesty and trustworthiness is maintained.

These values underpin our organisation and without them we could not provide the quality or breadth of services we do. We care what our staff think, and see them as integral to our vision for a progressive, innovative disability organisation. Throughout 2015-2016 we undertook research into organisational culture, seeking feedback from staff, executive team and Board members as to what common values they saw as critical to a successful organisation, particularly with the NDIS in mind.

More than 260 people were surveyed, interviewed or attended focus groups and we were pleased to note that participant 'quality of life' was seen as paramount when it came to planning the organisation's future direction. Respondents also viewed as essential the need to provide individualised support for participants and families and opportunities to pursue interests and goals.

Quality and education

Maintaining and improving the environment in which our staff work is important. As an organisation, we want to attract and retain skilled, committed people who share our values

for inclusive disability practices that encourage opportunity and choice.

We understand how important it is to support staff with education and training that helps to increase their skills and keep informed of best practice standards.

In April, an Internal Audit Team was established to provide internal audit training for 16 staff interested in knowing how to best monitor and evaluate the performance of business units and internal processes. To better support the team, a training course focussing on auditing systems and processes to continually improve services was also offered. The course was funded by the Alastair McDonald Bursary, which was established by the organisation's Patron and Member, Alastair McDonald, to provide staff with education and development opportunities.

Instrumental in maintaining a focus on staff safety is the organisation's Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

The committee, comprising 11 trained representatives, meets bi-monthly with each business unit's Designated Work





Group (DWG) to discuss policy and procedure development, review staff injury and hazard reports, complete workplace safety checks and aims to promote health and safety initiatives. The committee also includes an OCCE representative to provide valuable feedback from supported employees. Before joining the committee, all employees completed a five-day health and safety representative course at Holmesglen TAFE.

The organisation's WorkCover insurers, Xchanging, provided funding for 15 staff to complete driver safety education, giving those using OC Connections buses greater knowledge and understanding of transporting participants.

Throughout 2015-2016, Day Support staff completed mandatory first aid, manual handling and medication training, while some also completed a human rights in disability training course online.

In readiness for the NDIS, in August 2015 staff undertook a range of learning and development programs including training on NDIS access, community inclusion and high level change competencies.

Accreditation and standards

In October 2015, OCCE successfully transitioned from the Disability Employment Services Standards to the National Standards for Disability Services. OCCE also underwent a successful accreditation audit, which highlighted comprehensive policies, procedures and systems in place to support employees achieve personal work goals.

In June 2016, our Residential Services and Day Support transitioned to the National Standards for Disability Services. The latter maintained accreditation to the Department of Human Services Standards, while Residential Services completed a successful audit under the National Standards for Disability Services, conforming to all Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) standards.

New name

As the NDIS will demand change across several aspects of the organisation, we viewed as timely the opportunity to reposition our brand identity to be more participant-centric and market competitive.

Over the past year we communicated extensively with our participants, their families, staff and broader stakeholders to gain a clearer understanding of how the organisation's brand might be perceived within a changing disability environment.

Feedback indicated many considered the word 'Oakleigh' in our name gave the impression our services were limited to one geographic region, while the word 'centre' was seen as old-fashioned and more often associated with a static bricks and mortar location. As we plan to broaden services across Victoria in the future, we decided to adopt a new name, OC Connections: OC standing for 'opportunity' and 'choice', basic NDIS ideals, and which also acknowledge our former name (Oakleigh Centre). The addition of 'connections' highlights our belief that, as an organisation, it is our role to connect people with disabilities to whatever services or support they need to live the life they want.



Website update

In July 2015 we refreshed our website, which now attracts 1900 unique visitors a month. To further drive visitors to the site, in January we received an ongoing Google Ad Grant, available to not-for-profit organisations to promote their website on Google. Since being implemented, we have attracted 3000 new visitors to the website resulting in 100 inquiries for volunteering, the Tootgarook holiday house and fundraising events.

Our new look website was complemented with a Facebook page, which saw a 23 per cent increase in followers over the year. To coincide with our new branding, the website will be further updated late 2016.

Volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in assisting us provide a broad range of services and programs. They are an integral link to the community and our organisation is so much richer for the wonderful contribution they make.

Throughout 2015-2016 volunteers generously gave 10,020 hours of their time (equivalent to the work of just over five full-time employees) to work with our opportunity shops; activity programs; assisting residents in supported accommodation, particularly during the weekends; at OCCE and with our fundraising events.

Our volunteers work one on one with participants, or accompany groups or families to enjoy a break at our Tootgarook holiday house or on community outings.

To attract volunteers, we work with a number of community groups, including the Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre and South East Volunteers.

Corporate volunteers

OC Connections is fortunate to receive valued volunteer support from the business sector, with employees regularly assisting at OCCE and with fundraising activities. Our corporate volunteer program enhances workplace relationships and offers supported staff the chance to work alongside people from different company backgrounds.

In December 2015, we welcomed wonderful support from Experian Australia Pty Ltd, who helped to set up our Christmas tree shop in readiness for the festive season.

Recognising our people

Recognising the great work of our staff and volunteers is important and we are incredibly proud when a team member is selected for an award, contributes to sector forums or provides valued insight into ways in which to best support those with a disability.

In November 2015, Disability Educator, Graham Furman was asked to join the Heide Museum of Modern Art Focus Group, which meets to discuss community inclusion, accessibility and employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. The group is part of Heide's Disability Action Plan, which promotes and encourages greater community participation in arts, culture and outdoor activities, utilising the museum's natural and built environments.





At OCCE, an 'employee of the month' initiative recognises outstanding efforts and achievements of individual staff members, while feedback is regularly sought through its Employee Committee, which meets to contribute employee ideas and hear about workplace matters.

In November 2015, OCCE Employee Support Officer, Nikki Boote was selected to participate in the Social Traders' Crunch Program, which is funded through the Victorian Government's New Gen program. Crunch is Australia's leading development program that supports new and existing social enterprises.

Nikki received assistance in establishing OCCE's car wash social enterprise and through Crunch receives business mentoring and coaching, attends workshops and participates in many networking opportunities.

In June, Residential Services Support Worker, Shane Van Dort received the Oakleigh Rotary Club's Allan James Award, providing him with a scholarship to further his career in disability management.

Participant, Kathy Fawssett was nominated in the inaugural Supreme Court of Victoria's Funds in Court Wishing Tree Foundation's 'Inspire' Awards, which recognise Victorians with a disability who have overcome significant obstacles to achieve in their community. Kathy was nominated for her work with the redevelopment project's Residents Advisory Group.

Volunteer, Sue Cass received a 2015 Caroline Chisholm volunteer award, recognising her outstanding contribution to OC Connections' Day Support. All OC Connections volunteers are regularly acknowledged, particularly during National Volunteer Week in May, with an annual appreciation dinner in November and with nominations submitted for volunteer awards. 





How Jessica connects to...work

For most of us, having a job means enjoying an income that allows us to indulge in favourite pastimes.

Jessica is no exception. When the 22-year-old is asked what she enjoys spending her weekly salary on, she doesn't miss a beat: the popular television fantasy series, *Game of Thrones*, is one of her passions.

"I bought series one to four (of the show) and even have mugs that feature different characters," she says of the fictional program set on continents that resemble the middle ages of earth.

When not following the epic tales of tribal feuding, family power struggles and army protecting dragons, Jessica works at OC Connections Enterprises, the organisation's supported employment division.

Since joining in October last year, Jessica has shown a quick aptitude for learning. Initially working in the shrink wrap department, before long she moved to packaging work and joined the car wash team, the latter of which is OCCE's newest social enterprise offering employment opportunities for people with an intellectual disability.

After leaving school, Jessica joined Connecting Skills Australia (CSA), a not-for-profit organisation focused on integrating adults with a disability into the workforce and/or community.

Jessica says she loved her time with CSA, learning everything from literacy, numerical and computer competency to life learning skills, each designed to assist with her transition to employment. Following work experience at places like Coles, Linen House and Bunnings, Jessica was referred to OCCE.

Working four days a week, Jessica readily admits to loving her time at OCCE, particularly in making friends and taking on new challenges.

Executive Manager Business Enterprises, Tony Hogg, says the evolving change in Jessica since joining the organisation has been wonderful to see.

"We have noticed real confidence gains in Jessica's communication and work skills. She has even been elected to our employee committee, which provides staff feedback and contributes ideas about workplace matters." 





“ We have noticed real confidence gains in Jessica's communication and work skills.”



How we connect to...

Opportunity

At OC Connections Enterprises (formerly Oakleigh Centre Industries), experience tells us that with the right workplace opportunity and skills training, people with intellectual disabilities can make valued contributions.

Our goal is to provide an environment that gives supported employees the confidence and skills necessary to potentially transition to open employment.

The past year has been incredibly successful for OCCE with new initiatives launched and growth figures recorded. We saw an 11 per cent increase in supported employees, while our commercial packaging division had its most successful year since 2008 with a 5.6 per cent increase in sales on the previous year.

We are proud of the loyalty shown by customers, with 40 per cent supporting OCCE for more than 10 years, while one customer has used our services for over 35 years.

New directions

In July 2015, OCCE launched a new social enterprise venture to complement its packaging and scanning services. The enterprise, a 'waterless' car wash that uses biodegradable cleaning products and minimal water, expands the employment opportunities we now offer.

Like all OCCE services, the car wash aims to give people with a disability, mental health issues or the long-term unemployed the chance to learn new skills and gain experience in a workplace environment. It also works to raise public awareness about ways in which those with social or intellectual issues can integrate and work within the broader community.

Since launching, the program has received support from Melbourne's Cheapest Cars and the City of Kingston and plans are underway to both expand the service's geographical reach and provide interior cleaning as an added service option.





In May, OCCE was delighted to be selected, via competitive tender, as Victoria's only disability services provider to participate in a Department of Defence supported employment initiative.

The Defence Administration Assistance Program (DAAP) will see six OCCE supported employees take up a range of administrative jobs at the department's Victoria Barracks on St Kilda Road. The program is part of the Australian Public Service's 'As One' Disability Employment Strategy that aims to improve workforce participation of people with a disability.

As part of the program, which starts in September 2016, the employees, a coordinator and supervisor will work at the Melbourne barracks providing ongoing administrative support including packing, collating and shredding, office assistance, mail room support, photocopying and help with mail outs.

SkillsMaster

The successful move in 2015 to wage assessment tool, SkillsMaster, continues to add value to OCCE. The tool enables us to better monitor supported employee performance, actively supports greater workplace choice and outcomes and increases opportunity to develop skills for potential wage increases.

Working with each employee, we develop individual plans to establish career goals and provide specific job training to align with these. This has led to many employees now requesting training to use more complicated machinery/equipment and highlights their confidence to take on more involved work.

Work experience

OCCE offers a work experience program for students referred to us through special schools, TAFE, the Department of Health and Human Services or specialist agencies. Our program introduces students to a structured work day to give them experience in a real workplace setting.

Throughout 2015-2016, the program grew by almost 60 per cent with 35 students participating from Berendale, Southern Autistic and Yarrabah schools. Joining us each week, the students engage in a range of activities, increasing their job readiness and transition from student to employee once school finishes.

OCCE also supported four long-term unemployed volunteers undertake work experience as part of the Department of Employment's Work for the Dole Program. While the program offers vocational training to the volunteers, it also provides opportunity for our supported employees to work alongside community members.

Opportunity shops

OC Connections operates two opportunity shops located at Hughesdale and Huntingdale, which provide additional income to fund participant activity programs.

Each is generously supported by their local communities with a constant supply of donated goods. We are also fortunate to have a dedicated and hardworking team of volunteers who give valuable time to ensuring the shops and goods are well presented.

“ Our goal is to provide an environment that gives supported employees the confidence and skills necessary to potentially transition to open employment. ”

How Roger

connects to... **belonging**

It's 5.30pm on a chilly Wednesday afternoon. At Central Reserve in Glen Waverley the scene looks pretty much like any suburban sports ground in the middle of a Melbourne winter: footballers training, running through squad drills and yelling encouragement to each other as yellow leather footballs fly through the air.

Amongst the pack is OC Connections participant, Roger, aged 51 and the team's oldest player: a moniker he proudly wears thanks to the retirement last year of a former team mate who was 82.

As full forward for the Mazenod Panthers, Roger is an AFL enthusiast; he loves the Hawthorn Football Club and even admits to a 'man cave' dedicated to all things gold and brown.

The Panthers are one of 17 clubs from around Melbourne and regional Victoria who compete in the Football Integration Development Association (FIDA). With more than 400 players, the association was established in 1990 to give people with an intellectual disability the opportunity to play football in a structured competition.

Keen to have a club based in Melbourne's south east, in 2005 FIDA approached former OC Connections volunteer, Andrew Sharp, to set up a team. With five players from OC, Andrew also recruited others from nearby disability organisations. Today, there are two Panthers teams with a combined 50 players.

Now retired from his role as club president, Andrew recalls the greatest satisfaction he gained was seeing the difference playing football had on the players.

"It was fantastic to see how their confidence levels went up: suddenly there were boys who felt more confident doing things, like catching public transport. Best of all, it gave each a great sense of belonging."

With training almost finished, team mates gather to give Roger a celebratory slap on the back for slotting a goal. He grins at the achievement and camaraderie. Belonging indeed 



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“
Playing football ...
gave each a
great sense
of belonging.”

How we connect to...

Equality

In contributing to the 2010-2020 National Disability Strategy, the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council succinctly summarised its vision for Australians living with disabilities:

"People ... want to bring about a transformation of their lives. They want their human rights recognised and realised. They want the things that everyone else in the community takes for granted. They want somewhere to live, a job, better health care, a good education, a chance to enjoy the company of friends and family, to go to the footy and to go to the movies. They want the chance to participate meaningfully in the life of the community."

It's a vision shared by OC Connections and one we work hard at to ensure success. And as the NDIS comes into play, we look forward to seeing this vision move closer to reality for the almost 20 per cent of Australians who have a disability.

Moving house

OC Connections' residential redevelopment project, which will see 27 residents move from outdated congregate facilities in Oakleigh to supported homes within the community, continues to evolve. The first of five new homes being built opened in August 2016, with the remaining scheduled for completion by the end of the year.

Successfully working in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services and consultant architects, Concept Architects, we have adopted a team approach to the project, ensuring each home meets participant expectation and needs. This partnership will be especially beneficial as we look to reconfigure the homes internally to meet NDIS requirements and create future flexible living options. All properties will feature high level assistive technology to enable greater future independence for people of all abilities.

Throughout the year, participants took every opportunity to visit the different sites to watch the buildings take shape and report back on progress.





Good neighbours

To prepare the first residents to move, in March OC Connections teamed with the City of Monash to celebrate the council's inaugural 'Neighbour Day', using the event as the perfect way to introduce residents to their soon-to-be street neighbours.

With a sausage sizzle held on site at the Clayton community home, the celebration was attended by former City of Monash Mayor, Cr Stefanie Perri, council representatives, street residents, the home's new residents and their families and OC Connections and DHHS staff.

The event was organised between the council and OC Connections with great support from the redevelopment project's Residents Advisory Group.

Wise advice

Integral to the redevelopment project's success is the Residents Advisory Group, which meets regularly to provide feedback and add input to the consultation and decision making processes.

The group comprises mainly participants moving to the community and works to advocate on behalf of residents, particularly those unable to articulate for themselves.

Over the past year, the group has provided practical suggestions for the new homes regarding furnishings, paint colours and ways of connecting with their neighbourhoods. Its contact with local fire services resulted in safety training, while a visit from Oakleigh police resulted in planning for future information sessions about community safety.

As the redevelopment project is one of the most significant projects in OC Connections' history, in 2015 we engaged production company, Yarn, to film this journey and create four short documentaries for each project stage. The first documentary, Leaving Allen Street, was launched at the 2015 Annual General Meeting, while the second will be released late 2016.

The organisation also engaged Emeritus Professor Trevor R Parmenter AM to research the project and objectively assess processes undertaken and changes in people, particularly their confidence levels. This research will provide valuable information about how we engage people with disability in all aspects of their future life planning.

Professor Parmenter is well regarded within the disability sector: a Fellow of the Australasian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability, he also serves on the board of several disability organisations, including the Disability Council of New South Wales.

Preparing staff

To prepare Residential Services for the changes expected under the NDIS, and the moving of residents from congregate care to the community, significant staff training and education was undertaken.

All residential staff completed NDIS training sessions, with more to be introduced as residents progressively move to their new homes. Sessions, held for staff, residents and their families, have reinforced the importance of NDIS planning and how the scheme will impact individuals, from a personal and workplace perspective.

As each new house opens, staff numbers will increase, along with further education programs to cover mandatory and house-specific training.

Added support

Having access to programs and activities that enable our residents to pursue interests or get out into the community is vital to their quality of life.

When the redevelopment project began, we identified a significant number of Allen Street residents without funding to pay for day support. To ensure minimal impact when they move to the community, we worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services to secure Individual Support Packages (ISPs) funding to access outside activities.

To better support Allen Street residents, we increased volunteers, enabling us to tailor outings that best catered to an individual's interests. This resulted in greater community engagement with residents having the opportunity for weekends away or to attend local activity groups.

Other social activities enjoyed by residents included the Victorian Hot Rod Show, 'Elvis' and BABBA concerts, Rosebud Kite Flying Festival and regular visits to restaurants, hotels and markets. Residents are also encouraged to invite family and friends to lunch or dinner, or to celebrate special occasions, like birthdays. 🍀



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How Peter connects to...art

When Peter first took home a piece of his artwork, his mother, Jan was convinced it had been done by someone else.

“Peter had never really shown any interest in art (before joining OC Connections three years ago), so when this piece came home I rang to say that I thought he had the wrong work,” recalls Jan. But no, Peter’s signature on the piece showed it was indeed his.

“To say we were shocked is an understatement,” she laughs.

So in awe of his artistic gift, Peter’s family have since created a Facebook page and website for friends, family and former teachers to visit and follow his progress.

Peter’s work, much of which draws inspiration from Picasso’s eclectic style, was featured on the organisation’s 2015 Christmas collection of cards, gift tags and paper. Also featured was artwork by participants Joey and Mitchell, with all three among the art program’s most prolific.

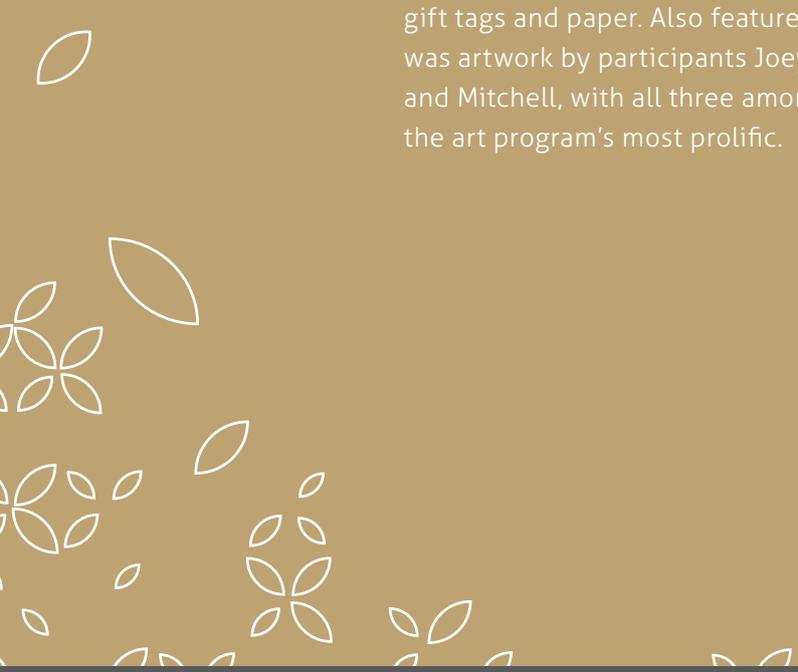
Run by Val Rowe, OC’s art classes offer more than just opportunity to while away a couple of hours with a paintbrush. Rather, Val takes seriously each class, discussing different types of art and providing participants with books and examples to inspire and motivate. So successful are the classes, that for the past two years, OC Connections has featured an exhibition of participants’ artwork at its annual open day. And some artists, like Joey, have had their work featured in public art exhibitions.

For Val, each artist’s differences is their greatest strength.

“Peter’s style is free and fun loving, featuring quirky images of people and animals. He works rapidly to translate what he sees in front of him into his own version of the image,” says Val.

Joey’s meticulous eye for detail enables him to reproduce artwork with great accuracy, often taking many weeks to complete one drawing, while Mitchell’s distinctive style is influenced by stored personal memories or from places he has been and he uses a single image repeated in lines across a page or space.

Three specific styles from three incredibly talented artists. 





“ Peter's style is free and fun loving, featuring quirky images of people and animals.”



Grateful Support

As a not-for-profit organisation, OC Connections relies on the generosity of its donors, supporters and the wider business community to assist with funding to provide participants with a range of services, equipment and experiences. While government funding assists with capital works, it doesn't cover the dollars needed for additional resources that can make a huge difference to someone's life. Resources like vehicles to transport participants to community activities; specialised wheelchairs for the financially disadvantaged or computer touch screens that helps those with poor vision or hand-eye coordination experience a whole new world of visual beauty.

Community support comes in many forms, from donating prizes for our annual charity golf day raffle, to making it a tradition to buy the family Christmas tree from our Warrigal Road shop or generously giving to our donor appeal. Thanks to generous community and corporate support, over the past year we raised more than \$186,000, which was achieved through a range of activities.

Christmas tree festival

Since the early 1960s, OC Connections has celebrated the festive season by selling Christmas trees. Buying one of our trees has become a tradition for many Melbourne families, who love the idea of a Christmas purchase that assists in raising money for those we support.

The festival was established by a participant's parent, Frank Burton, who originally began selling trees from his backyard.

Trees are sourced from the Dandenong Christmas tree farm and sold throughout December, along with a range of decorations from our Christmas tree shop.

The 2015 festival saw the addition of specially produced cards, wrapping paper and gift tags featuring artwork created by three participants involved in the organisation's art program.



Corporate charity golf day

In June 2016 we held our 21st annual charity golf day, attracting some 250 players to test their golfing skills on the prestigious Metropolitan Golf Club's course. We are grateful to the club for donating its course to us for the day, and to the club's women members, who fundraise for the organisation throughout the year.

Proceeds from the 2016 event will be used to replace one of our ageing vehicles which is no longer suitable for some residential participants. As people age, so too do their needs and our vehicles need to accommodate increased mobility problems, walking frames or wheelchairs. It is so important these people continue to have access to activities and their community, which is why we need to continually adapt to meet their needs.

We would like to thank and acknowledge the many individuals, businesses and organisations who donated raffle prizes, in particular Bakers Delight, who generously donated on-course snacks. We would also like to acknowledge:

Corporate sponsor:

Woodards Real Estate, Oakleigh

Hole sponsors:

- Eziway Salary Packaging
- Norden Group
- Toshiba

Hole in one sponsor

McKenzie Ross

Community support

We are always grateful for the community support we receive to raise funds for the organisation. In October 2015, former employee, Chris Hayward, used the Melbourne Marathon to raise money for us, while in April, we supported Montmorency Secondary College's production of well-known Australian play, Gulls, which highlights inequality within the disability sector. Ticket proceeds from the play were donated to OC Connections.





Bruce Bain Foundation

The Bruce Bain Foundation was established in 2006 by Don and Norma Bain to recognise the support given by OC Connections to their (late) son, Bruce, who lived at one of our supported homes in Oakleigh.

Money earned through the foundation is used to fund specialist activity programs.

Donor appeal and memorial donations

OC Connections is fortunate to be supported by many generous people who each year give to our donor appeals, which raise money for specific projects.

In 2015-2016, we received wonderful support to buy a range of equipment and assistive technology items that will make life easier for people moving to our new community homes. Thanks to the generosity of many we bought:

- Moveable sinks, toilets and basins
- Shower sensors
- Smart televisions
- Baths lifts
- Lifting hoists

While it is not possible to name every donor individually, we thank all for their generosity. In particular, we would like to acknowledge:

M Blanden

D Cragg

R Joyce

J B King

B Luxford

C Morris

AM, BM & ME Quinn

J Ramsdale

I Richards

H Su

R White

In memoriam

M Davies

J Kelly

John Kelly

Bequests

Estate of Edmund Barker

Trusts and Foundations

Bruce Bain Foundation

Frank Horn Charitable Trust

Intelcare Trust

Alastair McDonald Bursary

Grants

City of Monash

Google Ads

Social Traders

Department of Social Services

Department of Health and Human Services







Supporting OC Connections

OC Connections is a not-for-profit organisation. We rely on fundraising and donor support to supplement the many services and programs we provide to people living with an intellectual disability - programs that will enable them to live active lives with opportunity and choice.

How to support OC Connections

Donate

Donations can be made to OC Connections online by visiting our website at OCConnections.org or phone **(03) 9569 0603**. By subscribing to our newsletter you will receive regular updates about our current appeals. All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

Leave a bequest

By leaving a bequest to OC Connections in your Will, you can help us to continue providing services that give people with a disability the opportunity to improve their quality of life, and the accessibility to live it as they choose. A Will is a legal document and should be made with the advice of your solicitor, or a trustee company. This will ensure your wishes and intentions are executed.

Volunteer

OC Connections is fortunate to have the support of a wonderful team of dedicated volunteers. Our volunteer program is enriched by the diversity of our volunteers, who come from all walks of life and range in age from school leavers to retirees.

To find out more about volunteering with OC Connections, visit our website at OCConnections.org or phone **(03) 9569 0603**.

Thank you

OC Connections thanks and acknowledges our Patrons – City of Monash Mayor, Cr Geoff Lake and Alastair McDonald.

Thank you to our participants, their families, volunteers and OC Connections staff for sharing their stories and being a part of our 2016 Annual Report.

Design

Blick Creative

Written and edited

Jan Phyland

Photography

Steve Costello





OC Connections Service Directory

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www.OCConnections.org

OC Connections Enterprises (formerly Oakleigh Centre Industries (OCI))

1088 Centre Road
South Oakleigh VIC 3167
T: (03) 9575 4200
E: info@ocenterprises.org
www.OCEnterprises.org

Opportunity Shops

290b Huntingdale Road
Huntingdale VIC 3166
T: (03) 9543 5083

62 Poath Road
Hughesdale VIC 3166
T: (03) 9568 1407

Tootgarook Holiday House

56 Morris Street
Tootgarook VIC 3941
T: (03) 9569 0603
E: admin@OCConnections.org

Accommodation

Congregate care facilities
Allen Street
Oakleigh VIC 3166

Community Housing Program

Supported houses located at:

- Ashwood
- Chadstone
- Clayton
- Mount Waverley
- Oakleigh
- Oakleigh South





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OC Connections
ABN: 91 480 733 899

OC Connections Enterprises
ABN: 58 080 042 827

"By connecting and being part of a community with a shared vision and goals, we can create great things."

– David J. Greer