

STAYING CONNECTED

EDITION THREE, SEPTEMBER 2024



CEO MESSAGE THERESE DESMOND

Hello everyone,

Please forgive me if this newsletter is a bit self-indulgent!

By the time this reaches you, I will have already left OCC after 10 incredible and challenging years.

When we began the merger process, it was clear my role would change. However, ensuring continuity of support for our participants and job security for our staff made this merger vital for OCC.

With the expected freeze in NDIS funding, uncertainty from the NDIS review, outcomes of the Royal Commission, and government pressure for consolidation, merging became the strategic direction OCC needed to secure its future.

Since 1950, OCC has adapted, weathered many storms, and embraced change to better serve our participants, families, and staff. This merger is another step in ensuring we continue to fulfill our mission and remain relevant.

In August, a long-term and valued colleague visited my office to reflect on all we've achieved over the last decade. Together, we turned our financial position around, undertook a massive redevelopment project, successfully transitioned to the NDIS, doubled in size, navigated the immense challenges of COVID, and now, embarked on a merger.

As a team, we created the Participant Reference Group, worked with three different board chairs, developed strategic plans, and launched new initiatives like the Hubs for Day Support and eco products at OCCE. We've managed seven external quality audits, embedded OH&S, and advocated tirelessly for better supports for people with disabilities.

But beyond these achievements, what I value most are the memories and lessons I've gained. I've been deeply moved by the courage of our participants and families as they face life's challenges with such resilience and a determination to embrace life fully.

I'm also inspired by our staff, who despite their own responsibilities and challenges at home—whether it's parenting, caregiving, or dealing with illness—show up every day with unwavering dedication to those we support. Thank you for your guidance, support, and for teaching me so much.



As Bruce and I move to Lake Wendouree, where I plan to work part-time, travel, and contribute through volunteering, we're excited about the future ahead. My hope is that OCC continues to thrive, enhance the quality of support for participants and families, and create opportunities for staff to grow and be recognised in their valuable roles.

From June 2024, the leadership of OCC has been entrusted to Carol Berry, CEO, and Peter Langkamp, Board Chair of The Disability Trust. They are now responsible for nurturing the heart and spirit of OCC and building on the hard work of thousands who have invested in this organisation.

Thank you to all the participants, families, directors, members of OCC, supporters, and donors for your encouragement, support, and kind wishes over the years. Your contributions have been invaluable.

Wishing you all love, luck, joy, and happiness.

THERESE DESMOND

A "GLIMPSE" INTO THE OC ART SPACE

Renate, a Team Leader of the OC Art Space, recently sent through a collection of "Glimpses", exhibiting the incredible, individual creative styles of our resident artists.

The pieces range from paintings to sculptures to dioramas, showing different scenes and transforming simple objects into something new.



There's always a sense of passion and vibrancy when you step into the OC Art Space. Participants have freedom to create whatever their heart desires.

With the support and encouragement of their disability care workers, they can use recycled materials, mosaic tiles, things from nature, different fabrics and beads, paints and markers and all different kinds of paper, to fulfil their inspirations and reach their personal goals.

Thank you to the OC Art Space for encouraging participants to accomplish what they set their minds to, and for showcasing their beautiful artworks to the community!





TWO BIG WINS FOR OCCE AT MONASH BUSINESS AWARDS

We are thrilled to share that OC Connections Enterprises (OCCE) achieved an incredible milestone by winning not one, but two prestigious awards at the 2024 Monash Business Awards.

Our organisation was honoured with the Not-for-Profit category award and, to our immense surprise and delight, we also took home the coveted title of Overall Business of the Year!

This recognition is a testament to the hard work, innovation, and dedication of our entire team at OCCE. We were nominated for our pioneering social enterprise, OC Eco Products, which has been a trailblazer in bringing sustainable solutions to the market. The OC Eco T-Top Bollard®, Australia's first of its kind, has been at the forefront of this initiative. It stands out not only for its innovative design but also for its remarkable ability to deliver on the social, environmental, and local economic fronts—a true embodiment of the triple bottom line.

The Monash Business Awards are a prestigious event that recognises excellence across six key categories: Micro Business, Transport Trade Manufacturing and Construction, Not-for-Profit, Professional Services, Health & Science, and Innovation & Technology. To be recognised among such esteemed finalists was an honour in itself, and winning the Not-for-Profit category was a moment of immense pride for us.

However, the announcement that OC Connections was named the Overall Business of the Year left us genuinely speechless. This remarkable achievement reflects the positive impact we are making and the opportunities we are creating for local people living with disability to thrive in the workplace.

As a small team accomplishing big things, this recognition is a reminder of what we can achieve when we work together towards a common goal. Congratulations to the entire OCCE team—this is your achievement, and you should take a bow! We look forward to continuing to build on this success and making an even greater impact in the years to come.

Thank you to the Monash Business Awards for this incredible honour, and congratulations to all the other finalists and winners who are making a difference in their respective fields.

Let's keep striving, innovating, and creating opportunities that matter!

OUR ECO-FRIENDLY BOLLARDS GO NATIONAL!

OC Connections Enterprises, a leading social enterprise dedicated to creating meaningful employment for people with disabilities, is excited to announce its partnership with Jaybro, Australia's premier supplier to infrastructure workers. This partnership will see OC Connections Enterprises supplying its premiere product, the OC Eco T-Top Bollard®, for sale through Jaybro across Australia.

The OC Eco T-Top Bollard® is a revolutionary product, being the first and only Australian-made bollard crafted entirely from 100% recycled materials. Not only does this innovative bollard contribute to environmental sustainability by repurposing plastic waste, but it also creates essential job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

“We are thrilled to partner with Jaybro to make our OC Eco T-Top Bollard® accessible to infrastructure workers and communities across Australia,” said Steve Betinsky, General Manager of Employment & Enterprises at OC Connections Enterprises. “Our bollards offer a superior alternative to imported bollards that are made from virgin plastics, boasting exceptional durability, flexibility, and longevity.”



The OC Eco T-Top Bollard® is formulated with a custom blend of colorant and UV stabilisers, ensuring superior performance in reflectance properties and resistance to fading and cracking. Its weather-resistant properties and sturdy construction make it ideal for a wide range of applications, from road safety to pedestrian management.

OC Connections Enterprises is a certified social enterprise by Social Traders, employing over 100 individuals with disabilities and providing them with access to meaningful employment opportunities.

With every purchase of the OC Eco T-Top Bollard®, customers are not only investing in a high-quality product but also contributing to the employment of people with disabilities.

“We are proud to collaborate with OC Connections Enterprises and support their mission of social and environmental responsibility,” said Matt Collins, Road Signs and Traffic Category Manager at Jaybro. “By offering the OC Eco T-Top Bollard® through our platform, we are not only providing our customers with a sustainable solution but also actively participating in positive social change.”

This partnership between OC Connections Enterprises and Jaybro exemplifies the importance of corporate social responsibility and demonstrates how Australian companies can make a significant impact on both social and environmental fronts.



A SUCCESSFUL DAY ON THE GREEN FOR THE ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF DAY!

On Monday 29th July, we hosted our largest fundraiser of the year at The Metropolitan Golf Club, a dedicated supporter of OC Connections for almost 30 years. The wonderful team at the Metropolitan offers a full day every year for donors and sponsors of OC Connections to enjoy a round of 18-hole Ambrose golf and a delicious buffet lunch. As always, the service was brilliant and the food was delicious.

The weather was cloudy with scattered showers, but that didn't stop our eager golfers. Tournaments ran smoothly throughout the day. Everyone enjoyed learning from professional long drive golfer, Stephen Scutti, and having a go at our hole-in-one competition.

All funds raised from this event will be allocated towards our disability-friendly Housing Project, allowing us to build and furnish four new homes in the City of Monash. These homes will be accessible, purpose-built and will accommodate people living with intellectual disabilities.

This exciting project has another three years to run and every dollar raised will go towards building costs and furnishings. Every person deserves a place to call home and we thank you for supporting us to make this happen

A huge thank you to all sponsors and partners for sponsoring event holes, donating gift hampers and competition prizes for successful golfers.





DISABILITY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS RAISE THE ALARM ON NDIS MARKET FAILURE

OC Connections and other disability sector organisations are raising alarms over a potential market failure in the NDIS due to inadequate funding from the recent NDIA pricing review.

The pricing decision has led many service providers to reconsider their participation in the sector, threatening the availability of quality supports for people with disabilities.

The alliance calls for immediate action, including increased prices for support coordination and therapy, reinstatement of high-intensity payments, and a loading for registered providers to sustain services.

Protect your choice and control and join us in calling for immediate action by the NDIA and Government. Visit www.4aBetterNDIS.com.au to learn more.



WINNER OF THE ALLEN JAMES AWARD ANNOUNCED

We are proud to announce that Jessica Kritzer from OC Connections Enterprises (OCCE) has been awarded the prestigious Allen James Award by the Rotary Club of Oakleigh Clayton and Huntingdale. Jessica plans to use the grant to further her training in Positive Behaviour Support, a testament to her dedication to fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment.

Jessica began her journey at OCCE in 2021 as a Training Officer, delivering one-on-one task training. In 2023, she successfully transitioned into the role of Supervisor in Admin & Document Management, where she has excelled in leading a growing team of 16 individuals across three office locations. Her leadership and commitment are an inspiration to us all. Congratulations, Jess!

VALE JULIE HENRYS

Julie Henrys, a beloved member of OC Connections' Day Support, passed away, leaving a lasting impact on those who knew her. Joining Day Support four years ago, Julie was known for her positive attitude, independence, and willingness to try new things.

She loved chatting about family, enjoyed community outings, and was a talented artist. Julie's warmth, sense of humour, and engaging personality will be deeply missed by her friends and the OC Connections community.





EXPLORE MELBOURNE

- **Social group activities for people with disabilities**
- **Every second Saturday, 10am - 4pm**
- **Travel included**
- **Support services provided by OC Connections**

Choose from a wide range of activities, including visits to museums, zoos, animal sanctuaries, markets, beaches or Sky Deck. There's something for everyone!

NDIS funding required.

ENQUIRE NOW

T: 0407 438 781

E: caseyhub@occonnections.org

A: 4 Flicka Blvd, Cranbourne West

