



2021-22

Annual Report



Northcott acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands upon we work. We pay our respects to their Elders – past, present and emerging – and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We also pay tribute to their ongoing connection to land, water and community.

Our purpose

Northcott is a not-for-profit disability service provider that works with customers to realise their potential.

We are striving to build an inclusive society where people can live the life they choose.

We support people with disability to reach their full potential by providing services and support to promote a genuinely inclusive society.

Our vision

We want to grow our services because customers choose us as their provider of choice.

Our values

We are a values-based organisation that fosters a workplace culture based on our core values of:

- **INNOVATIVE** – because we develop new ideas and solutions with creativity in anticipation of changing needs.
- **RESPECTFUL** – because we believe that everyone's voice is unique and that they have the right to be heard.
- **BRAVE** – because we have the courage to stand up for people with all abilities, even in the face of adversity.



Our community

16,777

Children and adults with disability provided with supports and services through Northcott

4,196

accessed Northcott services

12,581

children and their families were supported by Northcott NDIS early childhood





Of the 4,196 customers:

58%

live in metropolitan Sydney

42%

live in regional areas
or outside Sydney

7%

are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

24%

accessed more than one
Northcott service

16%

used a Northcott service
for the first time

2,326,523

hours of service were received

A message from our Chair, and our CEO

The 2022 financial year was another eventful year for Northcott, where we faced external challenges head on, built strong new partnerships to grow our impact and put in place the foundations for a strong future to support our work towards an inclusive society.

Managing external challenges

As a business providing essential services to children and adults with disability and their families, COVID-19 has continued to impact Northcott extensively. During the lengthy lockdown in 2021, we remained committed to supporting customers based on their choices. Our centre-based services remained open, sometimes just for one participant. We also gave customers the option to join their service virtually or to access one-on-one support at home. Our services, such as Therapy, Positive Behaviour Support and NDIS early childhood, also adapted in response to customer need. It was pleasing to see 72% of respondents in our customer survey tell us they felt

supported by Northcott during this time – recognition of the hard work put in by our staff. You can read some of the great outcomes achieved in this Annual Report.

COVID-19 isolation requirements have impacted heavily on our operations, however, the processes and procedures we put in place in 2020 ensured we could continue to provide the high quality services and supports Northcott is so renowned for. However, the shortage of frontline staff, including support workers and therapists, is a significant ongoing issue for our sector.

We care about the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff. To protect both our workforce and customers, we consulted heavily

with staff about our COVID-safe plan and vaccination policy. We also worked with the National Disability Insurance Agency to support and lead the sector's response to COVID and ensure staff and customer safety and service continuity.

Just as we started to return to some normality, several regions where we operate were hit by devastating floods. To ensure the safety of affected residents, staff co-ordinated their re-location to safer ground, well away from the rising waters. Emotional support was also provided to those feeling anxious or worried by the events. In some areas, for the safety of staff and customers, we closed our offices. We offered support to staff members directly impacted by flooding, and through an organisation-wide initiative, funds were raised to assist these families with getting back on their feet.



Strong new partnerships to grow our impact

Since its inception more than 90 years ago, Northcott has collaborated with like-minded organisations to deliver relevant and high quality services and supports to people with disability and their families. This year we have continued this tradition with several significant new partners.

In June, we announced that Queensland-based provider Montrose Therapy and Respite would become part of Northcott, representing an exciting new expansion across the border. Montrose and Northcott share a common history as the NSW and Queensland Societies for Crippled Children. Together we have over 180 years' of experience. Montrose's reputation delivering clinical services complements Northcott's work in this space and provides the opportunity to expand and meet the needs of more people with disability.

In the disability housing space, we are collaborating with Good Housing and DPN Casa Capace to build nine new dwellings for people with disability across NSW. In the health and fitness space, we are partnering with WeFlex, an innovative company specialising in fitness for children and adults with disability. For the school leavers with disability we support, we are delighted to have the support of Citi Foundation through their global Pathways to Progress grant program (see page 18).

We warmly welcomed three new Board Directors in 2021-2022: Tracey Corbin-Matchett, Mathew Franklin and Chris Willcocks, who was formerly a Board Observer with us. It is wonderful to have fresh new faces joining our experienced Board. All three bring unique experiences and expertise to Northcott and we look forward to their contributions.

Future direction

By building a stronger Northcott, we're able to deliver even more progress towards achieving our purpose of a truly inclusive society.

During the year, we were excited to launch our new Strategic Plan. This focuses our direction and ensures that our Board, Executive and staff have the guidance they need to continue making an impact for children and adults with disability.

We took the next step in our journey towards becoming a genuinely accessible and inclusive workplace by launching our Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan and introducing a new employee group for staff with disability. We want Northcott to be a supportive workplace for all. Through this new staff group, we hope employees with disability can share ideas and develop initiatives to promote greater inclusion and diversity within Northcott.

The new Federal Government has also triggered some early changes in the approach of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). We hope this will reduce financial pressures, build a sustainable system for the future and drive more positive outcomes for people with disability participating in the NDIS. We are working with the new government, the NDIA and other providers through our membership of Ability First Australia.

Internally, we are making big investments in Northcott's digital systems to transform and enhance our service delivery and improve productivity and efficiency across our operations.

Thank you

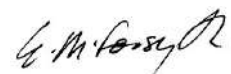
To our fellow Board members, thank you for your wisdom, guidance and strategic expertise. We are grateful for the time and effort you give to Northcott and our customers.

To our dedicated workforce, we greatly appreciate your hard work and commitment to our purpose and supporting people with disability to achieve their goals. Our values of respectful, brave and innovative are displayed every day through the wonderful work achieved by staff.

Thanks to you all, Northcott is empowering people with disability to live the life they choose.



Michael Briggs
Chair, Northcott



Liz Forsyth
CEO, Northcott

By building a stronger Northcott, we're able to deliver even more progress towards achieving our purpose of a truly inclusive society.

Our services and supports

Coordination of Supports

People with disability are supported to navigate the disability service system and understand their NDIS plan with information, advice and support from experts.



Northcott NDIS early childhood

Tailored support meeting the needs of children aged 0-6 with developmental delay or disability, delivered through our role as a NDIS early childhood partner.



Housing

More than 120 properties, including shared homes and individual villas, so people with disability can find a place to call home and get the support they need.



In-home and Community Supports

One-on-one support for people with disability who want to increase their independence, get out in their community or who need support around the home.



Skills 4 Life

Fun and educational activities supporting teenagers with disability to learn how to express their opinions, make decisions, and respect others, while building their confidence.



Orthotics and Custom Footwear

Tailor-made orthotic and footwear solutions supporting the mobility needs of children and adults with disability.



Short breaks and outings

Recreation programs offering new experiences and fun activities for children and adults with disability.



Positive Behaviour Support

A group of highly skilled NDIS Commission registered practitioners, supporting people with disability regarding behaviours of concern.



Respite

Accessible and comfortable short term accommodation for people with disability who want a break from their normal routine, in a supported environment.



Therapy

Fully accredited therapy specialists, including speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, dietitians and allied health assistants.



Sexuality and Relationships

Support and programs for young people and adults with disability who want to learn, explore and manage their relationships and sexuality.



Vocational Skills (SLES)

Young people with disability take part in activities to become work ready, gain work experience and explore volunteer opportunities to support them in finding a job.



Everyday Life Skills

Individual and group programs supporting people with disability to develop skills such as cooking, managing a budget, travelling independently, making friends and exploring the community.



A snapshot of our highlights

Read about our year online at northcott.com.au/ourimpact



Expanding into Queensland

Northcott and Montrose Therapy and Respite announced they will partner to support more young people with disability and deliver more positive impact for the Queensland community. Montrose is a South East Queensland-based disability services organisation providing Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Support Coordination, Social Work support, Short Stay and Medium Stay Accommodation and a Lifestyle & Leisure service to almost 2,000 customers. From 1 July 2022, Montrose will become a subsidiary of Northcott, representing our first foray into Queensland.

Staff survey

Every year we survey our staff to understand what we are doing well and where we can improve. Our 2022 employee engagement survey was completed by 820 people and revealed that most of our workforce (80%) have high satisfaction with direct managers. We also learnt that staff would like to see improvements in technology, recruitment and career opportunities.

Top insights

+90%

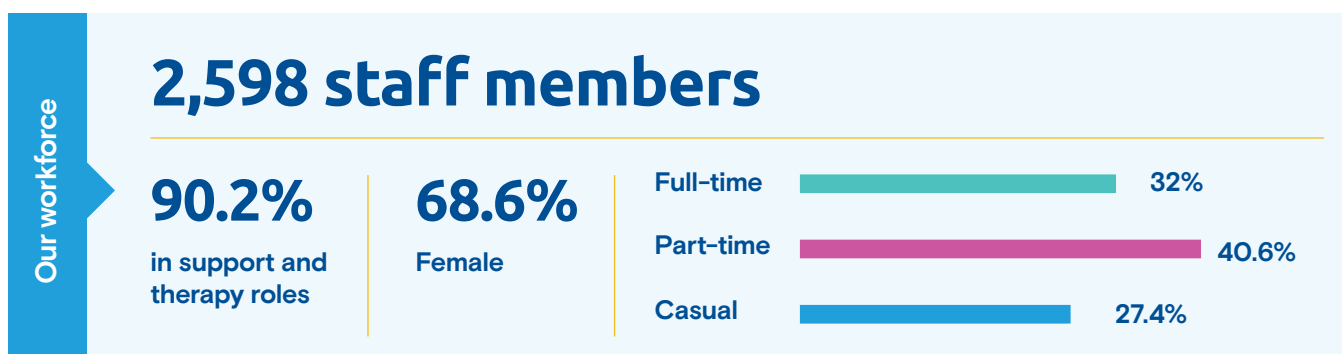
believe in our values

91%

believe it is important to attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training

+90%

feel they know the COVID safety measures to follow.





Giving Day 2021

We raised over \$140,000 in our second Giving Day on 30 November, smashing the target! Funds raised went towards purchasing sensory resources for our centres as well as respite support for families who don't have NDIS funds, or who have run out of funds for respite.

9 new homes coming

One of our aims is to provide more accessible housing so more people with disability can fulfill their goal of living independently. In March, construction commenced on two state-of-the-art disability homes in Gobbagombalin, a suburb of Wagga Wagga. We are partnering with DPN Casa Capace to provide these homes for eight residents. Then in April, we were excited to announce a partnership with Good Housing to build new villa-style disability housing in Bradbury, south west of Sydney. This new housing project is the first of many to come with Good Housing.



Listening to our customers

We asked the people we support to provide feedback on our services and supports in our annual survey distributed in November and December 2021. Despite a difficult year of service delivery due to the pandemic, we were pleased to receive positive results.

72%

of respondents said they felt supported by Northcott during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

85%

of people living in our supported housing said they feel positive about the Northcott support staff.

Better staff conditions

The new Northcott Enterprise Agreement (EA) came into effect in mid-July 2021. It brings all Northcott staff together under the one agreement, and includes new rates of pay, rostering rules, and other conditions of employment. The process to develop the new EA was highly consultative, with staff from all areas and levels engaged with.



A leader in early childhood support in FY22

3,352

first NDIS plans approved

8,470

NDIS plans reviewed

Research partnership

Northcott is pleased to be part of a multi-institutional partnership grant led by the University of NSW (Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry) to address the health inequalities faced by people with intellectual disability. The grant is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Northcott has contributed \$200,000 in cash and in-kind contributions across the 5-year project term.

We were proud to establish an employee networking group for staff with disability – called VIVID (Vibrant Individuals Valuing Inclusion and Diversity).



WeFlex partnership

We are delighted to have partnered with inclusive health and fitness company WeFlex, whose mission is to improve the length and quality of life for those living with disability through inclusive health and fitness. Through this partnership, we hope to support people with disability to have improved health outcomes.



Scan the QR code to find out more.

Support Worker Internship Program

Our subsidiary Northcott Innovation launched its Supported Living lab (SL/lab) Internship Program with 10 Northcott frontline workers from our Housing service participating. Through exploring new skills in communication, problem solving and human-centred design, the 18-week learning program aims to develop the competency of support workers to identify and develop solutions to positively impact the lives of our residents. As part of the program, each support workers will explore an area in the life of their customer that could be improved with an impactful aid or solution.



Participants in the Internship Program

Support for education

Our long-running Tertiary Scholarship program, administered in partnership with our Spinecare Foundation subsidiary, is made possible thanks to several Trusts and Foundations. The program includes the Gregory and Dolores Farrell Scholarship, Thomas K.F. Taylor Scholarship, Thomas Hepburn Lennox Scholarship, WR Foundation Scholarship and Wendy Hall Scholarship. Tertiary students with a physical disability receive financial assistance to help cover the cost of library and internet charges, textbooks, on-campus accommodation, transport costs, computer hardware and software, stationery, personal care and scribes/tutors.

21 students supported in 2021-22



Life After School graduation

Life After School program

Using a grant from the Australian Government's Information Linkages and Capacity Building Program we developed and delivered a program aimed at supporting young people with learning difficulties who don't have an NDIS plan to build the skills necessary to access the workforce. Participants had access to coaching, mentoring and work experience opportunities that will help them prepare for the future of work. We also held business roundtables with employers, peak bodies, service providers and other disability organisations to explore the barriers to employment for young people with disability and discuss solutions. Participants graduated in June.



Scan the QR code to find out more.

Northcott is a values-driven organisation. Through our recognition, perks and wellbeing portal, staff are encouraged to recognise their colleagues who display our values in their work. This year, 'Respectful' was the value most recognised in staff by their peers!



We have made good progress on actions outlined in our 2020-23 Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan, which will see positive outcomes for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and customers.

This year we have continued to support greater numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers, as well as employ more staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. We also celebrated significant days on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar across our offices. Following the success of a capacity building therapy project in Kempsey in the previous year, we have commenced a similar project with the Griffith Aboriginal Medical Service to address gaps in therapy services in the Griffith community.



*(Top) Northcott Tamworth customers and staff.
(Bottom) Northcott Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program Manager, Kerrie with Raymond Weatherwill*



Funding is helping Harper to thrive

“Harper has been with the NDIS for several years now. Over this time, she has improved with leaps and bounds.”

- Georgia, mother

When her parents were referred to Northcott’s NDIS early childhood team, Harper was behind in many key developmental milestones for a child her age.

She was unable to walk, sit, stand, eat or drink. She would also display severe emotional reactions, making it difficult for her family to take her to medical appointments, therapy sessions and out in the community. Her parents also struggled to find a day care centre able to support her needs.

Nadine, one of Northcott’s early childhood coordinators in northern NSW, assessed Harper and determined she may be eligible for NDIS funded supports due to her developmental delay.

Working with her parents, Nadine developed two NDIS Plans for Harper, the first of which was approved in 2020. Nadine also linked Harper's parents to a multidisciplinary team of therapists who have worked with Harper to develop her strength and mobility, as well as social and emotional skills. Nadine is currently supporting the family through a third plan for Harper.

Harper's positive outcomes

"Harper has been with the NDIS for several years now. Over this time, she has improved with leaps and bounds," says her mum Georgia.

"When Harper started with the NDIS she couldn't sit up unassisted. She had no core strength. With our amazing team of occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech therapist, behaviourist, assistant therapist, and Nadine, our early childhood coordinator, Harper is now up and running around with

limited supports. This is something we did not think would happen in such a short time."

Georgia says being able to have Harper's therapists visit their home as well as her day care centre has been so important in keeping everyone on the same page with her development. The family has seen many improvements in Harper, from her starting day care to now being able to go out in the community and enjoy small social interactions.

"Harper loves day care and is starting to make some good friends," Georgia says.

"With the help of her behaviourist, we can now go to appointments without Harper feeling like someone is going to hurt her. Having the therapist help and teach me and my husband how to support Harper and what to do when she has an episode has helped so much with her emotional development," Georgia says.

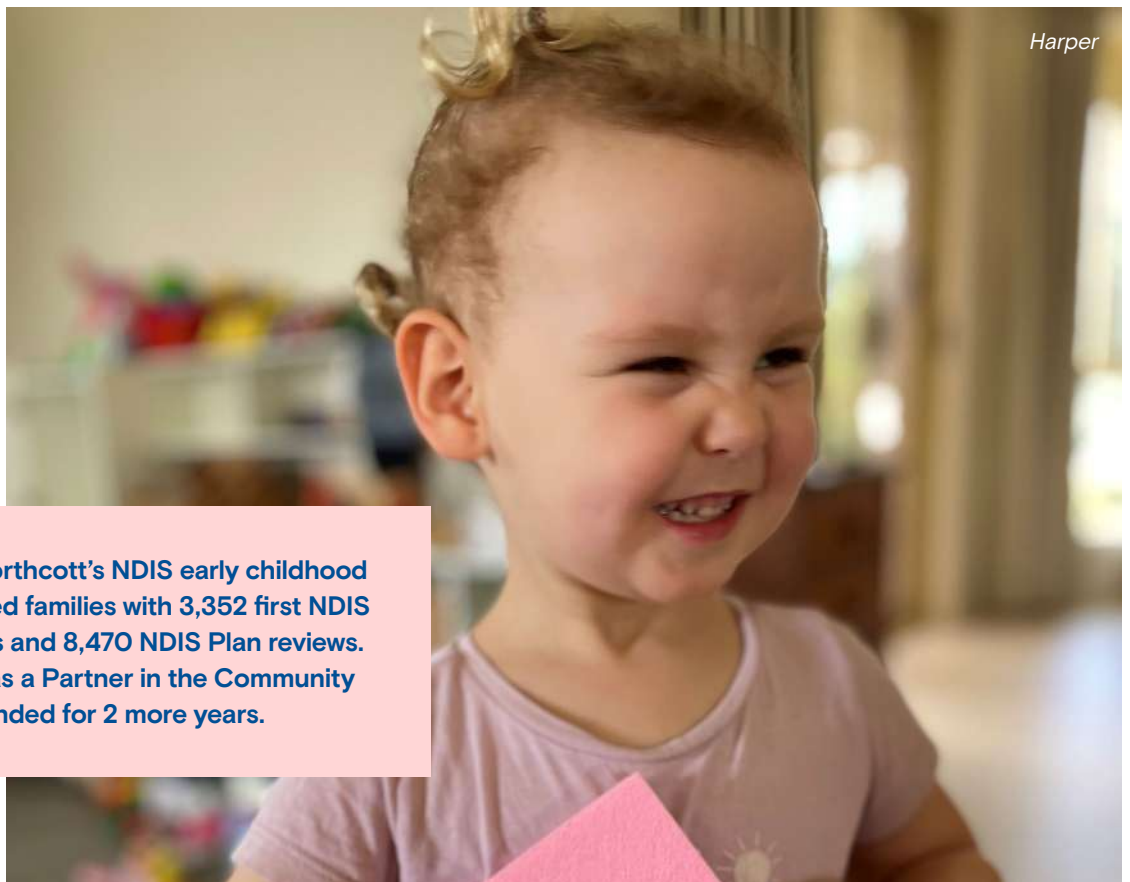
Accessing the right support

Nadine from Northcott is proud to have been able to assist Harper and her family get the support they need.

"Since the NDIS has afforded the family the chance to have therapy assistance and a multidisciplinary team, Harper has thrived. It is truly amazing how well she has developed," says Nadine.

"Harper has a long road to go but with the help of the NDIS, I'm sure she will continue to develop and grow," says Harper's mum.

"Thanks, Nadine, for always helping and listening to everything that Harper needs."



In 2021-22, Northcott's NDIS early childhood team supported families with 3,352 first NDIS Plan approvals and 8,470 NDIS Plan reviews. Our contract as a Partner in the Community has been extended for 2 more years.

Learning more than words

Participating in the *More Than Words* speech therapy program gave Sapana new strategies for communicating with her son, Aahan.



Aahan

Sapana's 7-year-old son Aahan was diagnosed with level 3 autism when he was almost 3 years old. Although he has a good level of understanding, Aahan doesn't use speech to communicate. He has accessed one-on-one speech pathology services with Northcott for around 12 months using NDIS funding.

Sapana was keen to participate in *More Than Words*, a training program for parents of children with autism, as a way to gain new skills for Aahan.

"I thought it might help me to use new strategies with Aahan and improve how I communicate with him in daily life."

The experience, she says, was nothing but positive.

"Before, I felt like I was walking on the road without direction. Now I know the direction towards our goals. The course helped me to have more patience and know how to deal with my kids in so many ways."

What is *More Than Words*

More Than Words is an evidence-based speech pathology program developed by The Hanen Centre. It is delivered by Northcott speech pathologists who have received specialised training and certification from The Hanen Centre.

The training focuses on developing the skills of parents of children with autism or social communication difficulties, teaching them communication and interaction strategies that can be used in the home and everyday routines and activities with their child.

Sapana and Aahan



The program includes small group sessions and individual consultations. Via video recordings, participants are also observed interacting with their child.

Positive outcomes for all

Sapana has noticed some big changes in Aahan, as a result of using strategies she learnt during the program.

“The most important thing I learnt was waiting and how to be patient. Because of that, I think Aahan is now able to go to the toilet. I waited and I didn’t force him. This is a very big thing. We are really proud of him,” she says.

“We are also interacting more with him. Nowadays Aahan doesn’t stay alone in his room; he comes to be with us and tries to play with his younger brother. When our relatives come to the home, he likes to be involved with them and play with them. He is more social now.”

Sapana also says she benefitted from hearing from the other parents.

“I liked being with the other parents. We learnt so many things from each other through the online classes. I found it very effective.”

Thank you to the Profield Foundation

Northcott was able to offer the *More Than Words* program to Sapana and other parents at no cost, thanks to funding from the Profield Foundation. This meant parents didn’t have to pay out-of-pocket for the training – or use a portion of their child’s NDIS therapy funding.

“Families with limited NDIS funding could participate without it impacting on access to other therapies, such as one-on-one occupational therapy or speech pathology sessions or other speech pathology goals such as communication device trials,” explains Sarah Ruming, a Hanen accredited Northcott Speech Pathologist and one of the facilitators.

“We find families are more willing to try an intensive program like *More Than Words* if it doesn’t impact their other therapy funding. For some, there is a perceived ‘risk’ in committing to a short program that takes a large portion of their funding, at the expense of other therapies, or that they are not sure will ‘work’ for them and their child.”

Families accessing Northcott Speech Pathology services were able to participate via a telepractice format, which allowed our Hanen-accredited therapists to reach more families.

Northcott is grateful to the Profield Foundation for their ongoing support. Their funding ensures more families are benefitting from vital therapy programs, such as *More Than Words*, which complement tailored one-on-one therapy.

Getting young people work-ready!

With the help of Citi Foundation, we're creating more work experience placements and job pathways for young people with disability.

Using a grant from Citi Foundation, we have employed a community engagement officer whose role is to build connections with businesses and develop work experience placements and paid employment opportunities for our Vocational Skills participants aged 17-24 years. As Northcott Community Engagement Officer, Josh Debono is also identifying sectors impacted by skills and labour shortages where there is the potential for people with disability to fill employment gaps.

Denny



Oscar



“The pandemic put a complete hold on work experience and paid employment opportunities for recent school leavers coming to Northcott for job support. Before that, many organisations were hesitant to take on people with disability because of a lack of understanding about their capabilities,” Josh says.

Through conversations with businesses as well as an industry roundtable meeting, Josh is raising awareness about the abilities of young people with disability – and creating real opportunities for work experience placements.

“I talk about the individual, their capabilities and the programs we have in place to build their job-ready skills and get them prepared for independence and moving into paid employment. With increased knowledge, employers are becoming more open to the idea of taking on a young person with disability for work experience. There are also a lot of opportunities showing real promise of paid employment to follow,” he explains.

Bunnings work experience program

In June, 65 participants from 7 Northcott sites across Greater Sydney kicked off a new work experience program at Bunnings.

“Bunnings hasn’t provided work experience placements for people with disability in the past. I sent them information about our programs and what we are aiming to achieve, and they said they were keen to get on board,” Josh says. “We worked together on a program and now we’ve built an ongoing relationship with them.”

The participants are experiencing every department of Bunnings from the warehouse to working on the retail floor. Each participant is paired with a buddy who assists them. In their final weeks, they can choose an area of their interest in which to finish their work experience placement.

“So far it’s gone really well. Our customers get a shirt and apron, learn skills and they feel part of the team,” Josh says.

“I’m proud to be playing my part in building connections and new work experience opportunities for our participants. This is a great way to support them to progress their skills, while trialing different types of industries and occupations. They are so excited to be doing work experience and you can see their confidence is growing. They are proud of themselves.”

What the participants think

Denny:

“I really like working in the tools section and helping customers and putting stock on the shelf. I also like talking with the people who work there.”

Oscar:

“I worked in the tool section and I enjoyed making it neat and tidy. I also enjoyed working in the paint section where I got to clean up a section. I enjoy making sure the prices are correct and each section I am in is neat and tidy.”

Northcott is grateful to Citi Foundation for funding this project through its global Pathways to Progress program supporting youth employment initiatives.

Outcomes



1 industry roundtable with 6 businesses attending



Initial discussions with 4 organisations about work experience and paid employment opportunities



24 participants completed or undertaking training in Responsible Service of Alcohol



Bunnings work experience program launched with 65 participants from 7 Northcott sites

An amazing journey of progress

With consistent, multidisciplinary therapeutic support from Northcott, Gracie's communication and motor skills have improved, giving her more independence than ever before.



Northcott Speech Pathologist, Kat and Gracie

Gracie is a happy 21-year-old who accesses Therapy services and participates in Everyday Life Skills at Northcott Seven Hills. She has Down Syndrome, intellectual disability and uses limited speech to communicate.

When Gracie came to Northcott, she wouldn't do many things by herself. She tended to follow others and wait for things to be done for her. Her communication skills were limited and she needed assistance with self-care, including personal care, dressing and grooming. Her fine and gross motor skills were limited and she struggled to walk and balance safely.

Fast track to 2022. With a dedicated team of support workers and therapists working together to develop her skills and strength, Gracie is doing more and more things for herself.

"Gracie is such a great example of progress. She has shown us that her potential was so much higher than anyone would have dreamed for her," say Kat, her Northcott Speech Pathologist.

Northcott's support

Gracie has accessed occupational therapy and speech pathology services from Northcott for several years, working on her communication and how she expresses herself, self-care tasks and mobility skills. Her funding has also allowed her to see an allied health assistant who continues her therapy plan supervised by her therapists. Gracie's support workers also continue therapy activities with her during the Everyday Life Skills service.

This consistent and frequent support is a key reason Gracie's skills have developed so rapidly, say her therapy team. Additionally, Gracie has a real drive to improve and be rewarded.

"When she has success, that's a driver for Gracie. The more she does, the better she gets, and the more she wants to do. A small taste of independence is enough to make her want to strive for more," explains Donna, her Occupational Therapist.

During the COVID lockdown in 2021, Gracie continued to attend our Seven Hills centre-based Life Skills service, where she was able to access one-on-one support. With her support worker, Gracie practiced her therapy activities, re-enforcing her skills and making progress.

Gracie's progress

Gracie's skills in all areas have grown significantly. Her team is immensely proud of how far she has come.

"Gracie has achieved lot. The one-on-one support definitely made a difference. She has improved in her communication, in her personal care, her social skills, and in her learning. There are so many improvements that she can be proud of," says Kristen, Northcott Support Worker.

"Initially, Gracie wasn't able to do certain fine motor activities that required some dexterity such as twisting and turning knobs, nuts and bolts. Now we've reached a stage where she's able to hold a writing tool really well and do fine motor activities such as zipping up and closing a resealable bag," says Renee, a Northcott Allied Health Assistant.



Kat, Donna and Renne, Gracie's Northcott Therapy team

Gracie's communication has also flourished, explains Kat, who, as her speech pathologist, introduced a signing environment for Gracie and her support network.

"When I first started working with her, Gracie's communication wasn't particularly present. She wasn't really intentional with her communication. The support workers had to do a lot of interpretation with her and they weren't always sure what she meant.

"Now, after Key Word Sign has been taught to all the support workers around her and she has realised that not only do they understand what she is saying, she understands what they are saying, it has been a huge change," Kat says.

Donna, Gracie's Northcott Occupational Therapist, has led improvements in Gracie's mobility, giving her the ability to now walk wherever she wants to go.

"Gracie's trajectory has just been up and up. One of the goals Gracie's mum has is to see Gracie living independently in supported accommodation. When I first saw that goal, I didn't think it would be possible. Now, I can see that happening in a couple of years because Gracie is improving in all of her skills. I can see that it's now an achievable goal," says Donna.



Learn more about Gracie's story in this video!

Northcott Therapists work with customers in their homes, in the community, in schools and at Northcott offices and other services.

Building a future full of potential

Tailored vocational skills support and a meaningful work experience opportunity has given Sean confidence, new skills and a passion for learning.



When Sean joined Northcott Taree's School Leavers Employment Service (SLES) in January 2020, his mother was worried about him. Sean was becoming more defiant, spending hours isolated at home, and rarely socialising with his peers.

Northcott Support Worker, Chad remembers that Sean would object to almost every task he was asked to do, keep to himself in group activities and disagree with his peers.

Two and a half years later, with Northcott's support, Sean is more confident and has developed skills and a work ethic that is preparing him for the workforce.

What Northcott did

After Sean started accessing Northcott's Vocational Skills service, our support workers noticed activities like resume writing and job seeking skills weren't resonating with him. Using a person-centred approach, the team adapted Sean's program, providing one-on-one vocational skills support in his home and matching him with support workers, like Chad, who he could build rapport with.

"I started to make horse reins with Sean. He was able to earn money by selling them. That gave him a feeling of self-worth, but also value to the work we were doing with him. He realised we were trying to help him," Chad explains.

"We started to do a lot more work in his home. We would mow the lawn, clean up the house and build that work ethic in Sean."

Chad discovered Sean responded well to camaraderie, preferring the support workers to work alongside him rather than tell him what or how to do things.

Slowly Sean gained trust and confidence. He started to form healthy relationships with both his peers and Northcott staff. He began to play a more active role in activities, showing initiative and doing tasks without being prompted.



**“I’m different now.
I feel a little bit
more confident.”**

(Left) Sean and Northcott Support Worker, Chad.

(Below) Ben, owner of Protec Mechanical Repairs, with Sean



Sean’s work experience

After noticing Sean had an interest in repairing things, Chad approached a local Taree mechanic about work experience opportunities. Ben, owner of Protec Mechanical Repairs, was more than happy to give Sean a go. Since the end of 2021, Sean has been spending one day a week in his workshop.

“I clean different parts of cars, empty the bins and sweep. I enjoy learning about how to do new things,” Sean says.

“Ben and his team are busy but they are nice and helpful. My favourite thing is cleaning the parts.”

Ben says he has seen a lot of growth in Sean over his time in the workshop.

“When he first turned up, he was very shy and wouldn’t interact with most of our staff. Over the last couple of months, he’s grown heaps and is getting more confident. He knows all the tasks he needs to do and can do them without instruction.

“I think Sean can be proud of his self-confidence and the additional skills that he’s picked up.”

Sean’s growth

Chad is also proud of Sean’s transformation.

“Sean has gained so much confidence. He is much better at talking to people, and much more caring towards other people. You don’t have to prompt him on how to do things once he’s been taught.

“I feel that Sean is really ready to join the workforce now. He has brought a lot of self-satisfaction into my job.”

Sean also recognises changes in himself: “I’m different now. I feel a little bit more confident. I enjoy not being stuck at home all day. I’m proud to leave the house more often, even when it’s not a day I go to Northcott.”



Learn more about Sean’s progress in this video!



Northcott colleagues, Aaron and Suzie

A positive career path

“It’s a role where there are a lot of ups and downs, but that means when you get those little wins, they feel even more special.”

- Aaron, Northcott Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner

An innovative solution to a staffing shortage issue provided Northcott employee, Aaron with the chance to develop his career. It’s also enabling Northcott to reach more people with our Positive Behaviour Support service.

Aaron is one of Northcott’s eight new behaviour support practitioners, all of whom have been trained by their peers through our in-house pilot trainee program. Aaron started as a support worker in one of Northcott’s supported living homes in 2020. With vast experience in the disability sector, Aaron was looking for a new direction to take his career.

“I felt my skills were at a level where I could assist more, but I didn’t want to return to managing a disability home,” he explains.

When he heard about the opportunity for Northcott support workers to train to become positive behaviour support practitioners, the timing couldn’t have been better.

About the traineeship

In February 2021, Aaron and his fellow trainees headed back to the classroom, studying full-time at Northcott to gain their new qualification. The program, which was developed by an internal facilitator and senior members of Northcott's Behaviour Support team, included interactive workshops, online learning, observation sessions, mentoring and self-directed learning.

Aligned with the NDIS Commission's capability framework, all aspects of behaviour support were covered, from restrictive practices, policies and procedures through to plan writing and observation skills. Each trainee was also paired with a senior practitioner to observe and work alongside.

"Being in a group and working collaboratively assisted me immensely. Listening to each other's experiences and being mentored and guided along the way gave me skills and knowledge to take into the complex role.

"The training involved going into homes to observe residents, ask support staff questions and review behaviour support plans. There were also opportunities to observe occupational therapists, speech pathologists and staff working in Northcott's vocational and life skills services," Aaron explains.

As the year progressed, the trainees began to take a more hands-on role, assisting experienced practitioners with their caseload and putting their new skills and knowledge into practice.

By mid-year, Aaron was assessed to be "provisionally suitable" to deliver services as a NDIS approved behaviour practitioner and ready to begin his new role!

On the job

"I'm now supporting six residents from our homes and two younger community-based participants, where I am working with teachers and parents," Aaron says.

One of the young people Aaron is supporting has been challenging, but equally rewarding.

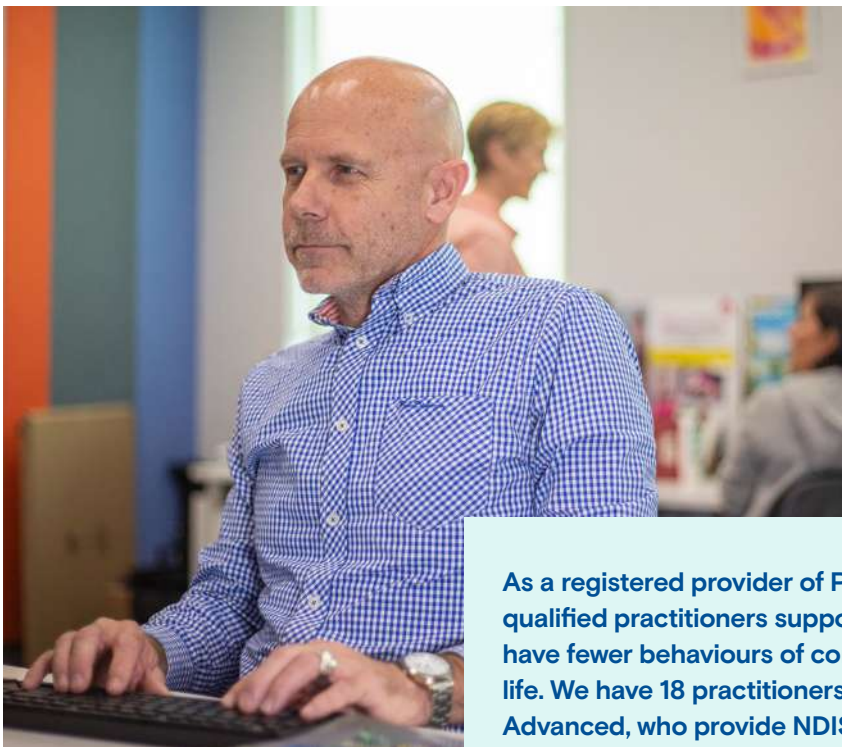
"This teenager has ADHD, mild intellectual disability and presents with a few common behaviours of concern which represent his diagnosis, and are detrimental to his physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Emotional regulation skills and improving his speech and gross motor skills so he can participate in social activities and have the confidence to build and establish peer relationships, have been at the forefront of my work with him," Aaron says.

"Initially, with a few obstacles, it was challenging, but we've got a really good relationship now. Although it's been a slow burn, I've seen progress," Aaron explains.

Having been in the role for some time Aaron has reflected on the career change.

"I'm getting a lot of satisfaction. I think I've got a lot to offer and I enjoy helping and supporting people. There is so much emphasis on behaviours within the disability sector and often the people we support are labelled negatively due to this. I get a great sense of achievement in being an integral part of the process moving forward to eradicate this stigma.

"When you see those little sparkles in a person's eyes, a smile, a verbal greeting, or a gesture to a picture on their communication board, it's really satisfying."



Aaron

As a registered provider of Positive Behaviour Support, our qualified practitioners support children and adults with disability to have fewer behaviours of concern and live an improved quality of life. We have 18 practitioners, ranging from Core to Proficient and Advanced, who provide NDIS funded supports to approximately 240 people with disability. We also provide internal supports to other Northcott teams, such as capacity building and vacancy management supports.

A house to call home

We supported four residents with varied and complex needs to move into our new Oran Park home where they are enjoying an improved quality of life.



Watch the video to find out more about our Oran Park house!



Before Vicky moved into a Northcott disability home, she was living in an aged care facility for a long time following a stroke. Although she was looked after, Vicky had limited supports for her complex needs and rarely would get out in the community. Thanks to the opportunity to move into disability housing with Northcott, Vicky is now supported to do things she loves, like shopping, while also having control over other aspects of her life.

The home

Northcott's Oran Park home was built by SDA provider, DPN Casa Capace and opened in 2020. The home is specifically designed for people with severe functional impairment or highly complex support needs, with automated doors, blinds and benches. Using Supported Independent Living (SIL) funding, residents have 24/7 support from Northcott to assist them in all aspects of their lives, from daily living tasks to administering medication, travelling to appointments or getting out in the community.

"We help our residents to have some type of independence and control in what happens in their lives," says Alana, Service Coordinator at Oran Park.

Supporting the move

Vicky and her housemates were all living in different circumstances before joining Northcott. Some had been living in nursing homes, while another had experienced long term hospitalisation due to the lack of suitable accommodation.

Moving the residents into Northcott's Oran Park home was an enormous task involving many Northcott teams, external organisations, the residents' families and the NDIS, explains Service Manager, Ravi.

"Northcott went above and beyond to support the customers. Our Vacancy Management and Housing teams worked together to achieve the best outcomes.

"Funding was an important part of the transition and the residents' applications were declined a few times as we were unable to obtain the required documents from the hospital or aged care providers involved. Finally we submitted the documentation to the NDIS and were able to secure the SDA and SIL funding which made it possible for these residents to move into Oran Park," Ravi says.

Once the funding was in place, Northcott prepared the house for each resident.

"We made sure the right supports were available and equipment arrived on time so that when the residents came they would have a positive experience."

Support staff were also trained in the specific support requirements of the residents, who have a range of disabilities and complex support needs.

"It was challenging and a lot of work...but we are so happy to have them here now," Ravi says.

Positive outcomes for all

"Our residents seem to be very happy. They are receiving support as per their choice. They are in control and making choices. They are controlling how they want to live in this house.

"They feel that this is their home. They have an attachment to this house and are very comfortable living here," explains Ravi.

Service Coordinator, Alana is particularly proud to have supported the residents to have

more opportunities for community access. One resident, who hadn't left her bedroom in the nursing home, was very anxious when she first moved into Oran Park. With support and encouragement to sit outside, then go for walks around the local streets, she slowly built up her confidence to regularly get out in the community. Another resident was also very reluctant to leave the house. With support and prompting from Northcott staff, this resident is now happy to go shopping and regularly attend mass at a local church.

"To see the residents able to do something for themselves is wonderful. My drive for coming to work each day is to help our customers reach their goals. I'm passionate about helping them maintain a quality of life," Alana says.

Northcott manages 123 disability homes and has 9 more being built in the coming year.



Resident Vicky with Northcott Support Worker, Sneha

Improving Kyle's quality of life

After years of collisions in her wheelchair and frustrating repair waiting periods, Kyle is enjoying greater independence thanks to a custom-designed wheelchair joystick.



Watch the video
and see Kyle's joy!

Northcott resident, Kyle loves her independence, but for several years she has had difficulties getting around in her wheelchair. Due to her disability, Kyle has uncontrollable tremors that cause her to lose control of her chair, often colliding with furniture and people in her path, injuring herself and others, as well as damaging her chair. Her customised wheelchair is constantly in need of repair, meaning she has to use alternative aids, including manual wheelchairs or power chairs not suitable for her needs.



Kyle



Aaron, Sam, Michael and Kyle

“For Kyle to be out of her chair causes her to be upset. She can get frustrated, and it limits her access to the community,” explains Aaron, the Service Coordinator in the Northcott home where Kyle lives.

“I’d rather be able to do things but if they take [my chair] away I’m stuck,” says Kyle.

With many unsuccessful attempts at improving the situation, Aaron turned to Northcott Innovation (NI), a subsidiary of Northcott that uses human-centred design to find solutions for the challenges faced by people with disability.

The solution

Aiming to give Kyle a higher quality of life by enabling her to drive her chair more safely and independently, NI identified that Kyle needed a different way to control her wheelchair. The team reached out to UTS Rapido, who were able to bring their engineering and design-thinking skills to the project.

With NI coordinating involvement from Kyle, her support staff and therapists, the Rapido team was able to observe Kyle and understand the issue. They developed several concepts, before settling on a low-tech magnetic toggle solution. The team then measured the power of Kyle’s tremors and matched it to various magnetic variations, testing prototypes internally along the way.

“We’ve developed a joystick, which intentionally comes apart when it’s overloaded,” explains Dr Michael Behrens, Principal Delivery Manager at the UTS Rapido.

“When you push the joystick harder than you’re supposed to, it breaks away and then the chair comes to rest. When everything’s settled down, you can clip it back on again.”

After hours of testing and countless prototypes, (plus many months of COVID-19 lockdowns), Michael delivered a 3D printed solution to Kyle in June.

After a few false starts, Kyle quickly worked out how to control the joystick, realising it intentionally would come apart, but is easily reattached. She was soon zipping around her home independently.

What the team thought

“I’ve known Kyle a long, long time and through ups and downs. I know this issue with the wheelchair constantly gets her frustrated and quite upset. To see something new that will give her the opportunity to go out and spend more time outside and do the things that she wants to do almost brought me to tears.” – Aaron, Service Coordinator

“It was amazing. I’m so pleased that the solution worked for Kyle. I think that we’ve got a solution that will mean Kyle can be more independent in the weeks, months, years ahead. She can get back out in the community, get to the club, which is one of her favourite places to go, and live a great life.” – Samantha Frain, Executive Director, NI

“It’s always great when we see a solution come together, but this time I got a great sense of satisfaction because of the vast benefit that it can have for Kyle and her quality of life.” – Dr Behrens

This project was made possible thanks to a Social Impact Grant from the UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, an in-kind contribution from Northcott Innovation and donations from Northcott donors.

Finding a rewarding role

“Brave is the Northcott value that means the most to me. I try to avoid conflict, but being brave for our participants is something that’s really easy.”

Rachel Ralph, Support Worker

Rachel started at Northcott in Ballina around six years ago, moving from hardware retail to disability support work to fulfil her desire to help other people.

With no prior experience working in the sector, or close relationships with people with disability, the switch was daunting.

“I remember feeling like a deer in headlights in my first couple weeks. I thought, ‘I can’t do this. I don’t know how to do this. This is so overwhelming,’” she recalls. Now Rachel can’t imagine doing anything else.

“I love it. I love that I get to work with people who are so genuine.”

Rachel



Watch this video to learn more about Rachel’s Northcott story.

Rachel's role

Rachel is a support worker, primarily in Ballina's centre based Everyday Life Skills service, supporting participants to meet their goals, take part in activities and learn new skills.

"I'm happy to assist the people we support achieve their goals, be their best, or do whatever is needed to get them through the day. Whether that's supporting them with behaviours, personal care or just being the best person they are," Rachel says.

She is an instrumental member of the team, earning the trust and respect of both the participants and her fellow staff.

"Rachel is always thinking outside of the box and creates a safe space for our participants to share their dreams with her. She then makes those dreams small achievable steps. She is always thinking ahead and breaking down barriers that may be in the way of participants achieving their goals," says Kahli Milner, Service Manager in Ballina.

One of the things Rachel is proud to have achieved during her time at Northcott is to help form a customer committee at the Everyday Life Skills service.



After realising that one of the participants enjoyed organising events and activities, Rachel worked with him to establish the committee and encourage customer-led activities. Drawing on her experience as a Scout leader, Rachel and the participant developed a way to plan and create meaningful experiences for the group.

"Northcott and my coordinator backed me to do this and now we have a service where customers have input into their activities and what they do each day," she explains.

While being part of the customer committee was an amazing achievement, Rachel says she is most proud of the trust she builds with participants.

"I'm really proud when a participant needs personal care and they will only let me support them. When somebody at their most vulnerable trusts me enough to let me assist them that gives me the most pride in my day."

A passionate advocate

Standing up for what she believes has always been important to Rachel.

"I genuinely love to be able to advocate for the people we support. We have a customer who loves getting his nails done and getting a little blush. His family didn't want this, but Northcott backed me 100% to support him to do this because it was his choice.

"To work for a company that feels this way is so empowering to me. That's what I love about Northcott, our values and the people we support," Rachel says.

"Seeing how happy he is [with his painted nails] and knowing that I not only have the ability to support him, but also the backing of my company, that's what I love about my job.

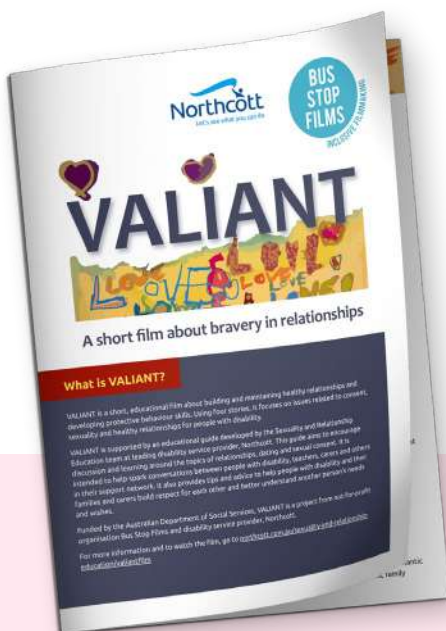
"I have seen so many goals achieved and been able to support people in so many ways – that's both amazing and rewarding."

Supporting positive relationships

Education around relationships, consent and sexual health for people with disability is difficult to find. Northcott proudly partnered with Bus Stop Films to create a film-based educational resource to fill this gap.

Inclusive film organisation Bus Stop Films identified the need for a way to support young people with disability to build safe and respectful relationships and understand consent. The idea came from observing young people with disability navigate new relationships and friendships while participating in their filmmaking classes.

As a leading provider working in this space, Northcott had also identified a lack of accessible resources for people with disability. The two organisations joined forces to develop and make *Valiant*, a short film and education guide that empowers young people with disability, while also addressing a gap in education.



Valiant was funded by an Australian Government Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant from the Australian Department of Social Services, awarded to Bus Stop Films.

Screenwriter Emily Dash, Northcott staff member, Alicia and film director, Claudia Bailey



The issue

Everyone has the right to intimacy and building healthy relationships, including people with disability. Yet access to education about sexual consent, relationships and dating is often limited – or worse, non-existent.

For young people with disability, the need to learn about relationships, sexuality and sexual health can be overlooked, ignored or even deemed unnecessary. In reality however, people with disability – and their parents, carers and support networks – often need extra support.

A learning tool

Through four heart-warming stories featuring characters who live with disability, *Valiant* explores the dynamics of relationships, tackling issues including breakups, sexual intimacy and first dates. Filmed by a crew comprising students with disability from Bus Stop Films, the characters in *Valiant* were played by people with disability.

Written by acclaimed screenwriter Emily Dash and directed by filmmaker Claudia Bailey, the content for *Valiant* was developed by 12 young adults with disability



who participated in workshops at Bus Stop Films, supported by Northcott. The workshops explored relationship issues faced by people with disability and the challenges they face in understanding and navigating dating and sexual relationships.

To complement the messages in the film, Northcott's Sexuality and Relationship Education team developed an educational guide to use for discussions and learning around dating and relationships after watching the film. The guide helps start conversations between people with disability, teachers, parents, carers and others in their support network. It also provides tips and advice to help people with disability and their families and carers build respect for each other, navigate relationships and better understand another person's needs and wishes.

An actor's viewpoint

Dina is one of the actors in *Valiant*, sharing the spotlight with her real-life husband, Ricky. In their scene, the couple explore the issue of sexual consent. Dina is proud to be a part of *Valiant*, saying, she believes the film will be useful for anyone who wants to be in a relationship and see what it's like.

"I hope *Valiant* helps people with disability understand how relationships work and realise it's not all about rushing into things. I'm pleased that [by being involved] I can help people learn about relationships and, in particular, consent," she said.



Watch **VALIANT** and download the educational guide!

Tracey Corbin-Matchett, CEO of Bus Stop Films, joined Northcott's Board in 2022. We are delighted she has joined the Northcott family!

Exploring inclusive governance

Northcott's subsidiary, Northcott Innovation (NI) is taking a deep dive into what it takes to truly include people with complex needs and intellectual disability in a steering committee.

In 2020, NI formed the Supported Living Lab (SL/lab) to find ways to improve the quality of life of people with disability living in supported homes. The lab's activities are guided by a unique steering committee.

"Everything that NI does is co-designed with people with disability, so we wanted to make sure our lab's steering committee – whose role is to direct and shape the work of the lab – is a place where people with disability, characteristic of those living in Northcott's disability housing, have a genuine seat at the table," explains Sam Frain, Executive Director of NI.

This meant adopting an inclusive governance approach. Residents with complex needs and intellectual disability (who represent the majority of Northcott's supported accommodation residents) were invited to join the committee, alongside staff from NI and Northcott's Housing and Operations teams.



Members of the steering committee

"The majority of the residents on our committee have a significant intellectual disability, some are non-verbal communicators, and some have complex support requirements. This differs from typical inclusive governance which tends to mean including people who have disability that doesn't impact their understanding and participation," Sam says.

"The style and format of our meetings, the minutes, the papers, the conversations, and the methodologies we use, are all matched to the support requirements of every individual on the committee. Additionally, our committee has a flat governance structure, so there's no hierarchy. Members with disability have the same committee roles and responsibilities as other members, including those who hold senior positions at Northcott," explains Sam.

Committee member Marisa and her support staff, Maree



Although there are challenges during every meeting, Sam believes NI and Northcott are gaining important insights about how to improve quality of life within disability housing. All committee members, including those without disability, are also gaining skills and getting new experiences.

“I’m proud the committee exists and that Northcott is committed to investing in it. You can genuinely see that all committee members love being a part of it.”

What the committee means to Marisa

Marisa lives in a Northcott home in Western Sydney. She has an intellectual disability and doesn’t use speech to communicate. She is supported to participate in the steering committee by Maree, her Northcott Nurse Unit Manager. Maree shares her observations here:

“Marisa gets so excited to go to the meetings. Any talk about it, she beams with excitement – she loves it. But she is getting more than that. She’s being listened to; she’s being heard.

“After a meeting, Marisa carries a booklet with the agenda and minutes. The support staff have conversations with her about what happened. She points to pictures and she wants to interact more.

“I feel that Northcott isn’t just ticking boxes to say we’re inclusive. To me, [the steering committee] feels like we are really doing it, which is exciting.”



Committee members Liz and Christian

a committee member) prior to the meeting. Liz supports them to understand about the committee, the upcoming meeting’s agenda and what they might like to contribute. Liz also de-briefs with each resident after each meeting. To ensure their full participation, some committee members attend with support workers who understand their personal communication methods.

The meetings are as informal and visual as possible. The group avoids using disability or organisational jargon and they break into smaller groups for discussions or activities. All members are encouraged to contribute through verbal communication, Key Word Sign and at times even drawing. With one member unable to meet in person due to their geographic location, at least one other member also attends every meeting via Zoom so that nobody feels excluded.

Inclusive practices

Due to its unique membership, the steering committee operates very differently to other committees.

To make the meetings as accessible and inclusive as possible, significant preparation takes place. The meeting agenda and minutes are developed, then simplified to include visual aids such as photos and icons.

Each committee member with disability meets with Liz, Northcott’s Inclusive Practice Manager (also

NI is sharing its experiences of inclusive governance in a research project conducted by Side by Side Advocacy.

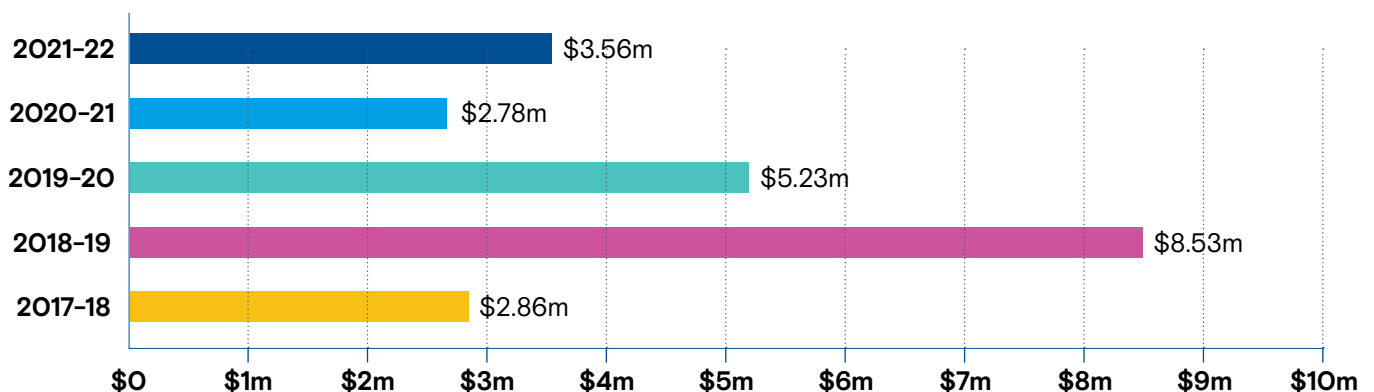
Financial summary

Five Year Financial Summary

	2021-22 (\$'000)	2020-21 (\$'000)	2019-20 (\$'000)	2018-19 (\$'000)	2017-18 (\$'000)
Revenue & Expenditure					
Operating Revenue**	216,942	216,864	206,335	192,436	145,920
Operating Expenditure	(223,642)	(212,370)	(201,193)	(188,465)	(145,862)
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	(6,700)	4,494	5,142	3,971	58
Financial Income/(Loss)	(5,045)	9,130	389	4,322	1,186
Capital Grants Income	-	-	-	-	-
Estates & Bequests	354	322	2,847	6,765	1,024
Other Non operating Income/(Loss)	393	627	184	243	214
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(10,998)	14,573	8,562	15,301	2,482
Assets & Liabilities					
Total Assets	123,662	133,930	150,021	129,098	106,967
Total Liabilities	52,167	51,436	82,101	69,739	62,911
Total Equity	71,495	82,494	67,920	59,359	44,056
Cash Flows					
Net Cash (used in)/ from Operating Activities	(6,729)	(15,012)	27,002	11,043	30,683
Net Cash (used in)/ from Investing Activities	5,283	14,610	(27,430)	(34,892)	(1,560)
Cash and Cash equivalents at 30 June	8,024	9,470	9,872	10,300	34,149
Ratios					
Current Assets/Current Liabilities	1.93:1	2.25:1	1.56:1	1.51:1	1.27:1
Total Cost of Services/Total Expenditure	88%	88%	91%	88%	89%

**Operating revenue excludes Revenue from Capital Grant income

Total Fundraising Revenue (including bequests) (\$)



Total fundraising revenue shows all funds (cash) received within the year.

97%

of our total
income comes
from Government
funding (includes
capital grants)

92%

of our total
income is spent on
delivering services

See www.northcott.com.au for the full Financial Report 2021-22

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Mr Michael Briggs

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2/3/2022)

Mr James Christian
(resigned 24/2/2022)

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Ms Liz Forsyth

Mr Mathew Franklin

Mr Jeyan Jeevaratnam

Mr Andrew Mansour
(1/12/2021-10/9/2022)

Ms Debra Richards

Ms Jodi Swinburne

(resigned 5/10/2021)

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Mr Chris Willcocks

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Mrs Lisa Chung

Mrs Michelle Laforest

Ms Anne Sullivan

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Associate Member

Mr Rod Smith

Northcott acknowledges the support of members who passed away in 2021-22.

**Board Member*

Acknowledgements

Northcott is grateful to receive donations, financial assistance, sponsorships, in-kind and pro bono gifts, support and advocacy from our members, other organisations, individuals and communities. This support enables Northcott to provide the services and supports children and adults with disability need to achieve their goals. While we cannot acknowledge all contributions here, we greatly appreciate all the support we receive.

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Wenty Leagues Club

West Pennant Hills Sports Club

West Tamworth Leagues Club

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Mrs Yvonne Mavis Byrne

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Allan Archibald Rowling

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Mr Geoffrey Burfoot

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