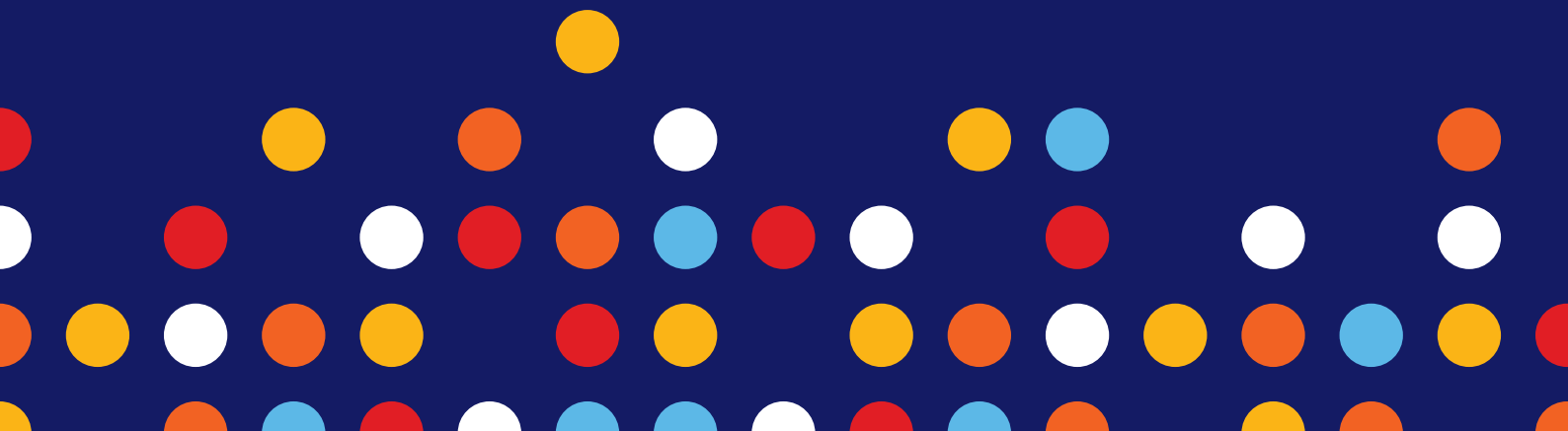




Annual Report

2020-2021





Acknowledgement to Country

IDEAS acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders past, present, and emerging.



IDEAS is driven by people
with disability for people
with disability.

Our vision is a world where
people with disability live full
independent lives of their own
choosing. Our tool is information.

We know information
powers better decisions,
to make life easier.

Good information is powerful.

Good information makes
choices real.



Corporate Statement

IDEAS – Information on Disability Education & Awareness Services

Our Vision **What we seek**

People with disability live full lives of their own choosing

Our Mission **What we do**

IDEAS purpose is to provide access to information and opportunities for people with disability, their supporters, and the community to reach their full potential

Our Values **What we believe in**

We believe the following are intrinsic to the organisation and everything we do:

- **Respect**
- **Inclusion**
- **Ethical Behaviour**
- **Innovation**
- **Independence**



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Chair's Report

The last year has been a tough one for everyone. While Australia may have been spared the high rates of disease and mortality seen elsewhere in the world, we have had to learn to live with harsh restrictions and social isolation that have seriously impacted the people that IDEAS has a long history of supporting. We are proud of the assistance we were able to give the disability communities through the pandemic by our continued operation of the National COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline until January through a grant from the federal Department of Social Services (DSS). With their long experience of providing accurate, up-to-date, and easy-to-understand information to people with disability, their carers and supporters, IDEAS' Information Officers were ideally suited to provide this service and we applaud them for their sterling effort.

This was in addition to their delivery of independent information on disability services, also funded by the DSS until 31st March 2021, through our multiple direct and broadcast communication channels. Together with the web content team, the information team also continued to fulfil IDEAS' core mission through the IDEAS website, which enjoyed high traffic from all over the country throughout the year.

In a new initiative this year, IDEAS delivered the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) component of the National Community Connectors Program in parts of regional NSW for the National Ethnic Disability Alliance. Again, relying on IDEAS' long-standing strengths in community outreach, a small, dedicated team successfully assisted CALD people with disabilities to better understand and engage with the NDIS. With an end to the funding, the program wound up at end of June 2021.

The PossABLE Advocacy team has also had to adapt to COVID-19 safe practices, which has proved a challenge, but one to which they have risen admirably. Notwithstanding the pandemic, an overwhelming number of referrals have related to the NDIS, and a passionate team worked hard throughout the year to gain better outcomes for their customers.

After a long process, IDEAS learned that we were unsuccessful in securing the tender to operate the Disability Gateway Service, which was hugely disappointing. As a result, from 27th January 2021, IDEAS stopped running the COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline. On the same date, IDEAS also removed public access to its database from the website, with a view to its relaunch on a subscription model next year. This is in line with the decision taken by the Board and senior management to develop fresh revenue

streams in light of the unsuccessful tender and other unsuccessful grant applications. These new revenue streams also include an exciting venture into an entirely new business area that leverages our existing strengths, expertise, and networks.

However, the end of funding has meant both restructuring and downsizing the organisation which has sadly led to the loss of valued staff, in particular Jenelle Becker whose passion and knowledge had helped to energise the organisation for over a decade. IDEAS' streamlined team has nevertheless retained the skills and capacity to fulfil IDEAS core mission – to provide useful, accurate disability-related information to assist people with disability to live better lives – through social media and the IDEAS eNews, while it also prepares to relaunch the database.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their support and commitment to IDEAS throughout the year, especially Wendy Bowles for her extraordinarily long service to the organisation as she steps down from the Board at the upcoming AGM. I would also like to commend senior management for their steady hand on the tiller and their eye on the horizon in turbulent seas. Diana Palmer, as ever, has been a stalwart in leading and championing IDEAS, and cannot be commended highly enough for her drive, vision, and passion for what the organisation does and stands for.



Martin Heng

Chair



Chief Executive Officer's Report

The year 2020-2021 saw the team at IDEAS demonstrate our value and expertise again, achieving key deliverables for funding bodies and turning our focus to new ventures and directions to carry us into the future.

IDEAS has a long heritage of providing information services and is very proud of the high-quality work we deliver to support people with disability with the information they need, to allow them to make informed decisions about their daily living.

From July 2020 to January 2021 saw IDEAS continue to manage the National COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline for the Federal Government through a grant from Department of Social Services. Our delivery of this service and government funding to deliver a National Information Service ceased on 27th January 2021. IDEAS was unsuccessful in our tender bid for the Disability Gateway. Funding from DSS ceased on 31st March 2021.

For the last quarter of the financial year IDEAS refocussed on the development of other business streams and realignment of service delivery, staffing levels and organisation structure. This saw the departure of several staff between March and June 2021. At the end of June, the team is smaller, committed and focussed on the future for IDEAS. We have retained key expertise in

executive management, database and knowledge management, individual support through information delivery, content development and technical skills for the digital environment.

Unfortunately, due to the changes in funding, IDEAS ceased operations of our National Toll-free telephone line, free availability of our renowned and comprehensive database and the publication of the Newsletter of IDEAS. We have retained the ability to disseminate information through the online environment using our social media channels and the IDEAS eNews. Subscription to, and circulation of the eNews has grown considerably in the last few months of the financial year.

IDEAS is a key provider of independent information services across Australia. Our staff have received accolades from far and wide over many years. Supporting our frontline team is a steadfast, capable, and experienced management team who have given their best to lead our team again this year in a challenging environment.



I am very proud to have had the honour to lead such an experienced cohort of people, loyal and committed to the philosophy of IDEAS over many years and am proud of every single person who has worked with us. I would like to thank each one of them for their commitment, passion, and loyalty. I would especially like to acknowledge and sincerely thank Jenelle Becker for her expertise, work, and commitment of over 11 years to the organisation. Lastly, thanks also to the Board for their commitment to the work we do and their continued support which keeps us focussed on the job at hand.



Diana Palmer

Chief Executive officer

Treasurer's Report

2021 was a year of continued quality independent service provision for IDEAS seeing us deliver \$3,926,645 worth of service to the community.

This is slightly up on the prior year but given the future funding situation, the focus of our organisation is sharply turning towards future funding sources and roles and continuing to support and fulfill our role in the aiding the disability community. Due to our future funding constraints, we have seen a significant turnover in senior staff, and I would like to thank all of them for their years of expertise and effort in supporting our disabled community as well as thank Diana and her team for the stellar effort they have put in to continue to provide services during the year. We note that the funding of the future remains uncertain but thank the NSW Government for their continuing support of IDEAS.

From a financial perspective we have recorded a net surplus of \$474,115. Once again, I would like to thank Andrew, Diana and the team that have had to make a series of very tough decisions to enable IDEAS to continue to support the disabled community moving forward.

On a monthly basis Andrew and Purpose Accounting have delivered timely and well summarised financial information all year to the Board which has enabled tough decisions to be confronted and informed discussions to take place. I once more would like to thank all of the wonderful people involved in the finance team for their service.

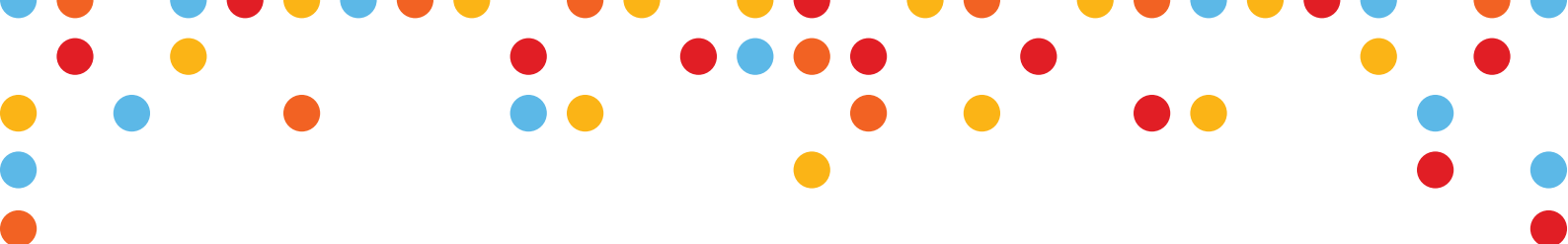
The total turnover for the year was consistent with the prior year. The State and Federal grants in the year were down 7% from the prior year and will be significantly lower in the 2021-22 financial year. The COVID-19 wage subsidy of \$682,400 at the start of the financial year contributed significantly towards the financial performance of IDEAS.

I note that the year saw the recognition of \$81,000 in deferred income and the deferral of \$86,500 of Grants in Advance (which are attributable to the next financial year).

I note that given the probability of redundancy payments being made in the 2022 Financial year, that we have recognised the entirety of all potential redundancy payments as a current liability at 30th June 2021.

IDEAS has reorganised its operations to enable the current assets and funding to enable the organisation to operate through the 2022 financial year as Andrew works to commence a potentially significant future funding source during this financial year.

IDEAS are now commencing registration for a direct service model in support of our core business to fund our operations and further work with the disabled community.



I think it is important to recognise the stellar work done to secure the funding that we have for this year and the work being done to finance our future operations.

In IDEAS it is the Treasurers role to have an overview of the systems that are used, monitor spending and be able to advise the board of our financial position, especially if new projects are to be undertaken as to their affordability and the recurrence or otherwise of our funding. The monitoring of these functions has been done primarily by Diana with Board support around the monthly review of IDEAS funding, budgeting and expense allocation being done efficiently and accurately.

All of our accounting is prepared on XERO, reviewed monthly against prior year figures and our budget (and the budget is updated during the course of the year to reflect changes in our operations).

We are audited at the end of every financial year and thank Steven Walker for his services in doing this.

The profit of \$474,115 is inconsistent with the prior years \$68,008, \$98,358, \$124,095, and \$98,413 (2020, 2019, 2018 and 2017) net results respectively. We note that the reduction in advertising and promotion, business costs and travel in a COVID affected business environment contributed to this increased net surplus.

IDEAS remains proud of the efficiency and effectiveness we continue to achieve in the delivery of our service providing strong value for money for the stakeholders in our service, particularly the disabled and their carers. Individuals, Families, Carers, and institutions continue to require these services and we hope that this is recognised by our funding bodies moving forward to ensure that our service remains properly funded on an extended (as against annualised) basis.

IDEAS net Equity position has improved during the financial year up from \$609,126 to \$1,080,361. Our net total asset position has increased by \$150,000 whilst the total liabilities have reduced by \$325,000.

I note going forward that we will continue to go through restructure of our operations and finance but note we have all liabilities (actual and potential) provided for (noting all employment liabilities are recognised and provided for). Further I have complete confidence that post our ongoing restructure that we will be a strong, viable provider of services to our disabled clients in the business streams that we will provide.

On a personal note, I congratulate Diana and her team on their mental strength, determination and resolve in the provision of all services of IDEAS. The board is supportive to all involved and remains focussed on IDEAS objectives and the work of the staff and friends of IDEAS. Further I would like to commend the Chair and the board on their stellar work over the year.

This is another strong financial result, but the ongoing funding from Government sources is significantly weaker in the future. Once more I would like to thank all of the wonderful people who have moved on during this year, particularly Jenelle and Angela who gave stellar service to IDEAS over a long period of time.

From the Boards perspective we are proud of the ongoing work being done by Diana and her team to enable a future provision of information for our community.



Chris Dumas

Treasurer



See [2020-2021 Audited Financial Statement here](https://bit.ly/2020-2021AuditedFinancialStatement)
<https://bit.ly/2020-2021AuditedFinancialStatement>

Board Members



Martin Heng Chair

Martin has served as Chair of the IDEAS Board for the last 4 years & was appointed to the Victorian Disability Advisory Council in 2019. He has over 25 years working in publishing & editing. Over 20 years with Lonely Planet, Martin was responsible in publishing many 'accessible travel' books, the most recent being the Accessible Travel Phrasebook. Martin is also a regular, invited speaker on accessible travel to many travel conferences within Australia and around the world. A road accident in 2010 left him a quadriplegic. Martin joined the IDEAS Board in May 2016.



Chris Dumas Treasurer

Chris has over 25 years of experience in accounting, auditing, and business development. He has been a Director of the Public Accounting Firm, Bentleys Newcastle since 1999. Chris specialises in providing business and tax advice to small and medium business clients focusing on tax structuring and analysing business performance. He has specialist technical knowledge in capital gains tax and tax effective business restructuring and is a key member of the Bentleys Business Service Technical Advisory Committee and the lead auditor for Bentleys Newcastle's involvement in NSW Workers Compensation Premium audit programme. Chris joined the IDEAS Board in November 2013.



Karen Peacock Vice Chair

Karen is a communicator and a disability activist, bringing much board experience to the IDEAS Board. Having worked in government and being a full-time Member and Senior Member of the former Social Security Appeals Tribunal for many years, Karen also holds degrees in Social Science and Law. A keen photographer, Karen is also an Arts Advisor for Accessible Arts. Karen joined the IDEAS Board in September 2018.



Andrew Bokor Board Member

Andrew's reason for being is to contribute to the disability community through his lived experience after being discharged from the Army, serving 18 years in the Royal Australian Engineers. Being involved in the wider community allows him to exercise a strong sense of ethical justice, making people aware of their entitlements and empowering them through information. Andrew has been an IDEAS Board Member since December 2016.



Wendy Bowles Board Member

Wendy is a Professor of Social Work and is the Acting Head of the School of Social Work and Arts at Charles Sturt University. With almost 40 years' experience in social work practice, research, and teaching with a focus on disability, ethics and sustainability, Wendy is committed to people with disabilities being informed citizens who actively participate to the level of their choosing. Wendy is a long time Board member and supporter of IDEAS having joined the IDEAS Board in November 2013.



Greg Auhl Board Member

Greg has significant experience within the field of education, having been a secondary teacher and leader before moving to the Higher Education sector. He is currently a Senior Lecturer within the Division of Learning and Teaching at Charles Sturt University, where he is Course Director for the University's Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. He is also currently working with the Faculty of Arts and Education as the Course Director for the Bachelor of Education (K-12) course. Greg is the primary carer for his adult daughter who has Down syndrome. He is active within a number of organisations within his community, both disability and non-disability focussed. Greg joined the IDEAS Board in December 2019.

Disability Information Services

From 1st September 2019 through until 31st March 2021, IDEAS was funded by the federal Department of Social Services (DSS) to support the delivery of accurate and independent information on disability services to the tune of \$3.591 million, with an additional \$57,152 provided during operation of the COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline.

2019-2020 saw IDEAS continue to deal with COVID-19, seriously tested IDEAS' capacity to maintain business as usual while responding to emerging community crises – an endeavour we met head-on with significant success.

Our funding was originally supposed to end in August 2020, but the onset of the pandemic resulted in our contract with DSS being extended until the end of March 2021 to operate the COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline starting in April 2020. IDEAS continued to offer information services through our many channels, both for our core disability information service and for the COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline.

IDEAS handled 15,387 enquiries through the contact centre across all channels: telephone calls, webchat, email, face-to-face, letters, National Relay Service (NRS), SMS, social media, telephone interpreter service, and through IDEAS' website. As can be seen in Diagram 1, IDEAS operated a truly national information service. The high proportion of enquiries from NSW, Victoria and Queensland directly reflect population density.

Diagram 1: Distribution of enquiries to IDEAS' contact centre



During the period staff numbers grew to support the growth of the Information Service, during the operation of the COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline.

Importantly, approximately 34% of enquiries were from a person with disability (PWD) themselves, while nearly 80% of enquiries were from a person with disability, their carer, family member or service provider (see Diagram 2).

Diagram 2: Who contacted us

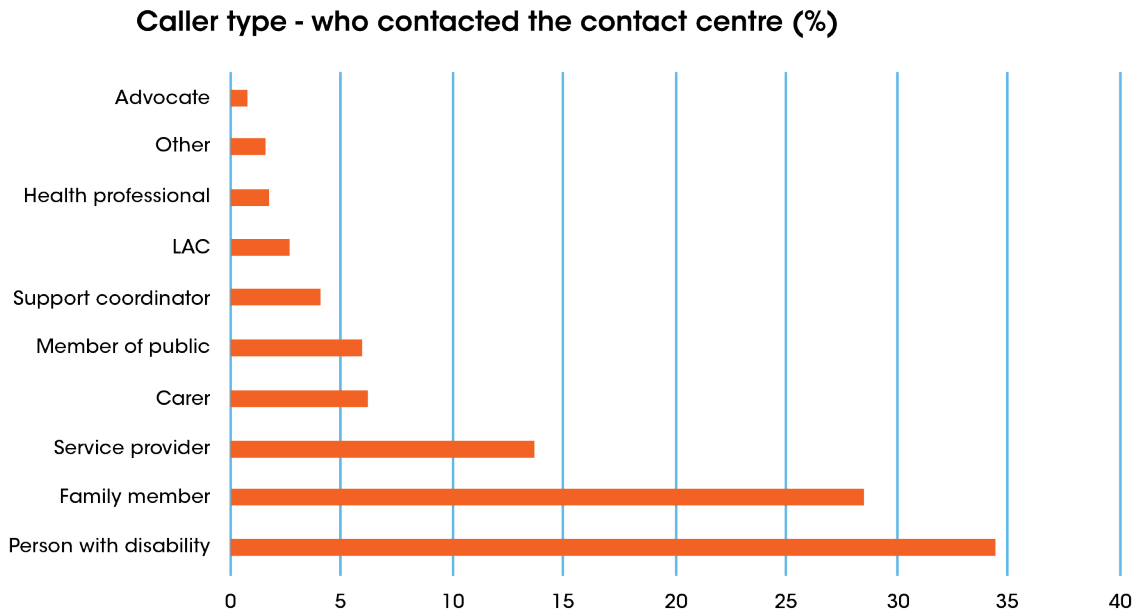
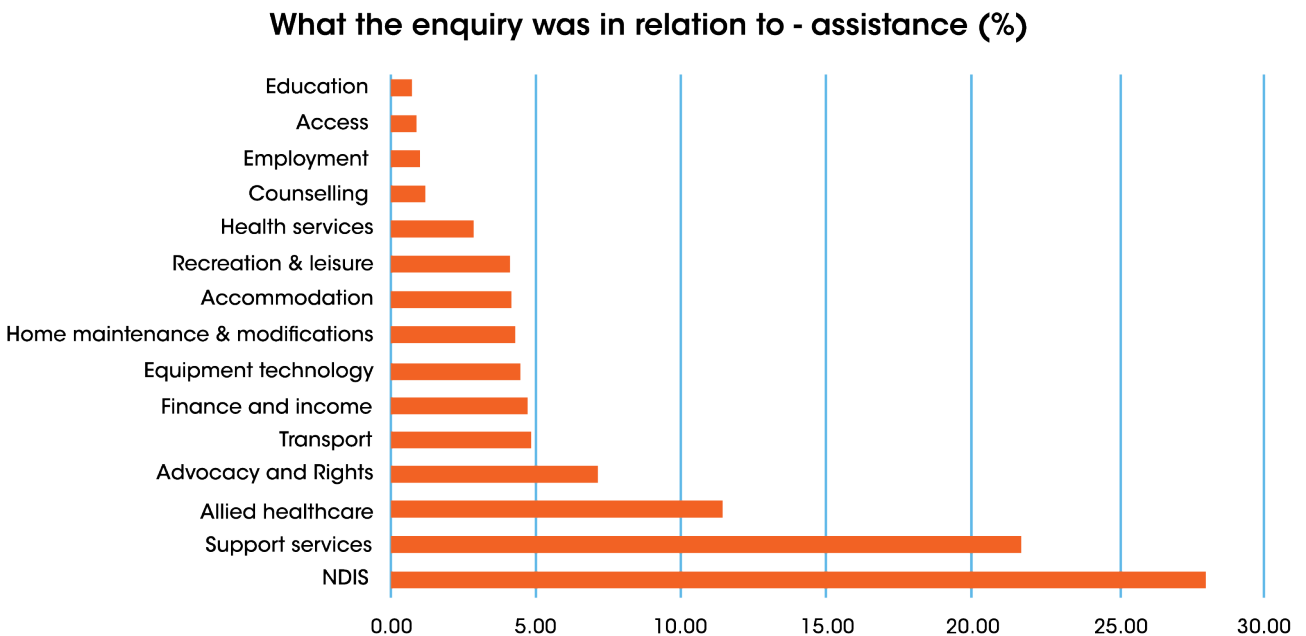
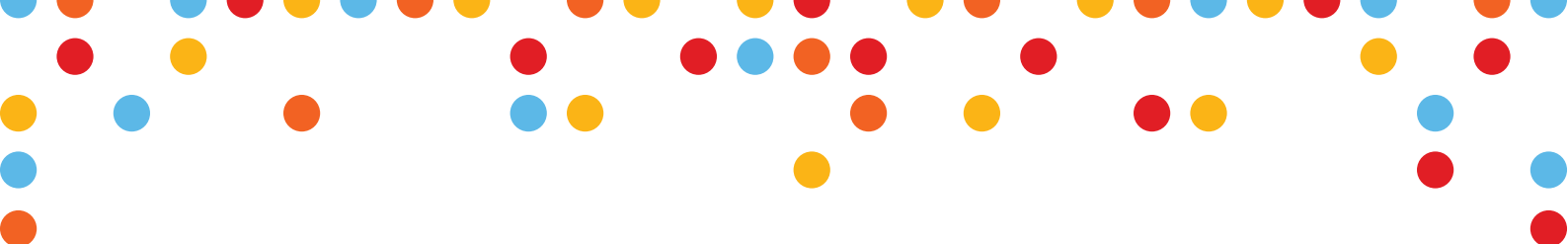


Diagram 3: What people contacted us about



The top five enquiries related to the NDIS, support services, allied healthcare, human rights, and transport (see Diagram 3). During the operation of the COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline, finance and income shot up the list from 10th in ranking to 6th.



Besides the contact centre we delivered information by other channels via website, database, blog, and posts, eNews and factsheets – as well as via our social media channels.

At the end of January 2021, IDEAS learned that we were not successful in securing the Disability Gateway Services tender. This meant, the COVID-19 Disability Information Helpline was transferred to the Disability Gateway Service and a new provider and IDEAS ceased operating an Information Line. IDEAS Board and senior management took the decision to develop other revenue streams with a strong emphasis on aspects of our business we could commercialise.

On 27th January, when we ceased operating the Infoline, IDEAS also removed public access to its database from the website and closed our toll-free telephone line. The temporary removal of the searchable function allowed

us to turn our attention to updating the database of more than 40,000 records of services and supports in preparation for a relaunch of the database using a subscription model in mid-2021. The diversion of resources to developing fresh revenue streams, however, meant we had to lose personnel from the contact centre. Meanwhile we continued to maintain data and produce online directories supporting our CHSP funding into the Riverina Murray.

Maintaining our commitment to delivering information, IDEAS moved from a hardcopy newsletter produced every two months, to delivering eNews weekly. Since January 2021, our subscriptions to eNews have grown from approximately 6000 to 13,000 subscriptions – a massive growth, which is testimony to people wanting good information from a trusted source.

IDEAS Online



**IDEAS does
information
so you can
do life.**

IDEAS website has been consistently in the frontline helping people with disability to make informed decisions by providing much valuable information at the right time.

IDEAS website has seen a sharp increase of about 321% users share in the last financial year. The page views have increased by 40 % from the last financial in spite of the challenges.

IDEAS website garnered more than 562,000 visitors and more than 1.4 million page views during the period. 91.4% of the users were "new visitors" with 8.6% returning visitors. Analysis illustrates a national audience not dissimilar to the contact centre enquiries, with a strong correlation between higher number of users and population centres.

Our COVID-19 blogs (several of them) have reached 170,000+ views mark. This shows our audience engagement and like towards our content. Social engagement has gone up overall and Facebook alone has gone up by 270% from the last financial year. IDEAS weekly eNews has seen a good reception amongst our audience and service providers.

Our increased social media activity has resulted in a dramatic increase in our followers. There has been a steady increase in our followers across our four social media channels of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Since September 2020, IDEAS published 4,000 posts/tweets with approximately 15,000 positive reactions and 7,500 shares/comments.

Community Engagement

National Community Connectors Program (NCCP)



Community Connectors

Support for multicultural people with disabilities

In mid-2020, the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) engaged IDEAS to deliver the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) component of the National Community Connectors Program (NCCP) in Campbelltown, Central Coast, Newcastle, and Wollongong for the 2020/21 financial year. The aim of this program was to provide active outreach to support CALD people with disabilities to understand and engage with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

By October IDEAS already had the program up and running, with five staff in place, including a team leader. From October 2020 until end June 2021 the Community Connectors:

1. Supported CALD people with disabilities living in the specified areas to engage with the NDIS

2. Increased community members' understanding and awareness of the NDIS
3. Broadened the understanding of the NCCP and soundly monitored and evaluated the program
4. Engaged with community members and program participants in a respectful and satisfactory way

Over the course of nine months, the IDEAS Community Connectors made over 2000 community engagements, with nearly 650 (or about 30%) being members of the community or people with disability, and a further 735 (or 33%) engagements made with Health, Cultural, or Service representatives.

In May 2021, IDEAS was informed that the NDIS would no longer fund the program and consequently the program wound up at the end of June 2021. We thank the Connectors Team Himadri Deka (Campbelltown), Keiko Clements (Central Coast), Julie Duncan and Ana Prada (Newcastle) and Deji Adiatu (Wollongong) for their work.

At the end of May 2021, we also farewelled Angela van den Berg our longstanding Community Engagement Manager who led the Community Connector team and engagement activities for many years. We thank Angela for her work in this space, which has given IDEAS an extensive reach across communities and the sector.



"We can't hear you; I think you're on mute. ... Maybe I'm on mute, hold on can you hear me now? ... Wait a minute, I just need to put the headset on ... OK that's better."

This is how most meetings at PossABLE Advocacy start these days. Providing advocacy to our customers virtually hasn't been easy, but like everyone we have adapted to this ultra-modern way of life. Despite the challenges, the advocacy team have been focused on ensuring people with a disability and mental health issues are treated fairly in all aspects of their life.

The swinging doors of state and federal ministers has caused uncertainty and unease in the sector, but the scrapping of NDIS independent assessments is a huge win. This will inevitably be replaced by another measure to create a "fairer" NDIS and we hope people with disabilities are consulted and entrenched in its planning and implementation.

Adding to the uncertainty, the 'Disability Advocacy Futures Program' has finally come to fruition. In short, funding for advocacy will go out for tender and services will bid to secure funding for three years to provide advocacy in designated areas. This will create some stability in the sector and hopefully persuade invaluable talent to stay in advocacy.

Referrals to PossABLE Advocacy have ebbed and flowed, with a total of 344 referrals over the year, the majority being issues regarding the NDIS. These referrals have assisted customers to access the Scheme after they have been rejected, or to have their NDIS plans reviewed due to inadequate funding. While our scope is much broader

than the NDIS, we have found the previously mentioned instability and the ever-changing complexity of the Scheme mean people with disabilities who can't be easily categorised have significant difficulties accessing ongoing support.

Now, we must talk about the 'C' word – COVID. I'll tell you a coronavirus joke now, but you'll have to wait two weeks to see if you got it. OK I'll stop now!

Quarantine and social distancing have taken a huge toll on our customers. People with disabilities generally have much less access to technology and limited computer skills, often compounded by written communication that is hampered by literacy levels. This has been the biggest challenge for the advocacy team: how do we provide outstanding support if we can't see people face-to-face?

The team have been flexible and savvy in how we gain understanding of and resolve an issue. Video calls, snail mail, and involving supporters and carers in issue resolution have ensured our person-centred approach wasn't compromised and our customers received the same level of support they have come to expect from PossABLE Advocacy.

I am immensely proud to be a part of IDEAS and the PossABLE team. I would like to give a huge shout out to the real stars of the show: Kylie Edwards, Karyn Mills, Lucy McGowan, Danni Phillips, Ben Gilholme and Himadri Deka.



It has been a busy year for eBility with the planning and creation of its new website which was finalised and launched to the public on the 8th of April 2021. Additionally, the first eBility eNews was sent out following the launch of the new website and continues to be sent out on a weekly basis, featuring helpful tips, articles, and recently listed classifieds.

The new site has received positive feedback from the community for the user-friendly navigation and simplified process of listing an advertisement. The first three months of operation on the updated site has shown

encouraging results with a significant increase in the level of site traffic recorded, including a 55.12% jump in users and a 171.63% increase in page views compared with the three months prior to the launch on the old site.

Ezy-Dun.

For all people with disability.

With the continuation of COVID-19 the hiring of Ezy-Dun has not eventuated due to lack of events.

COVID-19 arrived before the beginning of the financial year 20-21. At this time Ezy-Dun was an active part of the PLATFORM project working in partnership with ERA (Eastern Riverina Arts). With the project concluding in November 2020, Ezy-Dun was to attend the last 2 remaining festivals being held, the 'Temora Warbirds Festival' and 'ArtState' held in Wagga Wagga. Unfortunately, these festivals were ultimately cancelled.

IDEAS used the downtime due to COVID-19 as an opportunity to undertake some necessary acquisitions and maintenance on the unit.

- Ramps and railing custom storage bags for ease of storage was completed by Kotza Kanvas - Wagga Wagga.
- New 'wrap-around' signage - Artwork has been completed

Further additional work such as installation of a new air conditioner is still to be undertaken.

A successful VISY Grant through FRRR (Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal) was used to purchase a suitable vehicle to tow Ezy-Dun with additional towing accessories.

The hiring costs of Ezy-Dun, the delay of some of the acquisitions coupled with the massive impact of COVID-19 has delayed the use of Ezy-Dun by the community.

Feedback

Newsletter

“ Very informative Newsletter! Congratulations to all who take the time to ensure that the content is of such excellence - something for everyone to read and learn. I am so proud of how professional it is now compared to back in the 90's. Diana you certainly have a great team - thank you to all of you. Regards, Jenny

eBility

“ Your website made it much easier, and we had far more response through eBility than any other car sales website.

Information Officers

“ I was so relieved because I was getting nowhere. I'm just so relieved. You're the only one that seems to be on the ball.”

Website

“ Thank you so much for this amazing service.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you and let you know your organisation is rated very highly from our interactions. We initially met IDEAS at an Expo in 2017 and to date have always had positive interactions.

Thanks for providing this great service.

“ I have been involved in support groups for people with disability in the Hunter Region for many years and also sought information from IDEAS to assist the group. I cannot thank IDEAS enough for the contribution they have made in my life and the lives of so many others in the disability community.” – Barbara

“ When I phone for advice whoever takes the call is always downright welcoming and knowledgeable, making every effort to help. Never fail to pay attention unlike at times some others.” – Pearl

“ IDEAS has been offering information and support available down the years which is not available elsewhere as the 'disabled' model takes hold and slows down any aims and dreams a person with a disability might have to achieve for themselves and presses them into unwilling sheep mode.” – Pamela

“ Keep up the good work – your organisation is unique, unbiased, independent and very much needed.” - Glenda.

“ What an extraordinary organisation.” - Michael 2020

Supporters



ashurst

McCabes

Certification

IDEAS is certified against:

ISO 9001:2015 (Quality Management Systems)

and

NSDS (National Standards for Disability Services)
as a Disability Advocacy Organisation

IDEAS Contacts

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