



**ANNUAL REPORT
2020/2021**



Acknowledgments

DACSSA acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country. We pay our respect to their culture, customs and connection to land, sea and community, as well as Elders past & present.

We extend our continued thanks to Ochre Dawn Creative Industries for the featured artwork. The meeting place artwork represents DACSSA, surrounded by our five values. These values are the guiding principles behind everything we do: Integrity; Client focused; Progressive; Respect; and Courage. The multiple meeting places designed, reflect different people and communities, with journey lines between them – the patterning represents DACSSA working with them to improve their quality of life.



DACSSA celebrates the value of diversity. We are accepting, inclusive and respectful of all individuals and would like to thank all those who engaged with our service throughout the year.

We acknowledge and thank the Australian Government Department of Social Services for its ongoing funding, allowing DACSSA to provide independent advocacy services to people living with disability through the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP), Disability Royal Commission Support Services & NDIS Appeals.

Thank you also to the State Government of South Australia for its funding contributions to DACSSA during this year.

Purpose

DACSSA is a respectful, client-focussed organisation that provides free and independent individual and systemic advocacy for South Australians living with disabilities.

DACSSA seeks to build on the individual strengths of people with disability and enable community capacity building. We believe that every South Australian living with disability has the right to be heard.

DACSSA also works to champion the cause of people with disability through developing positive relationships and extensive, productive networks. We advocate for inclusion, equality, choice and social justice.

Values

Client Focussed



Our approach is person-centred, collaborative and strengths based.

Integrity



We build relationships of trust and are accountable for our actions.

Courage



We are confident to challenge the status quo and achieve change for people living with disability.

Respect



We pursue respectful and inclusive approaches to our work with clients and stakeholders.

Progressive



We strive to lead the sector with progressive thinking, appreciative enquiry and evidence based practice.

Chairperson Report

We strongly believe in the value of a state-based, independent, advocacy agency.

At DACSSA, we recognise 'independence' is the key to successfully promoting and protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

I am proud of the commitment displayed by the DACSSA team this year, as they have worked tirelessly to advocate for the importance of independent advocacy services, as well as a range of other systemic issues impacting people living with disability.

The resilience of our clients and team members is undeniable when considering the record number of people assisted, and outcomes achieved in the year. This is despite the difficult and enduring challenges we have continued to face with the COVID-19 pandemic and everchanging landscape of the disability sector.

Our team has been agile in responding to broad changes that have had dramatic impacts on our clients and our advocacy. DACSSA's extensive networks and collaborative approach have continued to assist in resolving an increasing volume of issues and, most importantly, empower people living with disability to have their voices heard.

Throughout the year we have worked collaboratively with other organisations and stakeholders to expand our strategic breadth and depth to strengthen our client services, improve systems, and ensure our success into the future.

I'm also pleased to report that our visibility is growing. We have continued to meet regularly with Members of Parliament to provide insight and proactive systemic advocacy for our clients and the broader community. DACSSA has also been ready to respond to state and national media outlet calls for our input on issues such as:

- safeguarding people with disability;
- abuse of and theft from people with disability;
- taxi and transport access issues; and
- a range of NDIS related issues.

DACSSA strives to bring a progressive, industry-leading approach to securing better outcomes for people with disabilities through the delivery of high quality services that are accredited in accordance with the National Standards for Disability Service.

In 2020, we were pleased to welcome Louise Butler to the Board, further strengthening our committed Board and expanding the rich skillset and experience able to be applied to our role of governance.

Thank you to each member of the DACSSA Board and team for your ongoing commitment to our important purpose.

Caroline Batty
Chairperson | DACSSA



Board Members 20/21

- Caroline Batty (Chairperson)
- Bill Miliotis (Deputy Chairperson)
- Philippa Coleman (Secretary)
- Kara Birch
- Ellen (Louise) Butler

CEO Report

Growth and gratitude gained, despite another year of trials and tribulations.

The challenges, change and restrictions experienced in 2020/21 were relentless for all, but particularly for people living with disability. Throughout the pandemic, we have seen an increase in our clients' need for information and support; and the complexity of peoples lived experiences and circumstances. We have also experienced a marked upswing in demand for our services. This has been difficult for the DACSSA team as we care deeply for the community we serve, yet we have grossly insufficient resources available to meet the needs of so many individuals in our community. Subsequently, we have increased our focus on systemic advocacy, collaboration and sharing of our knowledge to positively influence systems that affect all people living with disability in our State. With that in mind I would like to acknowledge and thank each member of the DACSSA team for the role they have played in achieving some outstanding outcomes and delivering services to a record number of individuals in the past year – a truly impressive effort.

Continued agility and transformation were key to DACSSA's success and growth throughout the year. Not only did we transform how we offer our support to better accommodate individual diversity and COVID-safe practices, but we also moved to a new office. Our new space better accommodates client accessibility and privacy, as well as our growing team who are responsible for implementing successful grant applications that are complementary to our core services and organisational values. I extend a warm welcome to our new team members.

The Disability Royal Commission has continued to be a focus of our work – driving initiatives to best understand and communicate the occurrence and impact of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability within our diverse South Australian community. Additionally, we have highlighted the importance of 'independent advocacy' and voiced concern about a subsequent year of rising sessions delivered, through our National Disability Advocacy Program, to individuals relating to issues such as:

- Abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation
- Housing / Homelessness
- Disability Services Complaints
- Health / Mental Health; and
- NDIS.

I extend my gratitude to stakeholders who have worked collaboratively with DACSSA throughout the year to jointly raise awareness of important issues, and assisted in supporting and safeguarding South Australians with disability through these tough times.

I would particularly like to thank our clients for their resilience, persistence and bravery in sharing their experiences with us. We hear and recognise just how weary, exhausted, and burnt-out you are feeling. We sincerely appreciate you being a part of affecting change for good.

In 2021, DACSSA celebrates 30 years of providing independent disability advocacy in South Australia. I look forward to celebrating this milestone and leading the organisation, together with our voluntary Board, into the future.

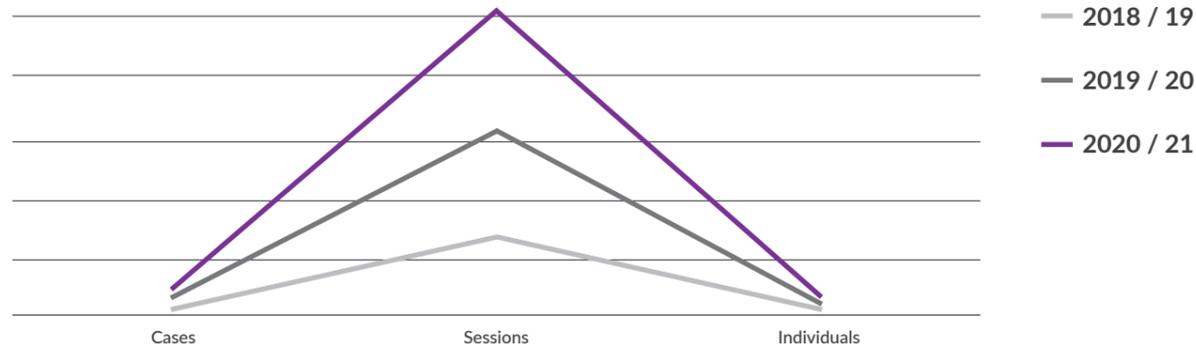
Kendall Field
CEO | DACSSA



Year in View

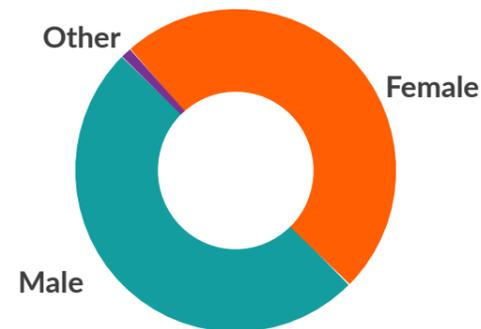
The demand for DACSSA services continues to rise, as does the level of service we have delivered to individuals over recent years, as illustrated below.

Increasing Demand and Service Delivery



Clients by Gender

The gender split of clients has remained relatively consistent when compared to previous years. DACSSA is pleased to see increasing numbers of gender diversity / LGBTIQ+ representation in its client group. DACSSA is committed to being a safe place for all people.

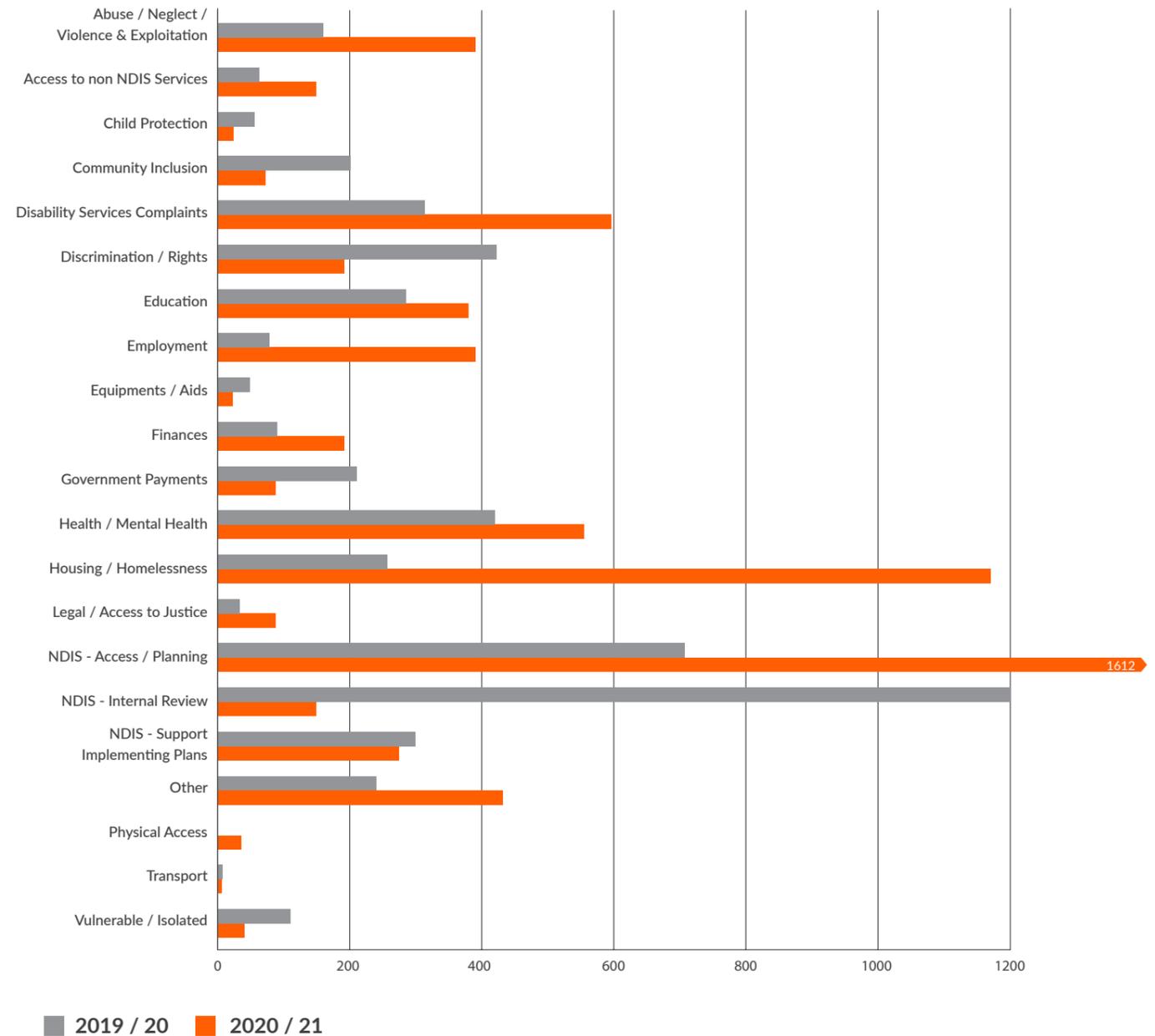


Key Observations

- Abuse/Neglect/Violence & Exploitation NDAP sessions have more than doubled since year prior, and 50% over past 3 years. This is reflective of current incidence, as well as severity and complexity. Concerningly, these figures do not include the sessions delivered through the DRC program.
- Employment and Housing/Homelessness became critical issues this year, with the number of sessions delivered more than quadrupling compared to prior year.
- Advocacy sessions relating to Accessing Legal Services /Justice and Non-NDIS Services increased by over 250% in past year, illustrating the growing need for connective services to assist people with disability in finding the support they need, particularly in the COVID-19 climate when many people have reported growing isolation and vulnerability.
- NDIS Access sessions have increased 225% from previous year, noting access is becoming increasingly complex and challenging.
- NDIS Internal review session figures have been skewed by the impact of COVID-19 and the NDIA's handling of plans during that time. Additionally, many participants are reporting feelings of futility and exhaustion from the review system.

NDAP Advocacy by Session Type

Advocacy by session type through our National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) reveals insightful trends of issues being experienced by people living with disability in South Australia. We value data. We work collaboratively with our funding body to shed light on issues that turn into patterns. We're saddened to see that matters relating to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation have again increased. This tells us that individual advocacy and our efforts to end disability abuse is critical for South Australia.



Disability Royal Commission

Disability Royal Commission highlights horrific nature & prevalence of both historic and ongoing experiences of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation in the disability community.

This year, our work helping clients engage with the Disability Royal Commission has continued to gain momentum, shedding light on both the prevalence and impact of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.

DACSSA was delighted to deliver outreach services in a range of mid-north communities, however we are disappointed many of our other outreach plans were completely halted by COVID-19 related restrictions on multiple occasions. We look forward to getting back to these communities as soon as we are able, to provide support to individuals who would like to learn more, and potentially share their story with the Disability Royal Commission (DRC).

Whilst we have been limited with regard to in-person engagement, we have been busy delivering services to individuals, and strengthening our stakeholder relationships, through virtual means. It has been a pleasure to work collaboratively with a network of committed people to ensure individuals have access to high quality, trauma-informed services. It's refreshing to work with like-minded organisations who understand the benefit of taking a holistic approach – for example DACSSA has worked collaboratively with legal services, counselling, and specialist cultural organisations so that clients are well supported at every step of their DRC journey.

DACSSA is particularly grateful for the opportunity to work directly with the DRC to plan various engagements in SA, as well as the hosting of Private Sessions. At DACSSA, we understand just how critical it is for individuals to have confidence that the stories they share will remain private – not only now, but long into the future. This is why, at every opportunity throughout the year, DACSSA advocated for legislative change that would improve and protect individual's privacy when it came to the DRC. We are pleased to see this change has recently been implemented, and hope this will assist in decreasing at least one of the barriers to people making a submission.

In addition to assisting people with their individual submissions, DACSSA has also been busy working on systemic submissions for the DRC. Topics of focus have included:

- Responding to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation
- The importance of Independence; and
- Complex intersectionality.

DACSSA welcomes the extension of the DRC and looks forward to providing support to anyone who would like to share their story, whilst there is still the opportunity.

“My Advocate was patient and understanding about my many health issues and fears. He kept in touch regularly & always encouraged me to tell my story to the DRC. He helped me to understand the process involved to make a submission etc. and seek legal advice for added protection. Most of all, he’s a professional person and was always sincere in conversation which made me feel safe and accepted as a person with disabilities, which was refreshing! In my opinion, he is an asset to your organisation with his excellent people skills and communications, which empowered me to believe I could reach the finish line!”



DACSSA Improving Lives

**Individual names have been changed to protect their privacy.*

Brad* is in his 20s and lives with Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Brad has high sensory needs, requiring quiet living space separate to other household members in order to maintain regulation, sleep and positive behaviour. His transportable sleep out was in a state of disrepair and becoming unliveable. Brad's guardian approached DACSSA to help advocate for a new sleepout and assist with a breakdown of communication with the housing provider. DACSSA arranged a meeting with relevant parties and attended the meeting with Brad's guardian. Effective communication was established, leading to agreement that funding the modifications was a more cost effective and trauma informed option than to move Brad out of his current care arrangements.

Megan contacted DACSSA to interface with various systems and service providers, as she feared for her safety after several failed attempts to have her former abusive nominee removed from her file. DACSSA interfaced with the relevant organisations and offices, before obtaining records under FOI to provide reassurance to Megan that her former nominee had been removed from her file and that they had not gained access to her information. DACSSA then worked with various individuals to assist in re-building Megan's trust and establish new pathways and practices that would meet her individual needs going forward. DACSSA also worked with DFV services to ensure other electronic access changes were made to ensure online privacy and security for Megan.

Megan* is a victim/survivor of Domestic Family Violence (DFV) who lives with physical disability.



Elizabeth* has profound mental health challenges following a long history of childhood abuse and domestic violence.

Elizabeth came to DACSSA seeking assistance in submitting a complaint to Housing SA, having been on a waitlist for over 13 years. During this period, she had been homeless, at risk of homelessness, faced domestic violence, been deemed to have mental incapacity, had longstanding health and disability related issues, and lacked financial skills and/or resources. DACSSA's Advocate became a voice for Elizabeth, enabling her to make a complaint whilst circumventing her fractured relationship with Housing SA. The Advocate developed a strong relationship with Elizabeth, helping her to bridge some of her trust issues, making her feel supported and listened to. Despite no direct resolution yet, she is very thankful for DACSSA's support and compassion throughout the entire process, knowing that she has been supported to tell her story.

Elijah's family was facing homelessness when their landlord gave notice to vacate when the property ceased to be lawfully useable for residential purposes. DACSSA helped the family, for whom English is a second language, with information and understanding of the processes they needed to follow, as well as completing forms and applications for alternative housing. At the point they were about to be evicted, DACSSA supported them to find emergency accommodation. The Advocate maintained constant ongoing communication in order to secure community housing, within commuting distance to the children's schools.

Elijah* is a young boy, with Autism Spectrum Disorder, who lives with his culturally & linguistically diverse family.

Financial Summary

For the year ended June 30, 2021

Quick Summary

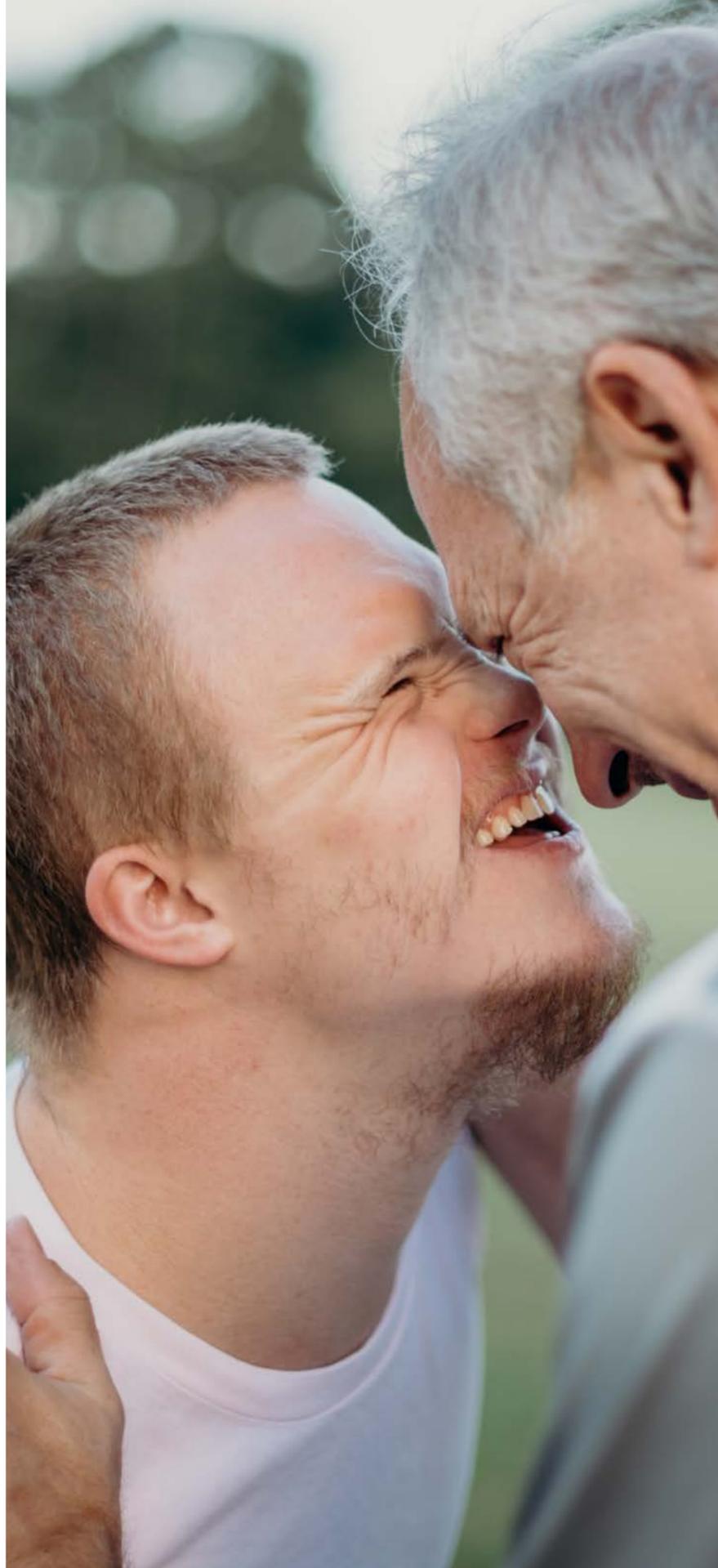
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year		Total Liabilities	
2020	\$53,898	2020	\$114,951
2021	\$63,420	2021	\$339,542
Total Assets		Equity	
2020	\$188,996	2020	\$74,046
2021	\$477,008	2021	\$137,466

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
Revenue	2	909,025	771,520
Employee Benefits Expense		(684,513)	(575,916)
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(32,744)	(3,312)
Rent		(10,038)	(40,244)
Motor Vehicles Expense		(3,888)	(7,862)
Other Operating Costs		(114,422)	(90,288)
Surplus / (loss) for the year	3	63,420	53,898

If you would like to view the full Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2021, please contact DACSSA.



Statement of Financial Position

30 June 2021

	Note	2021 \$	2020 \$
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	408,641	162,619
Trade and other receivables		100	4,750
GST receivable		-	3,737
Prepayments		6,365	3,834
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		415,106	174,940
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5	61,902	14,056
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		61,902	14,056
TOTAL ASSETS		477,008	188,996
LIABILITIES			
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	6	262,497	66,962
Employee provisions	7	45,487	26,553
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		307,983	93,515
Non-Current Liabilities			
Employee provisions		31,559	21,436
TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		31,559	21,436
NET ASSETS		137,466	74,045
Accumulated Surplus		137,466	74,046
TOTAL MEMBERS FUNDS		137,466	74,046

Note: Please refer to ACNC website for full financials

Testimonials

"As a big believer in credit where credit is due, I just wanted to let you know that the Advocate spoke beautifully. They were clear, engaging and empathetic. As a professional working in health I cannot remember someone speaking so well 'off the cuff'."

"The DACSSA Advocate was incredibly knowledgeable and was able to provide me with sufficient information to be confident enough to self-advocate for my son. The Advocate went above and beyond by offering to review any documents I would like guidance on in the week following our telephone consultation. I would definitely recommend DACSSA's services to others and reach out to the team again, should the need arise."

"The journey from an innocent person first diagnosed with a chronic illness, to disenfranchised (just dissed), disabled person, has given me a sense that I must trust no one but myself. I felt a fellow, compassionate soul in the Advocate from DACSSA and this has given me renewed hope and strength."

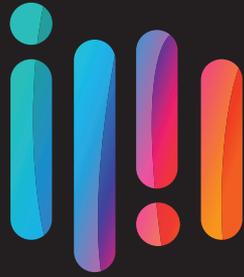
"The Advocate has been a wonderful resource for people like myself who have very little understanding of the NDIS, and has demonstrated a caring, respectful, and mature attitude at all times...they clearly have a passion for their job, the client group, and the organisation they work for"

"...Thanks again DACSSA for your local knowledge and also with the pre and post planning - SA engagement in general, we really appreciate the awesome work that you are doing with our mob." - Stakeholder

"The client stated that the DACSSA Advocate worked with them previously and provided a thorough and exemplary service last time and they would very much like to engage with DACSSA again. She spoke very highly of the Advocate and as a result, DACSSA services."

"I am very grateful for all of the assistance and advice provided by the DACSSA Advocate. They were very supportive and excellent at following up and guiding me through the process. Without them I would have had a very difficult time navigating the appeals process."

"I tried a different advocacy service who could not offer any private space to talk, and were not the right fit for me [sic]... I waited on a waitlist for DACSSA's services, but it has been exceptionally valuable. My issue [sic] has been complex and sporadic and I have been able to get guidance on many issues, all still connected to the primary focus. The Advocate has been very calm, sensible, logical and caring...A balancing force who wisely advises keeping justice, and its' pursuit, in line of sight.... Thank you."



DACSSA

DISABILITY ADVOCACY

Contact Us

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DACSSA is accredited with regard to the National Standards for Disability Services for the provision of disability advocacy in a manner which supports people living with disability, their carers, families and associates through individual and systemic advocacy.

