

Somerville's strength as a well governed, cohesive organisation relies on the incredible staff who work with us ensuring we continue to be the very best we can be. The past 12 months, despite numerous complex challenges and with unwavering support from the Board, we have managed to have the fortitude and courage to strengthen and diversify many areas.

Importantly we will continue to work collaboratively with our local, state and national partners and funding bodies to guide the organisation to realise all opportunities to continue to achieve our Mission.

Our Services

We continue to use innovative approaches with a focus upon outcomes that contribute to enhancing each client's quality of life in all areas of service delivery.

In Family and Financial Services we have developed and consolidated our Step Forward Program and are now delivering this in the Darwin prison. This program is a life skills and strengths based program which aims to equip people with social, financial and interpersonal skills to enable them to cope with the challenging and increasing demands of daily life on release from custody. Our Intensive Family Preservation Service and Child and Family Contact Centre programs continue to serve the community well, providing support and counselling to achieve the very best outcomes for clients.

Our Financial Services team continues to work at a rapid pace to provide counselling and support services to Territorians in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and surrounding regions. Our National Debt Helpline (1800 007 007) offers a Territory wide service, this is a full consultation service with quick answers and advice to financial problems. Somerville is dedicated to providing financial solutions to our clients without judgement which will have a positive impact on their current circumstances.

We have further developed our Life Skills Development Program for people with disabilities. This program is person centred and tailors services to meet each person's individual needs and life goals. This is one of a number of new specific programs that are included in a suite of specialist support services we will deliver into the future as part of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Northern Territory Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government for the rollout of the NDIS across the Territory came into effect for Supported Accommodation Services in Darwin from 1 January 2017. We have been steadily transitioning our Supported Accommodation program since that time. This agreement equates to an increased contribution of \$105 Million per year for disability services. The challenges for Somerville have been numerous on many fronts including:

- Poor quality planning
- A complex registration process
- A lack of understanding of our current service provision by NDIA
- A sub-standard response through the 1800 number to issues and queries resolved.
- Inadequate prices for supporting people with complex and often high medical support needs.

For the scheme to achieve all we set out for it to do, the financial benchmarking needs proper analysis, it simply is inadequate for the Disability Sector in the NT.

A truly National Scheme must recognise, if not champion difference to ensure participants have real control and choice. We recognise there needs to be national consistency on key design features, but the National Disability Insurance Agency in each jurisdiction must have enough authority, skill, flexibility and local knowledge to respond to local conditions.

Our major **concern is** the NDIS is accelerating; the demanding pace is creating a hostile environment whilst service providers like Somerville transition and adjust the way they operate.

Government Service Agreements and Compliance

We have reviewed and enhanced our compliance procedures and introduced a compliance calendar that will assist with internal monitoring and reporting.

The NT Government and Non-Government Community Services Sector "Statement of Principles" continue to serve us well. Working together according to the principles highlighted below assist us to provide quality and culturally appropriate services to Territorians:

- Achieving the best outcomes
- A cultural partnership
- Public accountability
- Provider diversity
- A holistic approach to program and service design

I was pleased to Chair the NT Government Red Tape Advisory Group who came together as a representative group of NGO's and Government to undertake an investigation into red tape issues in the not for profit sector. We acknowledge red tape consumes substantial resources in compliance activities, stifles innovation and reduces productivity. The final report provides insights drawn from consultation and surveys that will underpin this government's approach to future grants and service agreements.

Financial Performance

I am encouraged by our ability to end the financial year in a reasonable position again given the numerous changes to funding agreements.

Special Thanks

Somerville appreciates the support we receive from our funding bodies, the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments and more recently the National Disability Insurance Agency. Thank you also to incredible corporations, local businesses, families and individuals who continue to generously make donations to Somerville, you assist us with our Strategic Goal "To continue to develop alliances, partnerships, networks and increase stakeholder awareness of Somerville..."

Your connectedness is imperative to our remaining local, thinking and acting globally to influence policy and practice at a Territory and national level.

The Somerville team, my heartfelt thanks are extended to you, your devotion, allegiance and perseverance throughout another exciting and fulfilling year is unyielding.

Our Patrons, Hon Austin Asche AC QC and Dr Valerie Asche, our Ambassadors Mr and Mrs Ron and Robyne Burridge, thank you for your invaluable insights, contributions and uncompromising support.

The Somerville Board of Directors led by our President, Daphne Read thank you for being resolute in your stance to never compromise our quality of service delivery, but rather be positive about all that we can achieve within our Mission today and in the years to come.

The Northern Synod and Uniting Care Australia continue to be robust allies and partners in assisting us to achieve **our** Strategic Directions.

Thank you to the Somerville staff who are an incredible inspirational group of people who always work to achieve the very best for everyone they work with.

Vicki O'Halloran AM
Chief Executive Officer