# **Report to Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod**

# **Annual General Meeting – October 2018**

# Somerville CEO’s Report

This year has been one of transition and adjustment for Somerville, with the organisation undergoing a period of change as its operational model is adapted to a new funding environment across all its services.

These changes, while carrying some uncertainty, offered many benefits that will contribute to the long-term stability and sustainability of the organisation.

## Our Services

Mission is at the forefront of all Somerville’s activities and focuses our work on achieving meaningful outcomes and having a positive impact in our community. Our impact is achieved through the breadth of services we offer and a steadfast effort to continually improve the quality of those services.

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) brought with it a new funding and service delivery model, as well as opportunities for new services that had previously not existed due to limited funding availability. The Somerville management team has worked tirelessly in preparing for this change and it is a testament to their work that the transition continues to be a success. There are still challenges to work through as the NDIS is bedded down and the National Disability Insurance Agency and service providers become more aware of the practical issues involved in implementing this nationwide scheme. I am confident that as these issues are worked through and operations become more certain, that the NDIS will provide life-changing opportunities for people with disability and unparalleled continuity of funding for service providers.

The changes brought about by the NDIS have required a more disciplined approach to monitoring the financial performance and sustainability of each discrete service offering within Disability Services to ensure that we are operating within the constraints of available funding while maintaining Somerville’s high standard of service delivery. This has had the dual benefit of improving our understanding of the business fundamentals that underpin this part of the organisation, as well as providing a strong evidence base where a case needs to be made for additional funding to sustain a service.

Our Family Services and Financial Services are predominantly funded by the Northern Territory Government and are migrating to new five year funding agreements. This is a very positive improvement as the extended funding period provides greater scope for a more strategic approach to the delivery of our services as well as increasing our ability to retain good quality staff.

Our Financial Services are now secure for the next five years with an increase in funding to support intake and coordination of the service. Likewise, our Family Services will continue to be funded through a new five year service agreement for those programs that provide support to people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. We are expecting that funding for our Emergency Relief service will be re-tendered in the second half of the year and Somerville is well-placed to maintain a strong presence as a provider of choice for these essential services that help build the fabric of our communities.

Certainty around longer term funding enables an increasingly collaborative environment in which to build relationships with Government agencies toward the co-design of services both at establishment and through on-going refinement. Part of this process includes a realignment of services to meet the current priorities of Government and in general this has had a positive impact on operations. Work is still required to reinforce the importance of early intervention for Family Services and this will need to be reflected through the provision of additional resources in this critical area.

## Our People

As the incoming CEO I made some early observations about Somerville that have only been reinforced in the time that I have been here. Foremost amongst these is the outstanding culture that exists in the people that are part of Somerville. It is an extraordinary achievement that has plainly been built over many years. It is of immense value, a source of strength and flows through every part of the organisation.

Somerville’s people, whether delivering frontline services, providing organisational supports, or guiding the strategic direction of the organisation through strong governance all have an enormous amount of personal investment in the success of the organisation and the fulfilment of its mission. This is reflected in the longevity of service for so many of our people and the additional commitments that are so regularly demonstrated through volunteering as part of our community events.

This commitment to Somerville is the result of strong leadership over a long time, but more than that it has required a collective effort to build and reinforce this culture. This effort is part intuitive but also supported by practices that recognise and celebrate achievement. One of the key strategies for preserving and growing this culture over the next few years will be to develop and implement an Employee Recognition Framework that will add structure to what is already a well-established practice.

It is clear that our people are our strongest advocates. As we continue to tell the stories that have made Somerville what it is and celebrate the successes of the work it does, our people will remain our most valuable assets.

## Acknowledgments

Last year, Somerville experienced the departure of long term CEO, Her Honour the Honourable, Vicki O’Halloran AM, to take up the esteemed role of Administrator of the Northern Territory. While this has been a loss for Somerville, it has also raised the profile of the organisation and Her Honour’s appointment is an outstanding representation of the calibre of the people who work at Somerville. Her Honour gave over 20 years of service to Somerville and the organisation is indebted to her outstanding leadership.

Chris Tudor AM, as Vice President of the Board, stepped into the role of CEO on Her Honour’s departure and steered the organisation through transition prior to my appointment late in 2017. Chris has been on the Board for almost 30 years and his experience was vital to maintaining stability through this period. Chris’ humour and energy was appreciated by all staff and has had a lasting impact.

Since commencing in the role I have been so fortunate of the support that has come my way from the Board, Executive Assistant Elaine Castles, the management team and staff across the organisation. It has been a thoroughly welcoming experience and I have felt a part of something special from the very beginning.

Somerville’s supporters are many and diverse and their contribution is key to our ongoing success. From our funders, to our donors and volunteers, each plays an integral part delivering on our mission and achieving a positive impact in the lives of those experiencing economic and social disadvantage.

Thank you.

**Lawson Broad**

# Somerville President’s Report

2017-18 was another busy year for the Somerville Board. After more than 20 years of service to Somerville our CEO, Her Honour the Honourable Vicki O’Halloran AM, was appointed as the Administrator of the Northern Territory. The Board would like to acknowledge the significant contribution Her Honour made to Somerville. Under Her Honour’s leadership Somerville became an outstanding leader in the not-for-profit sector.

Whilst the board recruited to fill the position of CEO, Chris Tudor AM our Vice President, took on the role of acting CEO. We would like to thank Chris for his leadership during this time of transition.

In November 2017 we welcomed Lawson Broad as our new CEO. Lawson was born and raised in the Northern Territory and understands the environment in which Somerville delivers its services. His experience in private enterprise, the not-for-profit sector and in senior positions in government see him well equipped to provide the strategic focus for the organisation’s direction. The Board look forward to working with Lawson as he leads the organisation during this time of change.

Somerville has a long and proud history of delivering high quality services in the Northern Territory and of impacting positively on the lives of many Territorians. From the Board through to our leadership group and to the people who deliver our front line services, Somerville’s mission is clear and provides direction for all.

This year Somerville has worked through the transition of the NDIS and is currently consolidating its systems and processes to effectively manage the administration of the scheme. The success of the NDIS for Somerville is evidenced by the number of people with disability who are now able to enjoy a greater range of social and recreational activities.

Somerville’s Family and Financial Services continue to deliver a broad range of services to those affected by economic and social disadvantage in our community. The securing of five year funding agreements in both of these service arms ensures we can focus on long term outcomes for our clients.

## Governance

The Board of Directors are committed to their roles and responsibilities and we continually work to improve our governance, culture and practice. Through the Australian Institute of Company Directors ongoing professional development was undertaken so we can remain alert to best practice models of governance in the not-for-profit sector.

Transparency and excellence in reporting is a priority for the Board and this year Somerville was recognised for the third year in a row with a Gold Award in the Australasian Reporting Awards for Somerville’s Annual Report. Somerville are proud that our Annual Report is considered a model for peer reports across the community services sector.

This year the Board developed the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan through extensive consultation with the leadership group. The three year plan is designed to allow for a period of consolidation as the new NDIS business model is bedded down and as Lawson establishes himself in the role of Somerville’s CEO. We look forward to the full implementation of the plan as we move into the next financial year.

## Awards and Acknowledgements

In recognition of our ongoing commitment to providing high quality services to the community, the Board were very proud of the following awards in both program and individual excellence.

This year Somerville was awarded the Good Shepherd Sisters No Interest Loan Program Excellence award. This national award recognises the development of new or innovative approaches that enable microfinance programs to better meet the needs of clients.

Bonnie Solly, Director of Disability Services, won a Highly Commended Award in the 2017 Northern Territory Disability Services Award in the category of Outstanding Disability Service Employee. Bonnie has been a leader in the delivery of disability services for over 17 years and has made an outstanding contribution to the disability sector. Congratulations Bonnie.

Somerville acknowledges the support it receives from the Australian Government, the Northern Territory Government, the National Disability Insurance Agency, Uniting Care Australia and the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church. Thank you to our Patrons, the Hon Austin Asche AC, QC and Dr Valerie Asche AM and our Somerville Ambassadors Mr and Mrs Ron and Robyne Burridge for their support and contributions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers, organisations, local businesses, families and individuals who make such a valued contribution to Somerville and its programs.

## Honouring the life of Margaret Somerville

The life and work of Margaret Somerville, our namesake, is remembered and acknowledged through Somerville’s annual Margaret Somerville Award. Margaret remains an inspiration in all that Somerville does and achieves, and her legacy lives on through this annual award.

The award recognises the exemplary service and outstanding performance of an individual within our organisation.

This year's award recipient was Caroline Tapera. Caroline joined Somerville in 2011 and works in Somerville’s Disability Services as a Life Skills Development Program Officer. Caroline ensures that the people she supports have a range of positive life experiences and is passionate in her belief that the people she supports can and will achieve.

## Final thoughts

I am honoured to lead such a committed team of Board members and I thank them sincerely for their support over the past three years. I welcome their advice and inspiration as Somerville continues to lead the way in the Northern Territory community services sector

The Board is grateful for the dedication and loyalty of all the Somerville staff who continue to honour our vision and mission.

We thank them for their ongoing contribution in striving to provide the best quality service and having “the courage to be…..”

**Daphne Read**