

## Report to Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod Annual General Meeting – October 2019

The past year has been one of consolidation and growth for Somerville as the organisation further refines its service mix and concentrates on meeting need in the community where it is best able.

Historically, while Somerville has provided a range of community services, approximately 80% of activity has been focused on the delivery of disability services. This is the area where Somerville has its greatest strength, knowledge, experience and expertise. Alongside these services Somerville has for many years provided Homelessness; Financial Counselling and Family Services.

As with all non-government community service providers, Somerville is reliant on government funding to continue providing services. Funding agreements are often for short periods of time and in the past not extending beyond 3 year contracts and more often 12 month contracts.

This environment has shifted in recent times with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the initiative of the Northern Territory Government to move to 5 year funding agreements. Both of these are welcome changes. The NDIS ensures continuity of funding which is then able to be directed by individual NDIS recipients to service providers of choice. Somerville is fortunate to have built a strong reputation as a high quality provider of disability services and will look to build on this as it continues to be a provider of choice.

Similarly, we were fortunate to have recently had our Homelessness and Financial Counselling services renewed for a further 5 years. This enables Somerville to create some real stability in the delivery of these services for staff and clients ensuring that these community needs can continue to be met over the long-term.

Our Family Services consisted of an Intensive Family Preservation Service and a Child and Family Contact Centre; both services worked with families that either were at risk of entering the child protection system or were working towards exiting the system. These services were due to be renewed in early 2020, however, the Board determined that at this time, given the very high demand for disability services and the complexity involved in delivering those services, that Somerville was best placed to concentrate its energy and resources on meeting those needs. To ensure that staff and clients in these services experienced the least disruption possible, an agreement was entered into with Anglicare to transition these services to Anglicare including all existing staff and clients for the remaining 12 months of the contract. Anglicare offers a much larger and much broader range of child protection related services and provided an ideal fit for the inclusion of these services. Many compliments to the Somerville and Anglicare teams for making this as seamless a transition as possible and it is encouraging to hear how these services are thriving in their new home.

The outlook for Somerville is very optimistic and we continue to look for opportunities to meet growing need in the community and to expand our footprint where appropriate to meet that need. Somerville has recently purchased land in Katherine and in Tennant Creek for the construction of new purpose built Specialist Disability Accommodation. These are wonderful opportunities for these communities and will provide an outstanding level of design, amenity and function as new houses for people requiring additional physical supports in their home. Our Alice Springs service continues to grow and we are expecting to welcome our first few Supported Living participants in the coming months.

Over the last year Somerville has been exploring opportunities to partner with congregations on particular projects and will continue to work in cooperation with the Church more broadly to meet the growing need in our communities. On behalf of the Somerville Board, staff and family, I would like to offer my sincere thanks for the ongoing support we receive from the Church.

Lawson Broad

Chief Executive Officer

Somerville Community Services