



FULFILLING LIVES

2019

# ANNUAL REPORT

TOGETHER. YOUR CHOICES.  
YOUR DREAMS.



THC client Lisa.



## OUR VISION

Rewarding and valued lives for all people with disabilities

## OUR MISSION

Support people who have intellectual and other disabilities to live fulfilling lives in the community, as independently as possible.

Place the people we support at the centre of all we do – their unique and individual needs determine the services we deliver.

Support, train and value staff to make this mission real.

Manage ourselves responsibly to ensure our long-term viability.



# CONTENTS

- 2 Chair's report
- 3 Chief Executive Officer's report
- 4 Financial highlights
- 5 Key achievements
- 6 Building on our success for 2020
- 8 The Trolley Bag project
- 9 Christmas and New Year's eve cruises
- 10 Boot camp
- 11 Supported holidays
- 12 Moving to independence
- 12 Shannon's big year
- 13 Living in partnership
- 14 Our people
- 15 You call this retirement?
- 15 Saturday social club
- 16 Financial report

## STRATEGIC GOALS

1

### PEOPLE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

We will deliver support services of outstanding quality to people with a disability that will creatively respond to their needs and support their ongoing growth and development. We will deliver services that will provide the best possible quality of life for the people we support. We remain at the leading edge of service quality.

3

### WORKFORCE AND CULTURE

We will protect and enhance our distinctive culture through a first-class workforce.

2

### SUSTAINABILITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

We will grow strategically through formal and informal partnerships. We will develop alliances and partnerships to enable the organisation to grow strategically in order to respond to the increased demand for services under the NDIS.

4

### EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

We will develop our systems and processes to support the delivery of quality services and effectively measure outcomes against goals.



**“I’VE LEARNED THAT THC IS BLESSED WITH A DEDICATED BOARD OF PROFESSIONALS WHO CARE DEEPLY ABOUT THE ORGANISATION AND ITS MISSION.”**

# CHAIR’S REPORT

I’ve really enjoyed my first year as Chair. I’ve learned that THC is blessed with a dedicated board of professionals who care deeply about the organisation and its mission.

Our longest-serving board member and treasurer, Morgan Woods, will be a great loss to the organisation when he stands down from the board at the upcoming Annual General Meeting. Our CEO Nicola continues to do a marvellous job under challenging circumstances, and I am forever indebted to our wonderful staff, who show daily dedication and passionate commitment to our clients.

The recent introduction of the NDIS has raised significant challenges and opportunities for our organisation. It’s as if we’re standing on two tectonic plates that are constantly moving, with one foot on each plate. We’ve managed to negotiate our way through the transition quite successfully, despite the additional burden of administration and reporting on our staff.

We are fortunate to have supporters who provide essential financial and in-kind donations, and I thank each and every one of them for their generous contributions. As a Sydney Swans fan, I proudly profess how lucky we are to have the Swannies group. It is personally rewarding to see how much joy our clients get from being involved in the club. This further reinforces why we at the Board do what we do in support of THC.

This year we initiated a hugely successful social enterprise called the Trolley Bag Project. The project is run by and for people with disability with THC support, and you can read more about it in this Report.

After many years of hard work in achieving tremendous results for our clients, developers and councils are now reaching out to us after learning of our excellent reputation in the disability sector. They are confident in what we can achieve, and have commenced promising discussions on partnering with us to deliver access to appropriate housing options for our clients. Stay tuned for more developments in the future.

One of the biggest challenges THC faces is staff recruitment. Finding the calibre of staff we need, and in sufficient numbers, will only become harder in the future and as the number of people requiring support increases under the NDIS. THC goes to great effort to match staff to participant needs, and to provide adequate staff training and continuity and certainty of its staff.

Our top priority for the coming financial year is to enhance the processes we use to manage NDIS requirements. It’s a balancing act to ensure we have the right efficiency measures in place to make the most of the NDIA pricing schedule while maintaining an absolute priority focus on our clients, their carers, their families and their communities. We’ll continue to strive to make miracles happen this coming year, but can only do so with the ongoing support of our staff, our clients, our members and our supporters.

**DR DAVID ROSENBAUM**



**“I AM CONTINUALLY AMAZED TO HEAR ABOUT AND WITNESS THE MANY PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT.”**

**T**he Housing Connection (THC) has been operating in the NDIS environment for three years, and I am continually amazed to hear about and witness the many personal achievements of the people we support. Our staff do fantastic work each day to ensure that each and every person develops the skills, capacity and connections to lead a meaningful and fulfilled life. This is why we are here, and we are passionate about supporting individual outcomes.

Our key strength lies in our commitment to:

- working in partnership with each person to achieve their goals
- delivering relationally-based support
- being an engaged community-based organisation
- the passion, dedication and quality of our staff, and
- the vision, mission and values of the organisation.

This is part of our value proposition and what we aspire to deliver and achieve on a daily basis.

The NDIA planning process remains a challenge. Over the past 12 months, this has resulted in some people receiving incorrect or under-resourced plans that have reduced their life choices and/or resulted in THC picking up the shortfall. THC has continued to work with participants, their families or nominees to navigate the NDIA and to ensure the impact on their daily lives is minimised. For some, there is a real risk of harm, social isolation and breach of human rights where their plans are inadequate.

Despite some positive changes in NDIA pricing, it does not take into account the level of training we believe is essential to ensure quality, safe and effective support. In the past year, we reviewed how we deliver training, and will continue to do so to ensure we have capacity to offer our staff the training they need. The updated pricing will alleviate pressures on THC being able to offer some individually tailored support services in the short term, however we must continue to adapt our service and pricing agreements to reflect the cost of delivering services. While the organisation is in a healthy financial position, each service we offer must be financially sustainable.

THC continues to operate on lean overheads with a key focus on retaining our talented staff and an investment in frontline face-to-face service delivery. While our back-end systems have been working well, over the next 12 months additional investment in infrastructure will need to be considered.

We are in the process of finalising a three-year strategic plan which will capitalise on the opportunities afforded by the NDIS to consolidate and expand our locally-based services. We look forward to circulating the strategic plan once finalised. This year's report is dedicated to shining a light on some people's achievements and stories. Unfortunately, we can only offer a snapshot when there are so many good stories and so much good news to share.

Thank you to all our participants, families, staff, community members, partners and directors.

**NICOLA HAYHOE**

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



TOTAL GROWTH THIS YEAR OF:

**+13%**

**NET SURPLUS  
EXCEEDED BUDGET  
FROM SERVICES AND INVESTMENTS\***



TOTAL REVENUE:

**\$5,325,443**

**AN INCREASE OF 19% FROM 2018  
(excluding plan management)**



**3.3%** **REDUCTION IN  
ADMINISTRATION  
OVERHEAD**

Trending at **15.50%**, as compared to  
**18.80%** In 2018



**7.0%** **NDIS REVENUE IN  
EXCESS OF THE  
APPROVED BUDGET**

In light of guidelines from the Auditors, plan management sales are not being reported under Revenue. Figures for the year 2017/18 stand revised accordingly.

\* Full audited accounts are posted on [www.thc.org.au](http://www.thc.org.au) each year in a fully accessible version.

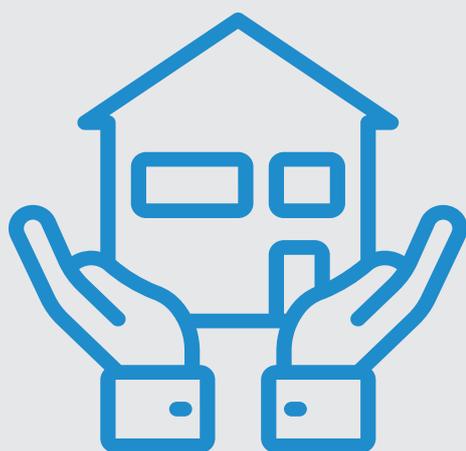


96

TEAM MEMBERS

43

SUPPORT STAFF EMPLOYED DURING THE YEAR



184

PEOPLE HELPED ACROSS ALL SERVICE TYPES IN 2018/19

SERVICE TYPES	NO. OF CLIENTS
Finding & keeping a job	11
Support coordination	79
Plan management	97
Core supports	111
Supported independent living	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>313</b>

# BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESS FOR 2020

THC is well placed to help people achieve rewarding lives. We rely on having a strong, respected brand to attract new clients.

Word-of-mouth has been the preeminent way that new referrals have been received. Looking forward, we will need to consider other marketing strategies to grow our brand and expand our reach to those seeking relevant THC service offerings.

It is extremely important to maintain a high level of engagement with people we support. We always welcome constructive feedback, which is critical to ensuring that our services remain relevant.

We will explore new living option opportunities over the next 12 months. We are currently working on five active options in partnership with other organisations and developers.

One example is a group of nine families and their young adult sons and daughters who call themselves 'Amaroo'. We are working to support these individuals to move out of home into an intentional community over the next six to 12 months.

We also hope to expand the co-tenancy model beyond the five people who have utilised it this year. We witnessed extraordinary success for one person with numerous challenges when he trialled sharing his home with two Chinese students. Over six months, there was an amazing social connection and friendship made; cooking and eating together, with some improved health outcomes for the person THC supports.

Under the NDIS, we need to ensure that all service types are sustainable in their own right. In terms of governance, our focus is on continuous improvement and best practice that will result in better information gathering.

Our investment in quality will continue with the new requirements introduced by the Quality and Safeguards Commission (Q&SC). THC now has a permanent staff member overseeing quality and continuous improvement, an internal quality and risk committee, and ongoing analysis of operational risks.

This year we have had two social work students on placement, along with several interns. Through training and customised work experience that leveraged their skills, we are delighted to have been able to offer casual employment to these exceptional students

Over the next 12 months, it will be imperative to work with the sector and local service providers to address workforce and skills shortages across the sector. We have identified this as an issue in the Northern Sydney region, and will need to develop a range of strategies to source and retain staff.

We will also review our training and professional development opportunities. This year we have seen a number of our talented staff resign to pursue better-paid jobs in the public sector. We continue to offer all staff access to fringe benefits that make a difference to take home pay. However, staff retention is an area that requires ongoing attention.

We also hope to expand the Techno Gurus program. It currently runs five days a week and offers technology training to help people make the most of technology and be as independent as possible.

In the next 12 months, we want to build on our approach of listening to the needs and interests of people seeking our services and continuing to be open to possibilities. We strive to be agile and flexible to respond to opportunities and changes as they arise.

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Techno Guru Daniel Captain (back right), with Korean participants Bo (right), Xiang Lu (front) and Qifen Yu (left).





# THE TROLLEY BAG PROJECT

The Trolley Bag Project is a social enterprise that provides opportunities for people with disability to be part of a community project. Workers are involved in the production and sale of products made from recycled materials, providing alternatives to single-use or throwaway plastics. Signature products include trolley bags, tote bags and wax wraps. Several corporate gift orders have been delivered to date and other contracts for wares are being sought.

Hannah Pickering – an employee on parental leave – initiated the home-based business, and came up with the idea of creating a social enterprise after seeing the potential for meaningful engagement, capacity building and a pathway to employment through the project. Central to The Trolley Bag Project's success is the vital role THC participants (workers) play in all aspects of the project.

The idea behind the project is an environmental one – to reduce the amount of single-use plastic being used for things like shopping and food storage. Recycled material, such as the hessian from coffee bags and recycled upholstered fabrics, is sourced and turned into shopping bags and waxed food wraps.

Workers can select which aspect of the enterprise they would like to be involved in according to their interests, skills and preferences. They also choose the number of hours per week they can commit. Our staff members Anna and Veena are on hand to support and guide the clients,

teaching them necessary skills and helping with tricky and challenging tasks. As the workers gain confidence, they are able to extend their skills and take on greater responsibility.

"The project provides an opportunity for people who want to learn new skills and feel like they belong to something," said Laurence, who is overseeing the project. "We've tried to keep it separate from THC at large, so people can feel they belong to something unique."

The project is still in the manufacturing stage, and we hope to allocate any sales profits to participants based on the hours they contribute, regardless of the type of work involved.

"We received a \$10,000 grant from The Help Street Foundation," said Laurence. "They've been big supporters of ours for years. This grant helped us buy sewing machines and set up the project."

The project has found a home in the Kuring-gai Community Centre in St Ives thanks to Unisson support. Having a dedicated space has enabled us to cement the project and to work towards its expansion.

"We are hoping to find more work for clients who cannot use a sewing machine, for example, doing ornamental braiding work to embellish the products," he said.

Trolley Bag Project products have been sold at two markets in a small trial. The presence of a booth and the THC logo is an effective way to raise awareness of our work in the community.




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**“IT’S SO REWARDING TO SEE PEOPLE NEEDING SUPPORT CONTRIBUTE TO THE BETTERMENT OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND STRIVING TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.”**

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As the Trolley Bag Project progresses, it will offer workers exposure to a range of operations, such as product development, manufacturing, marketing, promotion, sales, finance, sourcing materials and business operations. In its current phase, the project is focussed on production and improving stock quality and volumes through comprehensive training and support of team members like Graeme.

“I’ve learned to use the sewing machine, and use the chalk to mark lines on the material. I put pins in the material before I use the machine, and I move the pins as I am sewing,” said Graeme.

Jackie is another client who enjoys working on the project. While she found sewing difficult at first, she has since learned to sew. “My favourite part is sewing and being around different people. I work Mondays and Fridays. Anna and Veena are very helpful,” said Jackie.

“It’s so rewarding to see people needing support contribute to the betterment of their community and striving to make the world a better place,” said Laurence. “Our clients can feel that what they are doing is meaningful, not just for them, but for the environment.”

“I also like the waxing,” said Graeme. “We put grated wax onto the material, add a second layer of material, and then iron it.”

For Laurence, the project demonstrates the importance of sharing great ideas and resources to deliver core THC programs and provide support to people who can make a positive impact on our world.

We are actively seeking new referrals and people interested in becoming involved. Over the next 12 months, we are aiming to be operating at full capacity and to expand the project’s activities.

**Above left:** Libby, Anne and Susan (left to right) showing off their work.

**Centre:** Top Kelsey on sewing duty.

**Right:** Susan (left) with Anne (right) making bees wax wraps.

## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR’S EVE CRUISES

**T**HC is extremely fortunate to have some amazing people in the fold. The legendary man we all call ‘Dolphin Dave’ and his wife and co-partner Elsa made our festive season memorable again this year by making their boat available for our annual Sydney Harbour Christmas cruise for the fifth time. Their hospitality made everyone feel truly connected through the music, dancing and karaoke.

“He is the most humble, generous and genuine guy you’d ever want to meet,” said Anne Louise. “He wears many outfits. He’s the king of karaoke, and lets people sit in the captain’s quarters.”

As a result of the deep bonds formed with Dolphin Dave and Elsa, they donated their boat for our New Year’s Eve fundraising function free of charge.

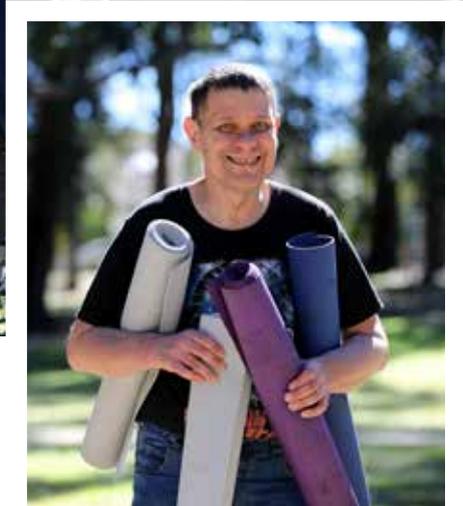
This was a spectacular opportunity for the people we support, their family, friends, staff and the community to share the 9pm fireworks on the harbour with all of Sydney. This was an opportunity for which we are extremely grateful.

“This is an experience they would never have had otherwise,” said Anne Louise. “It was very emotional to witness the reaction of everyone when the fireworks started.”

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**“THEIR BEAMING FACES IS A SIGHT THAT WILL STAY WITH ME FOR A VERY LONG TIME.”**

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# BOOT CAMP

In January 2019, and after a few months of discussion and planning, THC piloted and kicked off Boot Camp on Monday and Wednesday evenings in the lovely Beauchamp Park, Chatswood. Up to 15 hardy souls attend the sessions – clients, staff and volunteers – taking part with hearty rounds of cheering, laughter and grunts of exertion.

Through word of mouth, THC found Marek, a qualified fitness trainer to encourage participants to get out and exercise more.

Masters-qualified THC accountant Petra, who increased to full time in February after years of hard study, enjoys the physical challenge Boot Camp offers. She likes the variety of activities tailored to individual capabilities. She could only do five push-ups in the beginning, but now she can do 15, and has extended her aerobic capacity to easily perform an extended aerobic workout.

Apart from the health and sporting elements of the program, getting to know other people in a supportive social setting is equally important. For Petra, her favourite part is working out with others and getting to know them better. It offers something for everyone, whether it is achieving an individual fitness goal, a goal to try something new, or to exercise and have fun in a supportive and friendly atmosphere.

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**“I COULD ONLY DO FIVE  
PUSH-UPS AT FIRST –  
BUT NOW I CAN DO 15  
NO PROBLEM!”**

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There has been great feedback from clients about the benefits of taking part, and the motivation of exercising as a group. Marek has established a good relationship with all participants, which has even seen him invited to a few birthday parties and social events.

THC has worked to keep the cost down, and successfully obtained a grant to reduce the cost of Boot Camp further for another 12 months. After a long winter spell, Boot Camp is due to kick off again in spring, and we look forward to seeing the further progression of our participants.

**Top left:** Boot camp in the park in action.

**Above:** Shane packing away equipment at the end of a session.

## FIJIAN HOLIDAY

In November 2018, Rob and Jackie enjoyed a week-long holiday at Radisson Blu Resort in Fiji, supported by Michael. The adventure began when Jackie found \$2000 in her local 7-Eleven carpark. She turned it in to the police, but no one claimed it, so after three months it was hers to keep. This manna from heaven enabled Jackie and her good friend Rob to take a holiday they'd only dreamed of.

"She loved taking walks along the beach, getting her nails done, having her hair braided and enjoying a make-over. We also went snorkelling on the outer islands," said Michael.

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**THIS MANNA FROM HEAVEN  
ENABLED JACKIE AND HER GOOD  
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THEY'D ONLY DREAMED OF.**

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Jackie and Rob living it up in Fiji on holiday.

"Rob loved the fire dancing display, room service, the great food available at five restaurants, a joy flight over the island, and shopping for loud and comfortable shirts."

Their Fijian hosts made the trio feel extremely welcome, and greeted them by name. A measure of their good fortune is that neither Rob nor Jackie wanted to come home.

## NOOSAVILLE HOLIDAY

Libby has many happy memories of holidaying at Noosa with her parents. But she has not had the opportunity to visit since her parents passed away. When relatives invited her up for a visit in June, it was the perfect excuse to return to a place that held such happy memories for Libby.

John didn't need to think twice when his friend Libby invited him to join her as a travel companion. THC assisted Libby and John to plan their trip. Despite being good friends, Libby and John have different interests and wanted to spend the time doing different things. They worked together amazingly well to accommodate each other's needs and make the most of their time in Noosa.

Their action-packed holiday featured some wonderful experiences: swimming in the pool, having barbeques, going jet boat riding, whale and dolphin watching, hiking in the national park, and bike riding. They even hired a small fishing boat and did some fishing on the river.

"For me, this experience reinforced the importance of being able to facilitate these kinds of opportunities and experiences for our clients," said Ella. "I was fortunate enough to watch them enjoy themselves and let loose in ways that I had not previously seen. Everyone needs and deserves opportunities for this kind of growth."

Exploring Noosa bought back many happy memories of Libby's past trips there with her late parents. Understandably, this bought up some emotions for Libby, and a few tears were shed from missing her mum and dad. Leaving was also emotional since neither of them wanted the trip to be over.



Libby (left) and John (right) on a coastal walk in Noosa.

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**"FOR ME, THIS EXPERIENCE  
REINFORCED THE IMPORTANCE  
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THESE KINDS OF OPPORTUNITIES  
AND EXPERIENCES..."**

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SUPPORTED HOLIDAYS

# MOVING TO INDEPENDENCE

Daniel O'Keefe has moved out of home. Aged 23, that's younger than a lot of his generation. With THC's help, Daniel is transitioning into supported accommodation to live away from his family for the first time. He moved in with his housemate in June this year, spending Monday to Friday in a four-bedroom house in the Chatswood area. Daniel goes home on the weekends at the moment. The matching process was critical for the placement to succeed, as neither Daniel nor his housemate have experienced many friendships in the past. In spite of this, they have successfully managed to find a way to connect.

"My family and I have been so impressed with the amazing professionalism of THC and the hands-on support Daniel has received throughout this process," said Kelly, Daniel's mum.

THC provides Daniel a support worker between 3:30pm and 8:30am during the week.

"We are working in partnership with Daniel and his mum to build up Daniel's skills and independence," said Ellen Lowe. "When Daniel first moved in, he wanted you to make him a cup of tea. Now he will come home, grab an apple, make his own cuppa, and bring his lunch box back to the kitchen."

These small steps are early victories on a journey to reducing Daniel's dependence, especially on his mum.

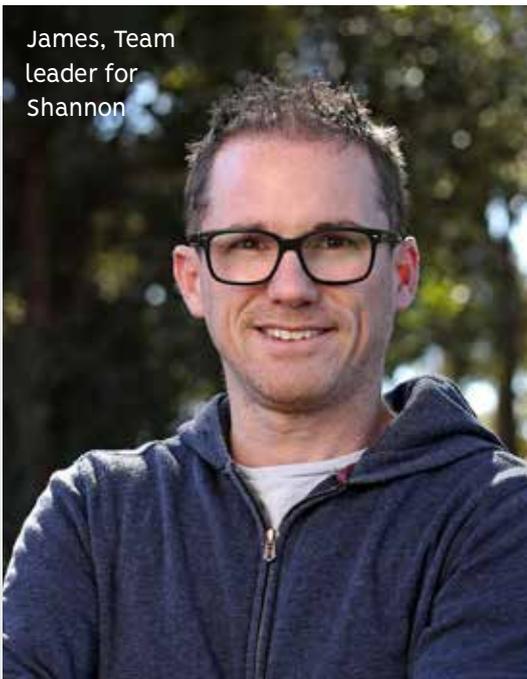
"For the first time I have had other people share the responsibilities of Daniel's care," said Kelly. "I would never have believed a year ago that my beautiful boy would be ready, willing or able to move out of home."

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**"HE REALLY SEEMS TO BE EMBRACING THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP INDEPENDENCE WITH GREAT CONFIDENCE."**

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James, Team leader for Shannon



## SHANNON'S BIG YEAR

After last year's incredible achievements, Shannon has had another huge year in 2019. He secured a full-time job working as an Assistant in Nursing (AIN) in the St. Vincent's Hospital radiology department.

He also got married, and has just recently returned from his first overseas holiday, travelling independently to the Philippines to visit his wife.

"For someone who has had to deal with high anxiety, Shannon is managing extremely well," said James, his team leader. "He's like another person from when I met him 12 years ago. It's fantastic seeing how proud he is of himself, and confident and motivated about his future."

THC has worked in partnership with Shannon to help him realise his dreams. From someone who was previously quite dependent on assistance, he has shown amazing determination to become more independent. While he still gets some support for things like budgeting, his actions this year demonstrate just how much progress he has made.

Congratulations Shannon!

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**"IT'S FANTASTIC SEEING HOW PROUD HE IS OF HIMSELF, AND CONFIDENT AND MOTIVATED ABOUT HIS FUTURE."**

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# LIVING IN PARTNERSHIP

At THC, we focus on solutions, and often look internally to connect clients. So, when Paul had a falling out with his flatmate, went into hospital, and then had nowhere to live on discharge, we stepped in to prevent him becoming homeless. Team leader Victoria had a gut feeling that he might get along with another client, Michael. After a brief discussion, Michael happily offered his second bedroom to Paul.

"It wasn't all plain sailing," said Victoria. "Anne Louise and I worked together to make it happen. They needed a fair bit of support to learn to live together. For the shared living arrangement to work, we had to establish boundaries around personal space, and educated them on how to co-habit and get along.

"At first, Paul would eat Michael's food in the fridge. This was short-lived after we explained to Paul why this wasn't okay and set up separate shelves in the fridge."

They also trained other staff to understand their individual support plans and likely triggers for each other.

"One of our main motivations for the arrangement to succeed was the benefits both Paul and Michael would receive from developing companionship from the friendship," said Victoria.

After three years of living together, Michael and Paul have overcome many of the initial challenges. Paul respects Michael's space, and they have become a lot better at communicating. They now say goodbye to each other when they leave the house, knowing where the other person has gone and what they're doing.

While this may seem basic, for Paul and Michael, this is a huge step in learning necessary relationship skills. Having both been socially isolated, it has taken a while for the bonds of friendship to develop.

"For me personally, I've learned you can put two people together that you think won't work, and it can be a really good match," said Victoria. "I find it moving when I turn up to support one of them, and the other asks to join in, so we go out together. There has been benefits in them living together and working on their cooking skills to develop a healthy eating regime. There's definitely more energy and personality in their place – it's more of a home than it used to be. I had concerns in the beginning, but to see them care for each other when neither have had that for many years is so heartening to see."

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**"ONE OF OUR MAIN MOTIVATIONS FOR THE ARRANGEMENT TO SUCCEED WAS THE BENEFITS BOTH PAUL AND MICHAEL WOULD RECEIVE FROM DEVELOPING COMPANIONSHIP FROM THE FRIENDSHIP."**

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Michael and Paul



# OUR PEOPLE



## YEBIN JU SOCIAL WORKER

I started at THC as a student on a four-month social worker placement in March 2019. Originally, disability wasn't one of my interests, but once I started and saw how much support is needed in this sector, I very quickly became passionate about the work that organisations like THC do. It's great to see how THC empowers the clients, and to learn about disability services and what providing great support looks like.

At 20, I'm the newest and youngest staff member after having recently been employed on a casual basis. My job is to support several THC clients to be as independent as possible. Each client is unique, so getting to learn their individual needs has been a big learning curve for me.

Just building relationships with clients and staff has been extremely rewarding, and I am excited to learn more in my role.

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**"ORIGINALLY, DISABILITY WASN'T ONE OF MY INTERESTS, BUT ONCE I STARTED AND SAW HOW MUCH SUPPORT IS NEEDED IN THIS SECTOR, I VERY QUICKLY BECAME PASSIONATE ABOUT THE WORK THAT ORGANISATIONS LIKE THC DO."**

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## ANNE LOUISE HICKEY CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER

I commenced at THC as a social educator in 1991, which makes me the longest-serving THC employee. Back then, I'd only been living in Australia for two years since leaving Canada. I knew from the minute I read the job advertisement in the paper that THC was the place I wanted to work: I hadn't come across a job opportunity like it since leaving Canada.

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**"...WE'RE HERE TO WORK OURSELVES OUT OF A JOB."**

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The values of THC haven't changed in all those years, nor should they. Our diverse and unique group of people have committed to ensuring a vibe that I want to remain a part of forever. For me, it's a vocation as much a career – my life is THC 24/7.

As the Client Services Manager, I'm honoured that THC allows me to work to my strengths. I am driven by a commitment to quality care and support for all our clients. Each day is a continuous learning curve as I work with our amazing clients, families, staff and community members. If you keep it real, stay true to your values, and maintain a good sense of humour, you can seriously do some good work which equates to a great experience for people.

I spend a lot of time ensuring we practise what we preach. I've always said that we're here to work ourselves out of a job – we don't create dependencies; we want to create people who are more independent. And that's exactly what we do.

# YOU CALL THIS RETIREMENT?

At the age of 64, Susan retired from a 15-year retail career at Target. THC and Job Support organised a big celebration to mark her retirement. Fast forward a few months and Susan is working three mornings a week at her dream job.

"I'd always wanted to work in an office one day. I've been enjoying the job. The people are friendly. They are nice. I talk to them," said Susan.

THC Team Leader Julian, who has known Susan for many years, says she has been so much happier since she started working at Veolia. "Susan's quality of life has improved since starting her new role. To hear that she looks forward to going to her job of her dreams is simply wonderful."

"I set out nuts and biscuits. I fill up the coffee machine with beans. I also clean the benches. I wipe the white boards and tidy things up," she said. "They taught me to do scanning on a printer. I do photocopies for the manager if she needs it."

Now Susan can work independently, without the pressure of the retail environment.

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**"I'D LIKE TO DO THE JOB FOR MANY MORE YEARS."**

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## SATURDAY SOCIAL CLUB

Everyone at THC knows what a great event organiser Kelsey is – from the epic pizza nights and the Thank Goodness It's Friday nights, to establishing the well-seasoned and growing Swan's Club. As a staff member and NDIS participant, she is in a unique position to make a positive impact that continues to delight clients and add value to what THC offers.

Over many chats, Kelsey and Anne Louise came up with the idea of introducing a social aspect to THC's services; that kickstarted the Saturday Social Club. Every Saturday Kelsey takes initiative, considers people's likes and needs, consults with the group and puts together a schedule of enjoyable adventures. All her groups are growing, from going to the Sydney Fish Markets, Newtown and Taronga Zoo, to visiting a Winterland Festival, going to the movies and enjoying mini-golf.

"It is a way for people to try new things, have an adventure, meet new people and have a go," said Kelsey.

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**"I THINK THEY ARE LEARNING TO TRY NEW THINGS, TO BE CONFIDENT. WHEN THEY PARTICIPATE MORE FULLY, THEY HAVE MORE FUN."**

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After nine years at THC, she is a familiar face to all the staff and clients. The clients see Kelsey as one of them, so the club feels like peer support, which is an advantage.

"I think they are learning to try new things, to be confident. When they participate more fully, they have more fun," she said.

Getting people to respond to her events and come along brings Kelsey the most satisfaction.

"There's a fair bit of laughter from people who know each other," she said.

SYDNEY SWANS



## SWANNIES CLUB TOUR

In May this year, the THC Swannies Club was offered a once in a lifetime opportunity to have a private tour of the Sydney Swans' home at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Club members hung out with players in the dressing rooms and spent quality time getting to know them, which was a fantastic experience for our passionate Swans supporters.

## CONTINUING OUR WORK WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

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2019 IS THE SECOND YEAR THAT THE HOUSING CONNECTION HAS PARTNERED WITH CHATSWOOD LIBRARY TO RUN THEIR MONTHLY BOOK SALE.

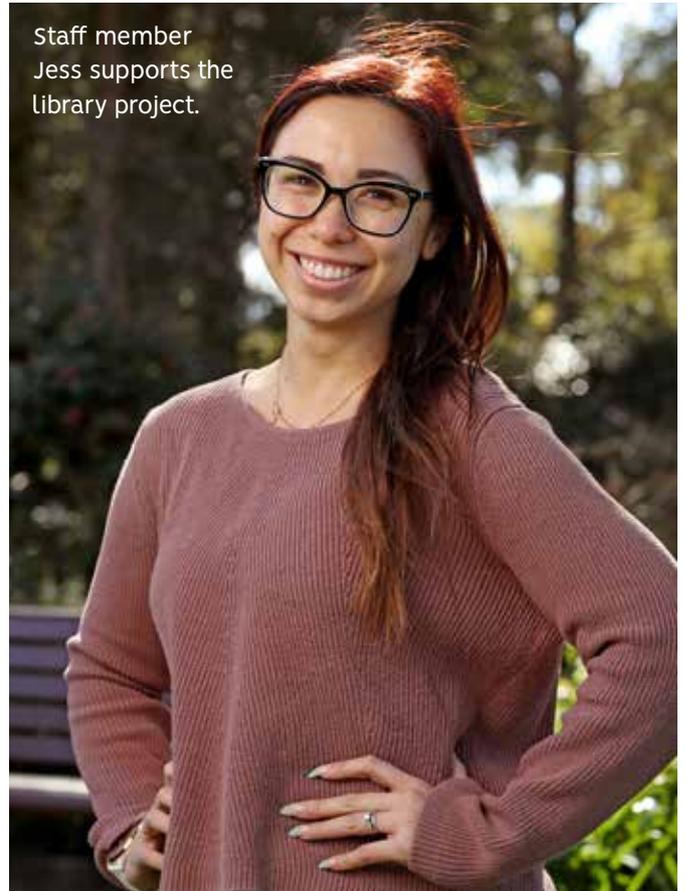
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Each month, a stall is set up in the foyer of the library where we sell books for \$1 or \$2 that the library might otherwise discard. As new books are included in the library's loan stock, older or less popular books need to find a new home to make more room.

On the third Thursday of each month, two clients supported by two staff load up several trolleys with an array of books, CDs, DVDs and magazines to present to an eager throng of second hand book enthusiasts waiting in the foyer.

Hansol Kim and Libby Pilz have been our star salespeople this year, ably supported by Laura Manning, Jess Creanor and Yebin Ju. Hansol and Libby have improved their calculation and money handling skills accepting money from customers and digging into their Housing Connection apron pockets to give correct change. Funds

Staff member Jess supports the library project.



received from the sale of library stock is directed towards funding THC's annual Christmas Cruise.

Willoughby Council's Library at Chatswood is gratefully acknowledged for providing this fantastic opportunity, which we hope will continue in 2020.

# JAPANESE CARERS

**Below:** Hitomi and Anne Louise at the Willoughby Council grant ceremony

THC continued to support up to 43 Japanese carers in 2019 thanks to a \$9,000 donation from Willoughby Council. The number of carers continues to grow, with members from Chatswood, Willoughby and the broader Northern Sydney District joined by carers from the eastern suburbs and Bankstown area. A sister group of carers based in the eastern and southern suburbs has been disbanded due to lack of resources, and this local carers group expects its numbers to grow further in the next 12 months.

The grant enabled the Japanese carer support group to maintain its twice-monthly meeting schedule. It also organised workshops with translators on accessing Centrelink and disability support via the NDIS, a workshop on childhood depression, an art therapy workshop and a workshop from TAFE NSW on post-school training opportunities.

The group also organised for carers to visit a range of disability employment services. All of these activities provide support to the carers, and aim to reduce their social isolation and inform them of services and opportunities for their children both now and when they become adults. The organisers of the carer forums have received feedback on the benefits of its activities to individual carers in feeling supported, and maintaining resilience and capacity as carers. THC hopes to continue supporting future activities of the group, and filling a critical gap in accessing information on carer mental health.



## HELP STREET FOUNDATION

THC WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE ONGOING SUPPORT OF THE HELP STREET FOUNDATION, WHICH HAS GENEROUSLY PROVIDED GRANT FUNDS FOR SMALL PROJECTS OVER MANY YEARS.

This year, we were fortunate to receive a grant of \$7,000 to assist THC to sustain some of the individualised support and to enhance individual service delivery.

**Right:** Long-term staff member Julian is passionate about supporting individual outcomes.





**FULFILLING LIVES**

## THE HOUSING CONNECTION

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