

2021  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



supporting



communities



through



turbulent



times



metro assist



## Chairperson's Report



For the second year running, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our vulnerable clients and their communities, and also on our team. It has challenged Metro Assist like never before.

Across the organisation, our people have come together and risen to the challenge. They have determined new ways of working to maintain services to our clients through lockdown and to overcome all other hurdles in their way.

Each member of our loyal and dedicated team has faced their own personal difficulties during this period. Their efforts in continuing to provide quality services to clients whilst juggling their own challenges have been truly inspiring.

Metro Assist is supported by many funding bodies and partner organisations. Their continued support over the last 12 months, and the flexibility they have shown as we adapted our services in response to the COVID-19 environment, have been much appreciated. We look forward to further strengthening these relationships in the years ahead.

In March, Lou Bacchiella retired from the position of Metro Assist CEO. Lou has made an immense contribution to Metro Assist over the past decade. His time as CEO saw the organisation successfully adapt to new funding and governance environments within the sector and he led our expansion into a number of new areas of service. Lou's warmth and compassion for clients and Metro Assist staff was evident every day and made him a great role model for all of us. We thank him for his contribution to Metro Assist and wish him and his family all the best.

The Board was delighted to appoint Michael Szafraniec the new CEO of Metro Assist. In his short time in the role, Michael has instituted a number of positive changes that have set the organisation up for its next phase of growth.

In February, one of our longstanding directors, Janice Poynton, resigned from the Board due to family reasons. Janice's contribution to the Board during her tenure was significant and wide-ranging. Her focus was always on putting the interests of our clients and staff first. Janice, on behalf of all the directors, thank you. We wish you the best for the future.

Thank you to my fellow directors for the time and energy you have dedicated to Metro Assist over the last 12 months, it is appreciated by me in my role as Chairperson, but also by the organisation and its clients.

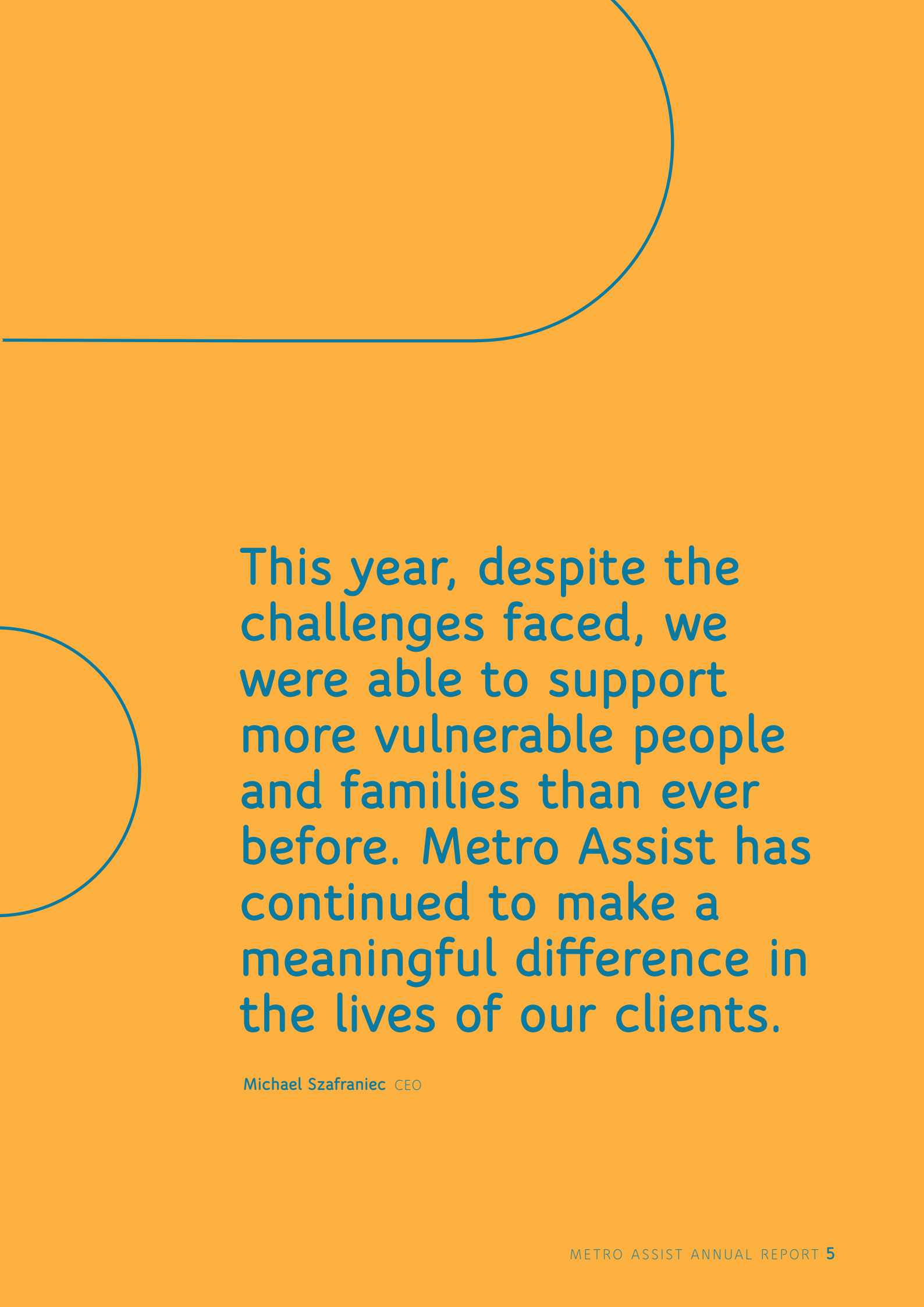
Thanks also go to Michael and the Metro Assist team. As mentioned previously, it has been a challenging year and you have overcome significant obstacles to continue to provide high quality services to our clients.

The Board looks forward to continuing to work with Michael and the staff to provide valuable services to our vulnerable clients and their communities, and to keep delivering the positive outcomes for which Metro Assist is well known.

**Mr Scott Machin**  
CHAIR

Each member of our loyal and dedicated team has faced their own personal difficulties during this period. Their efforts in continuing to provide quality services to clients whilst juggling their own challenges have been truly inspiring.

Scott Machin CHAIR

A solid blue line starts from the left edge, goes horizontally across the top, and then curves downwards and to the right, ending as a large blue circle. Another large blue circle is partially visible on the left edge of the page.

This year, despite the challenges faced, we were able to support more vulnerable people and families than ever before. Metro Assist has continued to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our clients.

Michael Szafraniec CEO

At Metro Assist, like many organisations across the country, Financial Year 2020/2021 was a turbulent period filled with new complexities that drove the need for innovation and resilience. During this time, Metro Assist focussed on supporting its staff which, in turn, enabled the organisation to continue to support our community through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The challenges came thick and fast from the external environment, with the shifting sands of the ever-changing public health orders demanding regular modifications to our operating environment, and the ongoing closure of international borders affecting our settlement services and other supports we provide to newly arrived migrants and refugees.

All these factors made it difficult to predict and plan the delivery of services. I'm proud to say that at Metro Assist, thanks to the Board, the outgoing CEO, the leadership team and, indeed, all staff, we were able to innovate, iterate and respond to each fresh challenge, ensuring that vulnerable people across our communities had access to the support they needed.

At Metro Assist, the health and wellbeing of our staff is paramount, and we concentrated throughout the year, first and foremost, on building a healthy and sustainable working culture. We focussed on supporting staff members, including our essential workers, who were providing frontline support to vulnerable people and then on transitioning to the online delivery of other services.

Some of our biggest challenges included addressing the needs of vulnerable people in crisis and ensuring our essential workers were kept safe, informed and supported so they could meet the needs of these people. This year, despite the challenges faced, we were able to support more vulnerable people and families than ever before. Metro Assist has continued to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our clients.

On this journey, Metro Assist was able to harness some discrete funding that supported the additional cost of operating in these new ways. These additional resources have enabled the organisation to regularly pivot our operations to meet the needs of the community and align our service provision with the parameters set by public health orders. During FY20/21, the overall revenue increased to a new high of over \$5.9M. This funding, although short-term, did help us navigate the pandemic. However, the crisis also led to a downturn in opportunities and, as such, our long-term cost base, staffing structures and funding position had to be adjusted.

When I commenced my role as CEO in February, there was a need to review our financial footing and the long-term sustainability of Metro Assist. I am grateful for the support provided by the Board for the Sustainability Project I initiated. Much work and difficult decision-making went into planning a new strategic direction for the organisation, but I am pleased to say those efforts have paid off and Metro Assist is once again "fighting fit" to embrace future challenges and sustain growth in the coming years.

## CEO's Report



At the end of this financial year, whilst losses were incurred, the organisation has a stable foundation from which to expand our support of more vulnerable people across more communities.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of our current staff for their professionalism, their commitment to Metro Assist and their courage in embracing change. I also want to acknowledge those staff members who left the organisation over the course of the year and thank them for their service to Metro Assist and to our communities.

I particularly want to acknowledge the team who worked so diligently to ensure that Metro Assist is now ISO:27001 (Information Security Management System) accredited. This was a significant project for an organisation of our size and the achievement is very much worth celebrating. This accreditation will ensure the organisation can continue to exceed government standards and expectations in delivering contracted services within our communities.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the directors of the Board who, as volunteers, have embraced the difficulties of operating during this year and who have shown foresight and fortitude in leading the organisation through this turbulent time. You have been a great support to me in my new role as CEO of Metro Assist – thank you.

**Michael Szafraniec**  
CEO



# Metro Assist Services and Impact

2020-2021

Metro Assist provides a range of essential supports and services to people, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Our programs offer access, dignity and quality of life to vulnerable individuals and families so they can thrive.

OUR CLIENTS

**10,588**  
people supported

**3.5%**  
identify as  
Aboriginal or  
Torres Strait  
Islander

**60%**  
women

**65%**  
from CALD  
backgrounds





## Employment Services

DRESS FOR WORK provides professional clothing to men and interview and resume coaching to jobseekers attending interviews.

PARENTSNEXT works with parents to identify their career goals and supports them to undertake training and work experience that will allow them to enter the workforce when their youngest child commences school.

SKILLME (POWERME) supports migrant men and women to have their overseas skills and qualifications recognised in Australia and creates pathways for participants to relevant and rewarding work.

REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAM (RESP) helps refugee and asylum seeker participants develop individual education and employment goals and supports them in achieving these goals.

OUR PROGRAMS  
SUPPORTED

845

refugees, migrants and  
asylum seekers to achieve  
their education and  
employment goals

900  
parents

with young children  
in their education and  
employment aspirations

24%

of clients  
gained employment as  
a result of Metro Assist  
programs



## Family Services

**COMMUNITY BUILDING PROGRAM** offers a range of parenting support, skill development and group programs for parents, children and young people. These services increase participants' life skills and wellbeing and connect them with others in the community.

**FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICE** works with parents expecting a child or raising children aged 0-8 who are experiencing domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol misuse, mental health issues and other challenges. Caseworkers provide psychological support, home visits, parenting education, assistance with access to childcare and other local networks and services.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT SERVICE** offers psychological support to children, adolescents and their parents from CALD backgrounds.

**TARGETED EARLIER INTERVENTION** program provides individual family support plans to help them raise strong, healthy children in a safe family environment. This may include access to parenting programs and specialist services such as allied health, play groups or support groups.

OUR PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

**432**  
at-risk  
families

including women experiencing domestic violence or relationship breakdown

**170**  
people  
with mental health care

**234**  
families

to reduce the risk of children entering out-of-home care

**3,256**  
people

in building positive parenting skills, social connectedness and life skills

## Settlement Services

Experienced caseworkers who speak many languages support new migrants and refugees to establish a life in Australia, helping them access housing, education and employment and establish connections in the community. The service offers a range of group-based activities and information sessions to help migrant communities build their capacity, access and knowledge.

OUR PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

**1,594**

newly arrived migrants and refugees to settle into Australia

**725**  
new arrivals  
in building their social and civic participation

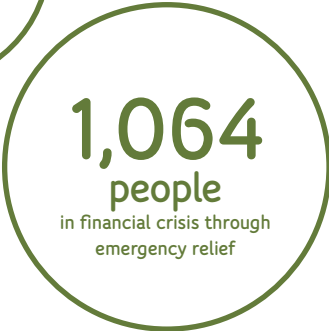
## Financial Inclusion

EMERGENCY RELIEF supports people experiencing financial crisis by offering one-off immediate assistance with food, transport, phone or chemist vouchers, part-payment of utility account/s and referrals to other services that help address underlying causes of financial crisis.

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING assists people experiencing financial difficulty by providing information and support to deal with financial issues, manage debts and alleviate the stress of financial hardship.

NO-INTEREST LOAN SCHEME (NILS) offers low-income earners safe and affordable access to loans of up to \$1,500 for essential goods and services.

OUR PROGRAMS SUPPORTED



## Tenancy Advice and Advocacy

SOUTHERN SYDNEY TENANTS ADVICE AND ADVOCACY SERVICE provides information, advice and assistance to private and public housing tenants, including communicating with landlords and real estate agents and preparing for, and attending, tribunal hearings.

WE PROTECTED



## Our client stories

### Psychologist Service



I NEVER THOUGHT that, at 68 years old, I would be separated from my wife and be co-parenting a four-year-old child. I've experienced depression before and, even back home in Syria, had thoughts of self-harm, but being in Australia and far from my family made me feel more desperate and hopeless than I've ever felt before. I really didn't want to see a psychologist - I thought men were supposed to be able to bear suffering and carry on - but I found therapy life-changing. The change didn't happen immediately, it took a lot of sessions, strategies and hard work, but I am learning how to take better care of my physical and mental health and I have noticed that when I am calmer and more confident, I have more positive interactions with my ex-wife and my child.

I KNEW LIFE would be hard as a single mother of two children, but I didn't realise how many financial, housing, health and parenting difficulties I would face. On top of all these challenges, my children and I were struggling to cope with the trauma of my ex-husband's abuse, which was always in our thoughts and sometimes continued in real life when he would find us. Metro Assist came into my life at a time when I was behind on every bill, unable to pay my rent and considering giving up on attending TAFE because I was so overwhelmed and thought it would be better for my family if I got a paying job. Metro Assist staff took the time to understand my needs and helped me gain financial aid and access physical and mental health support. They also invited me to several parenting programs. Most importantly, I was able to gain an AVO against my ex-husband, along with a new home, and these things have changed our lives. Thanks to this stability, I was able to complete my TAFE studies and I am now working as a qualified beautician, which is a job I love and allows me to support my children.

### Family Preservation Service



### Targeted Earlier Intervention program



I WAS A NEW ARRIVAL from New Zealand and expecting my fourth child when I left my partner - his violence was hurting me and my children. After we moved to a women's refuge, my ex-partner gained a court order to take my children away from me. I was devastated. The staff at Metro Assist helped me in every aspect of my life - they organized for me to attend multiple parenting programs and sessions with a clinical psychologist; they also helped me to set up a new life, providing access to an income that would help me get on my feet and finding, and paying for, housing close to my children's school. I was so proud to be able to go to court and show that I can provide a safe, loving home for my children, and the judge saw that, too - I was overjoyed when my kids returned home with me.



## Settlement Services



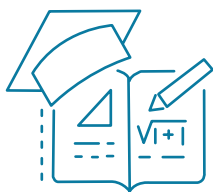
I ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA in June 2020, but I was very unhappy for many months. I didn't know anyone here and, because I didn't speak English, I didn't make friends or even know where or how I could meet new people. I thought finding a job would help me build a social network but with my limited English and no work experience in Australia, I was at a loss as to where to begin. The Metro Assist Settlement team helped me to build a support network in Australia in ways I never expected. They invited me to a parents' support group where I connected with other parents who had similar experiences to my own. It made me so happy to speak to another adult in my mother tongue at these meetings! Then, I spoke to Metro Assist staff about how I could work towards a fulfilling and financially stable job - my interest is in providing care to vulnerable people. Thanks to the support of Metro Assist, I am now working as a volunteer to build my professional experience and I am completing a Cert III in Individual Support and a Cert IV in Ageing Support at TAFE. I now look toward the future with hope because I know I have friends around me and a career ahead of me.

I'D BEEN IN AUSTRALIA for three years by the time I arrived at Dress for Work. I had spent a lot of time learning English and finally felt confident enough to apply for a good job in the banking sector. The stylist at Dress for Work fitted me with a brand-new suit, shirt, tie and shoes that made me feel like a million dollars! After my fitting, I did a mock interview with a Dress for Work consultant, to help me prepare for the real interview I had lined up. I think it was this preparation, together with my skills and looking professional, that helped me secure a role at one of Australia's Big Four banks! I am proud to be on my way to a secure and successful career in Australia.

## Dress for Work



## Employment Services



MY SON WOULD not be at university right now if it weren't for the staff at Metro Assist. His dream has always been to attend university and pursue a professional career, but we were unable to afford university fees and he is not eligible for HECS-HELP. The Employment Services staff supported my son to compile a scholarship application for his university of choice and he was awarded the Western Sydney University Crescent Foundation Leadership Scholarship! This scholarship, worth \$22,500, has changed the trajectory of his life and he is now studying full time and building the life that we dreamed he would have in Australia.



## Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service



I'VE ALWAYS BEEN house-proud. My home isn't fancy, but I like to keep it tidy and safe, especially now that I'm older and I'm worried about falls. I approached my landlord many times over the years about repairs that were needed in the home, but my requests were always ignored. It was so helpful to meet with Metro Assist staff who understood my entitlements as a tenant and how I could take action to improve my living situation. The staff supported me to collect evidence and then lodge an application for a repair order with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The tenant advocates were by my side when the NCAT representative ordered my landlord to pay for the repairs on my rental property and to waive my rent for a period. I received the maximum compensation NCAT can order thanks to the professional advice and calm support of Metro Assist staff.

## No-Interest Loan Scheme



**WHEN I ARRIVED** in Australia from Bangladesh, I wasn't eligible for any government support, so I worked during the day and studied at night to support my wife and daughter. When I enrolled my daughter in our local public school, I found out the fees would be \$4,500 per semester and I knew I would need some help to be able to give her an education. The no-interest loan I was able to obtain through Metro Assist gave me the relief I needed. Now I can pay for my daughter's school fees in manageable instalments and we can continue to work towards a better life as a family.

**WHEN I ACCESSED** financial counselling through Metro Assist, I was making \$64,000 per year, I was in \$25,000 worth of debt and I had just been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. I was so stressed about money and paying off my debts that, for three years, throughout my surgeries, chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments, I continued to go to work, even though my doctors said I shouldn't. Thankfully, Metro Assist's financial counsellors helped me negotiate a freeze on my loan repayments when I had to reduce my hours at work because I was very sick. They did so again when I was made redundant and needed some time to find a new job. When I did find a new job, the financial counsellors helped me negotiate a lump-sum settlement with the bank, so I could pay off part of the amount owed and finally be debt-free. Having a fresh start feels amazing and I know the reduced stress levels will be important for my long-term health.

## Financial Counselling



# Financial Report

Metro Assist's operations during the 2020-2021 financial year resulted in a net loss of \$273,733, as shown in the Profit and Loss Statement below.

<b>METRO ASSIST LIMITED</b>		
<b>Profit and Loss Statement</b>	<b>YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021</b>	<b>YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020</b>
Total Revenue	6,080,527	5,961,082
<b>Less Expenses:</b>		
Employees benefits expense	5,030,279	5,015,263
Program expense	481,784	435,611
Depreciation and amortisation expense	260,586	291,774
Other operating expense	581,611	679,346
	<b>6,354,260</b>	<b>6,421,994</b>
<b>Total loss for the year attributable to the members</b>	<b>-273,733</b>	<b>-460,912</b>

The reported financial performance for 2020-2021 was adversely affected by the application of the new accounting standard for revenue recognition, which resulted in over \$300,000 of funds for 2020-2021 programs having to be reported in 2019-2020. We have endeavoured to change the timing of payments from funders so that these timing differences do not arise in future years.

In the twelve months to 30 June 2021 and the four months since then, we have turned around the poor financial situation we faced in 2019-2020 and put the organisation in a much stronger financial position to better face the changing community service environment.

During 2020-2021, Metro Assist had the security of reliable funding streams. For the second year, we received additional funds to boost our emergency relief and tenancy support services for people directly impacted by COVID-19 and at increased risk of unemployment and homelessness.





The difficulties imposed by COVID-19 on the hospitality industry prompted us to permanently close our catering social enterprise business located at Pratten Park Bowling Club, Ashfield, in May 2021.

The implementation of Metro Assist's 2020/2021 business continuity and continuous improvement plan required the investment of funds and staff members' time in enhancing our Work, Health and Safety measures, IT services and data security, as well as obtaining accreditation for ISO/IEC 27001-2013 (Information Technology - Security Techniques - Information Security Management Systems).

The total of Metro Assist Limited's equity as at 30 June 2021 was \$1,349,530, as shown in the Balance Sheet overleaf. This is a drop of almost 17% from the balance at 30 June 2020. However, our financial position is not trending downwards. 27% of the equity held as at 1 July 2020 was spent on one-off strategic payments (redundancy, accrued annual leave and long service leave) to outgoing staff during 2020-2021. Metro Assist will build on the benefits achieved by the restructuring process and continue to manage our costs and strengthen our revenue streams to ensure a healthy balance sheet, enabling continued reinvestment in the organisation.

**The Auditors of Metro Assist Limited are:**

**ESV Business Advice and Accounting  
Level 13, 68 York St  
Sydney NSW 2000**

Metro Assist is grateful for funding and stakeholder support from the following organisations and agencies during 2020-2021:

- > Settlement Services International
- > Department of Social Services Australia
- > Department of Communities and Justice NSW
- > Department of Customer Service - NSW Fair Trading
- > Multicultural NSW
- > Transport for NSW
- > Cancer Institute NSW
- > Department of Customer Service - Office of Responsible Gambling NSW
- > Department of Planning, Industry and Environment NSW
- > Financial Counselling Australia
- > Good Shepherd Microfinance
- > Tenants' Union of NSW
- > Local councils
- > Local Clubs through Clubs NSW

## Metro Assist Limited

### Statement of financial position

AS AT 30 JUNE 2021		
	30 JUN 2021 \$	30 JUN 2020 \$
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,343,799	2,589,849
Trade and Other Receivables	196,656	170,832
Other Current Assets	43,903	41,601
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>2,584,358</b>	<b>2,802,282</b>
<b>Non-currents Assets</b>		
Property, Plant & Equipment	78,942	157,396
Intangible Assets	57,837	1,800
Right-of-Use Assets	187,070	379,530
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>323,849</b>	<b>538,726</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>2,908,207</b>	<b>3,341,008</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Trade and Other Payables	415,901	400,429
Lease Liabilities- Current	201,576	192,419
Employee Benefits- Current	677,327	601,739
Contract Liabilities	91,426	24,798
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	<b>1,386,230</b>	<b>1,219,385</b>
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>		
Lease Liabilities-Non-Current	—	201,575
Employee Benefits-Non-Current	172,447	296,784
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>	<b>172,447</b>	<b>498,359</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,558,677</b>	<b>1,717,745</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>1,349,530</b>	<b>1,623,263</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Reserves	309,575	269,324
Retained Earnings	1,039,955	1,353,939
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>1,349,530</b>	<b>1,623,263</b>







**Metro Assist Ltd.**

(Formerly Metro Migrant Resources Centre)  
Lvl 2, 59-63 Evaline St, Campsie NSW 2194  
02 9789 3744  
[www.metroassist.org.au](http://www.metroassist.org.au)

