

annual report 2016-2017



Chairperson's Report

I have the privilege to present the 2016-17 Annual Report of Metro Assist Limited. This is the first year of Metro Assist as "Limited" and from the Board's perspective I have confidence that we are establishing strong governance processes and lines of accountability that will serve the organisation well into the future. This year we have developed a new strategic plan that will place Metro Assist strongly at the forefront of services that assist people in need and will ensure that the organisation continues to play a vital role in the community.

This year we welcomed new directors to the Board who have contributed their own individual experience and expertise in guiding the way forward. The Board has been supported in its work through the support of a dynamic and experienced leadership team and I thank them for the excellent work they have undertaken in responding to an ever-evolving funding environment and reforms in a number of areas.

Metro Assist has strong day-to-day operational relationships with many organisations and stakeholders and it is wonderful to see that this collaborative approach continues to deliver results for our clients and for communities. I am also confident that we have the right elements for a forward thinking and dynamic organisation which include - services that are relevant to the community's needs; a team with the skills and experience to deliver those services; funding bodies that have confidence in us; and the spirit to be innovative in our approach.



I would like to acknowledge my fellow Directors who served on the Board during the reporting period and thank them for their dedication and voluntary contribution.

They include:

Jon Soemarjono
Thuat Nguyen
Jacob Carswell Doherty
Harriet Davidson
Helen Miller
Devaki Monani
Ting Lim
Nada Nasser

I extend the Board's gratitude to the CEO, Lou Bacchiella and his management team, and to all the incredibly dedicated staff, volunteers and students who are at the frontline of the organisation. We are extremely grateful to our funding bodies for their support and to all our partners and collaborators.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the many people we serve for their own unique strengths and inner spirit. We recognise the value and contributions that each individual makes to our society and to our immediate communities.

I wish Metro Assist continuing success into the future.

Elena Berrocal Capdevila
Chairperson

Our Vision

A socially just society that respects individuality, dignity and diversity and provides avenues for all people to fulfil their potential.

CEO Report



The 2016-17 reporting period saw many highlights and developments for the organisation. In September we celebrated the opening of our Bankstown office in Meredith Street, thereby placing our services closer to where the needs are in terms of client access. In close proximity to Centrelink and other welfare organisations, it has rapidly become a busy office. In December we celebrated our 30th anniversary in true style with a fun-filled evening of dance and entertainment, the highlight being a fashion parade by our male staff members to show off the latest fashion trends in our Dress for Work program. While it wasn't quite like the catwalks of Milan, Paris or New York, Club Punchbowl put on the light display and music that would leave Naomi Campbell wishing she were there. The boys strutted their stuff while the guests fell about laughing (with joy of course) and we clearly demonstrated what Metro Assist is made of – people who will stop at nothing to achieve a great result.

Metro Assist is one of 23 organisations which make up the NSW Settlement Partnership, a consortium headed by Settlement Services International (SSI) and funded by the Department of Social Services through the Settlement Services Program. Our settlement team has done some exemplary work across a broad spectrum of needs among newly-arrived migrants and refugees and they were able to resolve some very complex cases. We were again hosted for pre-Christmas lunch and gift presentation by our wonderful friends from St Michael's Anglican Church at Vaucluse and we have seen some

wonderful interactions established among the ladies from the church and refugee women.

The team has been busy running citizenship classes, helping people acquire their driver's license, delivering immigration advice, running information and community education programs, engaging with young people and helping people into training and employment, as well as participating in local events and providing that much needed one-on-one support to clients. We also work closely with a number of ethnic-specific organisations within our immediate region.

We have established excellent collaborations with other organisations such as the Lebanese Muslim Association in delivering our Dare-to-be-Sensible program to young people, and with the Muslim Women's Association in support of Linking Hearts as part of the NSW Government's Going Home Staying Home program to assist people fleeing domestic violence. Our collaboration with Rosemount Good Shepherd continues to flourish in providing financial counselling and the No Interest Loans Scheme to people who are experiencing financial stress and disadvantage.

In June 2017 we received notification that the NSW Department of Family and Community Services were favourable to an enhancement of our caseload for the CALD Brighter Futures program in Bankstown and Fairfield which is a tremendous vote of confidence in the service we provide. We are currently exploring

Our Mission

To empower individuals, families and communities of diverse backgrounds through innovative, professional and responsive services.

the use of specialist support such as psychological counselling to facilitate stronger engagement by the families with the program, which will lead to better outcomes. The process of co-designing services began as part of the Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) reform process which affects our Inner West based family programs funded through Child Youth and Family Support, Families First and Community Builders. It is envisaged that the reforms will lead to better and more flexible service arrangements for clients.

In the second year of SkillME we helped over 600 people seek employment, undergo training, or have their qualifications recognised. Employer engagement has become a key focus for SkillME in which we have targeted key growth sectors with job opportunities such as aged and disability, warehousing and logistics, heavy vehicle licenses, construction, engineering, finance and medical technology.

In May we presented our funding body, Multicultural NSW, with a mid-term evaluation report which highlights the significant strengths of the model in supporting migrants with different skill levels and employment experiences. Our employment support work was boosted through a great partnership with SSI to deliver the ParentsNext program in Bankstown. The program targets parents whose children are about school age to help them in either entering, or re-entering the workforce by establishing a personal plan and engaging them in activities that support them in pursuing their aspirations.

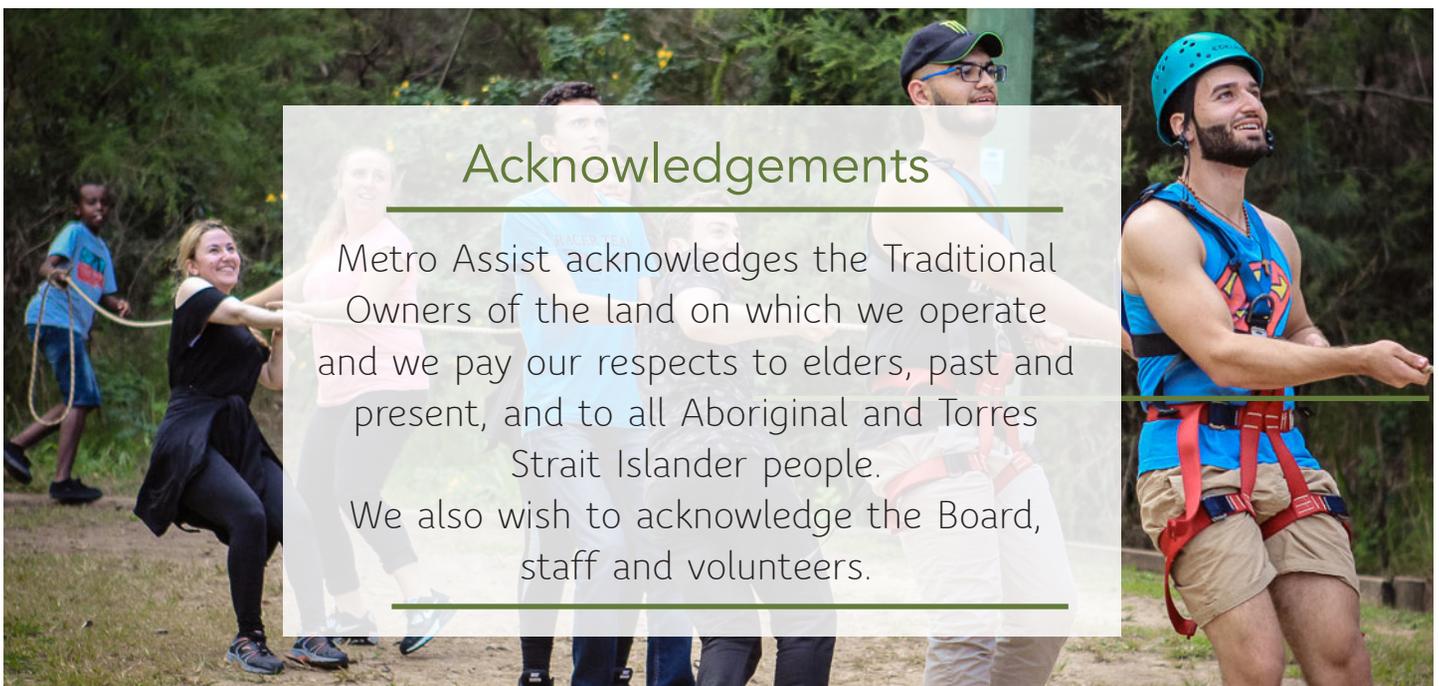
There are many ongoing challenges for our clients such as economic stress, financial disadvantage, relationship breakdowns and many other crises. Urgent calls for assistance in tenancy matters, financial counselling and emergency relief are indicators of the stresses faced by many low and middle income households in our region. The complexity of cases we are seeing in our family services and settlement support work also highlight the need for services offered by our organisation. We will continue to monitor and develop responses to meet the community's needs as they emerge.

“We have passionate and dedicated people who step up every day and do extraordinary things for their clients.”

I thank every one of our staff members, volunteers and students for their unwavering commitment to the organisation and the Board for its guidance and direction. I also thank our funding bodies for their confidence in us to deliver services, and our partners and collaborators for helping us.

We look forward to your continued support.

Lou Bacchiella
CEO



Acknowledgements

Metro Assist acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate and we pay our respects to elders, past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We also wish to acknowledge the Board, staff and volunteers.

Settlement Services

Major highlights and achievements

Given that the SSP Team is the largest in the organisation, the following are only a snippet of the special highlights from the previous year's activities:

Capacity Building

FRESH: Focusing on Refined Enhanced Skills and Habits – Youth Project

Funded by the SSI Settlement Innovation Fund – FRESH was a value added program to the Settlement Services Program overall Programs.

FRESH concentrated on a series of early intervention workshops, educational and recreational activities targeting young people aged 14-24 year olds from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to engage and positively orientate them into their new society.

The program also focused on building the capacity amongst young people to make informed choices regarding various aspects of their lives; including education, relationships, employment, social behaviours and mental health.

“Newly arrived refugees face challenges that prevent them from accessing formal institutions in Australian society. These challenges include English language skills, unfamiliarity with laws & regulations, lack of social groups and unawareness of community services.”



CASE STUDY: Anahita's Story

Anahita (not her real name) arrived recently from India, she came to us seeking assistance to gain employment, she was unfamiliar with the local community services & she required recognition of her previous qualification's in teaching. A person centred approach was taken to help her create her own visual goal plan & to investigate different pathways to employment, such as job websites, recruitment agencies, volunteer work & further study.

Anahita was also referred to SkillME which provided her with opportunities to learn new vocational skills. She also attended Job seeking workshops that have helped with resume writing, interview skills, & knowledge of work place culture.

This support has added to the client's social capacity, and helped them know what services and programs will assist in settling into their new country. The increase of this knowledge has helped build on their sense of belonging and also increase their confidence in accessing local community services.

Anahita is undertaking vocational training with BCA. She has gained enough confidence to facilitate an English Conversation group in her local area of Granville.

A major component of FRESH was the youth camps in which groups of newly arrived young people were given the opportunity to come together in a safe environment and share their life experiences.

“There was a robust rapport established amongst the participants, program facilitators and caseworkers – and this was pivotal in capturing the triumphant outcomes the FRESH activities achieved.”

The program also provided the opportunity to build skills in developing and maintaining effective social connections and relationships.

Acquiring relevant driving skills and a driving licence was one of the challenges FRESH participants highlighted in their activity feedback, as a result the program incorporated the opportunity for the participants to get their provisional driver’s which is instrumental in their quest to gain sustainable employment.

Program and Enterprise Development

The Pratten Park Employment Initiative

On Saturday 16 September 2017 Metro Assist officially launched the Pratten Park Employment Initiative at Pratten Park Community Sports and Bowling Club in Ashfield. The Pratten Park Employment Initiative represents an innovative partnership that will ensure that newly-arrived migrants and refugees are able to receive hospitality training and apprenticeships accredited with TAFE NSW. The longer-term survival of the Pratten Park Community Sports and Bowling Club will be boosted by the establishment of a restaurant that will be staffed by graduates of the training program.





The kitchen facilities at Pratten Park Community Sports and Bowling Club have been fully renovated with the support of funding from ClubsNSW, the Federal Community Builders Grant and NSW State Government and the Inner West Council.

The event was officiated by Mr Lou Bacchiella (Metro Assist CEO), Mr Gordon Latham (President of Pratten Park Community Sports and Bowling Club), the Hon Anthony Albanese MP (Federal Member for Grayndler, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development and Shadow Minister for Tourism) and Jo Haylen MP (Member for Summer Hill in the NSW State Government).

The event was attended by 100 people including members of the Pratten Park Community Sports and Bowling Club, hospitality trainees and their families and local community leaders and members. During the event the kitchen was officially opened and people were able to tour the renovated facilities.

“All official guests spoke with excitement for the opportunities that this initiative will provide to trainees and their families, the Pratten Park Sports and Bowling Club and the wider local community.”

Metro Assist would like to extend its thanks to those who were involved in the organising of the event and we look forward to providing further updates on the progress of this productive partnership.

Losena Fuko
Settlement Services Manager

Family Services

Metro Assist remains committed to improving the health, safety and wellbeing of our families and the children within our family services. Family and children are central to everything we do and their safety and wellbeing is our first priority.

Best practice in early intervention programs dictates that service models are underpinned by a belief that the challenges faced by vulnerable, disadvantaged families require multiple, complex responses. To this end, Metro Assist Family Services offers a range of services and support. Core services include families accessing quality childcare, access to group based parenting programs; and structured home visiting programs delivered one on one.

The Family Services team work closely with CALD families, children, and young people. Support is provided to reduce risk factors that may lead to child abuse, neglect, and domestic violence.

“Our aim is to improve and empower families to live independently while meeting their current needs.”

Metro Assist has welcomed the NSW Family and Community Services (FACS) Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) reforms. Inequality is a real lived experience for many of our families. Families sometimes experience unique and challenging times which increase their vulnerability. Their needs can vary from occasional and low levels to having very high needs and significant challenges.



In 2016-2017 NSW Family and Community Service (FACS) recognised the importance of the range of influences and circumstances with the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI), and have introduced a number of different service delivery options, to support and empower client's during different stages in their lives.

In 2016 we provided a number of client focussed consultations and surveys within our family programs. The main goal of these consultations and surveys is to give us insight into what is working well and what we could do better for the families we support. Survey results, and in particular what we identify as 'priorities for action', are used to inform our quality improvement plans and future direction.

Metro Assist continues to invest in, develop, train and work with its staff as these elements underpin the successful delivery of integrated services for children and families. We know that if there are too few staff and that if staff are not adequately trained and supported, they can't effectively provide nurturing and interesting environments for young children or help to families.

We appreciate our team's role in providing the best start in life for those children in our services, and we know that ensuring this positive start takes care, skill, commitment and training.

“Empowering and supporting our staff is essential if we are to deliver high quality, inclusive and transdisciplinary services.”

The Inner West Family Program

The Inner West Family Connect (IWFC) and Early Intervention Placement Program (EIPP) have supported over 638 families and young people within the Inner West LGA's (Strathfield, Ashfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Canterbury, Marrickville, Glebe, and Leichhardt). This includes information, referrals, case management and case support.

Both programs are experiencing a significant increase in complex case support; case workers are supporting families, children and young people who are experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, financial hardship, unemployment, and/or dealing with family members with a disability.

Over the last 12 months our family team has been involved with the TEI data trials. This has been a great opportunity for Metro Assist to provide valuable input towards measuring outcomes and the collection of data for reporting requirements. We are now in the second phase of the trial and looking forward to seeing an outcome framework that measures the success achieved by our families.

We offered a number of parenting programs such as Triple P, Tuning into Kids, and Budgeting Skills, as well as health talks and Domestic Violence Information Sessions to over 160 families.

Part of the success of our parenting programs has been due to successful collaborations and partnerships with key services such as the Australian Catholic University, Burwood Council, Inner West Council, Child Abuse Prevention Service (CAPS), Strathfield Council, Connect Marrickville, and Glebe, Lakemba and Punchbowl Schools as Community Centres (SACC).



“The strength of working in collaboration has allowed the family team to deliver over 40 parenting programs across 8 LGA's. These programs have been well received within the community as a result of a shared vision.”

Brighter Futures

Our Brighter Futures program in Bankstown and Fairfield provides for families who are expecting a child, have children from birth to eight years, and who face significant issues or hardships. Priority of access is given to families with children less than three years of age. Families receive intensive ongoing case management support using a strength based approach.

Enhancing outcomes for children in vulnerable circumstances defines our Brighter Futures goal. We work with families to set strategies to achieve long term goals. The program also has a focus on family relationships and family referral pathways to other community services to reduce isolation while empowering the client to build a relationship with the community.

As each family is unique, and has different needs, caseworkers have been equipped with the relevant knowledge of services and programs that can best respond to the individual needs of the children and families.

In 2016-2017, the Brighter Futures team received 50 Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) referrals. The team works closely with FACS caseworkers through warm referrals which has resulted in increased engagement with families.

Community Hubs

The Community Hubs Program in Ashfield and Strathfield LGA's are funded by FACS Community Builders program, with the aim of increasing inclusion and engagement of people with their local community.

The Hubs work with populations that are marginalised or at risk of marginalisation with an emphasis on families, socially isolated individuals and new arrivals. Community Hubs receive many requests for information about local services and can generally provide choice and a place to go for additional support or advice. Being a trusted and accessible service, the Hubs often find themselves at the front line for a broad range of inquiries about local services and information.

The Community Hubs also provide pathways for community members through educational and social programs such as literacy connection programs for isolated adults, home support programs for young children and seniors health education sessions.

“The Hubs use a collaborative approach to strengthen connections between individuals, communities, services, and agencies.”

Community Engagement

Ashfield & Homebush Community Hubs

5453

People received information & referrals



260

Services coordinated



178

Collaborations & Partnerships



8

Events organised





CASE STUDY: Houwayda's Story

Houwayda is the sole parent of four children, who was living in Campsie until recently. Houwayda was diagnosed with a brain tumour earlier in the year and for this reason wanted to be transferred closer to her family in the Chester Hill area. A Family Services worker supported Houwayda in successfully getting a transfer.

The worker also referred her to a one day parenting workshop at Prospect, got her son a free laptop for school and free soccer lessons, introduced her to the local food bank (Staples bag) and got her daughter's school fees waived.

The Family Services worker also secured a hair dressing apprenticeship for Houwayda's eldest son but unfortunately he failed to attend. The worker referred Houwayda and her son Issa to a community health centre for ongoing counselling.

The Hubs focus on tackling emerging needs at a community level, through community engagement, resulting in better integration of service delivery.

Over the last 12 months the Hubs have welcomed external community organisations to out-reach to our community members by providing support services. We have welcomed services such as MOSIAC (Justice Connect), Legal Aid, and Tax Free Help to name a few who recognise the need to provide outreach support services for isolated clients requiring specialised help.

Among our highlights the Community Hubs have worked with government agencies, councils, and other services to deliver a range of activities and events including Senior's information programs, Healthy Families Project, Safe Child, Safe Community and mental health awareness workshops.

We also collaborated in a variety of events throughout the year to mark significant dates such as NAIDOC week, Harmony Day, White Ribbon Day, Child Protection Week and International Women's Day.

We would also like to acknowledge the ongoing collaboration with the many educational institutions that provided student placements and have supported our work

Michelle Lazaris
Manager Family Services

Employment Services

Dress for Work

Dress for Work is a project which aims to assist disadvantaged clients by providing free donated business attire and delivering Job Readiness Training support. In 2016-2017 alone Dress for Work dressed and trained over 1,000 clients from over 60 service providers including the Australian Red Cross, Asylum Seekers Centre, Father Riley's Youth off the Streets and Disability Services Australia

Dress for Work continues to deliver key employment supports to clients in the Bankstown LGA as well as to the wider New South Wales region. Reflecting our commitment to the Bankstown LGA, Dress for Work has secured funding to go towards the expansion of the Dress for Work storage site which will see a newly refurbished workspace for our dedicated staff and volunteers.

“Volunteers continue to play a crucial role in the day-to-day operations at Dress for Work.”

It is envisaged that the expansion of the facility will enable Dress for Work to effectively service more clients in the coming years as well as provide a welcoming work space for volunteers and staff.

This financial year Dress for Work recruited a professional stylist who volunteered her skills and time to Dress for Work clients. We also saw one of our long-standing volunteers, Sititi Apuo, recognised with the Pacific Islands Council – Employment and Education Award for her commitment to Dress for Work. Dress for Work continues to pride itself as a project that encourages community engagement and capacity building through its volunteer program.

SkillMe

SkillME started in June 2015 as a demonstration project funded by Multicultural NSW to assist clients in getting into training and work, and to assist them in having their overseas skills and qualifications recognised.

In the 12 months from July 2016 till June 2017, we saw 354 clients, 85.3% of whom are from Asian and Middle Eastern countries. SkillME also delivered seven full vocational qualification training workshops, four partial qualification training workshops, and seven short training programs and workshops.

Working with a range of partners SkillME has developed a collaborative and creative intervention and training model for employment. We engage the relevant stakeholders in training and employment and come up with a person-centred wrap-around support model to facilitate the participant's English language skills, vocational skills development and engagement with employers.

One of these projects is the very successful Certificate III in Individual Support training we delivered in partnership with MTC Australia, BCA National Training and Chinese Australian Services Society (CASS) between July and December 2016. This project, like all full vocational training projects we run, consolidates our collaboration with training organisations, employers, English language training providers and JobActive agencies. It cuts down the time clients need to engage with a suite of



employment services, and more importantly it facilitates English learning in a vocational skill development context. It also promises a better employment outcome with the engagement of the employer.

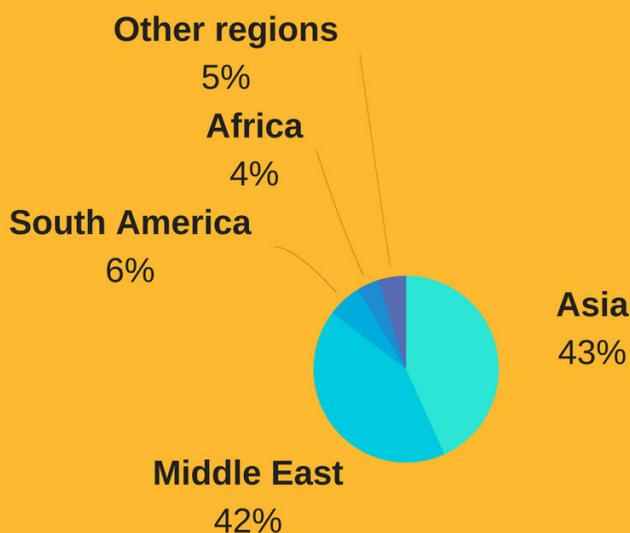
Our flagship Skilled Migrant Development Program which is run three times a year has assisted 60 migrants and refugees with overseas qualifications and skills to find professional employment.

26 clients benefited from our driving program through which they were able to get their driver's license to assist with job seeking.



“Recently we tracked over 100 clients for their employment outcomes and 60% of them have been able to find some form of employment after engaging with SkillME.”

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



“In total we engaged with 294 participants in a wide range of training and employment support activities.”

CASE STUDY: Lawand's Story

Lawand came to Australia from Syria in late 2014 with his young family. He was a senior engineer with many years of experience in construction before he fled the country in 2012 to Egypt. During Lawand's job search in Sydney he also completed a Diploma in Civil Construction and is currently doing his Masters in Structural Engineering.

In May 2017 he sought assistance from SkillME after many unsuccessful job applications to find employment as an engineer. He joined our Skilled Migrant Development Program and we connected Lawand with a multinational construction company. Lawand was a shining star in the interview and received the job offer as an engineer from the company.

Here he is standing with a pair of work boots from our colleagues at Dress for Work before he started the job!



Tenancy and Financial Inclusion

The Tenancy and Financial Inclusion team provides information to individuals and intensive casework to assist clients facing everyday challenges with renting their homes, managing their finances, seeking short term relief for emergencies and obtaining low cost financial products.

Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service

The SSTAAS team assisted over 1200 new clients on tenancy matters. Terminations were the highest issue (415), followed by rental bonds, compensation (305), rent (384) and repairs (255). There were 172 matters returned to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).

SSTAAS provides duty advocacy at Sutherland NCAT one day per week and Liverpool NCAT one day fortnight. During 2016/17 we assisted 284 tenants in duty advocacy, and this included providing on the spot advice (129) so that tenants could make informed decisions, assisted 133 in conciliation with negotiations with landlords and real estate agents and provided immediate representation to vulnerable clients in 36 hearings.

“Duty advocacy is a key element to delivering services to tenants. It means we can assist those tenants who can represent themselves with advice and assistance on the day; but also enables SSTAAS to refer vulnerable tenants who need more intensive assistance back to the team.”

CASE STUDY: Jean's Story

SSTAAS provided extensive assistance to an elderly tenant in public housing. Jean had lived in her one bedroom unit for thirty years, but due to increasing levels of social isolation she had developed a habit of hoarding cats. The cats were strays from the local area, and Jean enjoyed their company.

The cats, however, had become an issue with neighbours. Some years ago Legal Aid assisted her to reach a consent agreement with her social housing landlord about the number of cats she could keep. After the agreement was reached no further assistance was provided.

Ultimately Jean was back in the Tribunal and again facing termination of her tenancy. SSTAAS linked Jean into a disability service that agreed to provide a home visiting service two days per week and a new consent agreement was reached which enabled Jean to remain in her home.

SSTAAS works intensively with vulnerable clients. Many of these clients are at risk of homelessness if assistance is not provided. These clients often have significant disabilities or chronic medical conditions; or are increasingly older tenants who have rented their premises for long periods and can no longer afford the private rental market.

There has been significant redevelopment of land and homes across Sydney, which has led to increased rents and limited access to rental housing for those on low incomes. In some cases residents in older style retirement villages face the loss of their housing and difficulties in accessing new accommodation.

Not for profit retirement villages are under immense pressures from developers to buy out their villages and force existing residents onto the private market. Tenants often make up the majority of residents in not for profit retirement villages.

Going Home Staying Home

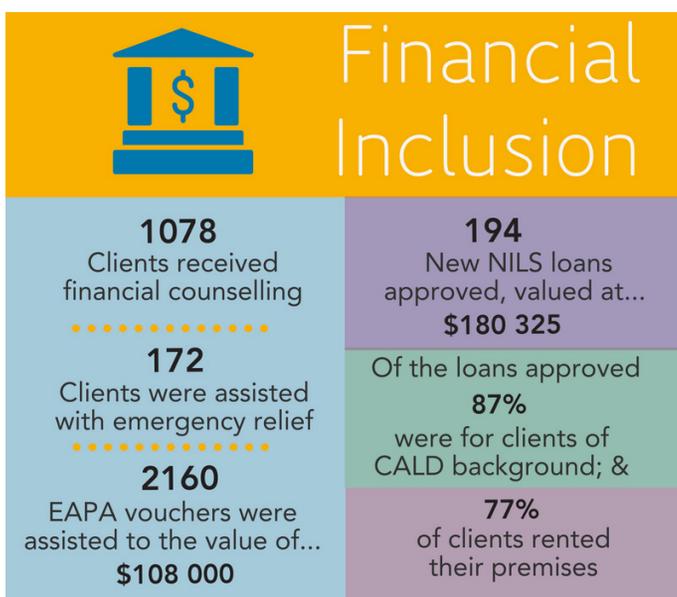
Metro Assist is a partner in a regional service known as Linking Hearts. Linking Hearts is funded through the Specialist Housing Services and the lead agency is Muslim Womens Association. Linking Hearts provides refuge, transitional housing and housing support to CALD families in Canterbury Bankstown who are facing homelessness.

Metro Assist's role is to work directly with clients to assist in securing private rental accommodation. It is intensive one-on-one casework, assisting clients to identify suitable properties and then assisting them to lodge applications and negotiate with real estate agencies. During 2016-17 we assisted around 8 clients per month.

Inner Western Sydney Financial Counselling Service

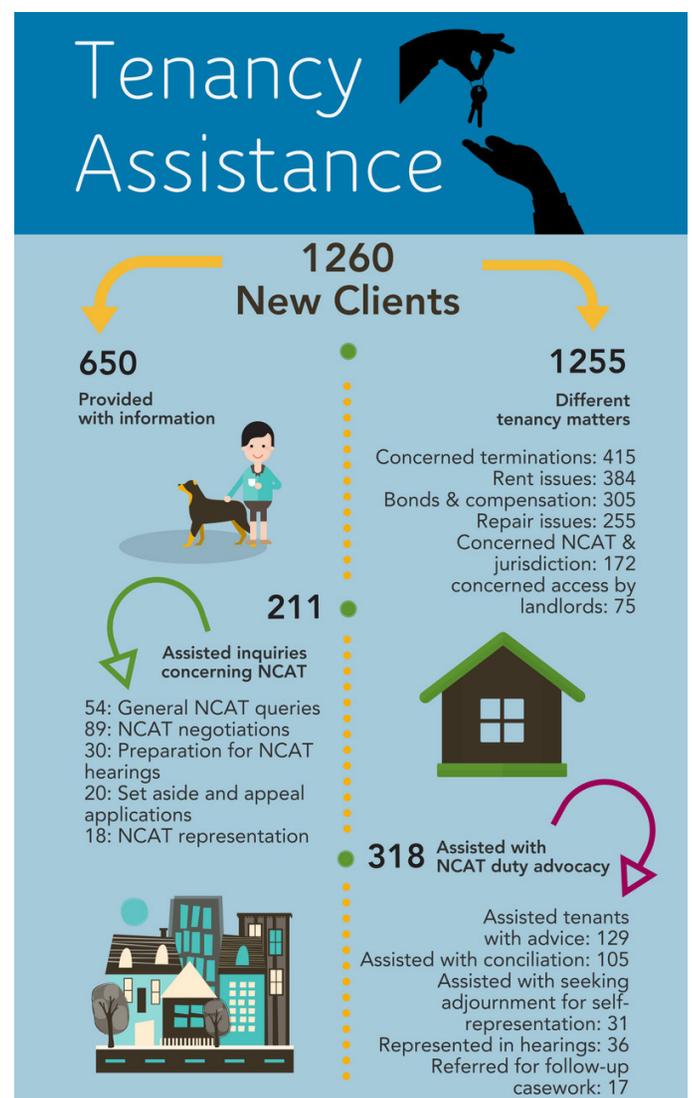
Financial counselling is delivered in partnership with Good Shepherd Australia and works with clients facing financial challenges that impact on their day to day lives. Our accredited financial counsellors provide intensive casework to people who find themselves in debt beyond their means and work with creditors to seek a way forward for the client.

The Inner Western Sydney Financial Counselling Service operates from 3 locations – Ashfield, Campsie and Marrickville; in participation with Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand. This is supplemented by outreach at the Canterbury City Community Centre Lakemba, and outreach at Bridge Housing provided by Good Shepherd. In addition the service participates in community activities such as the Ashfield Carnival of Cultures, and regional interagencies.



“Much of the financial crises seen by the service tends to occur with the overuse of credit cards, purchase contracts and people using pay-day lenders which charge exorbitant fees and interest rates that often put people further in debt.”

Debt issues are compounded for many of our clients come from CALD backgrounds, with limited understanding and experience of the Australian financial sector.



No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

NILS provides fee-free and no interest loans to low and moderate income earners for necessary household goods and services. Loans are capped at \$1200 and repaid in small instalments of around twenty dollars per fortnight.

NILS not only provides an opportunity to purchase much needed goods and services, but helps clients to achieve improved social inclusion with family and their local communities. The NILS programme operates with funding from NSW Fair Trading, Good Shepherd Microfinance and loans capital from the National Australia Bank.

“An important ethos of NILS is that loans must not only be affordable, but responsible and ethical.”

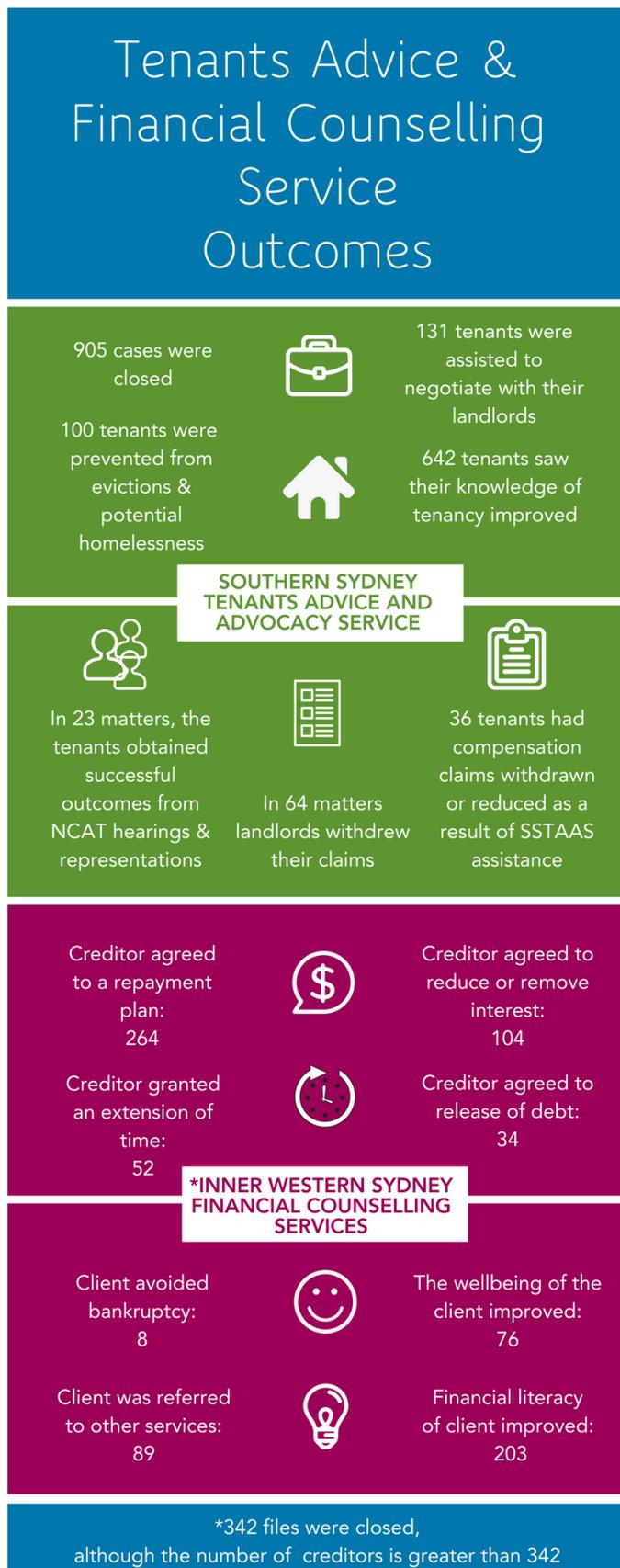
All applicants for NILS must provide evidence of their income, their capacity to meet accounts when they are due and provide a copy of their bank statements. When assessing applications we frequently find that clients have used payday lenders and rent to buy loan providers. These are expensive and often leave users in debt.

During 2016-17 Metro Assist was a partner with Office of Environment and Heritage. We promoted their program on the replacement of fridges and televisions to assist low income households to maximise their opportunities to reduce their utility costs.

As part of that program we assisted 60 households to obtain affordable appliances through the Home Energy Appliances programs in conjunction with the Good Guys.

EAPA and Emergency Relief

Emergency relief is provided to low income residents in the inner west of Sydney. This service provides immediate short term financial assistance to clients facing financial hardship. Around 160 or more clients are assisted each year, with most clients receiving assistance with food vouchers but also with transport, purchasing of essential medicines, and basic removalist assistance when escaping domestic violence.



Case Study - Ana's Story

Ana migrated to Australia to live with her husband. She was experiencing great difficulties in finding employment due to her lack of English and lack of contacts in her previous line of work. She agreed to a joint credit card with her husband. The relationship with her husband ultimately broke down. Ana told the bank they had split, and tried to have the credit card account closed. The bank declined and stated that she needed her husband's signature.

For six months her husband continued to spend on the credit card until there was a debt of over \$30,000. Eventually the bank sold the debt to a debt collector; and the debt collector chose to chase only Ana for payment; and not her husband. Ana was referred to the financial counselling service. She was extremely stressed as the debt collector was contacting her almost every day. Ana informed the financial counsellor that she had never used the credit card, and kept records of all the times she had contacted the bank.

The financial counsellor advocated on her behalf. She obtained a copy of the original application which confirmed that Ana was a secondary signature only, and was not in employment at that time. The financial counsellor submitted to the debt collector that Ana was not responsible for the credit card. After six months the matter was referred to their legal department, and agreed to cease any claim against Ana and to close the matter.



Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) is provided across Canterbury Bankstown to households experiencing difficulties paying gas and electricity accounts, and is provided to prevent disconnection. There are increasing demands for EAPA assistance as the cost of utilities increases.

Not only does EAPA assist struggling households, the program also enables caseworkers to link clients into other service programs to develop long term strategies to assist with the challenges of living on a low income.

This strength of EAPA is being built as Metro Assist participates in Bring Your Bill Days that are co-ordinated by Energy and Water Ombudsman (EWON) and involve multiple community organisations at the one site.

Rita Wilkinson

Tenancy and Financial Inclusion Services manager

Financial Summary

The net surplus for the financial year 2016-2017 is \$1,456,342 less \$120,000 transferred to capital reserve and \$121,535 transferred to the restructuring fund leaving a balance of retained profits of \$1,214,807.

The gain on the acquisition of Metro Assist Incorporated was \$1,511,561. On 26 October, 2016 Metro Assist Incorporated transferred its assets and liabilities to Metro Assist Limited for zero consideration and was deregistered.

In 2016-2017, there was a slight increase in Government grants due to CPI increases and the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) payments received from funding bodies is reflected in increased wages. Interest income increased 23% due to additional funds invested in term deposits attracting a higher interest rate.

The equity position of Metro Assist remains strong with total net assets of \$1,456,342.

For the continuity of the services, Directors recognise the need for assured funding and the organisation's ability to diversify its funding base into new areas of service.

Acknowledgement to Funding Bodies

Metro Assist acknowledges the continued support of the following funding bodies:

Department of Social Services
Department of Employment
NSW Department of Family and Community Services
NSW Office of Fair Trading
Multicultural NSW
Attorney General's Department
Local Councils and ClubGrants
Charitable Trusts and Foundations for small grants

William Buck
Chartered Accountants
Level 29, 66 Goulbourn Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Metro Assist Limited

Metro Assist Limited Statement of financial position As at 30 June 2017

	Note	2017 \$	2016 \$
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	7	2,964,121	-
Trade and other receivables	8	112,235	-
Other	9	57,888	-
Total current assets		<u>3,134,244</u>	<u>-</u>
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	10	<u>211,156</u>	<u>-</u>
Total non-current assets		<u>211,156</u>	<u>-</u>
Total assets		<u>3,345,400</u>	<u>-</u>
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	11	184,389	-
Borrowings	12	103,885	-
Employee benefits	13	477,802	-
Other	14	1,099,267	-
Total current liabilities		<u>1,865,343</u>	<u>-</u>
Non-current liabilities			
Employee benefits	15	<u>23,715</u>	<u>-</u>
Total non-current liabilities		<u>23,715</u>	<u>-</u>
Total liabilities		<u>1,889,058</u>	<u>-</u>
Net assets		<u>1,456,342</u>	<u>-</u>
Equity			
Reserves	16	241,535	-
Retained surpluses		<u>1,214,807</u>	<u>-</u>
Total equity		<u>1,456,342</u>	<u>-</u>



Campsie (Head office)
Level 2, 59-63 Evaline St
PO Box 503
Campsie NSW 2914
T 02 9789 3744
F 02 9718 0236

Bankstown Office
62 Meredith Street,
Bankstown NSW 2200
T 02 8709 0200
F 02 8709 0299

Ashfield Community Hub

Suite 1, 260 Liverpool Rd
Ashfield NSW 2131
T 02 9798 1700
F 02 9798 1717

Homebush Community Hub

1B Bates Street
Homebush NSW 2140
T 02 9746 8217

Condell Park Office

43 Simmat Ave
Condell Park NSW 2200
T 02 9790 1766
F 02 9790 2622

E metroassist@metroassist.org.au
W www.metroassist.org.au