



Many tracks, one road, sustaining community.
Northern Rivers Community Gateway

Annual report
2020-21

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Organisational snapshot	4
Our activity	6
Chairperson's report	8
Chief executive officer's report	9
Social inclusion services	11
Financial inclusion services	12
Children and young people's services	14
Community support services	15
Indigenous support services	16
Continuous improvement	17
Treasurer's report	18

Our vision *Many tracks, one road, sustaining community.*

Geographic coverage

We provide services throughout the state of New South Wales.



Our people

Members of staff who were working with Northern Rivers Community Gateway over the last year.



Our services

Social and financial inclusion

- Community Hub

- Volunteer Resource Centre
- Community Visitors Scheme
- Northern Rivers No Interest Loans Scheme
- NSW No Interest Loans Scheme management
- StepUP low interest loans
- Warruwi Aboriginal gambling help
- Work and Development Orders
- First Step emergency relief
- NSW financial inclusion coordination
- Be Connected

Community hub facilities

- Community information
- First Step emergency relief
- Assisted referral
- Community calendar
- Budget counsellor
- Tax Help
- Computer tuition and senior's kiosk
- Food pantry
- Shower facilities
- Laundry facilities
- Backpack Beds
- Room hire and office facilities
- JP services

Community support

- Parents Under Pressure
- Connecting Families
- Child and adolescent trauma counselling
- Reaching Out
- Helping Hands Aboriginal homelessness support

Children's services

- Rainbow Region Kids
 - Before School Care
 - After School Care
 - Vacation Club
- Books & Butterflies

Our core values

Vision

Commitment

Respect

Integrity

Innovation

Our purpose

- Strategically secure funds to deliver programs and services that target socially and economically disadvantaged people.
- Establish an evidence base to plan, develop and manage innovative services that deliver positive social impacts and improve personal and community capacities.
- Provide facilities that promote community engagement and harmony by supporting community groups and services.
- Provide collaborative leadership to celebrate diversity and advocate for social justice.
- Advocate for empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Provide opportunities for service users to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

Accreditation

We are proud to have achieved independently assessed, external accreditation, assessed by Quality Innovation Performance against the *QIC Health and Community Services 7th Edition Standards*.



Our locations

Head office and Lismore Community Hub

76 Carrington Street, Lismore NSW 2480

Goonellabah

10 Centenary Dr, Goonellabah NSW 2480

Grafton

2/70 Prince Street, Grafton NSW 2460

Murwillumbah

Room 8, Murwillumbah Community Centre, Nullum Street, Murwillumbah NSW 2487

Rainbow Region Kids locations

St. Joseph's Primary School
11 Perry Street, Alstonville NSW 2477

Casino West Public School
84 Hotham Street, Casino NSW 2470

Kyogle Public School
Summerland Highway, Kyogle NSW 2474

Lismore Public School
10 Pound Street, Lismore NSW 2480

Ocean Shores Public School
166 Shara Boulevard, Ocean Shores North, NSW 2483

Wollongbar Public School
Simpson Avenue, Wollongbar NSW 2477

First Step outreach locations

Byron Community Centre
69 Jonson Street, Byron Bay NSW 2481

Casino Neighbourhood Centre
138 Canterbury Street, Casino NSW 2470

Kyogle Family Support Services
5 Geneva Street, Kyogle NSW 2474

Murwillumbah Community Centre
Nullum Street, Knox Park, Murwillumbah NSW 2487

Our activity

Leadership

- Our strategic direction 2020-23
- Membership of NSW Department of Social Services Emergency Relief NSW-ACT subcommittee
- Membership of Homelessness NSW and Homelessness Australia boards of governance
- Membership of Area Health advisory committee
- Membership of Red Inc board
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Disaster management committee
- Business and continuity plans
- Clinical governance committee
- Mental health committee
- Stakeholder and staff engagement surveys
- External evaluation of virtual service delivery
- Mobile workforce strategies
- Infrastructure for hybrid increased service delivery
- Adaptable workforce, COVID safety and compliance

Social impact

- Membership of key service provider networks
- Ongoing IT capacity building
- Clinical governance committee
- Affordable housing project for older women – DA approved
- Disaster-ready facilities established
- Tracking of client disaster impact
- Bank of social impact assessment tools
- Integration of assessment tools into CRM
- Adaptable service delivery during COVID-19 pandemic
- Virtual service delivery
- Hybrid service delivery options
- External research to evaluate virtual delivery during COVID and map client journey
- Aboriginal cross cultural awareness training for all managers and staff
- Trauma-informed practice training for specialised staff
- Mental health training for all managers and staff

Strategic growth

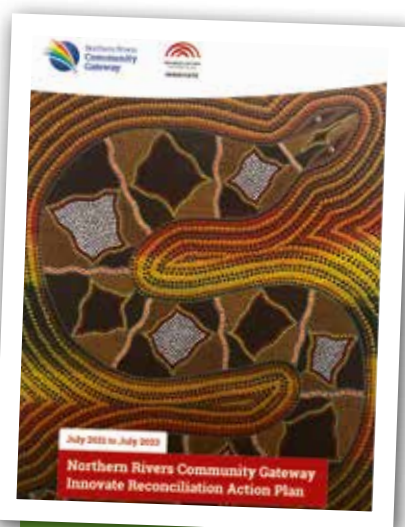
- IT capacity building
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Operational plan
- QIC Health and Community Service Standards 7th Edition accreditation mid-review
- Organisation-wide Child Safe review
- Internal rewards and recognition program
- Shop-top affordable housing project – DA approved
- Hybrid service delivery during COVID-19 pandemic
- Relocation and expansion of Rainbow Region Kids services in Alstonville
- Digital engagement for CVS delivery expanded
- Trauma counselling provision for clients affected by COVID
- Resourced SHS to take the lead in assisting clients through NDIS application process
- MOUs with key local services
- Ongoing planning of financial inclusion conference
- Expanded financial inclusion conference program to reflect current social trends

Leadership

- Uninterrupted essential services
- Service delivery adaptation to meet emerging needs with virtual and outreach provision
- Initiated automated system changes for HR, training and WHS to support virtual, off-site and paperless operation
- Leading partner of NSW Financial Inclusion Network
- Successful accreditation assessment of RRK services in Alstonville, Casino, Kyogle and Ocean Shores
- Conducted organisation-wide Child Safe Standards review and implement improvements
- Child and Family Development worker
- Achieved ASES-equivalent accreditation for Specialised Homelessness Service
- Advocacy and funding sourcing for single older women experiencing homelessness

Social impact

- Client, staff and stakeholder surveys and used responses to inform improvements
- Framework for peer supervision across therapeutic teams
- High levels of Aboriginal participation across all programs
- NILS Indigenous Money Network projects
- TEI target outcomes developed
- 95% client satisfaction rate for trauma counselling services
- Recognised disability as a major barrier to sustainable housing and achieved a large number of successful NDIS applications
- Successful round 3 CCCF funding for Child and Family Development worker
- Trauma counselling review findings embedded into practice



Reconciliation Action Plan.



Shop-top affordable housing development.

While COVID-19 remains an ongoing worldwide & community concern, it presents continued challenges to our organisation.

Given these challenges, Northern Rivers Community Gateway, in accordance with our COVID-19 plan, policy and procedures, continued to provide uninterrupted services to the most vulnerable in our communities.

The CEO, managers and staff should be congratulated on their commitment to the organisation, particularly as this year saw the untimely death of our Information Technology Officer, Terry Houlahan. Terry was a valued member of the Community Gateway community for many years. Not only did he perform his role expertly, he was always on hand to assist me through my many challenges with 'getting into' the board portal! Terry was remembered with a moving memorial service held on the steps of our Lismore Community Hub and is remembered by a plaque next to the main entrance.

A disaster management grant in early 2020 enabled the organisation to be fully prepared for the pandemic, purchasing resources to facilitate remote working. We expanded our commonwealth and state funding base again, which led to a positive outcome.

The board continued to focus on the organisation's strategic direction and governance. Although it was not possible for the board to meet face to face this year, we continued to meet virtually and embed strategic plans for 2020 to 2023, with three key strategic priorities:

- Leadership
- Social impact
- Strategic growth



Robyn Smith
Board of Governance Chairperson

Principles of good governance and strategic planning continue to underline the success of our organisation, along with learning and development. Our ongoing professional development is our key to ensuring skilled and professional staff, particularly in relation to the board and our key employee, the CEO.

The development application for our shop-top affordable housing project was approved by Lismore City Council in early 2020. This project will provide ten affordable units for older women at risk of homelessness.

Importantly, this project will meet a growing social need, increase housing availability in the CBD, utilise the space over our car park, is within walking access to local shops and services and, most importantly, will revitalise Lismore CBD with a modern and sustainable development. The CEO and board continue to strategically focus on funding opportunities that will see this project to fruition.

In conclusion, I'd like to express my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to my fellow board members for their valuable input and support, to our CEO for her leadership and management skills, and to Community Gateway managers and staff for their commitment and professionalism. I look forward to our future with confidence and enthusiasm.

Robyn Smith

Certainly no one could have predicted what we have experienced this past 18 months.

When COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, many thought our life would change for a little while – maybe a few months – but here we are in another year of lockdowns, social distancing, face masks, vaccinations and working from home.

More than any other year, our vision has supported us to deliver. *Many tracks, one road, sustaining community* remains our vision and epitomises the work that we do. This year, we began working towards our renewed strategic priorities for 2020 to 2023, including leadership, social impact and strategic growth. Our values – vision, commitment, respect, integrity and innovation – underpin all that we do as an organisation.

This past year has been challenging for all of us, particularly as a regional organisation supporting the most vulnerable people. Many volunteer-reliant organisations had no option but to limit delivery of their essential services or close their shop fronts, as their volunteers (many of whom were aged) became a vulnerable cohort during the pandemic and were isolating at home.

At the same time, we saw a significant increase in our clients, many of whom have never accessed our services before. With paid staff delivering our supports, we stayed open throughout and adapted to the challenge of service delivery in a restricted environment with innovative change. We were somewhat prepared for this situation with a recent disaster grant from Clubs NSW, a newly formed disaster management committee, a business continuity plan, an online orientation system and intranet. We were able to move quickly to a hybrid situation with minimal staff working from the office, staff working remotely delivering many services such as emergency relief, no interest loan interviews and trauma counselling via telephone and Zoom. We continued offering a shop front for particularly vulnerable clients, providing food and shelter. We embraced Zoom technology, creatively applying it in



Jenni Beetson-Mortimer
Chief Executive Officer

board meetings, team meetings, daily catch-ups and client services.

Whilst this past year has been one of the toughest years for our communities, it has been particularly tough for our staff and management. Our IT officer Terry Houlahan sadly died in August 2020 after a short illness. Terry was key in getting all our IT systems and resources in place so staff could work from home. We will always fondly remember our good friend and colleague Terry. We remembered Terry

with a lovely ceremony and have placed a plaque of remembrance on our Lismore Community Hub wall.

Throughout all the challenges staff and managers faced this year, I am most proud of how we continued commitment to our clients and to our organisation.

We kicked many goals this past year. With successful mid-term assessment of our QIP accreditation in mid 2020. With laptops purchased for all staff and remote access, enabling everyone to work from any location.

We renegotiated our contracts with the Department of Communities and Justice for our community hub and child & adolescent trauma counselling services. We renegotiated our contract with NSW Health for our support services for adult survivors of sexual assault. A Human Services privacy and consent audit of our no interest loan services demonstrated that our systems are robust and in line with legislative requirements. We voluntarily participated in an organisational review to determine how well we supported our staff's mental health. All staff completed Black Dog Institute mental health training. We created a mental health committee, with staff and managers currently developing a framework to maintain a supportive, mentally healthy workplace. Our Waruwi Project Officer must be congratulated for working with local Bundjalung communities to develop our Reconciliation Action Plan, which has been endorsed by reconciliation Australia. All staff completed Aboriginal cultural awareness training this year. Also this year, we continued development of our client relationship management system and made improvements to our staff orientation and training, with the development of training manuals.

Ensuring that we have good governance systems and building our evidence base continue to be priorities. We have continued our work with Beacon Strategies

Chief executive officer's report

who are currently undertaking a review of our virtual service delivery. This evaluation will look specifically at our clients' journeys through a virtual service. It will provide us with greater understanding of the outputs and outcomes of virtual service delivery and will provide strategies for management of a hybrid model.

Our front-line services continued uninterrupted during COVID-19 and I can't go past mentioning our Rainbow Region Kids, Community Hub and Helping Hands staff who continued to provide vital face to face services when many local services shut their doors. Our Rainbow Region Kids staff continued to provide before and after school care and Vacation Club to children, providing a vital service for the children of essential workers during that time.

I continued my participation as part of the weekly Department of Social Services Emergency Relief NSW-ACT Coordination Group meetings to provide input into the impact of COVID-19 on our client. Additional funding for emergency relief provision is vital to meet the needs of our communities.

A highlight this year for me has been our staff, management and board's commitment to each other and care for each other's wellbeing. With my own challenges going through cancer treatment this past year, Katie Burgess and Jodi Burley stepped up as senior managers to support me in my role.

We continue to grow as an organisation and a team. Staff and managers continue to show a huge level of commitment by participating in our clinical governance committee, disaster planning committee, mental health committee, reconciliation action plan working group, service reviews, wrap around service delivery and much more.

Thank you also to our managers, who continue to work hard and to drive positive organisational change. As I say nearly every year, continuous improvement often drives the need for change and I commend them all on their professionalism in embracing new systems, new processes and striving for excellence. This is often hard when faced with so many challenges, but they all continue to maintain focus on our clients and our grass roots service delivery.

Our staff provide services across six locations in the Ballina, Richmond and Lismore local government areas, and deliver outreach services across numerous locations in the Far North Coast, New England and Mid North Coast regions of NSW.

As a long-standing community-based organisation, Community Gateway has been continuously delivering services to build community resilience and support vulnerable people across Northern New South Wales for 45 years.

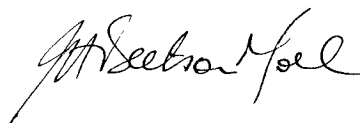
We also extended our state-wide commitment this year. As CEO, I have continued in my role on the board of Homelessness Australia and have continued chairing the NSW Financial Inclusion Network. The network, developed by our organisation in 2015, includes a range of state-wide peaks, government, and large NGOs, forming as a policy think tank on financial inclusion. We partnered with UNSW's Centre for Social Impact to host the 4th Financial Inclusion Conference, 2021. Due to restrictions resulting from the pandemic, this event has been rescheduled to 16+17 February 2022 at SMC Centre in Sydney and live online.

Together with the board, I continue to work on our approved affordable housing project in Lismore CBD, accessing funding to support the development. This project will meet a growing social need for older women at risk of homelessness.

My appreciation and thanks go to our board for their support of me in my role as CEO, their commitment to good governance and their vision in strategic governance. Thanks to our leadership team for showing adaptability in this ever-changing environment. Thanks to all our staff this year for their continued commitment to quality service delivery for the most vulnerable people in our communities, whilst themselves facing extreme challenges.

As I close off this year, we are preparing for renewed accreditation with QIP against the *QIC Health and Community Services Standards 7th Edn*. Although it is a major undertaking during this time of remote working, I acknowledge the work of our Quality Officer in supporting us to remain on a path of continuous improvement, and of our staff, board and management's commitment to quality outcomes for clients. I feel confident that our strong governance and management systems will get us through.

I look forward to next year and hopefully an end to the global pandemic.



Our social inclusion services

Community Hub

A one-stop shop for disadvantaged community members. Our hub provides virtual and face-to-face service delivery. We have physical hub locations in Lismore and Grafton, with outreach services to Casino, Kyogle, Murwillumbah and Byron Bay.

Be Connected

Digital mentorship for older people by trained volunteers through free, one-on-one lessons on how to use communications technology, get online and stay connected to the services and people they care about.

Northern Rivers Volunteer Network

Building skills, capacity and opportunities for volunteering organisations throughout the Northern Rivers region.

Community Visitors Scheme

Building social connections by matching volunteers with older people living at home alone or in residential aged care facilities.



Community Visitors Scheme.

Nature of appointment requests at our community hub.



- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Food parcels and food vouchers | ■ Transportation assistance |
| ■ Information, advice and referral | ■ Healthcare assistance |
| ■ Utilities and bills assistance | ■ Not listed under First Step emergency relief services |
| ■ Advocacy Support | ■ Community capacity building |
| ■ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander requests | ■ Family capacity building |
| ■ Intake and assessment | ■ Intensive support |
| ■ Material goods | |

1393

Number of clients requesting support at our community hub.

Number of times we provided support at our community hub.

4276

Financial inclusion services

Our financial inclusion services

First Step emergency relief

Free support for people and families experiencing crisis throughout the Northern Rivers region.

No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

Safe, fair and affordable credit for individuals on a low income, to help with essential items, with no interest payments or loan fees.

StepUP Loans

Low interest loans for people in the Northern Rivers region on a low income. This service became NILS4Cars in 2021.

Warruwi gambling support

Gambling awareness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities throughout the Far North Coast, Mid North Coast and New England regions of NSW who are experiencing problem gambling.

Budget counselling

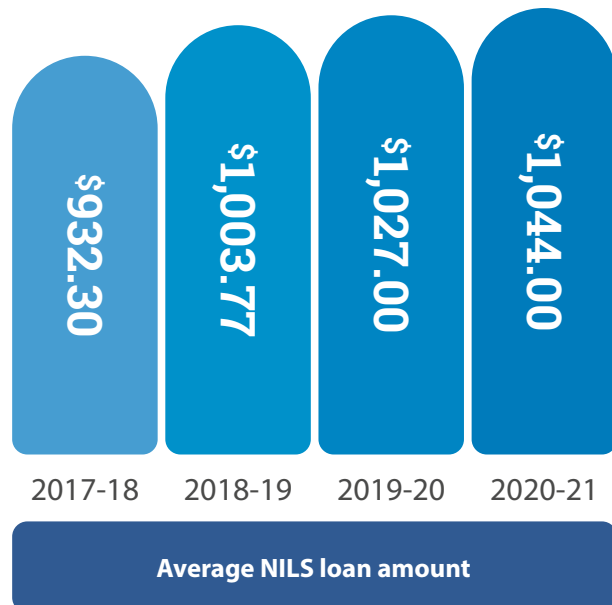
Free, confidential and practical advice from our trained financial experts to help people on a low income manage their day-to-day finances.

Tax Help

Free advice for people in the Northern Rivers region on a low income to prepare and lodge a tax return. Provided in partnership with the Australian Tax Office.



Total number of NILS credit provided.



Average NILS loan amount



Proportion of NILS loans provided to women.



Number of NILS loans approved.

NSW financial inclusion coordination

Our NSW financial inclusion services aim to coordinate state-wide strategies to support financial inclusion services, including coordination of the NSW Financial Inclusion Network.

Financial Inclusion Network partners

- Centre for Social Impact, UNSW
- Community Gateway (coordinating partner)
- Energy Water Ombudsman NSW
- Financial Counsellors' Association of NSW
- Financial Rights Legal Centre
- Homelessness NSW
- Legal Aid, NSW
- NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Government Department of Planning, Industry & Environment
- NSW Government Fair Trading
- NSW Council of Social Service
- Redfern Legal Centre
- Salvation Army
- St Vincent de Paul Society

4th Financial Inclusion Conference – Roads to Resilience

The NSW Financial Inclusion Network continued to plan and produce the 4th Financial Inclusion Conference.

The primary conference theme *Roads to Resilience* was established in 2019 to address financial exclusion and build capacity for financial resilience, by bridging important academic research with innovative service delivery practices.

Since its inception, the conference program has grown to include nearly seventy presenters, two international keynote speakers, four breakout streams, three panel discussions, conference dinner and presentation of the 2nd Financial Inclusion Awards.

Due to the ongoing effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the various restrictions resulting from it, the NSW Financial Inclusion Network has rescheduled the conference to 16+17 February 2022, delivered in a hybrid face-to-face and virtual format.



Conference sponsors

- NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice
- Panthera Finance
- National Australia Bank
- Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- icare
- Ecstra Foundation
- Transurban
- Earnd

Conference keynote speakers

- Professor Sharon Collard, Research Director at the University of Bristol Personal Finance Research Centre, UK
- Professor Frederick Wherry, Townsend Martin, Class of 1917 Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, USA
- Dr Jeremiah Brown, Research Fellow at Centre for Social Impact, UNSW
- Reverend Tim Costello AO, Chief Advocate at Alliance for Gambling Reform

Children and young people's services

Our children's services

Rainbow Region Kids

Flexible, accessible, accredited and affordable outside school hours childcare for school-aged children throughout the Northern Rivers region, including Before School Care, After School Care and Vacation Club during school holidays.

Books & Butterflies

Free, weekly playgroups that offer a supportive learning environment for children aged 2-5 years old, who may not otherwise have access to community playgroups or other services.



	Services provided	Families that used the service	Number of attending children	Hours of care provided	Suburbs and towns serviced
Alstonville	Before school care After school care	64	86	16,866	15
Casino	Vacation Club	26	46	4,710	7
Kyogle	Vacation Club	21	28	1,920	5
Lismore	After school care Vacation Club	61	96	11,599	12
Ocean Shores	Before school care After school care Vacation Club	66	95	20,270	7
Wollongbar	Before school care After school care Vacation Club	134	193	40,432	17



Our community support services

Child and Adolescent Trauma Counselling

Free, confidential counselling from qualified trauma-informed psychologists and counsellors, for children and young adults in the Northern Rivers region who are living with the effects of trauma.

Reaching Out

Free, confidential counselling from qualified, trauma-informed psychologists and counsellors, for adults in the Northern Rivers region who have experienced sexual assault as a child.

Connecting Families

Free, confidential supports for vulnerable families in the Northern Rivers region to support the development of parenting, emotional and behavioural skills, including the Parents Under Pressure (PuP) curriculum.

Helping Hands

Case management support services for First Nations Australians in the Northern Rivers region who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.

Child and adolescent trauma counselling client groups



■ Female aged 0-11 ■ Male aged 0-11
■ Female aged 12-21 ■ Male aged 12-21



95%

Reaching Out clients that said they experienced improved health outcomes as a result of the service.

Number of Reaching Out counselling sessions provided to clients.

249

99%

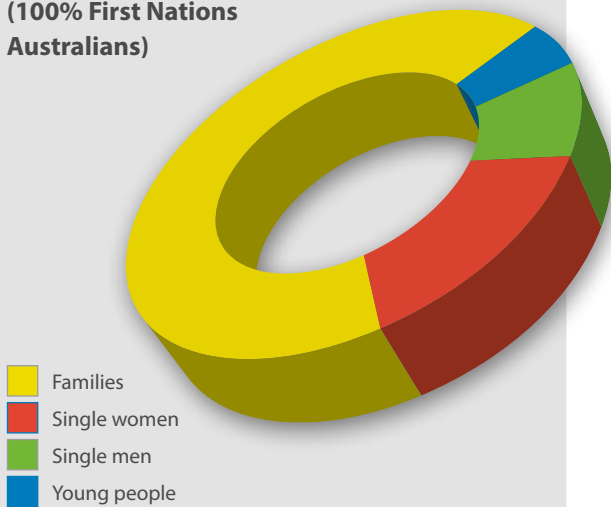
Reaching Out clients that said they were satisfied with the service we provided.

Indigenous support services

Supporting First Nations Australians

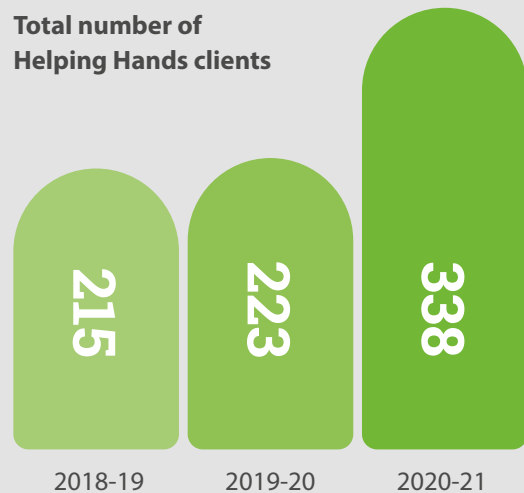
We support First Nations Australians through all of our services. In addition, Our Warruwi and Helping Hands services provided support exclusively to First Nations Australians.

Helping Hands client groups (100% First Nations Australians)

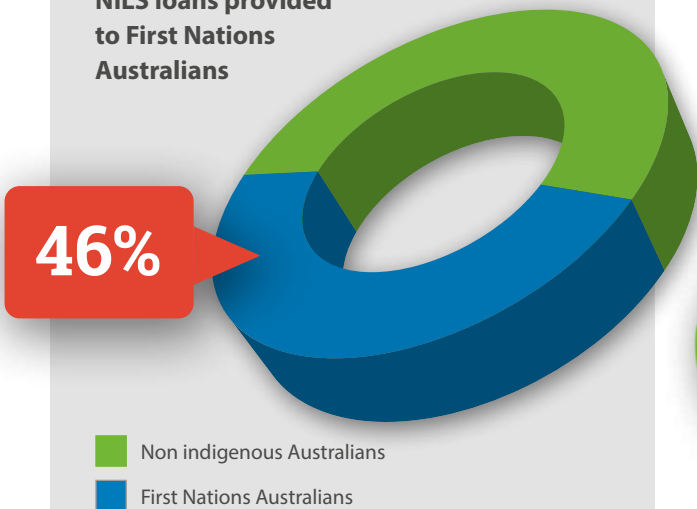


Helping Hands supports First Nations Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Total number of Helping Hands clients



NILS loans provided to First Nations Australians



22%

Percentage of trauma counselling clients who identified as First Nations Australian.

Percentage of Connecting Families clients who identified as First Nations Australian.

35%

Disaster management / work health and safety group

An advisory committee, focussing on disaster management and work health and safety.

Group members

- Jenni Beetson-Mortimer (Chair)
- Judith Balderi
- Will Bolger
- Melissa Clayton
- Melissa Coulton
- Helen Hall
- Terry Houlahan
- Natalie McKenzie
- Lisa Wilmer
- Jade Zwiers

Clinical governance group

An advisory committee focussing on the clinical scope of practice, safety, risk and quality.

Group members

- Jenni Beetson-Mortimer (Chair)
- Fiona Batterham
- Katie Burgess
- Melissa Coulton
- Helen Hall
- Terry Houlahan
- Kelsey McCallum
- Shaun McPherson
- Carolyn Tanner
- Lisa Wilmer

Our IT Officer Terry Houlahan passed away in August 2020. Terry had a significant impact on our IT systems and on our organisation as a whole, challenging us to take on innovative ideas and solutions. He was also a warm and kind person, and a friend to so many. He is missed by all of his colleagues. Vale Terry.



Reconciliation action plan group

An advisory committee established to develop and implement our Reconciliation Action Plan.

Group members

Internal participants

- Jodi Burley (Chair)
- Harry Beckers
- Aunty May King

External participants

- Mook Harrington, Solid Mob
- Laurie Mercy, Department of Human Services
- Tina Williams, Bundjalung Tribal Society
- Uncle Roy Gordon, community member

Harry Beckers, Uncle Roy Gordon, Aunty May King, Tina Williams, Laurie Mercy and Mook Harrington are all First Nations Australians of the Bundjalung Nation.

Mental health group

A committee focussed on the development of a draft internal mental health framework, to meet the organisation's vision and commitment to a mentally healthy workplace.

Group members

- Katie Burgess (Chair)
- Renee Bailey
- Tommy Brogden
- Melissa Coulton
- Jane McPhail

For another year, Community Gateway faced significant challenges with COVID-19.

However, through our management's good planning and foresight, the organisation had a positive outcome during the last financial year.

This was supported by an increase in our recurrent commonwealth and state funding. Our organisation's total assets are at \$2,832,048. This includes the value of our property, plant and equipment at 16-18 Bounty Street Lismore, at \$1,655,356. The end of year resulted in a surplus of \$418,180 which significantly increased our cash flow and together with fixed assets puts the organisation in strong position for future, long-term sustainability.

Our organisation continued to maintain good accounting practice, complying with all Australian and New South Wales company standards. This accounting was supported by two independent external audits. Attached are the audited financial statements. Our finance committee continued to monitor the organisation's expenditure, and was comprised of our treasurer, chairperson, CEO and corporate services manager.

Our financial and organisational management practices currently include annual external auditing with internal financial management and monitoring. These activities drive bi-monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports to funding bodies and our board of directors. Insurances including professional indemnity, public liability and work cover are in place as well as a solid base of policies and procedures to govern all areas of our operations.

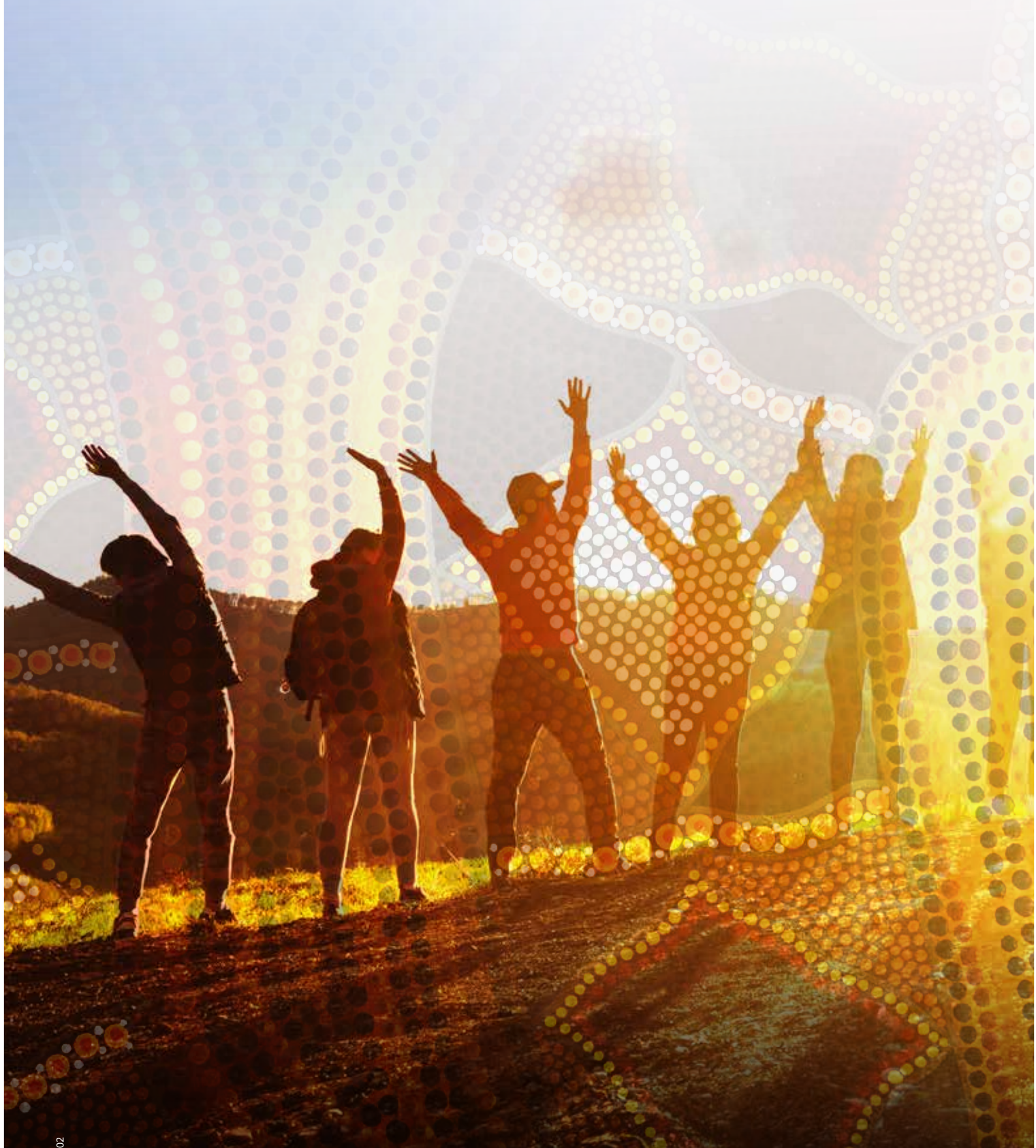
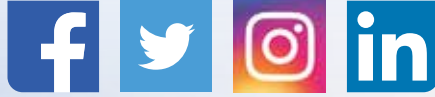


Deniel Taylor
Treasurer

I'd like to thank our CEO and members of the finance committee for their commitment to good financial management. I'd like to thank our auditors WCA Audit & Assurance Services, and our management team for their cooperation throughout the year assisting the CEO in good record keeping practices. I would also like to thank our staff for the work and effort they have invested over the past year, which directly supports the success and growth of the organisation.

I look forward to working with the board and CEO into the future.

Visit nrcg.org.au



A565-VG-20211202



Northern Rivers Community Gateway is a registered charity and QIP accredited.