



# A year of stories

2021 Annual Review

Possability

Nurturing  
potential.

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## Meet Cherie

Cherie's known as both a true jokester and a kind heart. To her, it's more than just sharing a laugh. "When others are sad, I want to make them happy. I like cheering up people."

She approaches every situation with the intention of choosing to be positive over negative, which she puts down to her personality and quirky sense of humour.

Cherie's outgoing and loves to be the centre of attention, because "why shouldn't I?" And has a soft spot for power tools. She's into woodwork and making mosaics. A table, shelves and Christmas coasters are all on the list of her handcrafted favourites.

### Acknowledgement

Possability, through our commitment to reconciliation, acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of this land.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present in our communities. We recognise their enduring culture and ongoing resilience and we thank them for their stewardship over country, and recognise their inherent connection to the land, the wind and waterways.



# A word from our Chair and CEO

Welcome to Possability's 2020-21 Annual Review. This year, our intention is to showcase some of the many stories that made our year. We're proud to have this opportunity to share them with you and thank our contributors for letting us retell their stories.

## Strengthening our services

Closing the book on another unexpectedly difficult year, it's safe to say the challenges kept on rolling. A global pandemic, staff shortages and the housing crisis have all pushed us to

rethink how we work. As an organisation and a sector, we've had to learn to deal with uncertainty.

In truth, being resilient and adapting to change is something we've had to do for many years. By keeping our focus on the people at the heart of our services, we believe we can deal with anything thrown at us and continue to provide quality and consistent services.

Understanding what's important to the people we support and their families has been at the forefront of our minds. We've made a commitment to look inward to learn how our organisation is experienced and how we're living up to our purpose and values. In this review you'll find discussions around how our belief in doing things better is driving us to be an ever more transparent and conscientious provider.

## Our five-year plan

Our Strategic Plan 2020-25 has served as a compass to guide us. Our plan is intrinsically linked to our vision, purpose and values, and as we strive for those overarching goals, we're staying true to our deeper reasons for being.

This past year we've pushed ahead with our strategic priorities in a number of areas and it's exciting to see the real benefits come to light, creating new opportunities for independence.

We've made progress expanding our work so we can provide quality services to more people. We're pleased we've been able to offer more people with disability employment services, an area that's growing every week. In this review you'll read about how community-based employment is having both economic and social benefits for all parties.

We have a long history of leading practice in Positive Behaviour Support and earlier this year officially launched our Positive Behaviour and

Therapeutic Supports services, offering these to a wider range of people who already access our services. We intend to offer a full range of Allied Health services to people we support in future.

Our intention to drive best practice across the disability sector has seen us develop the Applied Research Centre (ARC) for Disability and Wellbeing. The ARC is built on partnerships and uses evidence to pursue real change for people with disability experiencing disadvantage.

## Our many thanks

When discussing our organisation, we must acknowledge those who bring it to life. We're honoured and grateful that the people we support place their trust in us, and this gratitude extends to the important people in their lives.

We're eternally grateful for the wisdom and guidance of our Board. Each director brings a wealth of experience that has helped shape Possability and define our direction. Our heartfelt thanks to former Chair Brian Scullin for his invaluable service.

Last but certainly not least, we'd like to thank all our employees. They are "who" we are; they live our values and deliver on our purpose.

We particularly appreciate their resilience and patience. Our staff have worked under such difficult circumstances and continued to provide consistent support, all while we've been strengthening our processes through times of growth and significant external pressures. Our staff have worked tirelessly to keep the people we support and each other safe.

Again, welcome to our 2020-21 Annual Review—we hope you enjoy reading it.



Drew Beswick  
Chief Executive Officer



David Morris  
Board Chair

# A year of stories

Over the last 12 months, so many Australians have spent significant time living in lockdown limbo. We'd like to acknowledge the difficulties experienced and wish everyone affected the very best.

As well as the challenges, there have been some great things happening—there's been so much kindness and goodwill, so many bright ideas and so many moments to celebrate.

That's why this year, we want to recount the stories of people we support, the important people in their lives and our employees. These are some of the many stories that have made our year.



Zhang, story page 14

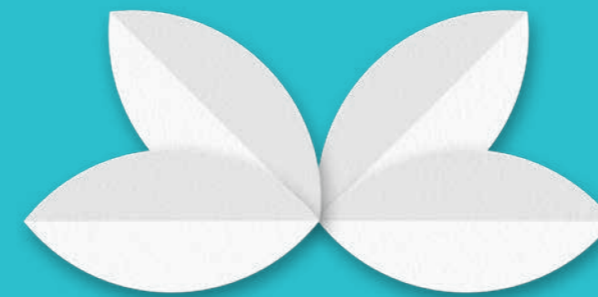
## Our vision.

A world where everyone has the opportunity to pursue their potential.

## Our purpose.

We are catalysts for change. Our actions are based on our belief that freedom and independence are fundamental human rights.

## Our values.



### Inspired

We bring our best to work every day and aim to bring out the best in others. We encourage people to take the lead and choose their own path.



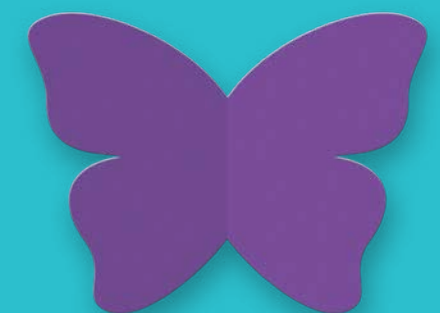
### Courageous

We do the right thing and don't give up when things get tough. We accept challenges and are a force for social change.




### Skilful

We believe in self-improvement and good practice. If there is a better way to do something, we will do it.



### Responsive

We listen, learn and act. We put people first, demonstrating compassion and understanding.



“Being in a rural setting, there’s a real sense of peace and tranquillity. It’s a warm and friendly environment and everyone who stays here has a unique experience.”

Rose

“I was asked by my little brother, what’s your dream job? I thought about it for five minutes and I couldn’t think of anything else. I’m like, I think this is it.”

Tiffany

## Living our values

Rose and Tiffany both work at our Seven Mile Beach Retreat, near the picturesque waterfront of the River Derwent. They describe it as a home away from home for those who come for short stays.

“Being in a rural setting, there’s a real sense of peace and tranquillity. It’s a warm and friendly environment and everyone who stays here has a unique experience,” Rose says.

Rose is the supervisor at the Retreat. She was working in the fashion industry when she

decided on a career change. “My father was diagnosed with dementia and that kind of changed a lot in terms of my values at the time. I asked myself: what was I doing with my life? I fell into disability support and absolutely loved it. I loved it from the moment I started.”

Tiffany has been a support professional for four years, starting out in children’s services. “I was asked by my little brother, what’s your dream job? I thought about it for five minutes and I couldn’t think of anything else. I’m like, I think this is it.”

## About us

We're many things—we're advocates, researchers and innovators. We come from different backgrounds and work together to make Possability a sustainable and values-driven organisation. We're about giving great services that support equity, freedom and independence—for the people we support and their families.

## How we got here

**We go way back, but we've always believed in potential.**

Our roots are deeply planted in the belief that if we can do something better, we should.

Our combined story began in 1953, with a group of parents who saw the need to create opportunities for their children with disability. These businesses would become OAK Tasmania.

Then in 1989, a group of nuns who understood the importance of 'a good life' opened a community housing and support services organisation for people with disability named Euphrasia.

Possability, as it is today, is the blending of organisations and people from all walks of life united behind one shared vision. We chose our name in 2015 after a long consultation process with people we support and their families.

Over the years our focus on 'doing things better' has only deepened.

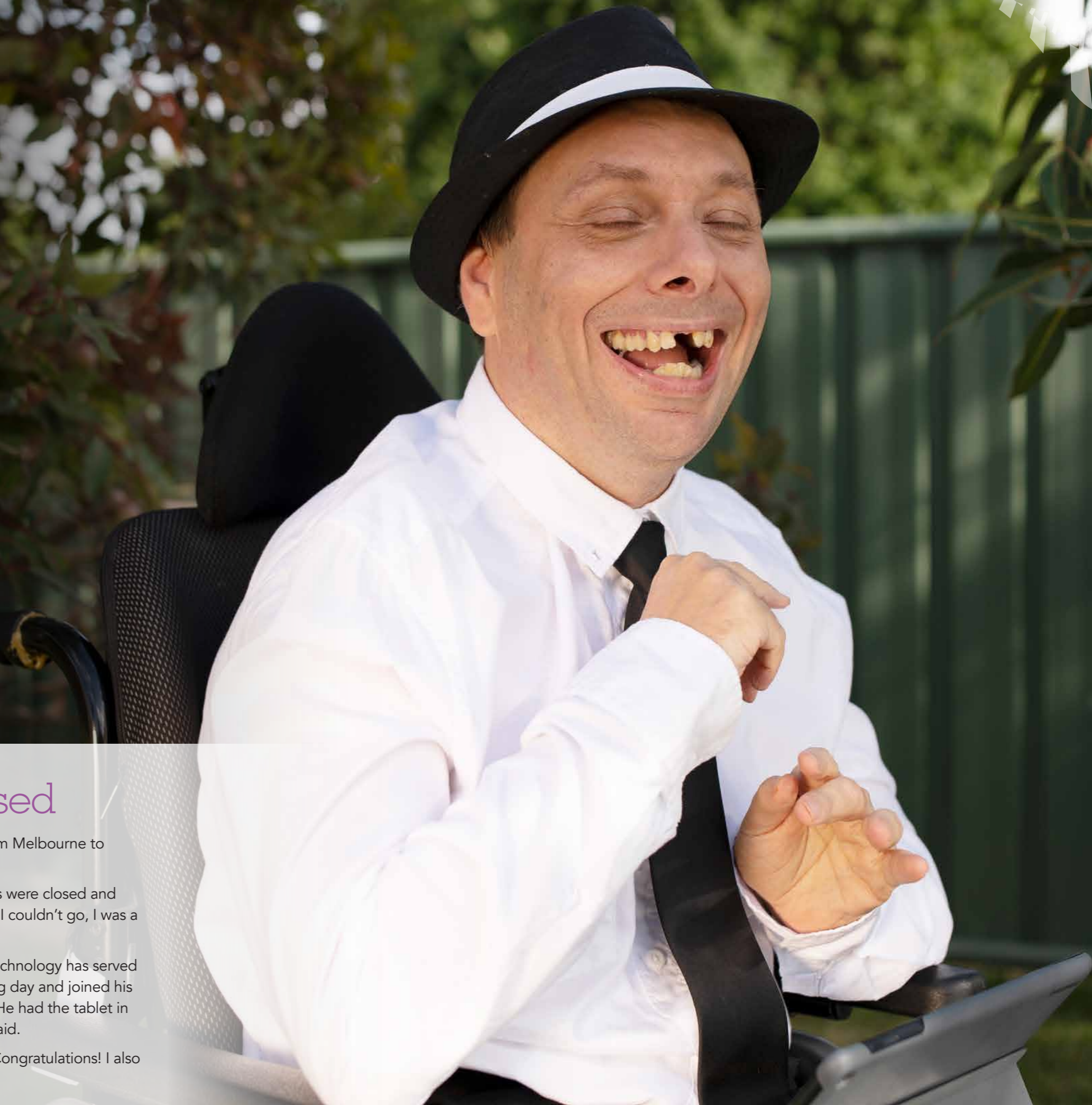
## A wedding not to be missed

Robbie had plans to go to his niece's wedding with travel booked from Melbourne to Adelaide. But COVID-19 had other ideas.

Victoria was right in the thick of it—outbreaks and lockdowns, borders were closed and flights in and out cancelled. Robbie was going to miss the wedding. "I couldn't go, I was a bit disappointed," he said.

Through all the ups and downs of Victoria's response to COVID-19, technology has served us well. Robbie got dressed in the suit and tie he had ready for the big day and joined his niece's wedding by livestream. His mum, Pam, was at the wedding. "He had the tablet in his lap, the biggest smile on his face and dressed to the nines," she said.

When asked what he said to the bride and groom, Robbie replied, "Congratulations! I also spoke about the footy."



# What we do

We support people to live in their home.

We support people to trial independent living and have short stays away.

We support people to build or maintain their social and community connections.

We offer employment and training to people looking to join the workforce, including school-leavers.

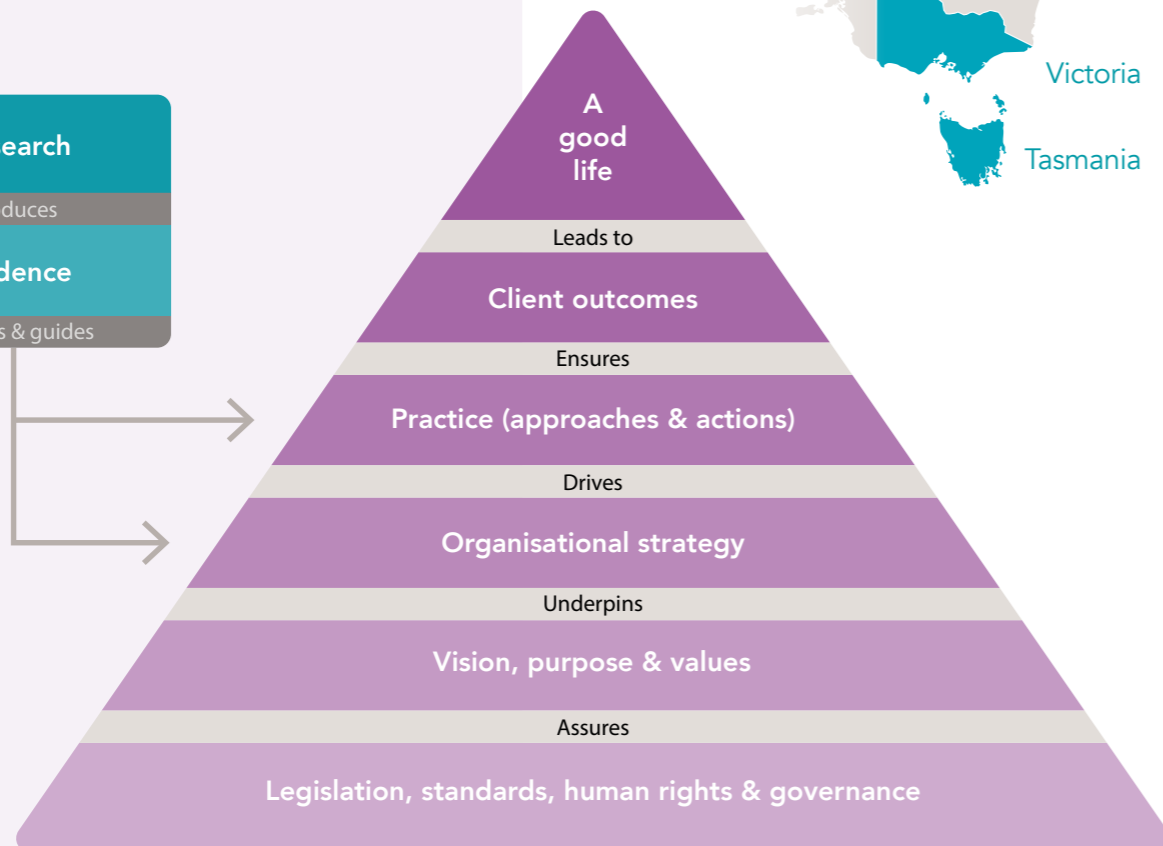
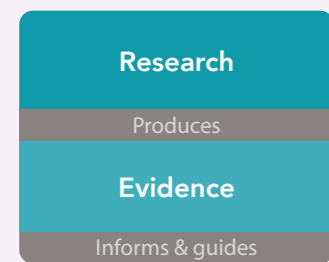
We act as a catalyst for change through Positive Behaviour Support, with an eye to expand further into Allied Health.

We support children in Out-of-Home Care and short-term accommodation.

# A good life

We have a Practice Framework. What does that mean? It means something different to everyone we support.

We all want different things in life. We've set up our services in a way that support's the unique pursuit of 'a good life' – whatever that might look like.



# Who we are

## Our staff...

Come from 40 different countries.

Are all the ages—between 18 and 70-plus.

6% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

11% have been with us for over 20 years!

Sample of 688 employees.

# Where we are



# Our strategic plan

## We have a clear understanding of where we're heading.

Last year we embarked on our Strategic Plan 2020-25. The pillars of our Strategic Plan serve as a guide for how we intend to get to where we see ourselves in four years—they're what we strive for, every step of the way.

### Greater contribution

We grow so we can make a greater contribution to shaping a world where everyone has the opportunity to pursue their potential.

### Pursuing potential

We expand our work with people who want to develop their independence and reach their potential.

### Driving best practice

We drive best practice and hold ourselves to a higher standard of quality.

### Collective strength

We encourage people to choose their own path, while harnessing our collective strength.

# This year

we supported

951

Australians with disability

we employed

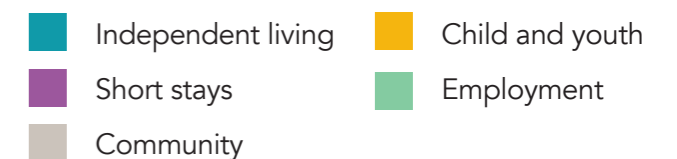
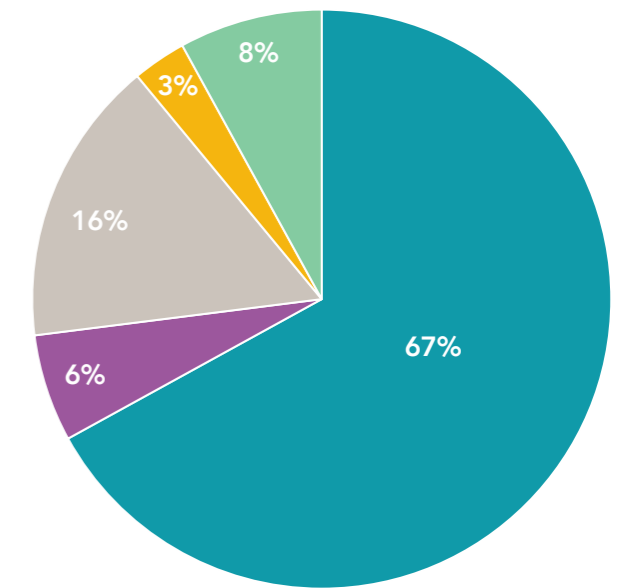
1,600

staff

we officially welcomed

our DHHS transfer staff as Possability employees!

# Support hours by service



Total support hours

1,469,223

# Our people are our strength

We're only as strong as our people, and truth be known—we employ some standouts. We're a values-based organisation, that means we actively look for employees who share our values.

## Supporting others to be their best

After leaving school, Shane worked in construction and mining. "It was just work; I went to work, did my job, was never really passionate about it."

Shane said it was his dream to be a nurse. He went back to study and picked up some part-time work with Possability—and it was here he found his purpose. "I love that I'm really making a difference, that's what drives me."

Shane is a service supervisor in Queensland and supports people to be their own brand of best. "I want to work with people to regain or build their independence, to build their strengths. To support people to be the best they can but keep their identity and be true to themselves."

This is the same ethos he applies to the team he manages. "We want everyone to have purpose and rapport with people we support and work to their strengths. Someone is a chef, so he works with the clients to build meal plans. We work with everyone's interests and strengths, so they feel valued for different reasons."

### The right direction

We're the new kids on the block in Queensland, but for decades we've been supporting people to do the things in life that are most important to them. Our people are taking our high practice standards and values to the sunny state.

Seeing a need to offer more great services, we believed it was important we grow northward and partner with Queenslanders with disability who haven't had access to services and who would like to work with us. A decision guided by both our vision and purpose as catalysts for change, as well as our determination to contribute to a world where everyone has the opportunity to pursue their potential.

"I think everything's going really well, we're going slowly and keeping all the Possability values at the right pace. We're heading in the right direction."

Shane



# Home-sweet-home

**There's a lot that goes into making a house a home. We've been partnering with people to find their new home-sweet-home—matching them with their ideal living situation and support team.**

## Cooking up a storm

Before emigrating from Shanghai, Zhang was a feature film producer and actor in TV shows and movies. When he arrived, he took up the tongs and started working as a chef.

Zhang chose to work with Possability after acquiring a brain injury in 2020. He has a great love of food and was in the habit of ordering takeaway, until Carl came along. Carl speaks Zhang's first language, Mandarin, and together they cook the food that he grew up eating. "Fried potato and pork meatballs, steamed fish with spring onion, tofu and pork buns," are just a few of his favourites.

## More than a new career

After 30 years as a high-end tourism operator and guide, Carl lost his business when COVID-19 hit. He's now embarking on a new career path as a disability support professional.

Carl points out that there's little difference between the two jobs. "Each time you see people are happy, when I get positive feedback from clientele, that's exactly the same." And he takes pride in the work he does. "When you see

people smiling and they appreciate your service, you feel amazing, you feel so happy."

## Finding new homes

Supporting people to find their home-sweet-home is about being flexible and creative. Here's a little snapshot:

- What do people want? The answers are different for everyone. We ask questions around location, type of house, lifestyle and much more.
- We continue to work with existing, and look for new, housing providers who are flexible and can offer people great individualised options.
- We developed new skills and services so that people with complex health supports could have a place of their own in their hometown.
- Funding matters. We work with people to understand how they can get the most out of their NDIS funding and support them to apply for more if they need it.

From left: Carl and Zhang





## Matt's long journey

Matt's story is one of resilience and courage. It's one of strength of character, and with challenges that he hasn't had to overcome alone.

Matt was two when he was hit by a car. He was flown to Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne where a neurosurgeon told his mother, Leslie, that he'd never walk or talk again. After he woke from an eight-week coma, they began to understand the extent of the frontal lobe damage and resulting cerebral palsy and epilepsy. "Matt didn't grow out of his epilepsy, he grew into it," Leslie says.

He's had to learn to walk, talk and eat again three times, each time he's approached his rehabilitation with true determination and grit. After the accident, Matt has had two major surgeries: a frontal lobe resection to remove an area where seizures begin and the insertion of a vagus nerve stimulator. Both surgeries were to control his seizures and were only embarked on after deep discussion and hours of careful planning—as a family.

Matt comes from a small, tight-knit family. He's a son to Leslie, a brother to Ben and his wife and an uncle to two little ones. "If I didn't have my mum, it just wouldn't be the same. Same as Ben. Ben's the right-hand, Mum's the left-hand person. I always rely on Ben," Matt says. He moved out of the family home and into his own place in 2009.

Today, you'll find this coastal Tassie local exploring beautiful beaches, going on tasting tours of local delicacies, listening to 70s and 80s music, like Queen and Van Halen, or getting into his sport. Matt collects 18-inch V8 supercar models and follows the cricket and football.

"It's been a long journey," Matt says. "I conquered what I had to do. I've had to, I just had to say to myself that I've just got to keep going. Having my family, it makes it easy, it makes me feel relaxed when I come back home."

# We're better together

**There's a real power in working together. We're active contributors in sector and government alliances to keep people safe through the pandemic and unify behind other common goals.**

It seems we've all spent the better part of two years talking about COVID-19. It's been a huge learning curve and a necessary one; keeping the people we support and our staff safe and well has been one of our biggest priorities.

Building on last year's COVIDSafe planning and employee training, this past 12 months it was all about getting ahead with safeguards and vaccinations.

## **For a strong NDIS**

Alliance20 is a coalition of Australia's largest disability service providers aimed at improving the NDIS for all participants. We represented Alliance20 to contribute to the NDIA's future planning around pandemic responses, pricing and independent living. As a sector we've learnt a lot and have much to offer the NDIA in terms of best practice and leadership.

## **Keeping people safe and beyond**

We're part of an informal group of Victorian providers set up at the beginning of the pandemic to collaborate over the challenges. This group continues to meet regularly to discuss sector issues and developments, including co-authoring our joint submission on Independent Assessments to the NDIA.

## **A leading role in the sector**

National Disability Services (NDS) is the sector peak for disability services in Australia. Possability is represented in both the Victorian and Tasmanian state committees. Through NDS we contribute to the broader policy agenda, contemporary issues in each state and share our knowledge and skills with other providers.

## **Many heads are better than one**

The Ability Roundtable is essentially a benchmarking platform, bringing together member disability service providers to innovate and share learnings to improve services. We've been involved since 2019 and going forward we hope to use the evidence to make sound decisions for the most benefit for the people we support.

## **Part of the cure**

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived on our shores, it was a scary time for many of us. 'Unprecedented' was the word we heard time and time again.

It was in these early days that another service provider in Victoria reached out for help. A group of women living in supported accommodation had tested positive for the virus and their house was understaffed because so many employees had to quarantine. Support Professional Chloe put up her hand to help.

Chloe was moved into a quarantined house with another member of the women's support team. Every day for two weeks, she gowned up in full PPE and supported the women. She cooked food, prepared warm water to sooth their throats, provided personal care and checked they were recovering OK.

"I was very proud of myself," Chloe says. "I felt like I'd accomplished something I never thought I would. I was so scared of the virus then; we didn't know about it."

All the women thankfully recovered well. While she says the two weeks quarantine at home was hard, Chloe has no regrets, "I just felt like it was empowering, like I had a part in helping people get better from this COVID thing. It was just one of the best things I've ever done."



We couldn't possibly go any further without saying a million "thank-yous" to our essential workers!

For better or for worse, delivery drivers, supermarket staff, nurses, doctors, paramedics and disability support professionals, among others, have continued to go to work and be there for the people who need them. Australia's essential workers have kept us going.

We're so grateful for the dedication and creativity of all the people we employ who have pulled together as teams and safely supported people in their homes. Our staff have had to do additional training and adapt to new ways of doing things. They've had to learn how to properly don and doff PPE, wear masks and follow the changing advice from state health authorities. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

## Meet Shaune

Growing up in Mooroopna, Shaune's childhood was all about his family and culture. Located on the banks of the Goulburn River, Victoria, Mooroopna means "deep water hole."

Shaune is a Yorta Yorta man and clearly remembers learning traditional art from his father. "He taught me dot painting and we carved out wooden didgeridoos," he says. Times spent camping and "fixing up cars" are also fond memories.

At 20, Shaune moved away from home for the first time. "We're a close family, but at the time, it was best for him to move to where we could find the right support for him," says Aunty Mandy, his dad's first cousin. Shaune's dream is to one day move back to Shepparton to be near his family.

In the meantime, Aunty Mandy would like to see him link up more with the local Dja Dja Wurrung community. "COVID-19 has made it hard to connect with the local community because everything keeps getting shut down."

Shaune is connected to football and cricket at the local club, the Bendigo Suns, and recently joined the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC).

Now that COVID-19 restrictions have lifted, he'd love to do more camping and fishing, like he did when he was younger.



## A focus on continuous improvement

**Looking inward and understanding where we can make improvements is an essential part of who we are and what we stand for. It's about doing what's right for the people we support and their families.**

Over this past year we've been upping our engagement with the people we support and their families.

### What have we learnt?

We have more work to do.

We know how important it is people are notified of all the changes that affect them, big and small. We're looking to make improvements to our communications with people we support and their families, with our rostering and complaints and complements processes first to be put on our continuous improvement register for review. We're committed to making lasting changes from the ground up.

## Validating and empowering

**We've made a commitment to always look for ways we can do things better—a huge part of this is making sure the conversations can happen.**

### At the heart of better services

We recently updated our Participant Engagement Framework with feedback we received from people we support. This Framework puts participants at the centre of our future planning—to have their voices heard, make informed decisions and to have a real influence over service development and design.

Having an effective and authentic way for people to tell us what they're thinking and feeling about our services is a must.

### Safe spaces to share

We hope to reinforce a culture where people feel empowered to tell us their stories and shape their services. There are a few different formal channels for people to share their thoughts and experiences:

- Regular house meetings, scheduled according to housemates' preferences.
- Surveys held face to face where possible and COVIDSafe.
- Community Forums hosted by advocacy groups.
- State-run Community Visitor Schemes, with reports provided to the government and our teams.

And while people are sharing, we're listening. As a direct result of feedback, we've:

- Invested in individual staff training where training will provide better quality of care.
- Encouraged participants to have greater choice and control over their house rosters, including selecting and recruiting a team that meets their needs.
- Supported participants to settle issues in their personal lives.
- Raised and resolved maintenance issues.

### How do people we support feel about our services?

**93%** feel safe in their home

**93%** said they choose the activities they participate in in their home

**90%** would recommend Possability to others

**88%** said they enjoyed spending time with family and friends (outside of paid support)

**52%** said they were updated on changes taking place in their home

*Views from house meetings in Tasmania, run by our engagement team.*

# Restructuring for our national focus

Shaking up our teams and creating new roles is helping to renew our focus on consistency and what's important.

**Sandy Travers, Director of the Office of the CEO**

Sandy was welcomed to our executive team to lead governance and risk management across the organisation. Working on behalf of the CEO and the Board, Sandy provides a level of independent review to how we do things. She makes sure we're aware of and responding to challenges and opportunities from inside and outside the organisation.

**John Rowland, Director of Operations**

John moved from the role of Executive General Manager of our Strategy and Business Performance team to lead our national operations teams. We created the new position to provide a national focus and consistent ways of working across our interstate teams. This has enabled us to draw on our strengths and focus collectively to improve the experience of the people we support.

**Janette Lenthall, Strategic Workforce Consultant**

Janette was our Executive General Manager of People and Culture and has now taken on a new position in workforce strategy. Her priorities are around industrial relations and making sure we can negotiate the complex cross-jurisdiction environments.

**Veronica Burton, General Manager of Quality and Safeguarding**

Veronica was appointed to lead our newly restructured quality team, with the ultimate goal being to ensure we deliver services that are safe and the best they can be. That people's rights and dignity are always protected, while services are based on active support and supporting self-determination.

While our quality team has been a permanent fixture, the changing sector environment meant a greater focus was needed. The team has two key functions, one half is the review team with a focus on learning from and responding to complaints and serious incidents, the other half ensures we're working toward best practice.



## Leif landed his dream job

When the opportunity came up to work in an agricultural machinery dealership, Leif jumped at the chance. He was already known to some of the team at Tasmac and he was welcomed into the business.

What started out as a role that brought together his interest in agricultural machinery and his cleaning might has blossomed into all areas of the business. Leif cleans the showroom and machinery and helps the parts and admin teams—there are no barriers to the roles he takes on.

Tasmac reaps both the economic rewards and social benefits of Leif's big personality. As he works his way around his workplace, Leif brings laughter and a break from the everyday routine. He wears a smile, shares a joke with his colleagues and lightens the mood. While for Leif, he's found his dream job and earns a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

Leif is part of our Community Based Supported Employment (CBSE) program. He's supported on the job by a CBSE support professional, but this support will lessen as he grows in confidence and capability.

## Views on safeguarding

100%

of people we support feel safe where they live

92%

are confident their family member is not subject to unnecessary restrictions

99%

of family members are satisfied their loved one is safe from abuse and harm

97%

of staff say they know how to respond to keep the people they're supporting safe

98%

of staff are confident they know how to report abuse

2021 survey of Victorian Transferred Services.

## The more you give

"Stefan asked me to advocate for young people with disability," said Wendy. Her son, Stefan, sadly passed away from Leukemia at 19. It was his wish that she speaks up for those who need it. So, that's exactly what she did.

Stefan had Asperger's Syndrome and his education was disrupted in year 10 when his school said they could no longer accommodate him. "I want to be a voice for people with disability," she said. "I know how difficult it can be and how important it is to break through barriers."

Wendy's devoted herself to committees and projects that advocate for better outcomes for people with disability in hospitals and airports and, unsurprisingly, won the Hobson's Bay Council Inspirational Woman's Award in 2013.

For Wendy, her career aspirations are now aligning with her personal beliefs and values. As she said, "in this job you're giving back to the community and helping people. I truly believe that the more you give, the more you get back."

### Earning and learning

Wendy is one of a group of new recruits who have taken up roles with Possability as part of a new program by the Victorian Government.

Delivered by Jobs Victoria, the initiative is a partnership between the Victorian Government, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, National Disability Services, unions and disability service organisations. The partnership is about opening up opportunities in the disability sector to people affected by COVID-19, with 600 traineeships. Trainees gain Certificate III or IV while being mentored and earning on the job. Possability was the first employer to join the program.

"The 'earn and learn' model is a great opportunity for people who've been impacted by the pandemic and are looking to change careers into a vibrant and growing sector. It offers people more than a stable job, what we do makes a real difference—supporting people with disability to build their independence and live the lives they choose."

*Drew Beswick,  
Possability CEO*

"This scheme will create hundreds of jobs for Victorians and provide much needed carers and support workers for people living with a disability."

*Jaala Pulford,  
Victorian Minister  
for Employment*





## A whole new world

There's just something about the magic of Disney. Rob's seen every Disney movie and will tell you his trip to Disneyland was the best thing he's ever done. He'll also tell you it took a lot of hard work to get there.

Rob was 17 when he found himself living in short term accommodation. He was looking for a place to settle, he ended up moving in with three housemates and joining group day supports but struggled with both. He started running away and was sometimes violent towards others.

Then the NDIS rolled out—and the whole world opened up. Rob moved into his own home and switched from group to individual day supports, with his own core team with similar interests. He got a job delivering catalogues, started volunteering at a dog rescue and heading to the cinema every week to catch new releases.

Rob dreamed about seeing more of the world. He wanted to go to Disneyland in California but was worried about how he'd cope going away.

As well as all things Disney, Rob loves animals. To start building up to an international trip, he went on smaller trips to local zoos and wildlife parks. Then he went interstate, to Melbourne and then to Queensland, where he went to Movie World and Sea World. Rob was excited but also a bit scared to begin with. "I was worried I might get myself worked up," he says. For each trip, Rob and his support team prepared with strategies around how to deal with things like crowds and loud noises.

After a few years, he made the trip—visiting San Diego Zoo, Safari Park, Sea World and Disneyland. "It was so big. It was like a whole new world," Rob says.

## A safe home

**Having a safe home to hang your hat is essential to building a happy life.**

Australia is in a housing crisis and people with disability are more likely to face several barriers. Many people with disability don't qualify for NDIS funding to cover the cost of housing, renting or buying, and many rely on the disability support pension. As rent increases, so does the risk of homelessness. It's a problem that will take a combined effort to solve.

### Housing affordability

Ideas Without Barriers was an event we co-hosted with social services provider Life Without Barriers in Hobart in May 2021. Policymakers and disability sector advocates, academics and executives met to discuss a plan for ensuring Tasmanians with disability have access to safe, comfortable and appropriate homes.

It was noted that the voices of people with disability must be heard, with supported decision-making facilitated where needed. One opportunity to come out of the event was the willingness of providers and the Tasmanian Government to work together on both the planning and rollout of new social housing, as our sector can help guide investments that will have the biggest impact.

### Housing Consultation Paper

Another way we're speaking up around housing is by responding to the Victorian Government's Sector Consultation Paper on its 10-Year Strategy for Social and Affordable Housing. By sharing our sector insights with the government, we hope to help shape the conversation and the eventual policies. You can find our response to the government's paper on our website.

### Housing choices

We've been providing specialised housing case management to Transport Accident Commission clients. Our role is to work with each individual to assist them to find suitable housing, or to overcome barriers so they can continue living in their current home and have their wants and needs met.

# Finley's clothesline



“Cheeky” is the first word Finley’s mum, Louise, uses to describe him. She then smiles, “He’s quite loving. I’ve just taught him to hug properly for five seconds. He’ll come and lean in, which is his way of hugging.”

Finley doesn’t speak to communicate, but his spelling is top-notch, and he loves looking up videos on his iPad of cars travelling over the Tasman bridge and clothes spinning on a clothesline. He needs constant support to keep him safe, as he exhibits significant behaviours of concern.

Louise is a working single mother with two kids, has no support at home and is battling depression. “That’s when Possability came into it and the support they offered was incredible.”

Finley had been spending two nights a week at our Seven Mile Beach Retreat when his NDIS funding was cut to only two nights a year. “At first he’d just sit there and had tears silently rolling down his face. He didn’t understand why he wasn’t with the people he knows, in the place that he knows.”

Routine is important to Finley but spending time at the Retreat is about more than that. “It’s Finley’s social contact; they’re Finley’s friends,” Louise says.

Missing Finley, the team at the Retreat etched “FIN” into the concrete under the new clothesline and sent his mum photos. “When he saw his name, he just pointed at the screen with the biggest grin. Followed by tears again because we still weren’t there.”

Louise put together 60 bits of documentation from Allied Health practitioners, teachers and friends and family to show how much his two nights a week at the Retreat mean to their family. They were given back enough of their funding to make the two nights work for the meantime but know it’s not a sure thing. Louise will keep advocating to give Finley what he needs—stability, connection with his friends and the things that bring him joy.

## We heart NDIS

**There’s no doubt that the NDIS has been a gamechanger and rightly armed participants with greater control over their service providers. We’re invested in working collaboratively to help shape the NDIS for the people who rely on it.**

We led two joint submissions to the NDIS with input from eight other Victorian providers around Supported Independent Living models and improving outcomes.

When the NDIA proposed Independent Assessments and changes to planning, we advocated strongly for a more transparent and individualised approach that’s truly built on human rights, co-design and with adequate protections for people going through the process. We:

- Led the development of two joint submissions with nine other Victorian organisations around Independent Assessments and changes to planning policy.
- Sent out online surveys and hosted a number of focus groups for people we support, to inform the submissions.
- Made a submission on Independent Assessments to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee.

### Views on Independent Assessments

**43%** said the survey was the first they had heard of IAs

**17%** said they had all the information they need and welcomed the changes

**56%** believed NDIS plan goals should be discussed during the IA (the NDIA was planning to discuss them after the budget was allocated)

**94%** disagreed with the proposed definition of ‘reasonable and necessary’ supports

**100%** believed they should be able to seek a plan review for reasons the NDIA wasn’t planning on allowing

*NDIS participants and family members, survey, 2021.*

# Catalysts for change

**This is bigger than us. It's about the people we support and broader diverse and vibrant communities of people with disability. We invest in research and share our knowledge to support equity, freedom and human rights.**

## **Applied Research Centre for Disability and Wellbeing**

We established the Applied Research Centre (ARC) for Disability and Wellbeing in collaboration with the University of Tasmania. Like us, the University of Tasmania is a values-driven organisation. This partnership builds on our mutual drive to contribute to knowledge, education, sector leadership and policy influence for people experiencing disadvantage, particularly young people and adults with intellectual disability.

The role of the ARC for Disability and Wellbeing is to support research and evaluate innovative programs that make a real difference in the lives of people with disability, their families and carers. Another function is to draw on this research to advocate for people experiencing disadvantage and influence policy and government decisions, through things like policy reform papers and consultation submissions.

To date we've taken a good look at the existing research and identified the gaps, so we know exactly where we can have the biggest impact. We found that almost half of research regarding intellectual disability in Australia is around education, while only 8 per cent focused on health and wellbeing.

We've started building networks for future collaborations that will allow us to capitalise on the broad range of experiences, skills and perspectives needed to address the most urgent research questions in the sector. Importantly, people with disability have a vital role to play in designing authentic research and we're looking to develop the strength and diversity of our research team.

## **Our annual conference**

We hosted our third annual industry conference in October 2020.

The theme was 'One person at a time: Ensuring an individual based approach to complexity within the NDIS Framework.' Attendees heard from leading practitioners on Positive Behaviour Support, co-design, trauma-informed practice and the importance of coaching and leadership.

## **Supported decision-making**

One way we're working to support the right to choose for people with complex needs is by contributing to the research project, 'Bringing supported decision-making to behaviour support.'

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) approved a grant for the project, which is being led by a team of academics, people with lived experience of disability and industry experts. Our Practice Innovation and Service Development team is part of this group, representing the interests of the people we support and broader NDIS participants.

The research project is about developing accessible resources to be used by industry practitioners to support people to make informed decisions around services, especially Positive Behaviour Support. These resources will give people the information they need to exercise their rights and understand the services they're receiving or are looking to receive. They'll also help practitioners and providers uphold the standards of the NDIS Commission—setting best practice and consistent services across the sector.

"Our purpose is to create new knowledge that supports people with developmental, intellectual or cognitive disability to live engaged, connected and valued lives."

*Applied Research Centre for Disability and Wellbeing, Possability*

## **Embedding Active Support**

We all want to participate in everyday activities, have relationships and be part of our community. Active Support is a person-centred staff practice that supports people with intellectual disabilities to be engaged in meaningful activities and social relationships, as well as exercising choice and control.

We are working with Professor Christine Bigby, Director of the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University, as part of a longitudinal study to understand how to embed Active Support in services. The study will help us understand where we're at with Active Support in our Supported Independent Living services every year. It'll provide valuable quality assurance feedback and contribute to knowledge about the significance of culture, teamwork and practice leadership, which leads to a better quality of life for the people we support. With consent, we've already collected baseline data at our Tasmanian services and plans for data collection in Victoria are well underway.



## Expanding employment services

We're thrilled to bits to be supporting people with disability to find and keep great jobs.

Our Community Employment and Transition to Work services offer people a few different employment opportunities and avenues. While they're only available in Tasmania, we're working to take our employment services to Victoria and Queensland.

- Our **Community-Based Supported Employment (CBSE)** program supports people to find work in the community. We partner with people to learn what they're interested in doing and then support them to find a job or work on their employability through skills development. Once they've found a job, we continue to support them in the workplace when they need it.
- We have a **labour hire service**. We provide support for people with disability on-the-job while a commercial organisation supplies the work. This works through partnerships with businesses offering fair wages and on the job training. Our greatest contributions in this space are through two Neville-Smith Forestry Products timber mills and Weeds and Seeds landscape maintenance operation (learn more in Matt and Mark's stories).
- Our social enterprise, **Oakdale Enterprises**, employs people in Hobart in paper recycling and security shredding and packing firewood and kindling.
- We support young people looking to find a job through our **School Leaver Employment Support (SLES)** program. SLES is about building skills and the confidence to move from school to employment, through individualised support and creating a clear pathway.

From left: Mark, Red and Matt



### Matt's motivation

Matt's been working at the Neville-Smith Forestry Products (NSFP) timber mill in Launceston for the past 12 months. Possability partnered with NSFP in 2019 and together set up a supported workforce with on-the-job training and secure employment. We provide the employees and NSFP provides the work and commercial nous.

Matt started out as a supported employee, packing kindling for Bunnings. On day one his supervisor, Red, said, "If you keep this up, you'll be a leading hand." Fast-forward six months and Matt now trains and leads the team on a full-time contract with Possability.

"Red must've seen some potential in me," Matt says. "I just like helping people, brightening their day and making them happy."

Matt's not only been earning a good wage, but his confidence has also blossomed into other areas of his life. "It's motivated me to do other things," Matt says. "Haven't got my licence yet, so want to get that, want to move out and get my own place. It makes me much happier, much better. The job really helped me out, it was a little push that I needed to have a good career."

### Making his mark

Mark had been out of work for some time when the pandemic took hold and he was unsure of where to look next. He was offered a supported employee role packing kindling at the NSFP timber mill and was soon promoted. He's now moved over to our new Weeds and Seeds operation as a leading hand.

The Weeds and Seeds team secured a contract with Community Housing Limited, a social housing provider. The team maintain the lawns and gardens, trim the trees and hedges and tidy away rubbish for 13 sites with around 30 to 40 units on each.

How does Mark feel about his job? "You've got something to get up for. We have a bit of banter and then we love getting into work. There's no talking at Weeds and Seeds, we're all just gasping for breath—did I just push that mower up that hill?" Mark laughs.



### Hey, Red

Leading both the Weeds and Seeds and NSFP operations is ex-tradie Andrew. Or as his crew calls him, Red.

Red brings out the best in his team. "We have people coming in low in confidence and competence. After a while they stop standing around waiting for a directive from me, they see something that needs to be done and jump to it. I love that I'm in a job that's making a difference," he says.

Red sets an intensive training schedule, it has to be when dealing with power tools and heavy machinery. Workplace Health and Safety discussions and risk assessments are a morning ritual. Employees learn about the expectations of an employer and in turn an employee, how the business works and the different levels of management, setting them up for success in a supportive team.

NSFP and Weeds and Seeds are both thriving, which Red says is because of his dedicated team and the employment specialists who hire them.

## Community Employment and Transition to Work



### We're CDERP certified!

We're ecstatic to report that eight of our employment services staff have studied and been officially certified by the Centre for Disability Employment Research and Practice (CDERP). CDERP created an evidence-based Applied Research Framework to deliver top-notch training and practice standards to those working in Customised Employment.

Our Certified Customised Employment Professionals are trained up and knowledgeable on how best to structure services, including the all-important Discovery phase, and support people to build their employment skills. We want to have the most capable staff, so we can offer people the best and most effective experience.

### Partnerships and education

Another partnership we've developed is with Don College, a senior secondary school in Devonport, Tasmania. We run a Community Skills Development hub, where people with disability are invited to sign up and work on everyday skills, like budgeting, grocery shopping and cooking. But there's always time for a bit of fun, with the outdoorsy and artsy well catered for.

"We're about enabling people to have the best possible access to community-based employment. To bring that to fruition and help them achieve those goals, even though they're different for everyone."

*Julie Penney,  
Manager Employment and Skills Development, Possability*

From left: Lou and Finley, story page 29



# Our Board



**David Morris**  
Chair of the Board

Special Responsibilities: Governance Committee



**Kathleen Brient**  
Director

Special Responsibilities: Chair of Governance Committee



**Matthew Greskie**  
Director

Special Responsibilities: Chair of Finance and Audit Committee



**Dr. Craig White**  
Director

Special Responsibilities: Chair of Clinical Governance Committee



**Pam White**  
Director

Special Responsibilities: Clinical Governance Committee



**Sue Ham**  
Director

Special Responsibilities: Governance Committee



**Jan Snell**  
Director

Special Responsibilities: Clinical Governance Committee



**Mark Valena**  
Director

Special Responsibilities: Finance and Audit Committee



**Taryn Rulton**  
Director

Special Responsibilities: Finance and Audit Committee

## Special mentions

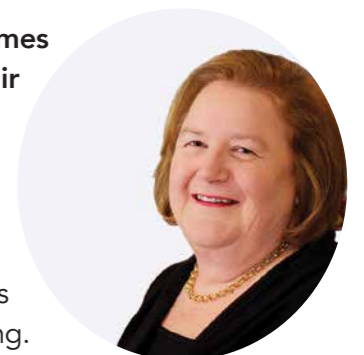


**Brian Scullin**

Brian has served as both Chair and Director since joining our Board in 2013 and retiring in November 2021. Brian was on our Finance and Audit Committee and Governance Committee. On behalf of Possability, we'd like to thank Brian for his invaluable service. Brian is deeply respected and has generously shared his time and wisdom over the years.

**"I am passionate about improving the opportunities for people with disability and have been proud to work with an organisation of the calibre of the Possability Group."**

*Brian Scullin*



**Dr. Julie Rimes**  
Inaugural Chair

Julie served as Deputy Chair and Director until she resigned in October 2020. Julie was on our Finance and Audit Committee and since taking leave from the Possability Board, has moved to provide insight and guidance as Chair and Director on the board of our new entity, the Applied Research Centre (ARC) for Disability and Wellbeing. We're thrilled Julie has chosen to continue supporting us and champion the important work of the ARC for Disability and Wellbeing.

**"Possability has long been at the forefront of disability thinking and practice in Australia. The independent Applied Research Centre for Disability and Wellbeing will consolidate proactive strategies and practices in our field. This is a significant and essential milestone for our organisation's history."**

*Dr. Julie Rimes*

# Our Executive team



**Drew Beswick**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Janette Lenthall**  
Strategic Workforce Consultant



**Sandy Travers**  
Director of the  
Office of the CEO



**Michael Trainor**  
Director of People and Culture



**John Rowland**  
Director of Operations



**Paul Csoban**  
General Manager of  
Operations Victoria



**David Mazengarb**  
Director of Corporate Services



**Rachel Wolf**  
General Manager of  
Operations Tasmania



**Nicola Crates**  
Director of Practice Innovation  
and Service Development



**Cherie Atchison**  
Chief Financial Officer

## Getting to know Ed

Edward, or Ed, is always up for a laugh and a chinwag. Talking on the phone, especially to Mum, filling in online forms and Googling the weather or this or that are some of his favourite things to do.

He's a well-seasoned traveller, having explored Australia far and wide with his family. When they go out on their yacht, Ed turns on the VHF radio, listens to the coastal news and gives his family their maritime position.

Ed moved into his own place with friends in 2012. Through the week you'll find him gardening, bowling, making pizza or delivering Meals on Wheels. Most likely, he'll be wearing sunglasses. "I wear them because I'm cool," Ed explains.



Possability

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Possability Group LTD