



Annual Report

Supporting people with disabilities and their families for 40 years in the Illawarra

2021



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p. 04

About Us

p. 04-05

The Past Year

p. 06

Vision & Mission

p. 07

Our Services

p. 08-09

Board of Directors &
Management Team

p. 11

Agenda

Table of Contents

p. 12-13

Minutes of Meeting

p. 14-15

Chairperson's Report

p. 16-20

CEO's Report

p. 22-23

Workforce Report

p. 24-29

Kemira, Saturplay & Social
Support

p. 30-31

Carers Health & Wellbeing &
MyTime

About Us

What started as a small organisation with a simple and rightful need to give back the choice to people with disabilities, has grown over the last 40 years into a well-known, reliable and trustworthy provider currently supporting over 240 families, but our heart and need is still the same - supporting you in your choices, always.

Interchange employs over 200 Support Workers and has relied upon many faithful and devoted volunteers over the years. We meet, and know, each and every person we employ being confident and comfortable that you can trust the people we connect you with.

We continue to be a loud voice in the Illawarra, nationally and internationally, with an unwavering commitment to creating opportunities and bringing value to the people who choose us as their provider.

To us, supporting you goes beyond physical wellbeing to include discovering new talents and abilities, new friendships, enriching life. We do this by offering individual support at all stages of life.



2020

JULY & AUGUST

A tentative return to pre-COVID-19 service delivery with a number of limitations and restrictions in place. Jake & Susan volunteered at the Good360 Warehouse helping pack over 720 care packs. Quota International Leisure Coast held a pie drive fundraiser to support Interchange and Jake thankfully received their donation. A supply of PPE was procured. Interchange ran our first session of Enteral Feeding Training. We offered a TAFE NSW skill set course free of charge to our workforce.

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

Interchange entered a team in September supporting people with Cerebral Palsy. The Interchange Team also donated blood and plasma at the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood donor centre. We ran another Enteral Feeding Training session We acquired a supply of santiser and offered it to participants, families and our workforce. The ramp was finished at our Pur Pur Centre. Interchange celebrated Carers Week with a number of activities. Workforce Survey sent out. NDIS Commission Mid Term Certification Audit was held with pleasing results. All Interchange sites registered as COVID Safe. We welcomed Marney Butler as a new member of our team. Marney is an experienced Support Planner/Coordinator .

THE PAST YEAR

Jake, Kade & Support Worker Lui, volunteered at the State of Origin, helping Good360 hand out 40,000 tubes of sanitiser. Jake accepted a donation from Anna Watson MP as a contribution to the construction of the new access ramp at the Pur Pur Avenue Centre. Jake attended

The Illawarra Connection's final dinner meeting of 2020 after graduating from the 2018-2020 Leadership Illawarra Program. We were unable to celebrate with our end of year party due to COVID-19 restrictions but we were able to present the Service Awards to our workforce at Centro. The AGM was held on 2nd November 2020.

Social Support groups were continuing to operate with a COVID-19 Safety Plan in place. From 1/2/21 there was a new mandatory NDIS Worker Screening Check introduced. The Interchange team again donated blood and plasma. We were finally able to hold our Parent/Carer event where we chartered a fishing boat and some of the Dads spent a day out on the water.

We became Carly's Coffee Courier's first customers in Wollongong. A high tea was offered to Parents and Carers as part of our Parent/Carer Health and Wellbeing Program. Three training sessions for Support Workers were held in March, administering Midazolam, Enteral Feeding, and Positive Behaviour Support Training. We were shocked at the sudden passing of Donnah Day, parent of two former Participants, as well as a member of the Parent Carer Sub Committee. Strategic Planning Day held at Novotel. We welcomed Sharon Maguire, an experienced Chartered Accountant to the team.

Interchange acknowledged our Volunteers as part of National Volunteer Week. Social Support participants had a short holiday to Jervis Bay. We were a finalist in the "Brilliant Idea- Teams" category of the "We Do Magic community Service Awards" being offered by Community Industry Group. We held our Parent/Carer Yoga Activity. We welcomed Leanne Davis-Raiss as a new member of the Interchange Team as a Support Planner/Coordinator and sadly farewellled Kate Malone. Interchange contributed to the IDO Expo by hosting an information stand. Jake presented at the ISBA 2021 virtual conference. IDA submitted a proposal to NSW Health to create a vaccination hub for member organisations in the Illawarra.

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

2020

JANUARY & FEBRUARY

2021

MARCH & APRIL

MAY & JUNE

Vision

To support people with disabilities and their carers living meaningful lives



Mission

- To partner with and assist people with disabilities and their carers
- To deliver flexible, high quality support

Values

- Collaboration
- Flexibility
- Innovation
- Reliability
- Respect

Our Services

1

Coordination of Supports

Assisting people with disabilities, their families and carers to identify goals and aspirations they may have to live a meaningful life.

2

Daily Living Assistance

Offering support to people with disabilities to increase independence in their own homes.

3

Community Inclusion

The choice of assistance during activities and outings, pursuing personal interests or hobbies or going on a holiday independent of family members, within an individual or group setting.

4

Parent/Carer Support

Developing opportunities for parents and carers to participate in the local community, foster relationships and strengthen informal networks.

Board of Directors & Management Team

Interchange Illawarra is led by a Board of Directors, made up of Parents and Carers as well as professionals from our local community, and is responsible for the overall operation of the organisation.

Jake Pearson, Chief Executive Officer, oversees the day to day operations, the people and resources. Jake is responsible for implementing the Strategic Plan approved by the Board and ensuring that the organisation's structure and processes meet the strategic and cultural needs of the organisation.



JAKE PEARSON

Jake's smiling face has been around the Disability Sector since 2001. After completing a Bachelor of Commerce, Jake has worked in both Human Resources and Operational roles, and is now the CEO of Interchange. Subsequent studies include Case Management, Community Services Coordination, Training and Assessment and completion of the AICD Company Directors course.

Jake is a Committee Member on the International Short Breaks Association Board, as well as being a husband and father to two small children.



AMANDA MASLOWSKI

Amanda is an experienced Financial Controller and has worked at Interchange for over 8 years.

Amanda has extensive experience in the banking sector and small business management, particularly with not for profits.

Amanda holds an Advanced Diploma in Accountancy and has recently completed the Cert III Individual Support (Disability).



MICHAEL CORBY

Michael has been involved in Disability support for over 17 years, initially starting out as a volunteer and casual support worker, while studying for a Degree in Communications at UOW.

Michael has completed further studies in the form of a Diploma of Community Services Coordination and Cert IV in Training and Assessment. He has previously been a Training Coordinator for people with a disability and taught as a Teacher in the Community Services sector at TAFE NSW.

**Susan Wallis**

Chairperson

**Peter Andrews**

Treasurer

**Lorraine Diaz**

Secretary

**John Kennedy**

Director

**Nathan McEwan**

Director

**David Richardson**

Director

**Bruce Rowles**

Director

**Dot Vassallo**

Director



Annual General Meeting

Agenda

MEETING DATE Monday, 1st November 2021

MEETING LOCATION Zoom Meeting

APOLOGIES

1. **WELCOME**
2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**
3. **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT** - Susan Wallis
4. **TREASURER'S REPORT** - Peter Andrews
5. **CEO'S REPORT** - Jake Pearson
6. **RETURNING OFFICER** - Ben Fock
7. **NOMINATION OF AUDITOR** -
8. **GENERAL BUSINESS** -
9. **CLOSING COMMENTS** - Susan Wallis
10. **MEETING CLOSED** -



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING | MINUTES

Meeting date | time 2nd November 2020 11:00am | Meeting location 81 KENNY STREET, WOLLONGONG

Meeting chaired by: Susan Wallis

Type of meeting: Board of Directors Meeting

Auditor: Elias Kinnas

Note taker: Pam Harris

Present: Peter Andrews, Lorraine Diaz, John Kennedy, Susan Wallis, David Richardson, Mauro Antonelli, Lucy Antonelli, Pat O'Dwyer, Vicki Foley, Glenda Pearce, Evan Loats

Via Zoom: Nathan McEwan, Elias Kinnas

In Attendance: Jake Pearson, Pam Harris, Amanda Maslowski

Apologies: Bruce Rowles, Dot Vassallo, Jan May

Agenda topics

1. **WELCOME** – Susan Wallis opened the meeting with an “Acknowledgement of Country” paying respect to the Nation’s first people and welcomed the Board, and guests
2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:**
MOVED: That the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 4th November 2019 be passed as a true and correct record. **CARRIED**
3. **CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT** – Susan Wallis presented the Chairperson’s Report
MOVED: That the Chairperson’s Report be accepted **CARRIED**
4. **TREASURER’S REPORT** – Peter Andrews presented the Financial Report
MOVED: That the Treasurer’s Report be accepted **CARRIED**
5. **CEO’S REPORT** – Jake Pearson presented the CEO’s Report
MOVED: That the CEO’s Report be accepted **CARRIED**
6. **RETURNING OFFICER** – Elias (Lou) Kinnas
Lou Kinnas declared all positions on the Board vacant and called for any Nominations from the floor.
7. **ELECTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
MOVED: That the 9 people accepting nomination be elected unanimously to the Board of Interchange Illawarra **CARRIED**

	Name	Position	Proposer	Second
1	Susan Wallis	Member	Peter Andrews	David Richardson
2	Peter Andrews	Member	David Richardson	Susan Wallis
3	Lorraine Diaz	Member	Susan Wallis	John Kennedy
4	John Kennedy	Member	Susan Wallis	David Richardson
5	David Richardson	Member	Peter Andrews	Susan Wallis
6	Nathan McEwan	Member	John Kennedy	Susan Wallis
7	Bruce Rowles	Member	Susan Wallis	Lorraine Diaz
8	Dot Vassallo	Member	Susan Wallis	Lorraine Diaz

MOVED: That the 8 people accepting nomination be elected unanimously to the Board of Interchange Illawarra **CARRIED**

8. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Name	Position	Proposer	Seconded
Susan Wallis	Chairperson	David Richardson	Peter Andrews
Peter Andrews	Treasurer	David Richardson	Susan Wallis
Lorraine Diaz	Secretary	Susan Wallis	Peter Andrews
Pam Harris	Public Officer		

MOVED: That all nominees be elected unanimously as tabled

CARRIED

9. NOMINATION OF AUDITOR – HLB Mann Judd

MOVED: That HLB Mann Judd be accepted as the auditor

CARRIED

10. GENERAL BUSINESS – Nil

11. CLOSING COMMENTS – Susan Wallis thanked everyone for their attendance and acknowledged the leadership and hard work of Jake Pearson and Amanda Maslowski.

CARRIED

12 MEETING CLOSED – 11.30am



Chairperson's Report

The preparation of the Annual Report each year forces me to review and appraise the activities of Interchange Illawarra over the previous 12 months and look for the highlights and lessons. This has been a little more challenging more recently than when I first became Chairperson in 2012.



It is with great relief that in another period of uncertainty and constant change resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the year has been a successful one and **we have continued to deliver on mission and purpose.**

It is with great pride that I observed Jake Pearson display incredible leadership as he again facilitated training opportunities during this last year thanks to funding support provided to our workers by the federal government. This not only upskilled and engaged our workers but also contributed to their mental health in a positive way.

Sustainability and the responsible use of resources is personally important to me, and I am proud that Interchange Illawarra installed solar panels at two of our sites during the year, which not only reduced our energy costs and added value to our assets but contributed to our energy independence and reduced our environmental impact.

We are grateful to Anna Watson, Member for Shellharbour, who awarded Interchange with a Community Building Partnerships 2020 grant which allowed us to build an access ramp to our Pur Pur Avenue Illawarra property. Ms. Watson visited the centre to present the cheque and construction was completed on time and to budget, and adds street appeal as well as increased accessibility.

Every year, my greatest gratitude is not for financial success or infrastructure improvements but always for the people who make up Interchange; people with disabilities and their carers, and the people we employ - our

Executive, Administration, Planning and Support Teams. These relationships are grounded on trust, reliability and kindness and are central to our culture and excellence in service provision. Thank you to each and every person who chooses our service, and every staff member who partners with Interchange to deliver support.

Jake and Amanda have again shown incredible leadership and grace under pressure, adapting, 'pivoting' and providing holistic support to all stakeholders. It makes me proud to know that all decisions are made with the best interests of participants and their families first and our organisation second, regardless of the economic impact. Maria, Michael, Pam, Sarah, Tanya, Leanne, Tracey, Marney, Kate, Emma, Kylie, Brooke, Leanne and Sharon, you are the heart of our team and your ongoing commitment during these challenging times is appreciated. On behalf of the Board, it is my pleasure to thank you all.

Our Board of Directors continue to govern as a team and representation is unchanged from the previous year, providing much needed and valued stability during an uncertain period for all.

Dot Vassallo has settled back into her role as though she never left, and John Kennedy and Lorraine Diaz continue to ably represent the perspectives of carers so that mission and purpose are at the forefront of every meeting, as they should be. Nathan McEwan is valued for his legal expertise and Bruce Rowles his

extensive knowledge and background in education. At the risk of sounding smug, good governance and team work at a board level is not a given and I'm led to believe that a Board of Directors, who is as well functioning as ours, is the exception not the rule. Our Treasurer Peter Andrews supported by David Richardson has again contributed above and beyond and provided essential assistance to Amanda in particular. The exceptional financial stewardship Peter and David continue to provide will be felt for decades to come. I appreciate every Director and the trust they place in me to lead the Governance team.

Finishing as I started with reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, towards the end of the year Jake and I took the opportunity to access the COVID-19 vaccination as soon as it became available. Together we rolled up our sleeves and were photographed doing so in the hope that by us having 'the jab' we would be role models and encourage our workforce and stakeholders to do the same.

On behalf of the Governance Team, I wish you all good health and safety for the coming year and beyond.

Susan Wallis
Chairperson

CEO'S Report



Jake Pearson

Chief Executive Officer

As we enter our 40th year of operation, it is interesting to reflect upon the environment of constant change brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic, but also on how our long term values and approach to supporting people with disability and their carers have held us in such good stead for a year of immense challenges and then recovery.

The year started with gradual but regular easing of COVID restrictions, and our service provision returned to pre Pandemic levels faster than anyone could have predicted. The immense financial support offered by the federal government assisted Interchange to keep our valuable workforce engaged and ready to return to work when it was safe to do so.

We used these early months to learn from the previous year, and further developed and refined our response protocols, secured a reliable stockpile of PPE and continued to invest in training and development opportunities for our staff. This included a partnership with TAFE to deliver two Nationally Accredited short skillset courses for Interchange Support Workers that was funded by a COVID response package awarded to TAFE.



The early stages of the COVID vaccination program had also been released and we promoted the benefits of vaccination to our participants, carers and workforce.

We furthered our digital transformation efforts of last year with the introduction of electronic timesheets and access to critical participant information for our workforce via an app linked to our Client Management System. This has helped to improve efficiency, accuracy and timeliness of the flow of information required to provide high quality and responsive service delivery.

The implementation of a participant portal where participants and carers can review real time spending and billing information related to their Interchange supports has also enhanced the customer experience for those choosing Interchange as their provider.

In December we successfully undertook the NDIS Commission Third Part Verification 'surveillance' Audit. Feedback was very positive and high customer satisfaction and engagement was a highlight.

Our physical infrastructure also received some enhancements with the construction of an access ramp at Pur Pur Ave, and the installation of Solar Power systems at both Kenny St and Pur Pur Ave. The Solar initiative not only provides us with the financial benefits of reduced energy costs, but also contributes to our commitment to contribute to climate change action and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).



Partnerships, Networks and Alliances

Working in partnership with other agencies continues to be a priority for Interchange Illawarra. The strength of well-developed relationships provides the opportunity to support a greater number of people with disabilities to their individual support needs, and to foster opportunities for community inclusion initiatives. We have key partnerships with:

- Illawarra Disability Alliance Members
- Community Industry Group
- Good360 Australia
- ASPECT
- Greenacres Disability Services
- TAFE Illawarra
- IRT
- Interchange Inc.

Donations

Interchange Illawarra is always appreciative of donations received. These valued contributions provide opportunities to people with disabilities, their families, and their carers, that would not be otherwise available. In particular, donations to Interchange fund health and wellbeing activities for carers, as these activities are no longer funded under the NDIS.

Interchange Illawarra acknowledges the donations received throughout the 2020-21 year:

- Quota International Leisure Coast
- Henry Crawford
- Community Building Partnership Grant

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

In March 2021 the Board of Directors engaged in a Strategic Planning process where our Mission, Vision, Values and future direction was examined and debated

The process gave all Directors the opportunity to contribute to the future of the organisation and as result of the successful day, our new 2021-2026 Strategic Plan has been approved and implemented.



Staff Update

Over the past 12 months, all staff and volunteers at Interchange have continued to support participants and their families with high quality and person centred support in an ever changing and challenging environment.

In October 2020, we welcomed Marney Butler to the Planning team and she very quickly became a respected and innovative part of the team. In April 2021 Sharon McGuire joined the Admin team and in June 2021 Leanne Davis-Raiss joined the Planning team. The breadth of experience and skills these people have brought to the organisation is incredible. Sadly, in May 2021, Kate Malone resigned and we wish her well for the future and know she will be greatly missed.

Acknowledgements

Throughout the year, various people and organisations work in collaboration with Interchange Illawarra. These relationships are valued by this organisation and are vital to the ongoing support to people with disabilities, their families and carers. These include:

- Interchange Illawarra Carers Sub-Committee
- Good360 Australia
- Paul Davies from Paul Davies Digital Co.
- Ross Boyd from RB Computing
- ASPECT South Coast School for Children with Autism
- Big Fat Smile
- Staff of National Disability Insurance Agency and NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- TAFE Illawarra

In a year that was more operationally and financially successful than anyone could have ever imagined, I'd like to credit our wonderful Board of Directors for providing clear and tangible guidance and for trusting the executive team and the entire workforce to deliver our Mission to the people we are here to serve. Ever changing rules and restrictions have made governance challenging, and taking a considered approach to governance based on sound strategic initiatives and operational reporting has led to considerable successes in this financial year.

Lead by our Chairperson Susan Wallis, the Board has brought their considerable knowledge and skill to every meeting (also plenty in between meetings!) and have been very generous to share this on a volunteer basis. Our organisation would not be in the fantastic shape it is in now without our committed Board of Directors- truly above and beyond reasonable expectations.

Our strength has always been our people and this year has again shown what a innovative and passionate workforce we have. It's a pleasure to recognise our workforce as the best in the business at any given opportunity, but special recognition needs to go our Planning and Administration Teams - the engine room of the organisation. To Amanda, Maria, Michael, Pam, Tanya, Leanne, Tracey, Emma, Kylie, Brooke, Sarah, Leanne and Sharon – I thank you for your unwavering support and hard work throughout the year.

To our wonderful Support Workers and Volunteers - you are the heart and soul of what we do. Working under constantly restrictions and undertaking a role is challenging at the best of times, I thank you for your ongoing passion and commitment to the people we support.

Lastly, "thank you" needs to go to people with disabilities, their families and their carers for sharing their lives, and continuing to choose Interchange Illawarra as their preferred service provider.

I am proud of the way our organisation has responded to the challenges that this year has presented and look forward to partnering with people with disabilities and their carers to deliver flexible, high quality support again in 2021-22.

Jake Pearson
Chief Executive Officer



Workforce

The Interchange Illawarra workforce comprises of both Volunteers and paid Support Workers allowing us to provide flexible and responsive support to people with disabilities, their families and carers during these ever changing times.

Our recruitment strategy for this financial year has remained a targeted approach, running two successful campaigns and gaining a number of highly experienced Support Workers. We have also gained a number of support workers through general enquiries and word of mouth. We have

continued to refine our recruitment and selection processes and have an orientation program which captures all information and training required for our workforce to do their jobs safely. We are continuing to refine our processes and update according to changes in compliance for NDIS workers.

Interchange Illawarra has an online training platform where our workforce access mandatory modules as well as an extensive library of topics that they can complete at any time. We also run





our specialty training sessions on a quarterly basis. Interchange's specialty training topics are delivered by Registered Nurses and highly skilled Interchange teaching staff.

Our valuable partnership with UOW gave us an amazing opportunity to host a Social Work Student for 6 months and they have successfully completed placement and stayed on to work for Interchange on a casual basis.

Our Workforce team continue to develop new and innovative ways to communicate with our workforce and these have been well received by Support Workers and helps us to engage effectively when

there are changes to legislation or updates within Interchange.

Valuable feedback from carers and participants reveals that our workforce is regarded as well trained individuals who can perform their duties in a professional manner, and they promote Interchange Illawarra as both professional and responsive to the needs of carers and people with disabilities. We aim to maintain this level of satisfaction by setting high standards at orientation and continuing to offer relevant training opportunities.

We look forward to working with new and existing members of our valued direct workforce in the coming year.

Workforce Team

Kemira Respite House

Interchange Illawarra is very happy to have been able to continue to provide Respite Support at Kemira House, in what will be the fifth year that Interchange and Greenacres have continued to successfully share use of the respite house at Kemira, in Kanahooka.

Despite a short hiatus in July last year as a result of the COVID lockdown, with IRT restricting access to the site, our fortnightly 'Girls' and 'Boys' Weekends Away for young adults with ageing carers continue

to be a resounding success according to the participants and their carers, alike.

During the most recent COVID outbreak and ensuing lockdown, Interchange Illawarra have managed to maintain this crucial support, with robust COVID safe practices and modified participant numbers and activities, to ensure participants can maintain the relationships that have been built over the last 5 years of the program, and also offer their carers a well-earned break.



Whilst staying at Kemira House, participants have an opportunity to socialise and form lasting friendships with their peers, practice independent living skills and learn to spend time away from their carers. Some participants are also using this opportunity as preparation for the next step of moving into independent/semi-independent living.

The Josie's Club social support group for Kemira residents was able to recommence after a long break (again due to COVID) between June 2020 and February 2021. From 20th February, Josie's Club was once again able to be enjoyed by Kemira residents and was well attended. Group members organise

their own timetable for activities and designate weeks for each Resident to take responsibility for planning that week's activity. The Interchange support worker simply facilitates the activity and ensures the club continues to be driven by the residents. Unfortunately this has again been suspended as of the end of June 2021, as a result of the most recent COVID outbreak and lockdown.

Tracey Greatz
Kemira Coordinator





Saturplay

This year commenced with a return to a full Saturplay program and even daring to return to some community based activities. However, the recent situation with further challenges brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak has led us back to a flexible approach to service delivery for this program.

Despite the current situation which challenges everyone across the state, country and globally, we have been able to continue offering Saturplay, albeit to a reduced number of participants and with activities limited to the centre.

It is fortunate that our Saturplay staff have such a sense of commitment to the program and have continued to fulfil their roles with unfailing enthusiasm and creativity. Each week of operation staff have demonstrated their ability to adapt to the changing conditions and they have shown a limitless imagination when organising meaningful social activities for the participants.

As with the situation in 2020 we see the benefits of intensive social support through centre based games and activities which allows participants to practice the skills of choosing activities and play

partners, modifying activities to incorporate their interests and improving their social communication skills in a supportive environment. For those participants using Speech Generating Devices for expressive communication, the Saturplay staff have worked hard to develop their skills in supporting communication and encouraging these participants to generalise their skills to the social context of Saturplay. We all agree that is inspiring to see our participants with expressive communication challenges show self-determination and take leadership in driving their own social experiences.

The diverse skills and qualities that the support workers bring to the program are incredible and include secondary and tertiary students balancing studies with work, people working fulltime in the disability sector and giving additional time to our program as well as educational professionals working across schools in the Illawarra providing support to students with a disability. This includes a number of staff working at ASPECT South Coast School, myself included, who bring a knowledge of special education which is shared across our workforce. This actively contributes to the quality of the program and the resulting growth of social skills for our participants.

I would like to extend a special thank you to all of the Saturplay team who continue to bring positivity to their role in the face of their own trials of life in lockdown and home learning.

At this time I draw attention to the ongoing support of ASPECT (Autism Spectrum Australia) South Coast School who have provided a venue in the Corrimal Base School site for more than 20 years. Their support allows our participants to flourish in an autism friendly venue. The continued access to this location allows our participants to grow and develop in a highly supportive environment. It is their enduring generosity that allows the Saturplay program to continue to support our many participants.

This year we have farewelled some participants as they reached their 12th Birthday and also participants who chose to no longer access the program. Interchange continue to wish them well as they join other community groups for social activities. We have also welcomed many new participants to the Saturplay program who we hope to support for the coming years.

What 2021 has shown us is that we are flexible and dynamic we are positive and committed and we have the skills and resilience to meet almost any challenge. The staff and I extend to all of our participants and their families our deepest wishes for you to stay safe and remain positive and we look forward to continuing to provide you with a trusted quality service in to the future.

Leanne Micallef
Saturplay Coordinator

Social Support

Despite facing some significant challenges in the face of a global pandemic, the Interchange Social Support program has had a relatively successful 2020-2021 financial year. After we moved to increased 1:1 support and online activities for much of the final quarter of the previous financial year, it was a massive relief and a joy to return to face to face supports for the 12 months of the 2020-2021 financial year. Although some groups may have been smaller than we had seen previously, we were able to continue offering all of our existing groups upon the return of face to face social support groups.

Regular Centre-based and community access social groups that we offered during the financial year included; Social Support Weekdays, Social Support Saturdays, Weekends Away, Saturday Club North and South, Kiama Group, Social Support South, Youth Group, TGIF, and School Holidays. We provide support to participants across a number of age groups and service the 3 local LGAs of the Illawarra. The most popular activities this year were Laser Tag for the younger groups and a good old Lunch at the Pub for the older groups (who can blame them?)

We also returned to our Hawks and Dragon's supporters programs and despite the Dragons being outside of the top 8 at the time of writing, the Hawks were able to provide an exciting run all the way to the grand final for our Interchange sport's fanatics.

Thanks must go to both the Dragons and Hawks for their continued partnerships and support of

our social support programs over the years. The participants of these programs are an integral part of the local supporter community and the partnerships we have with these organisations is important in ensuring they can continue to be a part of that.

Weekends Away and Short Holidays

Our Weekends Away and Short Holiday programs offered short term accommodation to participants and respite to their carers. Participants can stay at our respite cottage in Evans St Wollongong for the weekend with a group of their friends from the program. It gives the participants a chance to increase their independence, practice their daily living skills, spend time away from their primary carers and maintain their informal supports.

Short Holidays were a big hit during the year, and our participants were able to provide some much needed tourism dollars to regional NSW. During the financial year our holiday groups visited Bateman's Bay in December, Blueys Beach and the Mid North Coast in February, Dubbo in March, Jervis Bay in May and Kookaburra Farm-stay, near Port Stephens, in June. A great time was had on each and every one of these short holidays.

Unfortunately, our next planned holiday to the Gold Coast in late August had to be cancelled due to the latest COVID outbreak. We will make plans for more

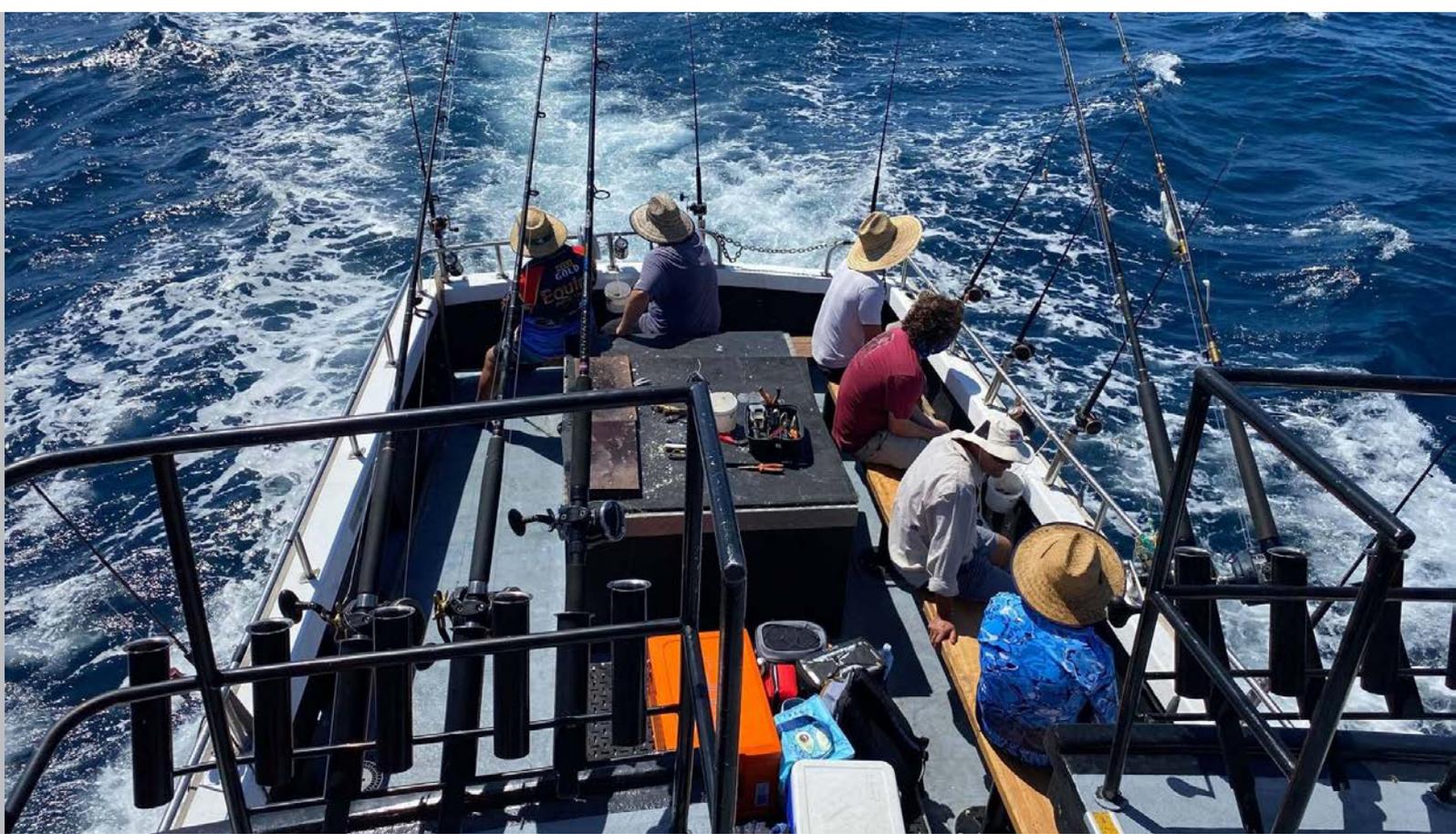
holidays in the future when it is safe to do so. With the safety of all involved in our Social Support programs being so important to us we have continued to implement measures to manage the risks of COVID-19 during this time. Contactless temperature checks upon arrival at groups and additional cleaning & sanitising procedures have been continued. We have also set out clear expectations in relation to the exclusion of those who display flu like symptoms, and 14-day self-isolation rules for those people who have been in contact with a person who has COVID-19 or those who have been overseas or to hotspots. We now offer programs on a bi-monthly basis instead of our previous quarterly offerings to help us adapt quickly to changing health advice.

At the time of writing, group based activities were on a break due to the COVID delta strain outbreak and as unfortunate as it may be to miss out on our social groups it is more important to follow the relevant health advice carefully and keep everyone safe during these unprecedented times.

As always a huge thank you must go out to all the Participants, Families and Support Workers involved in Interchange's Social Support programs. We have had a great 12 months and I am looking forward to another great year ahead in the 2021-2022 financial year, I hope you all are too!

Michael Corby
Social Support Manager





Carers Health & Wellbeing

As we have done so for all of our 40 years in operation, Interchange Illawarra has continued to offer Carer Health and Wellbeing activities for the carers of registered Interchange participants.

The organisation has a proud history of providing holistic support that benefits both the person with a disability and the members of their household and we know that research shows that the health, wellbeing and success of People with disabilities is directly related to the wellbeing of their carers- both from a physical and mental health perspective. Caring for a person with a disability can be exhausting, isolating and create significant social and financial disadvantage.

Health and wellbeing activities are designed to offer carers opportunities to connect with each other and we do this by organising and facilitating various programs, workshops and events free of charge to those people in our community that always put themselves last.

Our support planners have all taken responsibility to arrange an event throughout the year, giving carers not only the opportunity to enjoy enriching activities with fellow Carers, but also the chance to get to better know our Planning staff.

Due to NSW Health restrictions imposed for part of the year, our offerings were modified to suit the rules at the time. We hosted our traditional Carers luncheon to celebrate Carers Week in October 2020 - hosting at our Kenny St site over two days rather than our ordinary large event at a local eatery. In February we successfully ran a fishing charter for Dads, the first successful Dads only event we have run in many years. We also fitted in a high tea at Sublime point in March before the restrictions took hold in June.

My Time

The 'My Time' project is funded by The Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) and is provided in partnership with the Parenting Research Centre, Playgroup NSW, Interchange Illawarra, TAFE Illawarra and Big Fat Smile. This program is about assisting families to develop social networks, enjoy some time out and provide children who have additional needs and chronic illness an opportunity to socialise with other children.

My Time continued to be well attended with parents/carers enjoying the opportunity to have a 2 hour break to chat with others and learn about relevant information. This supported playgroup initiative is the only one of its kind Australia wide where TAFE Child Care students have a hands on opportunity to work with, and better understand, children with disabilities in a social learning environment for the child and siblings. Over the

years many of the childcare students have developed a passion for supporting children with a disability and have registered to volunteer at Interchange and work in the disability sector.

Unfortunately, we needed to suspend our Face to Face sessions in the middle of 2021 due to COVID-19. Carers were supported instead through the sharing of information and activities via email, and the use of a Facebook group for families. When community restrictions lift, we are planning for the return to our sessions at the TAFE Wollongong campus with our wonderful TAFE students.

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