

**Knoxbrooke**

**Talk**



Inside this edition:

Mawarra Update

Welcome aboard Trevor Norman

Achieve Update

Knoxbooke Enterprise update

NDIS News

Winter Newsletter

It's just about the middle of Winter – and what that means is that Spring's on the way. Despite the low temperatures and lack of sunlight, plants all around us are getting ready to grow, because they know that from here on, things are going to get a bit brighter.

At Knoxbrooke, we're all about growing as well. In fact, it's the reason why we exist.

Since our last newsletter, Knoxbrooke held a series of workshops designed to dig down on what exactly is driving us. The money is hardly great, after all, and the hours can often be quite demanding.

The answer, it turns out, is actually quite heart-warming. Bottom line: we like helping people to grow. The "payoff" comes from seeing our clients discover new interests, develop new skills or delight in some new job or friendship.

And we like how working here helps us grow as well. Because when you help people to explore new horizons, you generally end up expanding your own.

In the coming editions of this newsletter, we'll explore the four key pillars of Knoxbrooke's GROW philosophy – a philosophy that's all about being Genuine and Responsive; a philosophy that means we create Opportunities and stick with With You All the way.

But for the time being, please stick with us! There are a few pages of this newsletter to go.



Mawarra

It's been a busy three months at Mawarra – and, as always, consultation's been front and centre.

"We've had a lot of workshops with clients and their families in recent times and taken a lot of their feedback on board," says our Group CEO, Kristian Dauncey. "We want to understand what good service looks like from a client and their families perspective – and we'll do what it takes to provide it."

"It's totally understandable that some people are still feeling a little bit unsettled after such a massive period of disruption at Mawarra, but I think that more people are coming to recognise that most of these changes have actually been really positive."

"We're not about offering some stock-standard program and saying 'Here you go, take it or leave it'. Individuals with a disability are just that – individuals! The fun part of this job is actually meeting with clients to work out what they want, then coming up with fun ways to deliver it."

"One of the key things we've been hearing is that people want more choices and more flexibility," adds Knoxbrooke's Claire Cutler. "In the past, it's all been pretty rigid. On a Monday, for example, there might have been cooking, exercise and art, and if you weren't interested in any of those programs, you either had to slot in or entertain yourself."

"Now every day starts with a discussion about what people actually want to do, and we've brought in more buses so we can do things around town. We don't need to overthink it or micromanage everything, we just need to make sure that everyone has a safe and great day. What that looks like is up to the clients."

A more "individualised offering" is also being delivered through a brand, new staff roster, which ensures that we will always have at least one staff member on hand for every three clients.

In the past, Mawarra had "staff ratios" of 1:6 or even 1:7 – and as Claire explains, that was simply not good enough. "If you're in a room and you've got somebody you really need to focus on exclusively for a while, the

other six people might still be able to have a good time. But will they be as engaged? Probably not."

Another major positive in recent months has been the move to a permanent workforce – and away from the casual contracts of the past. This is not just good news for Knoxbrooke staff. We believe that it's a win for our clients. A consistent and stable workforce is a workforce that's there for the long haul. It's a workforce which has the time to train regularly, really get to know each client's history, and really work with them to create a better future.

"We go through a rigorous recruitment process to select the right people," says Kristian, "and the result is that we have a highly engaged and very motivated workforce. [They're just terrific people, and they do the right thing.](#)"

Opportunities at the Op Shop!

Recruitment is also underway at the Op Shop – and we are recruiting supported employees!

"We know it's really hard for our clients to get a retail job," says Kristian, "so one of our priorities is to create opportunities in this area, so the person on the register ringing up your purchase could well be a supported employee being provided assistance as required. We also have vacancies in our sorting centre, in the warehouse, delivering items, and so on."

"Because of COVID, a lot of our volunteers have tapered off," adds Claire, "but what better way to fill the void with people in supported employment? We've got endless opportunities at the shop, and you get all kinds of weird and wonderful things turning up, which can make things so much fun. Only the other day, we sold some random jug for almost \$3,000 because it turned out to be an antique from the 1900s."

"At the end of the day, when people come to work, every person needs to feel included and engaged and empowered and feel like they're part of something special."

"I think we see that a lot."



Welcome aboard



Our numbers are growing at head office too, with the appointment of a new financial controller.

Originally a chartered accountant, Trevor Norman comes to Knoxbrooke from Combe Asia-Pacific, where he served as general manager for close to a decade.

But every bit as relevant, from our point of view, were his 13 years as a volunteer on the board of Araluen, a well-regarded disability provider in Melbourne's north-west.

Trevor didn't need to be told why our work is important – though he happily admits to being “blown away” by its extent.

“It's been a whirlwind for the first three months, put it that way,” he says. “I think just the breadth of Knoxbrooke's operations have surprised me. On top of the whole disability service portion of the business, you've got the nurseries, you've got the packaging and assembly businesses, you've got an Op Shop. There are just so many different arms to the business which, commercially speaking, need to stand on their feet.”

To take the body metaphor a little bit further, it's a business model that's gone straight to his heart. “I just love the way we provide work for so many people. Work is such a big part of every person's life. You get structure from your job. You get enjoyment. You get self-esteem. You get friends and relationships. That occurs for us, and it's so important for people with disabilities to have those same opportunities.”

“I'll be crazy busy trying to get budgets done and all the rest of it, and then I'll have a meeting out at the nursery, and all of a sudden it all makes sense. Seeing what the organisation is actually about gives you a little bit of a spring in your step.”



Achieve update

Trevor hasn't been to our new Achieve campus yet – but next time he needs some more pep in his step, that might be a good place to head.

Located right in the middle of Ringwood, it's now home to 36 students, up from just 20 at the start of last year.

"With the fantastic team there, we've been very successful in recruiting new students," says Knoxbrooke's Gai Campbell of the decision to lease the bigger building, "and moving down there's been terrific, because it's a really light-filled environment".

Needless to say, the curriculum is growing as well, with students acquiring an ever-widening range of life skills designed to stand them in good stead for the future. Whether they're honing their cooking, learning to drive, doing radio shows or dabbling in LEGO robotics, Achieve's three-dozen young adults all seem to agree on one thing: "we love coming to Achieve".

"We've definitely seen an improvement in the outlook for the students," says Kristian. "The research tells us that if someone doesn't get a job or some kind of meaningful employment in that first five years after they leave school, then their future is not going to be as positive as it might be. School is a highly structured system, and there can be big problems associated with going from that to a life with no structure at all."

"The NDIS sets a target for this sort of transition

program, and that's to place 30% of your students in employment. We're currently tracking at 41%."

"It's not just a credit to the great staff we have there. It's a credit to all the great Achievers."

Building boom at Tyson House

Perhaps in the future, some of those Achievers will find jobs in construction?

If so, they'll come with a few skills.

One of Achieve's new electives is seeing students spend three days a week at Tyson House, Knoxbrooke's three-bedroom cottage in the heart of the Dandenongs.

"There's lots of maintenance works that needs to be done," says Gai, "so some of them are working on site for three-day stints, learning to use power tools, clear weeds and so on. It's terrific for the students to get a glimpse of another world, and I think that some of them can glimpse another career path as well."



Knoxbrooke Enterprises update

If any Achieve students want to find work in our nurseries, their timing is starting to look pretty good.

“We have grown a couple of our enterprises in the last few months and taken on about eight new supported employees,” says Knoxbrooke Enterprises CEO Scott Buckland. “And there are still a few vacancies that we’re trying to fill.”

The growth has come in spite of some serious COVID-related challenges over the last 18 months. “These snap lockdowns certainly impact on almost all of our enterprises, so we’re heading forward with a little bit of caution, but also with some confidence that the future looks pretty bright.”

“We’ll often have 100 people working on site at any given time, so it can be difficult to manage social distancing and all the protocols, but we’ve been able to make modifications this year and get close to pre-COVID levels of production.”

And, in some ways, we’ve even begun to exceed them. “May was actually a record month in commercial sales for the organisation, which is a massive highlight.”

“We don’t produce all those plants easily. We provide a nurturing, supportive environment to get people started, but at the end of the day, it’s work like any other workplace, and our people work very hard. The actual feat of the team is getting all those plants out in that time frame is just exceptional, and it

should be celebrated.”

Storm appeal

Something that should not be celebrated, on the other hand, were the storms that wreaked havoc all over Victoria last month.

Unfortunately, Yarra View Nursery was particularly hard-hit, with large trees coming down and causing close to \$200,000 in damage.

“The insurance will cover some of it,” says Scott, but there’ll be some remnant damage that we won’t be able to claim, and we’ll still be finding stuff that needs fixing for months.”

We are calling on everyone to assist us get back on our feet through a tax-deductible donation to the Great Storm Recovery Appeal. To donate please visit:

<https://knoxbrooke-inc.giveeasy.org/the-great-storm-recovery-appeal>



NDIS News



PRICE GUIDE UPDATE

Group Funding

In 2020 the NDIS re-structured group funding by taking the loading for non-face to face time and centre capital costs out of the line-item rate, initially this change was to take place from 1/7/2020, however after heavy lobbying by providers the NDIA allowed providers the option to continue with the old structure for a further 12 months. The new structure of funding results in an anticipated reduction in income of approximately 11% for Knoxbrooke. The change led to Knoxbrooke having to reevaluate group services and was a major part in our decision to close the Outer East Basecamps, in West Gippsland we are committed to continuing our day services, the service is in the process of a major restructure to maintain its viability whilst continuing to offer and improve the variety and level of support.

Although the NDIA announced in early June 2021 that they would extend the option to continue with the old structure for a further 12 months we are proceeding with the new structure from 1/7/2021. This will be a change for our clients not only because of the restructure but also our invoices will now include three lines of charges, support, non-face-to-face and centre capital cost's, all of which will amount to less than charged prior to 1/7/2021.

An example of the new funding structure:

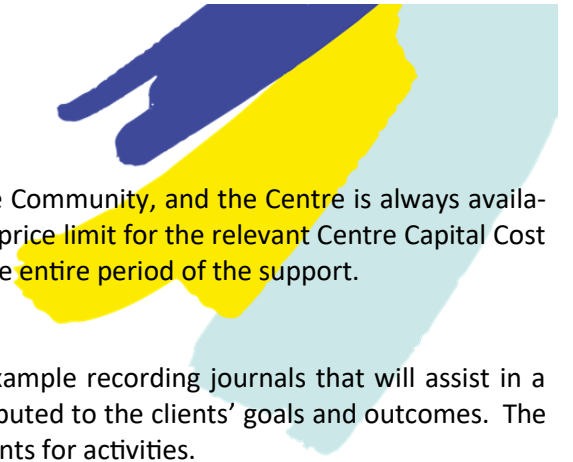
OLD NDIS FUNDING		NEW NDIS FUNDING	
Group Activities in a Centre 1:3 ratio	\$26.45	Group Activities in a Centre 1:3 ratio	\$19.89
		Centre Capital Cost	\$2.17
		Non-Face-to-Face support	\$1.98
Total charge per hour	\$26.45	Total charge per hour	\$24.04

OLD NDIS FUNDING		NEW NDIS FUNDING	
Group Activities in the community 1:3 ratio	\$24.30	Group Activities in the community 1:3 ratio	\$19.89
		Centre Capital Cost	\$2.17
		Non-Face-to-Face support	\$1.98
Total charge per hour	\$24.30	Total charge per hour	\$24.04

What is the Centre Capital Cost Fee?

The Centre Capital Cost fee is an additional amount providers can claim for the cost of running and maintaining the facility, it is charged under a different line item to the support.





*When a support is delivered partially in a Centre and partially in the Community, and the Centre is always available during the support if required, then providers can claim up to the price limit for the relevant Centre Capital Cost support item in respect of each of the participants for each hour of the entire period of the support.

What is Non-Face-to-Face Support?

This is support provided that is not face to face with a client, for example recording journals that will assist in a hand over situation or to document how the support provided contributed to the clients' goals and outcomes. The item also covers the time it takes to set up and perform risk assessments for activities.

Supported Employment Funding

When the NDIS commenced in 2013 the funding for Supported Employees continued to be structured in line with the DHHS DMI model, that is, a lump sum per client billable over 52 weeks regardless of the number of hours a supported employee worked. The NDIS announced in 2019 that the funding model for Supported Employees will be transitioned over to the hourly rate of support in line with NDIS style of funding, this transition is to take place prior to 31/12/2021. Knoxbrooke have commenced transitioning clients across to the new model. The transition will require plan reviews for all supported employee clients, many of which have already occurred. The hourly funding for supported employees working 15 hours or less will be lower than the old DMI rate, for those working over 15 hours a week it will be higher, the NDIS recognizes this and have informed providers that plans will be adjusted to accommodate the change. In line with NDIS' funding, non-face-to-face time and centre capital costs can now be funded through plans and will appear as separate charges to the hourly support. These changes result in the NDIS funding individuals for the actual level of support they receive which in most cases was underfunded in the old model. It will also allow Knoxbrooke to increase our training and support hours for individual workplace skills.

See below for an example of the new funding structure for a supported employee that works 15 hours over 3 days at the Yarra View Nursery:



OLD NDIS FUNDING		NEW NDIS FUNDING	
DMI 4 per week	\$309.30	Supports in Employment 1:1 x 4 hours pw	\$238.68
1:1 Individual workplace support \$63.21 x 4 hours	\$252.84	Supports in Employment 1:3 x 11 hours pw	\$218.79
		Non-Face to Face support (12 mins per day)	\$35.80
		Centre Capital Cost (\$2.17 per hour)	\$32.55
AMOUNT CHARGED PER WEEK	\$562.14	AMOUNT CHARGED PER WEEK	\$525.82

Check your Support Budgets

The NDIA have advised that the 1/7/2021 price increases will not be added to existing plans, participants are expected to fund the increases from their current plan budgets. As some clients have committed 99% of their budgets for supports already, we strongly suggest that you assess whether the supports will be covered by plans, taking into account a 1.5% increase in charges.

PPE

Providers can fund the cost of PPE for support workers assisting clients with supports under the daily life category, this may apply to some of our 365 1:1 supports.

Self-Managed Support

The new price guide includes funding for self-management capacity building if you self-manage your plan this funding can be used to purchase services to get help to self-manage your funds and supports.

Knoxbrooke NDIS Team

Knoxbrooke have a dedicated team of staff available to help you with your NDIS needs, this is an unfunded team available to help you with planning meeting preparation, advocacy/support in planning meetings, change of circumstance or unscheduled reviews.

If you have any questions in relation to the above or about the NDIS in general, please contact the Knoxbrooke NDIS Team and we will be happy to help. We can be contacted at:

Email: ndis@knoxbrooke.com.au

Phone: 9758 3666 Outer East
5624 3400 West Gippsland



Donate to Knoxbrooke



We value your support.

- Your generous contributions help us to
- Enhance our service offerings
- Help send members of our Knoxbrooke Client Council to the annual VALID 'Having a Say Conference
- Purchase materials and equipment's
- Improve facilities for our supported employees

If you can assist, please give us a call on 03 9758 3666

Respectful images policy

Knoxbrooke is wholly committed to a 'respectful images' policy that ensures that all photos of service users and their families that are presented in Knoxbrooke social media, website, newsletters, reports and flyers are respectful, dignified and fit for purpose.

Knoxbrooke has a wonderfully positive story to tell and we are keen to share our activities with family and friends of Knoxbrooke.

If for any reason you do not wish for your loved one to be included in photographs that may appear in publication or our social media page, or you would like a copy of our policy, please let us know.

