



Annual Review 2011

www.abilityfirstaustralia.org.au



abilityfirst AUSTRALIA

Ability First Australia is a national body of leading disability organisations working to achieve a fair go for Australians living with a disability. These organisations are amongst Australia's oldest and most respected charities. All were established from the 1920's onwards to support children living with the results of polio, cerebral palsy and related conditions. Today these organisations continue to provide innovative and responsive services aimed at meeting the needs of people living with a disability.

Our purpose is to work with our Member organisations to ensure that every Australian living with disabilities, and their families, will have access to programs that maximise their potential and create opportunities for them to make their own choices. We do this by providing a national focus for these statewide organisations and to help build their capacity to continue providing best practice services and opportunities for innovation.

Ability First Australia works to help build the capacity of its members by:

- Coordinating and managing the national event, Walk with Me.
- Facilitating face-to-face meetings with key staff in the disciplines of client services, human resources, IT and marketing/fundraising. These meetings encourage the sharing of knowledge and the evaluation of best practice.
- Facilitating phone conferences for staff at various levels and developing a staff exchange program.
- Strengthening relationships with the Federal Government.

Around Australia we employ over 3,500 staff with an equal number of volunteers. The cost of providing our services exceeds \$177million per year, of which 80% is provided by Governments.

Across all states and territories we provide these life changing services from 200 local sites to over 66,000 clients and their families. These services range from early intervention and childhood and family support, independent living skills, respite and accommodation, leisure access and recreation to job training and employment.



“ I believe strongly that we must encourage every opportunity to see the person, not the disability. Ability First Australia strives to achieve a fair go for people living with disabilities and those who support, love and care for them.

Ability First Australia and its eight affiliated member organisations across the nation, make the impossible, possible. They support, facilitate, empower, encourage, advocate and give hope to tens of thousands of Australians each year. Walk with Me, their annual national event, is a wonderful celebration of people with a disability, taken to the public arena.

I am proud to be associated with Ability First Australia as Patron. Keep up the great work! ”

Thérèse Rein



L – R: Glenn Gardner AM, CEO Ability First Australia; Thérèse Rein; Phil Cave AM, Chairman Ability First Australia and Don Jackson COO Easter Seals USA

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This year has seen steady growth in a number of key areas for Ability First Australia and its members.

Firstly, we welcomed as a new member, Polio Australia. Incorporated in 2008, Polio Australia ensures that all Polio survivors in Australia have access to adequate support and information and stimulates research into the later effects of Polio.

Secondly, there has been significant growth in the number of clients supported by our members and in the services they provide. As at 30 June 2011 across the country Ability First's members spent over \$177M in providing services (representing an increase of 8% over 2010) to over 66,000 Australians and their families.

Again this year, key personnel in Client Services, Information Technology, Human Resources and Fundraising have continued to develop positive relationships, with face-to-face meetings and telephone conferences. Their sharing of expertise, ideas and knowledge can only add value to the services provided in every state and territory.

This year, close to 5000 walkers participated in the twelve walks held as part of our second Walk with Me, with over \$220K raised at the local level (\$150K in 2010). All this augurs well for the future of Walk with Me as a cost effective way of raising funds as well as the awareness of disability in the wider community.

We are grateful to the national and local sponsors and all the volunteers who helped make this happen.

Another highlight of this year also relates to Walk with Me. The event's founding national sponsor, Dilmah Tea, through it's MJF Foundation provided the funds for two of our senior client services managers (Terry Lyons from Novita and Wendy Hall from Northcott) to visit Sri Lanka and observe first hand some of the Foundation's operations. As a result of that visit the MJF Foundation and Ability First Australia are forming strategies to develop a partnership into the future which will enhance the services each of us provides in our respective countries.

Staff of another national sponsor of Walk with Me, the ManpowerGroup are working with Northcott's employment service Jobmatch to provide training and develop skills in people with disabilities seeking employment. The intention is to produce a model which can then be used throughout the country.

We were also delighted to welcome Ellyse Perry, dual International Sportsperson, as an Ambassador for Ability First Australia in September 2011, and look forward to having her energy and enthusiasm on our side.



*Chairman Phill Cave AM (seated)
and CEO Glenn Gardner AM*

From a board perspective, we were sorry to receive the resignation of Diana Heggie as a Director. Diana retired this year as the CEO of Scope Vic and in a career of over 25 years made an outstanding contribution to the lives of Australians living with a disability. We thank her for her contributions as a Director and wish her every happiness in her retirement. We are looking forward in due course to welcoming to our board her successor.

We thank our colleagues in Easter Seals (USA) and look forward to continuing contact with Easter Seals Canada and CONFE Mexico. This year 12 Australians representing Ability First Australia will be participating in Easter Seals Annual Convention in Washington DC.

In tabling this review of the highlights of the past year we thank all those who worked with us in providing such results. Without the support of our National Sponsors, Corporate Partners and generous individuals we could not have achieved these results.



Phillip Cave AM
Chairman



Glenn Gardner AM
Chief Executive Officer

Post script:

Elsewhere in this Review, mention is made of the retirement at the end of this year of Glenn Gardner AM as CEO and the appointment of his successor Andrew Rowley.

As Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Glenn for over 25 years of service in the Disability sector and indeed for his incredible foresight and vision in bringing the concept of a National collaborative organisation to fruition, as Ability First Australia.

At my recommendation, and with the Board's approval, Ability First will retain Glenn on a contractual basis from 1 Jan 2012 for the remainder of that year. Glenn will also stay on the Board for that period.

I welcome the opportunity to work with Andrew who I am sure will take Ability First Australia to the next stage of our growth and development.

Phillip Cave AM, Chairman

www.cootharinga.org.au



Cootharinga North Queensland has been providing quality services to people with disabilities, across North Queensland, for 60 years. With the development of our unique housing and accommodation models, "Person Centred Practices" and recent expansion into Early Intervention Services for children with disabilities, we continue to further achieve our vision: "Building a better world with people of all abilities!".

www.montroseaccess.org.au



MontroseAccess provides respite and therapy services to hundreds of Queensland children and young adults with physical disabilities. Our services include community based therapy services, such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech pathology and social work, recreation programs, in-home respite and out-of-home respite.

www.northcott.com.au



Northcott provides services to people with a broad range of disabilities including physical, intellectual, sensory, acquired and degenerative disabilities, as well as challenging behaviours. Some clients with rare or lesser known disabilities find Northcott to be the only provider of appropriate support and services.

www.novita.org.au



Novita provides essential therapy, equipment, family support and specialist services to more than 2,000 children with disabilities and special needs - and through its broader work with families and communities, has a direct impact on thousands of South Australians.

www.rockybay.org.au



Rocky Bay has been providing support for people with disabilities since 1938. We support clients of varying needs with a wide range of disabilities, both physical and intellectual. Rocky bay currently supports in excess of 1,000 children and 500 adults.

www.scopevic.org.au



One of the largest providers of services to people with a disability in Victoria, Scope's mission is to support people living with a disability to achieve their potential in welcoming and inclusive communities.

www.stgiles.org.au



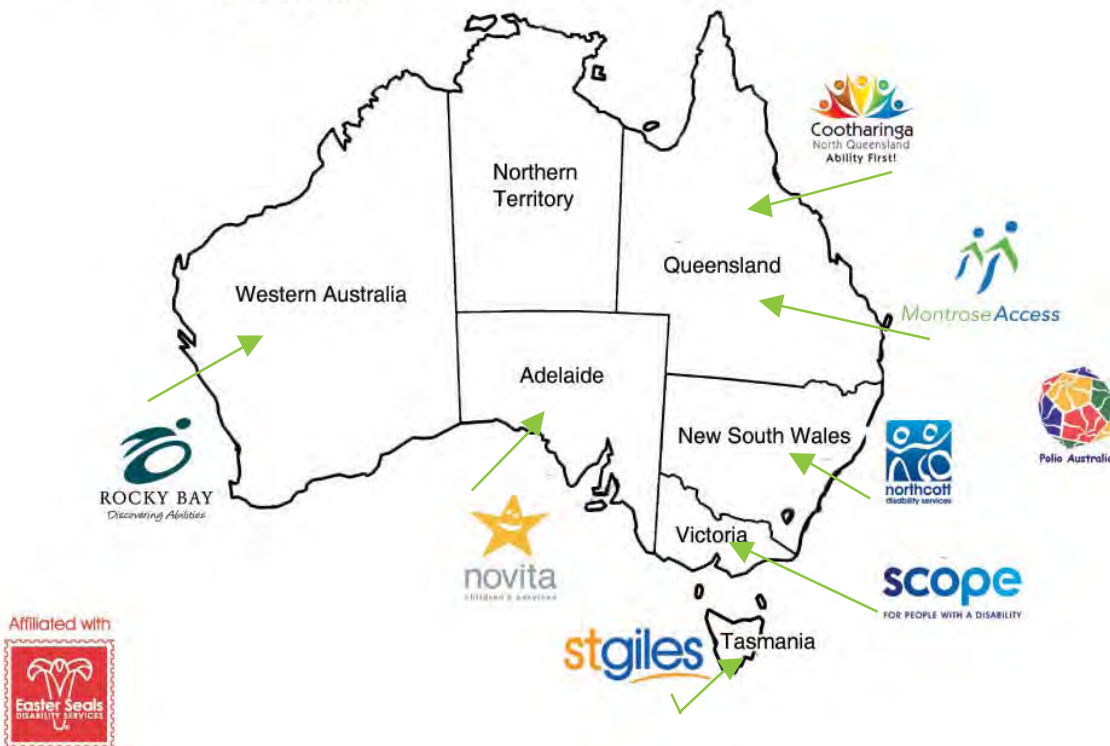
St Giles is Tasmania's largest disability support service with 250 staff at campuses in Hobart and Launceston. It is Tasmania's only provider of paediatric allied health services supporting more than 6000 children with disabilities. St Giles also supports hundreds of adults with disability through its seating clinic, respite homes, family support unit and holiday homes.

www.polioaustralia.org.au



Polio Australia's programs will ensure that all polio survivors have access to adequate support and information together with comprehensive and consistent health, disability and aged care services from a range of well informed and appropriately-educated professionals.

abilityfirst
AUSTRALIA



Members



Across this great land, from Far North Queensland to Hobart, Brisbane to Perth, people came from Australia all over to participate and support Ability First Australia's *Walk with Me*.

Seen as a positive sign that we are on the right track, 2011 saw *Walk with Me* grow from 7 to 12 walks held throughout September and October.

Walk with Me is the National fundraising and awareness event, held under licence from our affiliates Easter Seals, and managed from the National office of Ability First Australia. Through each of Ability First Australia's member's networks, participation is encouraged on a number of levels:

- Client Ambassadors, chosen by our member organisations become the stars of each event with much local media focus on their participation as they lead teams to fundraise for their organisation.
- People interested in walking to support our members, register on a dedicated website and are able to fundraise online.
- For those who don't wish to walk they could support any number of registered participants by making a donation to their online fundraising page.

On the day, people have the opportunity to walk along side of and in support of family, friends and colleagues and our members' clients with a disability supporting the slogan: "see the person not the disability".

With thanks to the National and local sponsors, Client Ambassadors, walkers and fundraisers, the event raised nearly \$300,000 nationally and is in good shape to meet the target of \$500k in 2012.

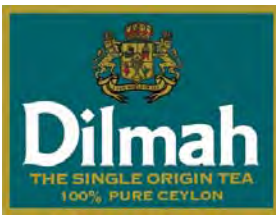


Ability First Australia Ambassador Ian 'Macca' McNamara launched the event nationally at an official reception on August 12 at Northcott's Conference and Functions Centre. At the launch he was quick to admit: "I love the name of this event -there are far too many Fun Runs out there and I for one, don't see anything fun about running!"

Over the course of the weeks leading to the events, 'Macca' in his weekly ABC Radio program "Australia All Over" did a magnificent job of promoting the twelve walks and made time in his busy programming schedule to interview a number of interesting candidates around Walk with Me.

Many of our sponsors were actively involved in the event with Neverfail Springwater watering holes, Shelta Shade Stations and Dilmah Tea stops set up at the walks and some volunteer helpers on hand from ManpowerGroup. It is this quote which best sums up the event from their perspective:

"We were all humbled by the dedication, patience and love shown towards the children with disabilities by all of the other volunteers and parents. If anyone is unsure about volunteering for a charity event like this, just do it and I guarantee it will be worth it!" (Tony Ricketts, Adelaide Branch Manager, ManpowerGroup)



Anchorage
CAPITAL PARTNERS

Blake Dawson

PAULA'S
CHOICE AUSTRALIA



Walk With Me

Rohan McDonald

The biggest wish of any expectant parent is for their newborn to be healthy, but life had other plans for Lyn and Justin McDonald.

The Eumundi QLD couple's second son Rohan was born with Tibial Aplasia, a condition that initially must have been as frightening as it sounds. It means Rohan has a lack of bones.

In his short life, four-year-old Rohan has already endured two major operations on his legs. He's on his tenth set of prosthetic legs. The brave youngster will have more surgery at the end of the year and is likely to eventually use a wheelchair.

Luckily, the McDonalds haven't had to go it alone.

Since he was six months old, the Sunshine Coast branch of MontroseAccess has been there for Rohan, his parents and big brother Neil, now aged six.

MontroseAccess supports young people who have conditions of varying severity, and their families. Its extensive services range from physical therapy to recreational activities.

"In the earlier days, we would call a lot as we weren't sure as we've never done this before," Lyn said.

"They were great and very supportive and really helped us get our heads around it all."

MontroseAccess provides Rohan regular speech therapy and physiotherapy. Lyn is also grateful for the equipment loans and regular home visits from staff.

"All of the team are great, they are sympathetic to what is going on but they don't mollycoddle us," she said.

"They are supportive but always looking forward, which is exactly what you want."



Bella Owen

From its Penrith office, Ability First Member Northcott Disability Services provides a wide range of services to clients and their families living in the Nepean region of Greater Sydney.

Helen Owen and her family access Northcott's Early Childhood and Family Support (NECAFS) service to assist with caring for toddler Bella, who has a mild intellectual disability, autism and complex care needs. Bella and the rest of the family have benefited from the holistic, multidisciplinary services provided by the team, particularly at a time when no other support could be found.

"I was referred to Northcott after calling many other organisations that were unwilling or unable to help. With multiple diagnoses, Bella has complex care needs and we didn't know where to start. Northcott has helped in every way possible - with therapy groups, in-home care, equipment, play and learning tools, parent education, accessing services, funding and sibling respite. The Northcott team is really like a family to us now."

Finn Burns

Seven-year-old Finn Burns and his family have been supported by Scope since Finn's diagnosis of Kniest Dysplasia and cerebral palsy.

Scope has supported Finn and his family through the Early Childhood Intervention Service, accessing the right equipment together with therapy in school.

Finn has gone from strength to strength. With the support of Scope Finn took his first steps at age 3.

"I can't begin to explain the difference Scope has made in Finn's life. When we began to learn the enormous range of services and support they could offer us, it was like a weight lifted from our shoulders", said Michelle, Finn's mum.

Finn has a huge passion for football; one of his dreams for many years has been to follow in his brothers' footsteps by playing Auskick.

Following five weeks of intense physiotherapy in Canada and ongoing physiotherapy with Scope, Finn built up his muscle strength to allow him to participate in sports. Prior to the intense physiotherapy Finn had to rely on using a crocodile walker and a wheelchair for longer distances.

Despite once being told that Finn would never be able to walk, Finn's football dream has become a reality. This year Finn played his second season of Auskick. He loves putting on his football socks and boots to go out and play with his friends.

This year, Finn, surrounded by his family and friends joined Scope in participating in Walk With Me. Walking (and bike riding) the course demonstrated how far Finn has come with the support of Scope and his family.

"Our biggest wish for Finn is acceptance and independence. That one day he will work, have his own home and find someone to love him for himself. And we just know he will achieve it all and more with Scope beside him" says Michelle.



We gratefully acknowledge the support we have received from our donors, sponsors and supporters:

Companies

Anchorage Capital Partners
Blake Dawson
Liangrove Foundation Pty Ltd
The CEO Circle Pty Ltd
Ovations Speakers Bureau

Walk with Me National Sponsors

Dilmah Australia Ltd
ManpowerGroup (Australia) Ltd
Shelta Australia
Neverfail Springwater Ltd
Paula's Choice (Australia) Ltd

Individuals

Ms J Booth
Mr Paul Cave AM
Mr R Critchley
Mr W Day
Ms T Hawkins
Ms G Springer
Ms K Stubbs
Mr B Walsh
Mr T Ziersch

Chairman's Circle

Mr Phil Cave AM
Mr G Gardner AM
Mr K Godson
Mr D Guy
Mr C Mills
Mr A Moss AO
Mr G Pettigrew
Mr D Wong

National Advisory Group

Mr K Godson
Mr C Mills
Mr G Pettigrew
Mr C Shine
Mr D Wong

Aggregated Client Numbers 2011

	Total	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 17	18 - 64	65 - 74	75+
Community Participation	2,115	-	-	-	2,035	63	18
Assist Tech	12,075	540	1,518	5,253	4,178	410	178
Leisure	2,333	-	158	300	1,870	3	3
Early Childhood	5,610	923	3,495	1,193	-	-	-
Job Training	1,390	-	-	8	1,378	5	-
Therapy	32,043	5,378	8,050	14,533	3,970	80	33
Respite / Accommodation	4,813	-	298	1,393	3,030	60	33
Ind & Family Support	5,695	255	780	2,425	2,183	50	3
Totals	66,073	7,095	14,298	25,103	18,643	670	265

The figures in this table represent the total number of Australians living with disabilities, and their families for which the member organisations of Ability First Australia provide services.

Ability First Australia National Office Staff

Chief Executive Officer

Glenn Gardner AM (retires 31 December 2011)
Andrew Rowley (commences 1 January 2012)

Fundraising and Marketing Manager

Georgina Springer



Ian "Macca" McNamara

Affectionately known as Macca by his loyal audience from across Australia, Ian has an understanding of the issues faced by people living with a disability and those who care for them.

As presenter of the ABC radio program Australia All Over, Macca has the opportunity to talk to people from many diverse walks of life from all over Australia. With an affable, easy manner and an eye for the human story behind the public face, he did a wonderful job officiating at the National Launch of Walk with Me in August 2011 at Northcott's Convention Centre, and continues to be a champion for Ability First Australia whenever possible.

Terry Hawkins

"When I first became exposed to the incredible work done by Ability First Australia in bringing awareness and support to those living with a disability, I knew I wanted to be involved. I am inspired everyday by what this amazing organisation does for and to improve the quality of life for its members' clients."

Terry is one of the most sought after speakers around the globe for her dynamic, informative and memorable presentations. She is also a successful author and well established business woman.

Terry dedicated one of her children's books, 'STICKMAN Rules! Let's DO Ability' to Ability First to help children understand what it's like for another child to live with a disability. Her training company People in Progress was founded in 1989 and continues to be a leader in the delivery of high impact, results based learning.



Ellyse Perry

Ellyse joined Ability First Australia as our Ambassador in September 2011 and is looking forward to working with us to grow Ability First Australia's profile and raise awareness for people living with a disability.

Not too many athletes represented their country in two sports at the tender age of 16. Ellyse Perry did, firstly with the Matildas (Football), then becoming the youngest ever cricketer to represent Australia, male or female, at just 16 years and 8 months

Now, at only 21, whether this dual international is playing cricket or football for her country, she is a prodigious talent: a joy to watch on the field and equally impressive off the field.

"It's an honour to be involved as an ambassador for AFA. One of the greatest gifts we are given as human beings is the ability to care about and make a difference to the lives of others. AFA works with its members to do so for people living with a disability, by encouraging them to realise their potential. It's wonderful to be associated with an organisation with such a clear and positive message!"

Between August 13 and 17 2011, thanks to the cooperative partnership between Ability First Australia and MJF Charities Foundation, Wendy Hall and Terry Lyons, Senior Client Service Managers employed by Ability First members Northcott Disability Services and Novita Children's Services respectively, were provided the opportunity to see first-hand the excellent work being undertaken on behalf of Sri Lankan children and adults who have a disability.

The Merrill J. Fernando Charitable Foundation (MJF Foundation) was established by Merrill J. Fernando, Founder of Dilmah Tea, with the objective of rewarding the workers and community with a vision for a better future for Ceylon Tea.

Ability First and MJF foundation began a partnership in 2010 when Dilmah Australia Ltd became the founding National sponsor of Ability First's event Walk with Me. Through this partnership, opportunities have developed for the two organisations to work practically together to help enhance the lives of people living with disabilities in their respective countries. Through exchange of expertise and benchmarking future improvements in providing services for people with disabilities in Sri Lanka will develop.

Supported by the MJF Foundation, Terry and Wendy visited a variety of Sri Lankan projects, schools and government departments to get an overview of disability services in Sri Lanka and the related cultural, social and family context in which services are required to operate.

Wendy and Terry visited facilities in Hikkaduwa, Tangalle and Ambalantota and Colombo:

- a physiotherapy program for physically disabled children at Kelaniya,
- the Home for Mentally Handicapped in Moratuwa,
- an opportunity to speak with a group of parents and young adults with Aspergers Syndrome,
- the International Girl Guides Camp for Differently Able which was being hosted in Colombo,
- the Lady Ridgeway Hospital where they met with a Paediatrician and a Paediatric Psychiatrist,
- the Department of Education, Special Education Unit and the Department of Social Services,
- the Child Guidance Centre and La Petite Fleur International School.



Observations were that current programs are in need of additional resources and face many common challenges including:

- Distance and related issues around accessibility of the buses and cost of public transport
- Inaccurate diagnosis and /or lack of knowledge about diagnosis; many children were being referred to as autistic or Down Syndrome when they were actually not
- Very few services for children who have physical disabilities, the additional access issues relate to a physical disability appears to result in children being kept at home
- Lack of training amongst staff; and the use of untrained or unpaid volunteers.
- Limited programs offered in many centres where the emphasis appeared to be on producing goods for sale
- Parental shame related to having a child who has a disability or additional needs
- Late referral of children to services; parents often not seeking support until their child is rejected by the school
- Children who have disabilities being excluded from education: while the policy is that education is inclusive the reality is that children with additional needs are not welcomed into schools

Terry and Wendy were grateful for the opportunity to visit Sri Lanka and found that while some programs used a very dated residential model there were also some very contemporary models that use a child centred approach and supported parents to work confidently with their children.

The exchange has resulted in a number of recommendations being made which could assist the Sri Lankan facilities in implementing improvements to their services based on the key features of their programs that most align to best practice in Australia.

Moving forward, it is anticipated that a focus group of suitably qualified professionals will be established and funding sourced to continue to develop a working model which will result in improved services to people with disabilities in Sri Lanka and in Australia.



1 Background To Ability First Australia: Ability First Australia was incorporated in 2003 as a national company supporting seven of Australia's oldest and most respected disability NGOs. All were established from the 1920's onwards to support children living with the results of polio, cerebral palsy and related conditions.

Today these organisations continue to provide innovative and responsive services aimed at meeting the needs of people living with a wide range of disabilities.

2 Ability First Australia's Objectives: Ability First Australia's establishment was an acknowledgement of the fact that the collective experience, knowledge and expertise of these NGOs acquired over a long period of time would be enhanced even more if they were supported by strategies driven from a national office.

Ability First Australia therefore has two main objectives:-

- i) To develop national strategies to raise funds in order to preserve the current level of service delivery across the nation, as well as to allow its members to engage in the creation of innovative service models.
- ii) To develop close working relationships between its members that will result in:
 - the professional training and development of staff and the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise;
 - national bench marking and development of best practice in service delivery;
 - securing full advantage of Ability First Australia's and its members' affiliation with Easter Seals in the USA.

3 BOARD OF DIRECTORS: The Board approves the appointment of Directors as nominated by the Members in accordance with Clause 13.3 of the Constitution. On the current Board each member organisation providing direct services is represented by its CEO. The current Chairman was appointed by the directors under a clause in the constitution which allows for the appointment of independent directors. The constitution also allows for the CEO to be appointed as a Managing Director.

The Board normally meets four times a year, three times in person and once by telephone.

4 Staff at a number of levels are encouraged to keep in contact with each other and at least once a year provision is made for face to face meetings.

5 INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATION: In recent years there has been growing contact between Staff and Directors of Easter Seals (USA) and ourselves. Staff participate in regular telephone conferences and have at times visited each other and seen first hand client programs. On a number of occasions staff from Australia have attended Easter Seals Annual Training Conferences and some have given presentations.

The affiliation is valued highly by both Ability First Australia and Easter Seals. Recently this collaborative relationship has been strengthened by Easter Seals Canada and CONFE Mexico becoming global partners with Easter Seals and Ability First Australia.

AGGREGATION OF FINANCIALS OF ABILITY FIRST AUSTRALIA MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

INCOME STATEMENT	2011	2010
Revenues		
- Government	144,504,626	130,560,599
- Fundraising	16,054,945	15,382,135
- Other	21,810,484	21,201,319
Total Revenues	182,370,055	167,144,053
Expenses	176,775,003	163,798,061
Surplus/ (deficit)	5,595,052	3,345,992
BALANCE SHEET		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	39,309,774	37,189,925
Trade and other receivables	10,048,910	4,886,125
Inventories	871,715	912,517
Other financial assets	23,737,156	20,122,888
Other	218,763	890,652
Total Current Assets	74,186,318	64,002,107
Non-Current Assets		
Other financial assets	34,959,397	40,997,186
Property, plant and equipment	74,295,817	70,475,266
Other	268,800	302,356
Total Non-Current Assets	109,524,014	111,774,808
Total Assets	183,710,333	175,776,915
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payments	14,644,057	15,605,296
Other financial liabilities	10,546,847	15,328,148
Current tax liabilities		
Borrowings	86,735	37,382
Provisions	19,836,496	19,154,746
Other	21,845,761	17,596,901
Total Current Liabilities	66,959,895	67,722,473
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provisions	3,195,165	2,476,876
Borrowings	155,585	66,186
Total Non-Current Liabilities	3,350,750	2,543,062
Total Liabilities	70,310,645	70,265,535
Net Assets	113,399,687	105,511,380
Members' Funds		
General Accumulated Funds	33,859,144	33,447,645
Retained Earnings	48,626,354	42,756,278
Reserves	30,914,189	29,307,457
Total Members' Funds	113,399,687	105,511,380



Phillip Cave AM - Chairman

Phillip began his career as an accountant. In 1985 he became a founding Executive Director of Macquarie Bank Limited. He is an accomplished Chief Executive Officer, Director, Chairman, and Board Member with a proven track record in major corporate turnaround projects, structured finance and corporate advisory services.

Companies of which Phillip has been a major shareholder and either a Director or Chairman include Parbury Limited, Wormald, Sunbeam-Victa and Hygienic Lily. He is currently Chairman of Bisalloy Steel Group Ltd; Chairman and Partner of Anchorage Capital Partners Pty Ltd and a Director of Antares Restaurant Group (Burger King NZ), Total Eden and Acrow Formwork and Scaffolding.

Within the wider community he is Chairman of The Wesley Institute and Leading the Way. He has been involved in Disability Services for over 20 years and was Chairman of Northcott Disability Services for seven years. In 2006 he was admitted into the Hall of Fame of Variety, the Children’s Charity and has participated in 21 “bashes” for that charity.

Glenn Gardner AM- Managing Director and CEO

Glenn has spent the majority of his working life in the Human Services Sector. In 1988 he joined the staff of Northcott Disability Services and in 1989 was appointed CEO.



He became the CEO of Ability First Australia in February 2008, after having served as its Chairman for a number of years. Glenn is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and is a foundation member of The CEO Circle. He has been a member of the Rotary Club of Parramatta City for 22 years and is a Past President and Paul Harris Fellow. (Retires as MD December 2011)



Glenn Rappensberg

Glenn has been Chief Executive of Novita Children’s Services for more than 10 years. He is Executive Director of the Channel Seven Children’s Research Foundation and Managing Director CareFirst Pty Ltd. Glenn is also a Board Director of all three organisations.

Glenn is Chairperson, National Disability Services (NDS) Committee on Children, Young People and Their Families, a member of the Department of Families, and Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, (FaHCSIA) Better Start Initiative Expert Reference Group.

At the state level he is a member of the National Framework for Child Protection Partnerships Group and a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Committee. Glenn is also an Associate Fellow of the Australian College of Health Executives.

Michael Tait

Michael has spent over 20 years in senior management positions within the hospitality, property development, health and disability sectors.



Since joining Rocky Bay as CEO in early 2006, he has taken an active role in the Disability Services sector. Michael is a deputy Chair of NDS’s State Management Committee; member of the Perth Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s Disability Working Party; the Disability Service Commission’s CEO round table; the Human Services forum representing disability; and currently a member and officer of many sector forums tackling such issues as work force planning, sector sustainability, unmet need and policy advisory for State Government.



Darrel Bourke

Prior to commencing as CEO of MontroseAccess in 1996 Darrel held a number of senior executive management positions within the electricity industry and local government. Having formal qualifications in both accountancy and business management, he is a member of the Certified Practising Accountants Australia and the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Darrel has held the positions of Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary of National Disability Services (NDS) Queensland.



Ian Wright

Ian is a Chartered Accountant who commenced his role as Chief Executive of St Giles Society Inc in May 2010. Prior to this he spent 30 years in public practice accountancy operating mainly as a Registered Company Auditor.

With a long held passion for serving the needs of his community and with 15 years under his belt as a board member and former Chairman at St Giles he has already assumed a very active role in the sector.

Complementing his work in the community sector Ian has over 30 years' experience in working with the Not For Profit Sector both as an advisor and as a participant. He is a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia and a member of the Institute of Company Directors

Kerry Stubbs

Kerry was appointed CEO and Managing Director of Northcott Disability Services in 2008.

Kerry began her career in research and lecturing at the University of Sydney, and has also taught at University of Technology, Sydney. She worked as a researcher in the NSW Parliament before moving into a career in human resources in the NSW Public Sector and as a private consultant.



Kerry was appointed Corporate Human Resources Manager of Sydney Water in 1998 and from there moved into a variety of operational and General Management roles in the water industry.

Her career in Health began in 2001 and after holding a number of Executive roles in this area, Kerry became Executive Director of St Vincent's Hospital and Sacred Heart Hospice.

In 2007 Kerry was the NSW winner of the Community and Government sector Telstra Businesswomen's award.



Brendan Walsh

Brendan joined Cootharinga in 2008 as CEO and has over 25 years experience in Board governance and leadership of community Enterprises through Directorships and Chair positions.

Prior to joining Cootharinga he held a number of roles across State and Local Governments; the not-for profit sector, and in health and community service agencies.

He is a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and an Associate Fellow of the Australian College of Health Service Executives.

Diana Heggie

Diana has been CEO of Scope since 2007 and has worked in the disability sector for over 25 years. Diana has been at the forefront of historic changes to services for Victorians with disabilities and is committed to creating opportunities for people with a disability. She leads Cerebral Palsy Australia as President and is also the Vice President of the peak body, National Disability Services.



Diana is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Her primary qualification is that of a Physiotherapist and she has also undertaken Post Graduate qualifications, including a Graduate Diploma in Human Services Research. (Resigned September 2011)

INCOMING CEO - Andrew Rowley

Andrew joins Ability First Australia as CEO replacing Glenn with effect from 1 January 2012. Andrew comes with a proven track record in establishing Foundations and fundraising. He has extensive experience in the education sector and for the last four years was the inaugural CEO of the Steve Waugh Foundation. Andrew has a keen interest in supporting Ability First Members from a national perspective to provide and develop quality services.





Ability First Australia

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