



ODYSSEY HOUSE
NEW SOUTH WALES

2020

annual report





About us	2	Increasing our impact	30
Alcohol and other drug misuse in Australia	4	Board	32
2020 impact snapshot	5	Jodi's story: becoming a better parent through community groups and counselling	35
Our supporters	6	Our people	36
Financial snapshot	7	Governance	37
CEO & Chairman's message	8	Legislative framework	38
Rafi's story: from residential and community programs to a new career during COVID-19	10	Sylvia's story: creating a new life after the Parent's and Children's Program	39
Patrons' message	11		
Strategic directions	12		
Earl's story: finding my voice in Mingu Yabun	13		
Programs	14		
Services locations across Sydney	15		
Our clients	16		
Supporter highlights	18		
Giving kids their parents back	19		
Reconnecting to culture	22		
Teaching life skills	24		
Community engagement	26		
Staying open and safe	28		

Contents

Our Vision

A world free of addiction

Our Mission

To build safe and healthy communities by reducing the impact of substance misuse on individuals, families, carers and communities.

Our Values

- > Professionalism
- > Creativity
- > Respect
- > Integrity



“ At first, I had trouble managing my emotions and frustrations during counselling sessions but the therapists stuck with me. They made me feel I was worth the effort. I did all the Odyssey House support groups; Mental Health Recovery, Alcohol and Other Drugs Recovery and Bringing Up Great Kids. My partner and I did relationship counselling, plus another parenting program called Circle of Security. All the way through, I've been treated as a whole person.

About us

OHNSW is an alcohol and other drugs (AOD) rehabilitation service, and provides an essential service to vulnerable populations by virtue of Section 4 of the *Essential Services Act 1988 (no.41)*, including during any Government-declared state of emergency.

Since 1977, OHNSW has helped clients reduce harms associated with AOD use. We provide specialised withdrawal and support programs through residential and community services, and in 2017 expanded our outreach network across Greater Sydney and the NSW Southern Highlands. From March to August 2020, during COVID-19 restrictions, overall client numbers increased by 17 per cent.

Our residential services, in South West Sydney, provide a 7–10 day withdrawal program, a 3 or 9–month+ residential treatment program, a specialised Parent’s and Children’s Program and short courses at Odyssey College to improve personal wellbeing and life skills. Our AOD programs treat trauma and co-occurring mental health issues, helping clients reconnect with family and culture and strengthening social and self-connections. The residential program also includes the Aboriginal-specific support program ‘Mingu Yabun’.

We also provide free community services which include individual and group counselling as well as education, mental health and family support programs. These are delivered online, on the phone and face-to-face.

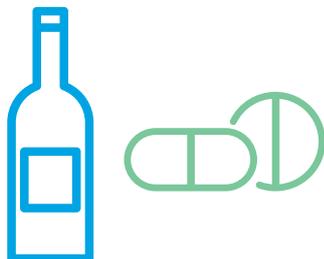
OHNSW’s strategies, programs and services support the *National Drug Strategy 2017–2026*. Our operations align with **NSW 2021**, and the NSW Department of Health’s five priority areas relating to equity, empowering parents, mental health and risky behaviours, chronic conditions and preventive health, and strengthening the workforce.

We are closely linked to the Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies, the Australian Therapeutic Communities Association and with other Odyssey House organisations in Victoria and New Zealand.

In 2019

25%

of Australians drank at risky levels, and **16%** illicitly used a drug¹



Alcohol and other drug misuse in Australia

Every year, more people die from drug overdoses than die on the roads. In addition to this, 4186 die and 144,000 are hospitalised due to alcohol-related harms.²

Of the 2810 clients we treated in 2019–20, the principal drugs of concern were amphetamine-type substances (ATS, mostly crystal methamphetamines – 35 per cent), alcohol (34 per cent), opiates (12 per cent) and cannabis (11 per cent).

In 2019–20, depression was the principal mental health diagnosis for clients with a mental health issue, followed by anxiety.

“ Addiction isn’t a decision or a conscious choice; it overtakes you.

The social and economic impacts of addiction and AOD misuse range from poor physical and mental health, pain and suffering, pressure on healthcare services and reduced quality of life to poor parenting practices and child maltreatment, family breakdown and domestic violence. It can also affect household spending, productivity, crime rates, the justice and prison systems, victim outcomes and road safety.

“ I didn’t feel worthy of anything or anyone, so I gave up on myself and the ones I love...I had no sense of identity or self-worth.

OHNSW works to reduce the impact of AOD misuse on individuals, families, carers and communities. We provide treatment and education to break the cycle of generational AOD misuse and help people turn their lives around.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019

² Alcohol and Drug Foundation

2020 impact snapshot



Helped
2810
clients



Provided **3622**
treatment episodes or series of
treatments



Supported **2532** people
through community services and
493 through residential programs
(some clients access both)



Introduced a **short term
(3-month) residential
program** to complement the
long-term program (12-months+)



Began the
residential
**Parent's and
Children's Program**
expansion project

Provided **community
services** to

44

Local Government Areas
in Greater Sydney



Supported
149 parents
through our Reconnecting
Families suite of programs



Introduced **vocational
training** at Odyssey College



Expanded the Odyssey
College curriculum to
include PDHPE, Work and the
Community and employed a
Special Education Teacher



Participated in the **NSW
Special Commission of
Enquiry** into the Drug 'Ice'



Increased
government grants by
\$259,066 (2.8%)



Remained **COVID-19 free**
amongst staff and clients as at
December 2020

Our supporters

Thank you to all the donors, fundraisers, businesses and government agencies who support our clients each year. *

Businesses & Foundations

Altus Group	Club Burwood RSL	Strategies Pty Ltd
ANZ	Convict Fitness	Moore PR
APP Corporation	Design Confidence	NBRS Architecture
ASX Refinitiv Charity Foundation Limited	Direct Data and Electrical	OzHarvest
Australian Youth & Health Foundation	Everything HR	Rodney & Judith O'Neil Foundation
Australian Fund Manager Foundation	Foodbank	Rooftop Social
Bambuddha Group	Genworth	Rotary Club of Campbelltown
Byora Foundation Pty Ltd	GHD Group Pty Ltd	Sellick Consultants
Campbelltown Catholic Club	John Lamble Foundation	The CEO Circle Pty Ltd
Campbelltown RSL	Interrisk Global Pty Ltd	The Wiggs Foundation
Chatswood RSL Club Ltd	Isentia	Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Corporation
	LCI Consultancy	Wilson Asset Management
	Liangrove Foundation	
	Marsdens Law Group	
	The RA Gale Foundation	
	MCR	
	Michael Brown Planning	

*some have requested that their support be kept private.

Donors

Richard Austen AO	Stewart Hindmarsh
Karen Becker	William Inglis
Christine Bishop	Susan Maple-Brown
Cate Campbell	Rod Matthews
Mary Digiglio	Janette O'Neil
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Stephanie Fairfax	Brian Sandland
Annie and Mark Fesq	Max Tegel
Murray Gordon	Garry Wayling
Dr Leslie Green	Helen Waters
Ross Grant	Ralph Waters
Christopher Grubb	Val Mills Community Fundraising Group
Douglas Snedden	

Government Supporters

Australian Department of Health and:	Attorney General's Department
• Central Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network	Australian Independent Schools
• South Western Sydney Primary Health Network	NSW Health, and
• Sydney North Primary Health Network	• South Eastern Sydney Health District
• WestWent Primary Health Network	• South Western Sydney Health District
Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	• Western Sydney Local Health District
Australian Department of Education and Training	NSW Department of Education
	NSW Department of Family and Community Services
	NSW Police Force

Financial snapshot

In 2019–20, OHNSW derived 83 per cent of revenue from NSW and Federal Government departments, a slight increase on 81 per cent last year. This was supplemented by corporate and private donations (17 per cent) and in-kind support.

Social and economic restrictions of COVID–19 meant OHNSW was unable to carry out scheduled fundraising activities and finished the year with a deficit of \$681,008.

Revenue remained stable at \$11,436,575 (2019: \$11,450,758). This reflects an increase in government grants of \$259,066 (2.8 per cent) and a decline in donations of \$261,734 (30.2 per cent).

Employee costs increased by \$259,245 (3.2 per cent), in line with the 2012 Equal Remuneration Order under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) Industry Award 2010.

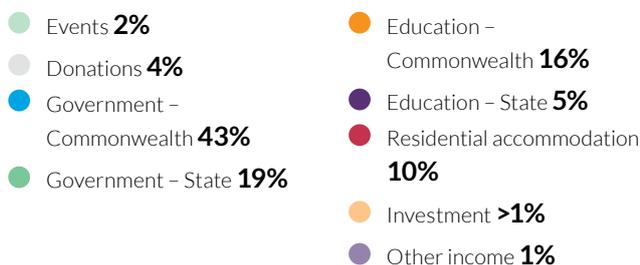
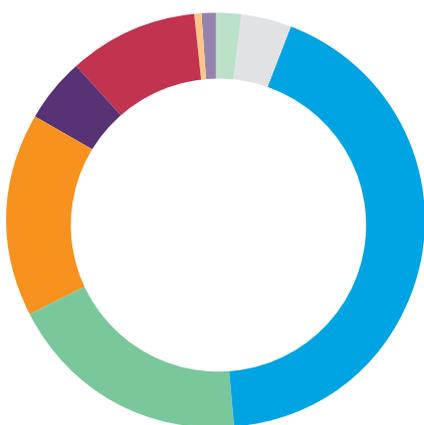
Depreciation and amortisation expenses increased by \$627,352 (190.2 per cent), primarily due to lease agreements and changes to Lease Accounting

Standard AASB16. We reduced other operating expenses by \$590,407 (17 per cent) through organisational review and rationalisation.

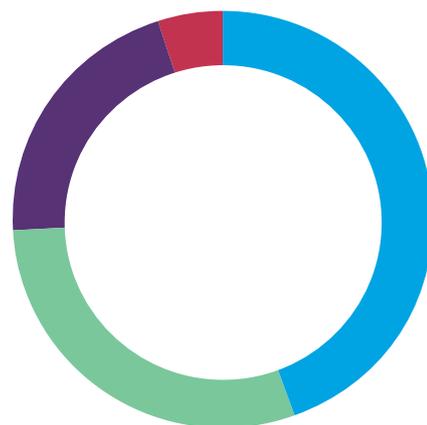
Our fundraising and marketing program uses newsletters, appeal letters and emails to retain and attract donors. We are also a beneficiary of charitable initiatives such as the Australian Fund Manager Awards, which profile OHNSW to encourage public donations as well as workplace giving. We are grateful to OHNSW's fundraising volunteers who run community events on our behalf.

We are endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) by the Australian Taxation Office and hold a Charitable Fundraising Authority from the NSW Government. All OHNSW appeals and fundraising activities comply with the Fundraising Institute of Australia's Code (which is informed by the International Statement of Ethical Principles in Fundraising), as well as the Trade Practices Act and The Privacy Act.

Income



Expenditure





CEO & Chairman's message

Douglas Snedden, Chairman & Julie Babineau, CEO

This year has been challenging for every individual and organisation here in NSW and worldwide.

Odyssey House NSW has shown tremendous strength, agility, adaptability and unity in these uncertain times. COVID-19 arrived shortly after bushfires and drought in areas where our clients and staff reside. Our resilience, core values, flexible work practices and our key strategic risk and governance priorities helped us deliver continued high-quality services while remaining COVIDsafe. Up to December 2020, we had zero positive cases of COVID-19 amongst any of our staff, clients or visitors.

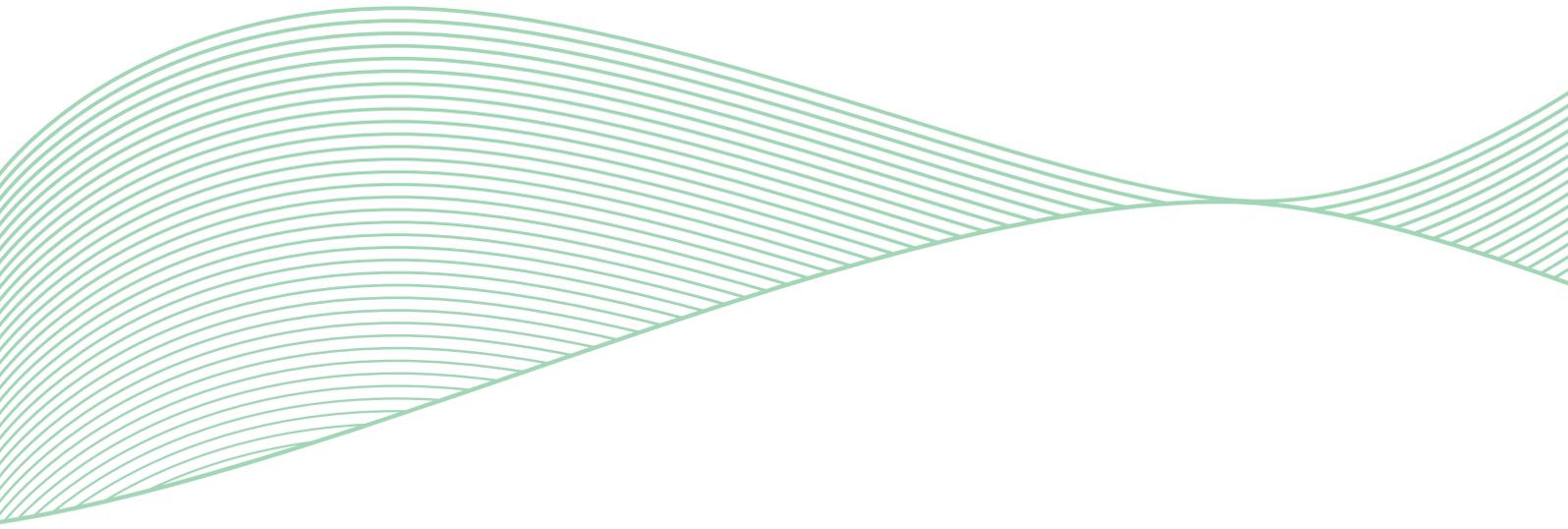
We engaged early with our State and Commonwealth Government funding bodies to ensure we were declared an "Essential Service" to continue receiving funding and providing services. Importantly, there was an increased need for alcohol and other drug services due to the physical and mental health impacts of the pandemic.

While we had to review our fundraising activities and cancel our Business Women's Lunch, we were very grateful for continued assistance from our donors and supporters, who are listed in this Annual Report. Despite COVID-19 and associated cost increases, our operational performance remained strong.

2019-20 also gave us the platform to move towards 'One Odyssey'. The Board, together with a newly invigorated executive team, is working collaboratively with staff to drive more integrated delivery of residential and community services and help staff keep each client at the centre of their recovery journey.

Our research collaboration with the University of Technology, Sydney is contributing to the development of 'One Odyssey'. It has identified several perspectives on gender differences in the characteristics of clients entering residential rehabilitation with mental health issues and polysubstance use. Understanding the client's perspective on leaving residential rehabilitation can help to identify potential barriers to remaining in treatment and ascertain optimal ways to support people in their transition back to the community.

Our new Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024 continues to provide focus to help us build our scale, strengthen our systems and processes, align and sustain our resources and develop and retain our workforce so we remain at the forefront of alcohol and other drug treatment provision. Our Reconciliation Action Plan continues to support our commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and we remain on track with major initiatives such as expanding the Parent's and Children's Program and our newly named Odyssey College. The College has introduced vocational training and expanded its curriculum, which will further expand Odyssey's impact in the community.



We are very proud of our achievements in what has been an extraordinarily challenging year, and wholeheartedly thank our committed staff and dedicated volunteers for their efforts in maintaining and growing our services despite lockdowns. **Our benefactors, stakeholders, funders and the Board have been an incredible support and we take this opportunity to thank them all.** We sadly say farewell and thank you to two Board Members, Dr Jan Copeland who provided her expertise and advice to us for 14 years and Stacey Quince who helped develop educational services for our clients. We look forward to introducing our new Board Members early next year.

This next financial year we are focused on expanding our Parent’s and Children’s Program, strengthening our clinical services and ensuring continued access and availability of a broad range of alcohol and other drug treatment services. **We could not have done it without our committed and dedicated staff, so this is a huge “thank you” to you all and to all our volunteers.**

Thank you everyone for your efforts throughout this year.

Douglas Snedden
Chairman

Julie Babineau
CEO



OHNSW Chairman Douglas Snedden, patrons Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of New South Wales, Dennis Wilson and CEO Julie Babineau



Rafi's story*

from residential and community programs to a new career during COVID-19

Early childhood trauma led Rafi into cannabis and alcohol misuse until the judiciary intervened. After a year in our residential rehabilitation program, the 26-year old now attends community support groups via ZOOM and is training to be a landscape gardener.

It took a long time to realise how unwell I was—physically, emotionally and mentally. My birth mother misused drugs and alcohol during and after pregnancy, which affected my brain function and caused organic psychosis. When I was eight my mother lost custody of me, and my adoptive parents took me in. Despite their efforts, I was using alcohol and cannabis regularly by my early teens and had developed social and mental health problems. It took a toll on everyone around me and I was often in trouble. In 2019, I was back in court.

“ The judge said, go to rehab or go to prison.

I entered Odyssey's residential program in June 2019, but struggled to cope with such a big community and new environment. A month later I returned home to my parents, thinking it was just rest I needed, but my mental health rapidly deteriorated and I relapsed within days. My parents rang Odyssey House NSW and asked them to take me back into the long-term residential rehabilitation program.

The team interviewed me, and agreed to take me back with extra support to address my social anxiety and help me cope better day-to-day. They assigned me a buddy. They also taught me about my

symptoms, diagnoses and treatments so I could begin to understand myself, settle in and build trusting relationships before starting the main rehabilitation program. It made a big difference.

My recovery plan included treatment and counselling through mental health recovery groups, individual counselling, specialist consultations, and extra support for team members who were helping me. It also included a relapse prevention plan for me and my family.

I've now finished the residential part of the program and have moved into my own place. I have new life skills and habits, and Odyssey House's community services team is helping me stay mentally and physically stable. COVID-19 means weekly face-to-face recovery meetings have been replaced by ZOOM calls, but that suits me as I don't miss work. The calls help me set goals and maintain healthy relationships, and keep me aware of my achievements.

“ The tailored approach to my recovery made a huge difference, so I stayed in the residential program for a year and achieved my recovery objectives. I'm living near my parents and training to become a landscape gardener.

The residential program completely turned my life around—I don't use drugs or alcohol and have less symptoms of organic psychosis. I'm more comfortable socially and have developed self-confidence and hope for the future. My parents have been really loving and supportive and I feel like I'm on the right path with them now.

*Names changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Patrons' message



Message from

**Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC
Governor of New South Wales**

As Patrons, Dennis and I have been privileged to visit Odyssey House NSW and meet staff and clients.

Odyssey House NSW helps men and women from all backgrounds and stages of life who are experiencing addiction, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups. These include people who are socio-economically disadvantaged, those with co-occurring mild-to-moderate mental health issues, parents with young children, people transitioning from prison or homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and LGBTIQI people.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs is a major cause of preventable disease and illness in Australia. Substance abuse ranges from alcohol and marijuana to heroin, methamphetamines such as ice, and other illicit and illegally used prescription drugs.

COVID-19 has triggered increased concerns for all experiencing alcohol and other drugs (AOD) misuse and/ or poverty due to changes in social and economic activities, and reduced access to emotional supports previously available from work, school and broader networks. Odyssey House NSW, as an essential service, has remained operational and continued to provide alcohol and other drugs treatment services to its clients throughout this health emergency.

The organisation's approach uses expertise, compassion and respect to inspire hope and help clients develop healthy lifestyles and relationships. Dennis and I witnessed this during our visits. We spoke with clients and listened to their stories addressing their underlying causes of alcohol and/ or drug dependencies, and the developing of life skills to take personal responsibility and better integrate with their families and communities.

Dennis and I look forward to our future involvement in support of Odyssey House.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Beazley".

**The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC
Governor of New South Wales**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Wilson".

Mr Dennis Wilson



Strategic directions

2020 – 2024

Our *Four-Year Strategy 2020–2024* provides a framework to help build safe and healthy communities by reducing the impact of substance misuse on individuals, families, carers and communities.





Earl's story*

finding my voice in Mingu Yabun

After domestic abuse led Earl to long-term amphetamine and alcohol misuse, Odyssey House's holistic care helped this loving father find a sense of belonging, give up smoking and create a beautiful life with his daughter.

I was born near the NSW border but adopted into a family in another regional town, and grew up not knowing about Aboriginal culture. Domestic violence was a big part of my childhood and at home I got the blame for everything. When I was 13, my foster brother introduced me to marijuana and I soon started wagging school to smoke, drink and hang out by the river.

I always felt out of place and that I didn't belong. I was literally the black sheep of the family. I was easily led by my friends and did whatever they did, just to fit in.

I finished school and didn't work, but did a few short courses and illustrated a book for an Aboriginal group. I felt like I belonged. After six weeks in jail for drink driving, I met up with a relative who introduced me to amphetamines.

“ [Amphetamines] gave me a feeling I have never felt before but it was good and I loved it...I was happy, I felt I belonged and was with my real family.

After several years of addiction I met my partner and switched to alcohol, but ended up drinking four litres of wine every day. We had a daughter. My partner was violent and eventually our daughter's school contacted FACS to report my alcohol misuse.

I didn't feel worthy of anything or anyone, so I gave up on myself and the ones I love...I had no sense of identity or self-worth.

In 2019, my daughter and I entered Odyssey's residential Parent's and Children's Program. My recovery plan included Odyssey's Mingu Yabun group. I learnt to express myself through art and writing, to manage my grief and low self-esteem and connect with my culture. Over time I became Assistant Head of Mingu Yabun and my daughter changed from a friendless, anxious girl to a popular, confident and creative child with a love of music and reading.

I found my voice, got to know myself better and discovered a sense of belonging.

Towards the end of our stay I wrote to my adoptive parents, and my birth mother. She had already passed away so I read my letter for her to the Mingu Yabun community. I cried that day for the first time in 30 years.

“ I spoke in group about how I value my life, my culture, who and what I am, my friends, family and most importantly my daughter. I have been able to build my self-worth and integrity with the help of the program, my peers and my daughter.

In early 2020, my daughter and I moved out to set up our own home, with Department of Communities and Justice support, and to complete the last stage of the Parent's and Children's Program in the community. My daughter is proud of me and I have a beautiful life thanks to Odyssey House NSW.

*Names changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Programs

For 43 years, OHNSW has delivered rehabilitation services to help clients recover from AOD misuse, mental health issues, trauma and other complex conditions. OHNSW comprehensively assesses clients to offer the most effective choice of withdrawal, residential and community services tailored to their needs.

In 2019-20 we treated 2810 people, some of whom attended several of the programs below.



Service locations across Sydney

Residential Services

Our residential services, in South West Sydney, provide a 7-10 day withdrawal program, a 3 or 9-12+ month residential treatment program, a specialised Parent's and Children's Program and short courses at Odyssey College to improve personal wellbeing and life skills.

Community Services

OHNSW provides free community services including individual and group counselling as well as education, mental health and family support programs. These are delivered online, on the phone and face-to-face.

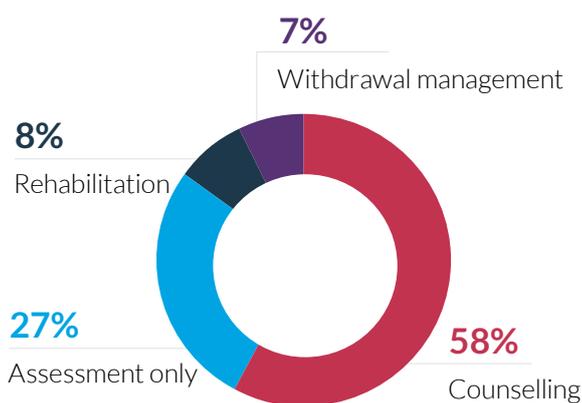


Our clients

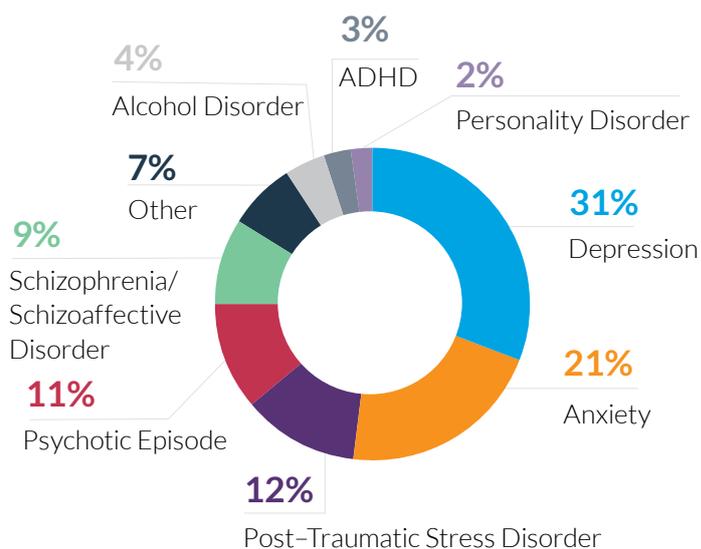
OHNSW helps people from all walks and stages of life facing challenges with alcohol and other drug use, with a particular focus on under-served and vulnerable groups. These include socioeconomically disadvantaged people, those with co-occurring mild to moderate mental health issues, parents with young children, people transitioning from prison or homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and LGBTQI people. Amongst those we treated in 2019-20, 68 per cent had a mental health diagnosis. We provide integrated treatment for clients' AOD dependence and mental health issues.

In 2019-20

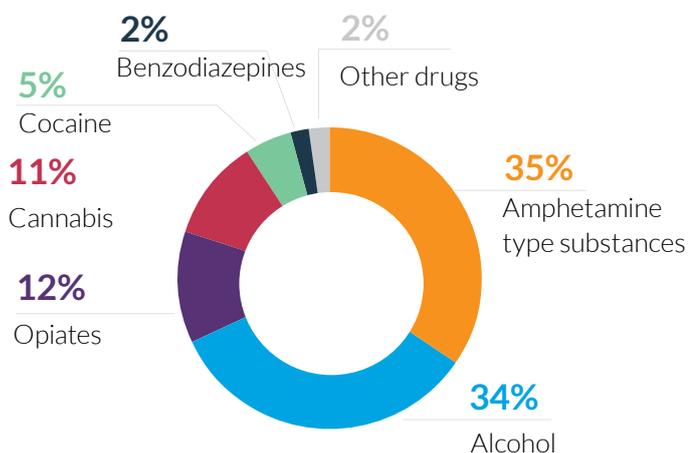
Closed treatment episodes



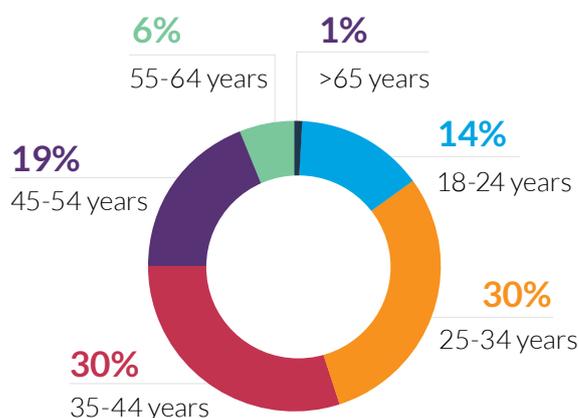
Principal mental health diagnosis



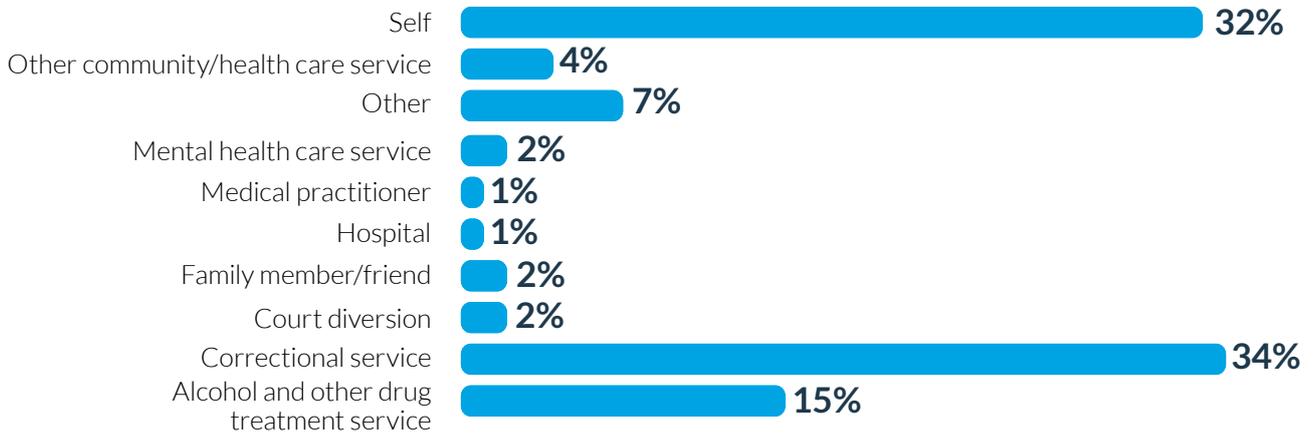
Principal drug of concern



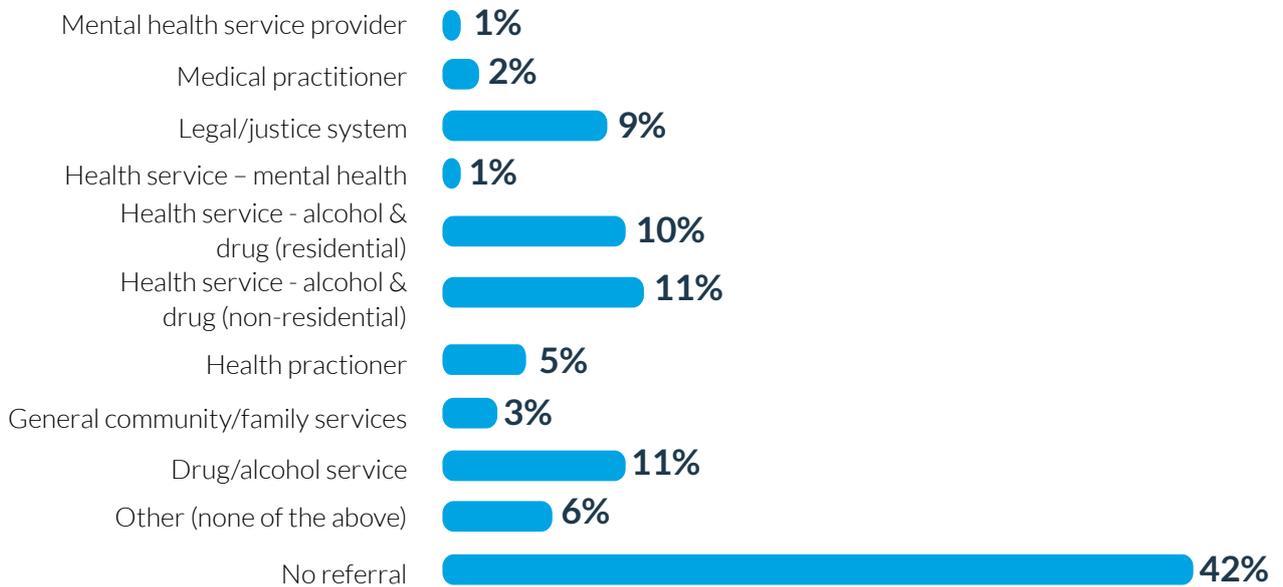
Age



Source of referral – new clients across all programs



Referrals out – exit clients across all programs



Supporter highlights

Sandy Point Dragons - a 10 year partnership

Since the 2010-11 season the Sandy Point Dragons have invited residents from the OHNSW Residential Program to train with them on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and race at regattas.

The long-standing relationship with OHNSW's residential program began when the then-Principal of Odyssey College, a Sandy Point paddler, saw the mutual benefits for OHNSW residents and the club.

Club activities give residents a welcome respite from their treatment, while at the same time becoming a part of it. The sense of community is important to the OHNSW crew and helps them get to know people, be part of a team, and have fun before they leave their program.

The Sandy Point Dragons provide physical training, positive role modelling, mentoring, camaraderie, team building and community involvement. Club members work with residents in an informal, practical environment and the partnership gives them the opportunity to get to know residents and gain a greater understanding of the challenges they face. It has provided club members with the opportunity to contribute to residents' recovery in

a practical way and increase their understanding and compassion for their journeys.

"It is very gratifying to see club members and OHNSW residents racing together at regattas, and some OHNSW graduates have gone on to join local dragon boat clubs when they have completed their treatment. **It is an association of which our club is proud.**" said Sean Haran, Director, Sandy Point Dragons Boat Club.

Sandy Point Dragons Boat Club is on the southern side of Georges River in Sydney's south west and uses the scenic river as their training ground. They paddle as far west as the M5 bridge and to the Alford's Point bridge in the east. The club was created by the local community as a sporting and fitness activity to enjoy the wonderful waterway on their doorstep.

In addition to the crew from OHNSW, Sandy Point Dragons have members with a wide range of occupations and interests from all over NSW and adjacent communities in the Liverpool, Bankstown and Sutherland Shire areas.

2019 Open Day



2019 Open Day. Representatives from Sandy Point Dragons with OHNSW Chair Douglas Snedden and CEO Julie Babineau.

Patrons visit residential services



Her Excellency The Honorable Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of New South Wales

Giving kids their parents back

We are expanding the residential Parent's and Children's Program



Our Parent's and Children's Program (the Program) is one of just a few Australian services which enable parents to undergo treatment for alcohol and other drug misuse while living with their children, in a safe and supportive environment. In Australia, there is a large unmet need for residential treatment for single fathers, mothers, couples, parents seeking restoration of care and pregnant women.

In 2019, OHNSW received a philanthropic donation of \$1 million, which was matched by \$1 million from the NSW Government. This launched the Parent's and Children's Program Expansion Project (the Project), and an independent feasibility study recommended knocking down and rebuilding our our Parent's and Children's accommodation at Eagle Vale. Modification of existing accommodation is structurally and economically unfeasible.

Our Parent's and Children's Program is part of the Reconnecting Families suite of services.

“ The new centre will double the number of families we can treat in our 12+ month residential programs to 16 family groups.

Existing accommodation comprises 12 rooms for couples, single mothers or single fathers with one child, however variations in family setup mean capacity is often reduced by 25 per cent.

The Program simultaneously treats substance-related harms while providing education and therapy to help parents develop a safe home environment for their child/ren, support restoration orders in custody matters and reduce the future need for out-of-home care. Parents receive guidance from family support workers and participate in the Positive Parenting Program, Circle of Security and other groups to improve their parenting skills. Children attend early childhood centres or primary school in the local area, and receive psychological, pediatric and other specialist support to break the cycle of generational drug and alcohol misuse.



Fundraising is underway to increase the capacity of the Parent's and Children's Program.

Artist's impressions courtesy of Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects

Support for Program Expansion: As of June 2020

- Our priority is to maximise the impact of project funds to best help families break the cycle of generational drug and alcohol use.
- As at June 2020, we had \$2 million of the required \$4 million capital funding and planning is well underway.
- OHNSW has requested capital funding from Federal and State Governments, which have indicated strong support. Discussions have also begun to meet increased recurrent funding needs.
- In Australia, more than 450,000 children (13 per cent) are raised by adults who misuse alcohol or drugs¹ and more than 60,000 have a parent attending drug treatment².

Parent's and Children's Program Statistics



16 parents and **18 children** participated in the Program.



From 2016–19 the participation of **single fathers grew from 16 to 40 per cent**, and on average **12 per cent** of participating families included couples.



Five families identified as culturally and linguistically diverse, and another five as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Expanding the program: proposed timeline

Mid 2020

OHNSW appointed APP Contractors to manage the Project.

2021

Anticipated development application approval.
Appointment of construction contractor

Late 2020

Development application ready to be submitted to Council.

2022

Construction complete.

¹Dawe et al. 2007, p.vii

²Gruenert, Ratnam & Tsantefski 2004, p.5

Reconnecting to culture

Helping residential Aboriginal clients

Mingu Yabun

For 12 years, Mingu Yabun has been helping residential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients connect and reconnect with their culture to build their self-esteem, reduce isolation and give them strength to complete treatment. Weekly Mingu Yabun group meetings are held alternatively on-site at Odyssey House NSW (OHNSW) and in the community, such as the Tharawal Aboriginal Medical Service locations.

The Mingu Yabun group normally comprises from 5 – 18 residents and gives them the opportunity to discuss cultural issues, their progress in recovery, relationship and family issues, challenges they may be having in the program, and strategies for rebuilding their lives in the community. This empowers them to 'become accountable and develop integrity while building a better future,' said OHNSW's Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Wiradjuri woman Leonie Murdoch. An important element of recovery is that the residents have access to Tharawal Aboriginal Medical Service's full Aboriginal Health Assessment and other medical services to increase their support networks.

Our people are historically story tellers

Narrative Therapy plays a significant role in the group to help residents appreciate their life story and way of life, and to acknowledge the importance of contextual interaction and socially-constructed meaning. Local Aboriginal elders are sometimes involved as mentors which may be particularly helpful with multi-generational drug misuse or violence in the client's family and when family contact may not be advisable at the time. Local elders tell their own stories, teach and empower residents with information about their culture, heritage and language. This helps clients deal with the reasons they resorted to drug misuse, remain in the program and reap the benefits of recovery.

The Dreaming

'In 2019, Mingu Yabun created THE DREAMING, a nine-part canvas painted by 12 Aboriginal residents from 12 different Aboriginal countries. The painting took 21 groups, 44 group hours, and 299 people hours to complete. There were 16 people involved in the painting, lacquering, adding backing board, framing and naming this art piece. Some of our members painted their totems representing their Aboriginal family, community, and country; while others have chosen to paint their Creator.

'Our Mingu Yabun Group members wanted to create an art piece that not only showcased our culture but also expressed the diversity within our culture. The artists wanted the art piece to be displayed at OHNSW's Redfern office and on 12 December 2019 presented it at the 'Breakfast at Odyssey Thank You' event. Respect is an integral part of our culture and we were very mindful to include the totems of the Gadigal people of the EORA Nation, as the art piece would be in Redfern.

'Collectively we decided to name our art THE DREAMING, which is widely related to time, Aboriginal people, land and culture. THE DREAMING is the stories which contain our structure and processes; our laws and lessons; and these will differ from tribe to tribe, mob to mob and country to country.'



Tanya Plibersek MP unveiling The Dreaming with Julie Babineau, CEO OHNSW



Mingu Yabun helps reconnect our people back to their culture, reduces isolation, builds strength and bridges the gap between the mainstream and our culture with regard to family, values and community.

Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Wiradjuri woman Leonie Murdoch.

Mingu Yabun 2019-20



16

members identified as Aboriginal people



12

members identified as coming from different Aboriginal countries



3

members identified as being Saltwater people



1

member identified as coming from Stradbroke Island'

The Dreaming



Mingu Yabun in the community

In March 2020, Leonie and Amanda Klinar, Aboriginal Liaison Worker and Sydney North Coordinator, OHNSW, created a cross-cultural therapeutic alliance between OHNSW and Ken Zulumovski Hon DHSc, Founder and Managing Director of Gamarada Universal Indigenous Resources, to expand delivery of Mingu Yabun across the whole of OHNSW.

The partnership combines innovative healing programs with western AOD treatment models, delivered in a culturally sensitive and safe environment. It is consistent with 'train the trainer' principles and can be delivered by Aboriginal service staff and graduates as they complete the program to become leaders and new trainers.

Teaching life skills

Residential clients are enrolled in Odyssey College



Odyssey College is OHNSW's education unit for residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation clients at Eagle Vale, in South Western Sydney. A second campus exists at Ingleburn. Odyssey College is registered by the NSW Department of Education and Communities through the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA), under the Education Act 1990 and is a member of the Association of Independent Schools.

Odyssey College delivers the Stage 6 Life Skills syllabus to provide a range of course options for students with special education needs. Key learning areas include:

- **English** – English Life Skills, Stage 6 Syllabus
- **Mathematics** – Mathematics Life Skills, Stage 6 Syllabus
- **Art** – Creative Arts Life Skills, Stage 6 Syllabus, Visual Arts course
- **Choir** – Creative Arts Life Skills, Stage 6 Syllabus, Music course
- **Computers** – Technology Life Skills, Stage 6, Information Processes & Technology course
- **Woodwork** – Technology Life Skills, Stage 6, Industrial Technology course
- **Ceramics** – Ceramics Content Endorsed Course, Stage 6

- **Work and the Community Life Skills** Stage 6
- **PDHPE** Stage 6 Life Skills

The school has a closed enrolment policy allowing attendance only by those who are referred from OHNSW rehabilitation programs. The Principal is the delegated authority by the Board of OHNSW and reports to the School Advisory Committee, a committee of the Board. There are, however, avenues for interested parties and for students to have input into OHNSW operations. Family Information Days enable family and loved ones to share lunch, attend seminars, ask questions and discuss concerns in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

Students' participation is determined by education assessment, their treatment plan, therapists' recommendations, case reviews, and self-assessment. Continued enrolment is dependent on each students' health and behaviour in the residential program.

Students complete satisfaction surveys throughout the year and are encouraged to evaluate educational activities and give teachers feedback. This is collated and analysed to monitor the effectiveness of education services. A report on the findings is published bi-annually and analysed by staff to determine adjustments and improve course effectiveness.



This year, we changed the school's name from the Progressive Learning Centre to **Odyssey College**. By the end of the 2020 school year, Odyssey College aims to introduce new subjects as well as vocational training.

Peter Reuben, Principal, Odyssey College

Odyssey College 2019 School Year Statistics

34.7
years

Students' average age
on enrolment



of students (**16**)
identified as Aboriginal or
Torres Strait Islander

63.8
days

Mean attendance at
Odyssey College

Highlights for 2019 school year

- **Administered 138 WRAT** (Wide Range Assessment Testing) screening tests to students to determine entry level for educational programs.
- **Attended four plays**, three at the Roslyn Packer Theatre and one at the Sydney Opera House
- Facilitated **three choir performances** at Narellan BaptistCare
- Delivered **regular art therapy groups** for the students in the Withdrawal Unit
- Delivered **eight vocational guidance groups** for students using the DISC model and self-directed search
- **Ran a woodwork market stall** at Open Day in October 2019

Community engagement

How we work with the community

Odyssey House NSW (OHNSW) actively engages with our local communities and stakeholders to raise awareness of our services, provide education about alcohol and other drugs issues, expand local networks, 'friend-raise' and build goodwill, share information and connect at events with people face-to-face.

Our community partners

OHNSW has strong relationships with the service providers necessary for successful delivery outcomes. To best meet client needs, we have clear referral pathways and MOUs around co-care, re-referral in crisis or for acute care. Our staff have been active in promoting our programs to the public and local health and welfare organisations across Greater Sydney to which we might refer clients and vice versa.

Staff organised forums, attended promotional events and participated in local interagency meetings including, for example:

- **Participating in NAIDOC Week** 8 - 14 July with the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence in Redfern and with communities in Marrickville and Campbelltown.
- **Celebrating Mental Health Week** with the Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation in South Western Sydney.
- Being an event partner at the **One Door Mental Health 2019 Wellness Walk** across the Sydney Harbour bridge.
- Hosting a stall at the **LGBTIQ Mardi Gras Fair Day** in Sydney.
- Participating in the **Northern Beaches Safety and Wellbeing Webinar** on men's mental health during the initial COVID-19 shut down.
- Sponsoring and speaking at the **International Family Drug Support Day**, at NSW Parliament House. Theme "**Support the Family – improve the outcome**"

Client feedback

OHNSW has continuous improvement processes in place and regularly engages clients via focus groups and the quarterly Consumer Satisfaction Surveys, and works with clients to address issues raised. In addition to these, the residential services team holds four to five family dinners a year to enable clients' families to visit them and experience the environment at the Residential Rehabilitation Program and the Parent's and Children's Program. These have not been held since March 2020 due to COVID restrictions.

Stakeholder communication

OHNSW shares important news and stories about our admissions process, programs and operations, and gathers feedback from clients and families through invitations to, and interaction at, events and activities; appeal opportunities; staff presentations at conferences; community stalls; local speaking opportunities such as Rotary; participation in inter-agency and sector meetings; membership of relevant peak bodies and sector agencies; phone calls, emails; bi-annual Odyssey House newsletter; social media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube; videos; our website: www.odysseyhouse.com.au; OHNSW annual Open Day (last Sunday in October); and through ongoing media relations.



OHNSW stall at LGBTIQ Mardi Gras Fair Day in February 2020

Community engagement 2019-20



Our traditional media coverage grew by

157%



Staff and clients were interviewed by
The NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice'

2.8%

Government funding increased by

\$259,066

Fundraising in the community



Mike Ryan, Charles Lancaster representing AFMA and Julie Babineau, CEO OHNSW

OHNSW thanks all those who have held an event or participated in an activity to raise funds for our programs.

We would like to thank Club Burwood RSL, Chatswood RSL, and Campbelltown RSL for their support of our Bringing Up Great Kids program. Thanks also to the Campbelltown Catholic Club for their continued support. We would especially like to thank Val Mills and her team of volunteers who have been running stalls at shopping centres in the Macarthur region throughout the year.

OHNSW has been fortunate to be an event beneficiary since the inception of the **Australian Fund Manager Awards (AFMA)**, 20 years ago. The AFMA Committee has worked tirelessly to put together a wonderful industry-recognised event, year after year. We sincerely thank the AFMA Committee for their ongoing support and commitment and all the attendees of Awards dinners who have helped us help more families in need.

The OHNSW Business Women's Lunch has been an annual highlight for over ten years, however due to COVID-19 we were unable to hold our lunch in May 2020. We extend thanks to all supporters of this event and look forward to having them join us for lunch in the near future.

Staying open and safe

Demand for our programs increased during the pandemic



The pandemic brought new and unexpected challenges. With lockdown, healthcare workers needed to support patients within a severely restricted environment. The Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) sector faced the challenges of the pandemic's physical and mental health impacts. While physical impacts included discomfort and/or withdrawal because of reduced access to illicit substances, emotional challenges ranged from isolation, anxiety around the unknown, to the consequences of increased use and/or relapse. With closures and a reduction in other services, OHNSW accelerated rollout and innovation in service provision, optimised the use of digital platforms and balanced staff and client safety to ensure physical distancing, isolation and infection control requirements were implemented and maintained.

Our stakeholder engagement helped us develop a detailed and effective pandemic plan which identified moderate and severe risks to business-as-usual. This in-depth analysis enabled service continuity for our full suite of clinical services, with slight modifications to ensure

safety was and is maintained for staff, clients, their families and the community. In line with the Federal Government's 3-stage Recovery Plan, OHNSW developed a comprehensive Roadmap to Recovery to provide direction for staff on return to a new normal.

Residential service staff ensured that facilities remained a 'safe bubble' for residents. This required significant change to daily life and imposed extensive restrictions for residents including cancellation of all visitors. Client engagement was fundamental through this process to ensure its success. As cases dropped in NSW and community restrictions eased, residential service staff took a staged and considered approach to reducing service restrictions and allowed additional people to attend the site, supporting family reconnections, albeit in a limited capacity, with trials and consumer engagement at each stage.

Continuity of service, positive stakeholder feedback and zero infections among clients and staff means that OHNSWS successfully adapted to the challenges of COVID-19.

“

There has not been a single case of COVID – 19 amongst staff or clients in 2020 and we have remained fully operational.

David Kelly, Director Programs

10%

increase in the usage or number of people using our **residential services** from March to August 2020 during COVID-19

17%

increase in demand for our **community-based services** from March to August 2020 during COVID-19

Home schooling in the Parent’s and Children’s Program

As schools closed, OHNSW staff at the residential Parent’s and Children’s Program supported 6 parents to continue their therapeutic treatment while home-schooling 7 children between the ages of 1 and 12 years. We created a school environment by converting the staff office and using its computer and internet capabilities. With pre-schools re-opening later than primary schools, staff also took on childcare responsibilities to allow parents to continue their engagement with the therapeutic community. We purchased creative equipment, modelled good behaviour, engaged in creative play and used mobile devices for video calls to keep the children safe, entertained, learning, and maintaining their familial relationships during lockdown. Staff supervised families so they could take walks locally.



Increasing our impact

Improving our systems and processes

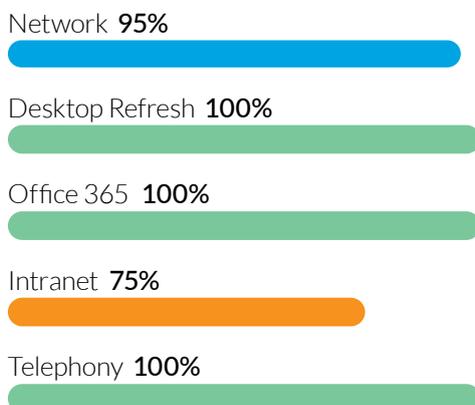
Our organisational effectiveness is impacted by our systems, information technology (IT) infrastructure and knowledge management. In 2019-20, OHNSW made great strides in improving these. Three main projects were the ongoing IT and Communications Infrastructure Project; improvement of client relationship management using RediCASE; and implementing the outcomes of the Residential Program Treatment Study, which was carried in conjunction with the University of Technology, Sydney.

Information Technology and Communications Infrastructure Project

In 2018, OHNSW commissioned an external review of our IT infrastructure, which resulted in a decision to upgrade and the appointment of MCR Computer Resources in November 2018 as our IT support provider. Over the past 18 months, improvements ensured consistent technology use across the organisation. This was particularly helpful in light of challenges created by COVID-19, as it enabled some employees to work from home and service continuity.

Upgrading our information technology and communications infrastructure

Completion of Project at 30 September 2020:



Get Redi Project

OHNSW's client-centred care approach is supported by the client relationship management system (CRMS), RediCASE to make data entry, reporting and analysis easier for staff, funders and clients. OHNSW began introducing RediCASE across the whole organisation in 2019.

To date, the first of seven modules is in place and we are now implementing three subsequent modules. The immediate impact has been increased understanding of how our programs and services affect our clients and their families. We have streamlined business processes that support the very beginning of each client's journey with us and data quality has improved. For example, we're now able to pinpoint geographic areas of need through a snapshot of telephone enquiry locations.

“My job is going to be a lot easier and communication will be more efficient!”

OHNSW staff member



Kristina Cochi, teacher Odyssey College

Residential Program Treatment Outcomes Study Recommendations

In 2017, Odyssey House NSW partnered with the University of Technology, Sydney, to carry out a longitudinal evaluation of the Residential Rehabilitation Program. Research funding was provided by NSW Health. For two years, Dr Rosemaree Miller and Associate Professor Toby Newton-John collaborated with our staff to track the progress of residential clients during and after completion of the rehabilitation program. We were successful in obtaining additional funding to extend the length of the evaluation until December 2019.

The final evaluation report was submitted to NSW Health in December 2019. It contained the background, methods, and results of the evaluation, as well as discussion of the major implications of the evaluation findings for Odyssey House NSW.

The study asked two primary questions:

- 1. Does residential rehabilitation reduce substance misuse and improve the mental health and physical well-being of clients?**
- 2. Are these treatment gains maintained 3, 6 and 12 months after the client's separation from the program?**

The study found that follow-up client contact was difficult, however clients who completed the study showed increased treatment gains after leaving residential rehabilitation. In addition, the study found clients' greatest reduction in substance misuse and mental health issues and an increase in physical well-being generally happened 12 months following separation from the program.

Outcomes

Following release of the report, OHNSW implemented a number of changes to keep more clients in residential treatment, help them improve their mental health and reach their recovery goals.

Changes included the introduction of a short program (12 weeks) for clients not needing longer term residential treatment; the introduction of early stage social anxiety management groups, psychoeducation groups, and recovery planning and relapse prevention. Other changes include increasing mental health services and extending support for clients after they leave the program.

“ It is hard but it is worth it. Just give in, don't fight it, it is the best thing I have ever done.

Female, 25–34 years old.



Art class at OHNSW.

Board



Julie Babineau (MSW, BSc, GAICD)
Director / Chief Executive Officer

Appointed to Director: 20/11/2018

Committees: Quality and Clinical Safety; Finance, Audit and Risk; Fundraising and Marketing; School Advisory; Remuneration.

Julie Babineau has held leadership positions in the health and community services sectors in Australia and Canada. She has a wealth of experience in policy, planning and strategy, as well as an extensive knowledge of the health sector in relation to populations in need.



Jan Copeland (PhD, BSc (Psych) Hons, MAPS)
Director

Appointed: 21/02/2005 **Resigned:** 17/12/2019

Committees: Quality and Clinical Safety

Professor Jan Copeland was the founding director of the National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre at the University of New South Wales 2007-2016 and her own consultancy, Cannabis Information and Support.



Christine Bishop (BA, LLB, BSc (Hons), MPsyCh. (For) (Hons), MFMH, FAICD)

Director

Appointed: 29/08/2011

Committees: Quality and Clinical Safety

Christine Bishop spent 25 years in legal practice, then eight years with the Department of Juvenile Justice as a psychologist specialising in alcohol and other drug issues with young people. She has an interest in pathways to recovery that balance medical, legal, and social issues so clients leave treatment with skills to lead pro-social and productive lives.



John Coughlan (BEc. Dip Rur. Acc. (UNE), FCA, FCPA)

Director

Appointed: 16/10/2006

Committees: Finance, Audit and Risk Management (Chair)

After eight years in chartered accounting, John Coughlan enjoyed a 25-year career as Chief Executive in the thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing industries in NSW and Queensland.



Stewart Hindmarsh (Approved leave) (BEc/LLB (Hons), MBus (Fin))
Director

Appointed: 22/03/2016

Committees: Fundraising and Marketing

Stewart Hindmarsh is a director of diversified property business, Hindmarsh. Stewart was most recently Chief Executive Officer of World Nomads Group, a leading global provider of travel insurance now owned by private health insurer nib.



Judge Peter Johnstone (LLB)
Director

Appointed: 17/10/2017

Committees: Remuneration (Chair)

Peter Johnstone is President of the Children's Court of NSW, a position he has held since 2012. The Children's Court comprises 13 specialist Children's Magistrates and 10 Children's Registrars. Its jurisdiction is the care and protection of children and young people, and youth crime (ages 10-18) across NSW.



Valerie Hoogstad (BA, MBA, Dip TESOL)
Director

Appointed: 21/10/1996

Committees: School Advisory; Quality and Clinical Safety (Chair)

Valerie Hoogstad has lectured at several universities in communication studies and international education. She has written sixteen textbooks and several papers on intercultural education and communication studies. She was the director for International Education at Australian Catholic University.



David McGrath (BSc(Psych) (Hons), MBA, Juris Doctor)
Director

Appointed: 27/11/2014

Committees: Quality and Clinical Safety; Remuneration

David McGrath runs his own independent consultancy business and advises governments and non-government organisations on areas of social policy. He was previously Director of Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Programs at NSW Health for nine years and was the COO on the NSW Special Commission into the drug "Ice".



Stacey Quince (MEd, MA, DipEd, BA)
Director

Appointed: 21/05/2019 **Resigned:** 25/09/2020

Committees: School Advisory (Chair)

Stacey Quince has over 25 years' experience in education and is currently Director, Teacher Quality at NSW Department of Education. She has served as Principal at Campbelltown Performing Arts High School since 2012 and her work has been recognised nationally and internationally.



Susanne Taylor (MComm, BSc Politics, Govt & ModHist)

Director

Appointed: 22/12/2018

Committees: Fundraising & Marketing (Chair)

Susanne Taylor has over 25 years' experience as a communication specialist in Australia, south-east Asia and the UK. She has held senior communication and public affairs roles at various state agencies in Queensland and NSW.



Douglas Snedden (BEc)
Chairman

Appointed: 17/10/2011

Committees: Remuneration; Fundraising and Marketing

Douglas Snedden has been the Chairman of Odyssey House NSW since October 2011. Formerly Managing Director of Accenture, he is Chairman of iSentia and Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, a director of OFX Ltd and a member of the National Library of Australia Council.



Garry Wayling (BCom, ACA, GAICD)
Director

Appointed: 27/11/2013

Committees: Finance, Audit and Risk, Management, Remuneration

Garry Wayling is a Chartered Accountant. He was an Audit Partner at Arthur Andersen and then Ernst & Young Australia. Garry is an independent director at ASX-listed companies OneVue Limited and Inabox Group Ltd.



Jodi's story*

becoming a better parent through community groups and counselling

Smoking marijuana was normal in this young mother's family at home and at extended family gatherings. The courts found otherwise as her family grew and she faced increasing levels of unmanaged anxiety and depression. OHNSW Support Groups are helping Jodi understand herself and develop healthy relationships with her children. This is her story.

My family all smoked marijuana and I started smoking with them when I was 13 years old. I thought this was normal. It was never an issue with my parents at home or with other friends and family members at gatherings, so I kept smoking marijuana when I started a family and while I raised my children, who are still very young.

Over time I became anxious and depressed. My drug use and poor mental health affected my parenting and a couple of years ago, the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) became involved. I lost custody of my kids. DCJ recommended counselling but I couldn't bring myself to do it.

I then joined one of Odyssey's community groups. They have a lot of different groups from substance abuse treatment to counselling and education, and I joined a women's support group. In the beginning, I only wanted to reduce my reliance on marijuana and regain access to the kids. I couldn't see the bigger picture. However, connecting with Odyssey staff ended up having a much bigger impact and over the past few years, they have connected me with most of my local groups. I've started learning a bit more about myself and am beginning to understand how different parts of my life fit together.

The groups helped me work through the reasons I used illegal drugs, and I realised I had to cut some people out of my day-to-day life to make changes and get my kids back. I'm developing stronger relationships with my children. Last year, one of my sisters passed away and lately I've also been repairing relationships with some of my brothers and sisters. I'm avoiding conflict right now, so will reach out to other family members when I'm ready and able to have those difficult conversations.

“Odyssey staff helped me connect with other people and now I'm beginning to understand what might be possible for me.

The community groups helped me learn how to set goals and achieve them. I smoke cigarettes and am also trying to cut down on that, to be completely drug-free and become the best version of myself for my kids. I've accepted that counselling for grief and loss may be helpful and have a referral to Relationships Australia.

It's now several years since I first got help from the local Odyssey team, and the court has set a date to assess my progress and make final custody orders.

“I hope to show the court I'm on track with my treatment and can be a good mother.

*Names changed to protect the privacy of our clients.

Our people

Engagement

We measured employee and leadership development, satisfaction, technology, COVID-19 recovery and wellbeing throughout the year.

Employee feedback underpinned action plans to improve engagement, wellbeing, adaptability and commitment to progress for and with the organisation through a period of significant change and development.

Our surveys are an important way for staff to communicate their thoughts about OHNSW in a constructive and confidential forum.

Recognition

Staff are recognised for their 5, 10, 15 and 20 years' service, and through our Values in Action peer nominations. Employees continue to recognise and acknowledge their peers' high performance throughout the year.

Safety and wellbeing

We are committed to providing a safe workplace.

Throughout the year our site representatives were given Work, Health and Safety training as were new employees during onboarding and probation. In response to the pandemic, the Business Continuity Planning Committee ensured a smooth transition to working from home for employees who were provided access to:

- Regular health updates and COVID-19 information sessions led by the CEO and Executive Team.
- Resources for remote working including IT and other team support.

- Wellbeing resources, including access to training, webinars and independent support.
- Ongoing supervision and support.
- A clear Recovery Plan following employee feedback.
- A dedicated email address for employees to provide feedback, raise concerns and ask questions.

Our external Employee Assistance Program continued providing one-to-one counselling support where requested.

Learning and Development

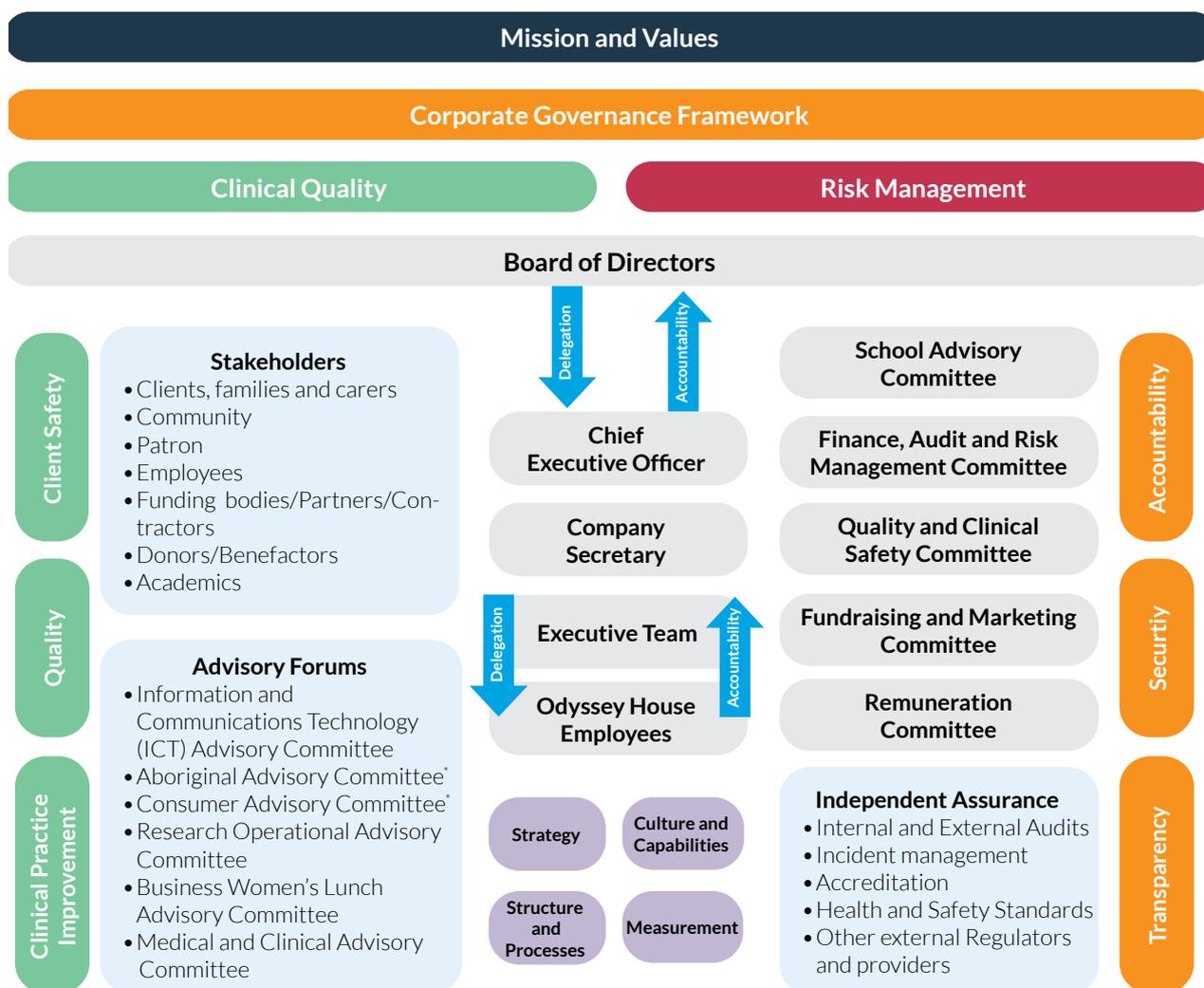
In July 2019 we launched a Management Development Program with 10 sessions attended by a total of 21 Coordinators, Leadership Management Team members and Executive Directors. The program ran up to March 2020 with external and internal training, online learning, seminars, and webinars throughout the year.

Governance

Governance is fundamental to delivering safe, high-quality clinical care within a system of rules, practices and processes. The OHNSW governance framework provides guidance for strategic development and high-quality clinical care while managing risks and using resources in a responsible, transparent and ethical manner.

Our governance framework takes into consideration the OHNSW constitution, mission, values, system components and stakeholders. It demonstrates effective governance is everyone's business and helps us keep good governance central to our corporate and clinical processes. The Board and Chief Executive work closely with the Senior Leadership Team and its employees, to monitor governance and support the provision of effective clinical services.

Odyssey House NSW Governance Framework



* In development

Adapted from the Open Minds Corporate Governance Framework, 2017

Legislative framework

The legislative frameworks we comply with or work within are:

- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
- *Corporations Act 2001*
- *Charitable Fundraising Act 1991*
- *Trade Practices Act 1974*
- *Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights (2008)*
- *The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (2017)*
- *Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)*
- *The Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW)*
- *NSW State Records Act 1998*
- *The Privacy Act 1988*
- *The Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)*
- *Child and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 2008*
- *Education Act 1990 (NSW)*
- *Teachers Accreditation Act 2004*
- *Institute of Teachers Act 2004*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *Food Act 2003*
- *Building Code of Australia*
- *Social Security Act 1991*
- *Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Act 2012*

Our professional services

Independent auditors

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Australia

Bank

Odyssey House NSW's main bank accounts are with Commonwealth Bank Australia and Westpac Banking Corporation.

Legal advisors

Marsdens Law Groups

Accreditations

- Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS)
- NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)



Sylvia's story*

creating a new life after the Parent's and Children's Program

A moment of clarity and fierce determination helped Sylvia get herself and baby Connor into our Parent's and Children's Program, where she overcame methamphetamine addiction and found hope for the future.

Mum and Dad were hardworking, and put me into early childhood care where I was sexually abused. I couldn't cope with what happened to me and I started using cannabis when I was 16, and became addicted to crystal methamphetamine (ice) when I was 20.

“As soon as I had it, I was hooked. I just couldn't stop. I would work and smoke ice; it helped me function throughout the day, it gave me social skills and confidence.

I trained as a beauty therapist, built up my own business and eventually became pregnant with Connor. I stayed clean for three months, but developed post-natal depression. My partner also took drugs, and I continued using ice throughout most of my 20s.

One evening when Connor was a few months old, I put him in the bath and went out of the room to use ice. When I came back, he was floating and inert in the bathwater. I called paramedics and saved Connor from drowning, but it was a wake up call. I decided to change my life to become a better parent, but couldn't face being away from Connor.

I found Odyssey's Parent's and Children's Program, and arrived at Eagle Vale a week before Christmas.

“I thought I didn't deserve my son. I hated myself.

My rehabilitation plan was challenging but the strict schedule, counselling, group sessions and living arrangements all gave me new parenting and life skills. I learnt how to express my feelings and loved the English and Maths courses at Odyssey College, but my favourite part of the program was the Circle of Security.

I thought I was doing everything right by Connor, but the Circle of Security made me realise I disappeared from him. Being in the moment—watching him go off and explore then come back to me—helped me connect with him and changed my parenting.

Towards the end of the program Connor's father passed away. Odyssey staff were particularly supportive at that time.

It began to get easier. It's amazing how clouded everything is in addiction but once you see clearly, everything is just basic life skills.

Connor and I spent 19 months in the residential program and another few months living independently nearby, and we've returned to my hometown healthier and happier. I'm a much better parent. I'm proud to have completed the program with Connor, and graduated in October 2020. I was inspired by the paramedic who helped me so I'm going to university to become a paramedic, and save up for my own house.

I'm grateful to be making new memories and have a second chance in life.

*Names changed to protect the privacy of our clients.



ODYSSEY HOUSE
NEW SOUTH WALES

Odyssey House

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Admissions

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Donations

T: 1800 644 661

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