



Seniors Rights Service

Annual Report 2023 – 2024

Welcome to the Seniors Rights Service 2023-2024 Annual Report. It is with great pride that we share our accomplishments of continuing to support older people to know their rights and to be empowered to assert these rights.

We achieved this by providing free specialist legal services, aged care advocacy and information across metropolitan, rural and regional New South Wales. In these pages, we'll share with you some news of the initiatives and strategies we have implemented to deliver on our role as NSW's leading advocacy organisation on behalf of older people.

Seniors Rights Service is a proud member of



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Some names in this publication have been changed to protect people's identities.

Always was, Always will be, Aboriginal land

Seniors Rights Service recognises and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's First Nations Peoples and their ongoing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders – past, present and emerging.



About Us

Protecting and advancing the rights of older people

Since 1986, Seniors Rights Service has existed to be the voice of older people in NSW, wherever they live. We proactively support older people to know their rights and to be empowered to assert these rights. We do this by providing free specialist legal services, aged care advocacy and information to people over 65 and to First Nations people over 55 years of age.

We are a not-for-profit community organisation.

Our Vision

A society that respects and upholds the rights of older people.

Our Purpose

The purpose of Seniors Rights Service is to raise awareness and empower older people to activate, uphold, extend and defend their individual rights.

We achieve our purpose by providing accessible and confidential legal services, aged care advocacy and information.

Our Service Principles

In all of our endeavours, we will:

- empower older people as rights holders and active contributors to society
- provide high quality, appropriate and timely services
- provide equitable access to services for seniors regardless of race, nationality or ethnic origin, gender, marital status, disability, religion, political beliefs, sexual preference, or any other characteristic
- support the capacity development of our staff to ensure they can deliver high quality services
- collaborate with other organisations in pursuit of common goals
- work with broader civil society to foster respect for older members of society and their individual rights

Our Priority Populations

Seniors Rights Service prioritises engagement with older people who:

- are disadvantaged and vulnerable
- are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- reside in regional, rural and remote locations
- are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or other.

At a Glance

Our Services

Legal advice
2,228

Advocacy cases
5,035

Information enquiries
6,266

Aged Care Navigator
318

RACH sessions
887

Community events
274

Financial Advocacy
242

Home Care Check In
192

Net Promoter Score
77

Net Promoter Score is an industry standard for tracking how likely a client will recommend a service to another person and overall client satisfaction based on customer feedback.

Social Media and Website

 Facebook followers
3,300

People Reached
927,605

 LinkedIn followers
1,333

Interactions
1,836

 Instagram followers
1,179

 Website visitors
47,000

File downloads
10,707

Our Board

Seniors Rights Service thanks all our Board members for their guidance and thoughtful contributions over the year.

Ours is a voluntary Board and we acknowledge the time they generously give to the organisation.



Hakan Harman Chairperson

Hakan is the Chief Operating Officer of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, he holds a Master of Public Administration and Bachelor of Commerce, is a Fellow of CPA Australia and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Hakan has over 30 years experience as a senior executive across public, commercial and not for profit sectors. He has a strong community focus, commitment to social and cultural justice and a deep passion for sustainability, inclusive leadership and social cohesion.



Andrew Byrnes

Andrew is Emeritus Professor of International Law and Human Rights at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), an associate of the Ageing Futures Institute and the Australian Human Rights Institute at UNSW, and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and of the Australian Academy of Law. He has served as President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of International Law and Vice-President of the Asian Society of International Law, as well as external legal adviser to the Australian Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights and as a member of the Human Rights Committees of the NSW Bar Association and the Law Council of Australia.



Barbara Anderson

Barbara's professional background is in health information management and she has extensive experience in ageing and the care of older people. At NSW Health, her roles included Principal Policy Adviser – Ageing & Disability, Integrated Care Branch, NSW Health. Barbara also ran her own consultancy specialising in quality improvement, accreditation, and health records/information management, including clients from health and aged care facilities, peak body organisations, and government departments.

Barbara resigned from the board in August 2024



Barbara O'Neill

Barbara is a proud Weil Wan/Dunghutti woman born on the Gadigal Country of the Eora Nation.

She is an Indigenous Trauma and Recovery Practitioner and specialises in the support of care leavers from institutions and people in the prison system. Barbara sits on the Walama List of the District Court of NSW assisting His Honour Judge Warwick Hunt in her role of Respected Other Person.

Barbara also consults with the Burdekin Association in regard to Indigenous Young People in Out of Home Care.

Barbara resigned from the board in May 2024



Matthew Cleary

Matthew has extensive management and not for profit governance experience across a range of sectors including Health, Social and Disability. Within the Age Care space, he has worked as a Senior Project Manager for the Older Persons Advocacy Network. Matthew has also worked extensively overseas in humanitarian management roles supporting people and communities in need. Additionally, he has worked for St Vincent de Paul as Executive Officer based at the Matthew Talbot Hostel and as a consultant at PwC on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care.

Matthew currently chairs the Finance Audit and Risk Committee.



Nitika Bhala

Nitika's educational qualifications includes a Master of Business Administration, a Master of Economics, and a Bachelor of Commerce. Additionally, she is an associate member of CPA Australia

With over a decade of diverse experience in both the nonprofit and private sectors, Nitika currently serves as the Senior Finance Manager at YWCA Australia, where she leads financial operations across multiple entities. She plays a pivotal role in overseeing financial planning, budgeting, capital projects and audit processes, working closely with C-suite executives to drive organisational growth and sustainability.



Jane Saphin

Jane has over 30 years' experience in the Health Care industry, including 12 years in global product management for 2 Australian medical device manufacturers.

Jane recently joined Access Sydney Community Transport as the Manager, Business Operations and Performance and is a volunteer coach for the Harding Miller Education Foundation, an Australian charity that supports high potential but socio-economically disadvantaged girls across Australia.

Jane resigned from the board in August 2024



Elaine Leong

Elaine is the Group General Counsel and Group Company Secretary at The Benevolent Society. With over 20 years' experience as a lawyer and governance professional, Elaine leads practices which add value through advice, education, collaboration and advocacy. She established and led the first in-house legal team approved under the National Pro Bono Insurance Scheme and led the first in-house legal team in the charity and non-profit sector to become a founding signatory to the National Pro Bono Target, committed to advancing positive social change through pro bono legal work.

Elaine resigned from the board in February 2024



Chairperson and CEO Report



Hakan Harman
Chairperson

Over the 2023–2024 financial year, Seniors Rights Service focused resolutely on our core mission by providing information, advocacy and legal services to older people over the age of 65 across NSW and to First Nations people over the age of 50.

The services we provide remain in high demand for a number of demographic, economic and societal reasons. New South Wales is experiencing an ageing population, coupled with rising living costs and increasing levels of digital and physical isolation. These trends will continue into the foreseeable future, prompting us to devote significant resources towards preparing for the challenges ahead.

During this reporting period, we successfully developed and formalised our Strategic Plan for 2024–2028. This roadmap clearly defines our purpose and the services we deliver. Central to our success will be an unwavering focus on the communities we serve and the dedicated individuals we employ. We are proud to report significant progress in solidifying these foundational elements evidenced by our accolade as the Xref Employer of Choice 2024.

Our organisational success is intrinsically linked to empowering older Australians from all walks of life, enabling them to age with dignity and respect. It is our goal that their rights are prioritised by everyone involved in their care and support.



Shannon Wright
Chief Executive Officer

In the 2023–2024 financial year, our efforts culminated in 15,442 interactions aimed at providing older individuals with legal assistance and critical information regarding aged care services and financial matters. Each interaction represents a step towards ensuring that older Australians are heard and that we actively work towards achieving meaningful outcomes for them.

Our Aged Care Advocates conducted 887 information sessions in aged care homes, informing residents of their rights to safe and high-quality care as well as their right to live free from abuse and to have a person of their choice, including an aged care advocate, support or speak on their behalf.

Furthermore, we facilitated 274 sessions with community groups to raise awareness about the challenges faced by older people and to inform them of the support available through Seniors Rights Service.

As a Community Legal Centre, we have stood firmly alongside older people in need of legal advice and representation. Our solicitors assisted 1,424 clients, delivering 2,228 pieces of legal advice and actively engaging in 145 community legal education sessions covering various topics pertinent to older people.

Our Financial Advocacy team employs their expertise to navigate financial challenges faced by older clients by advocating on their behalf with aged care providers and government agencies. Over the year we assisted 242 clients, addressing issues such as overcharging and changes to care packages. This work is often life changing, alleviating financial stress and mitigating related mental and physical health risks.

The Home Care Check In project extends vital support to older people who may lack family or community networks around them, who are experiencing grief, who cope with cognitive impairments or who have difficulty communicating. This proactive initiative has engaged 39 clients through 486 phone contacts and 192 face-to-face visits within the financial year.

Seniors Rights Service is committed to making systemic contributions to policy discussions and research that improve our understanding of older people's needs and enhances their rights. Throughout this period, our leadership team has played an active role in consultations regarding the new federal Aged Care Act, elder abuse, coercive control, the health impacts of isolation and disability access standards tailored for older individuals.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank our funding bodies:

- The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care through The Older Persons Advocacy Network
- Legal Aid NSW
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice through the Ageing Peaks program
- NSW Fair Trading.

To the Seniors Rights Service team, we express our heartfelt appreciation for your unwavering commitment to safeguarding and advocating for the rights of older people across NSW. Your care, expertise, passion and respect for older residents across New South Wales enable us to excel in our mission. To our Board members, thank you for your continued support, guidance and strategic insights that strengthen our organisation.

We take immense pride in the outstanding work our staff undertake daily to enhance the lives of older Australians and uphold their rights. As we look to the future, we remain dedicated to supporting your essential and outstanding efforts.



Making Plans To Deliver Future Results

While Seniors Rights Service has achieved much over our history, the real challenges are still ahead of us.

This year the Board created the Seniors Rights Service Strategic Plan 2024-2028 to ensure we are successful in delivering future services to older people.

To develop this plan, Seniors Rights Service consulted broadly with our clients and their representatives, with our staff and a wide range of stakeholders on what is important and also on priorities and approaches to implementation. Thank you to all those who contributed to our Strategic Plan 2024-2028. We thank you for the trust you have placed in us and we look forward to demonstrating the achievements this plan makes possible.

Under this plan there are two fundamental pillars as our foundation are the people we serve and the people we employ.

For the benefit of the people we serve, this plan commits us to using the full spectrum of our expertise on behalf of older people in all their diversity across NSW. This requires us to be skilled solicitors, equitable champions and first-class advocates that empower older people to continue to contribute to society, and to be treated with dignity and respect.



For the people we employ, we are committing to continuing to improve the way we do things, remaining an employer of choice for staff and growing our services to meet emerging needs. We will attract and retain the staff we need to deliver on our promise to older people across NSW.

By following the Seniors Rights Service Strategic Plan 2024-2028, we will ensure we remain a client-centred service that is effective, integrated and focused on the voice of older people and their representatives.

Making Society Better For The Older People We Serve

Seniors Rights Service provides thought leadership on a broad range of issues that impact the rights and dignity of older people in NSW.

Each year our advice on aged care rights and insights into the needs of older people are sought out by decision makers and we also join with leading research, legal, advocacy and sector partners to make recommendations on behalf of the diverse communities we serve.

Seniors Rights Service's leadership continued to make these policy and social contributions throughout this financial year.

Research and Policy Case Study: Social Isolation as Elder Abuse

Seniors Rights Service commissioned the Federal government's Australian Institute of Family Studies to undertake research into the factors, dynamics and effects of isolation experienced by older people in New South Wales.

The research determined:

- Isolation can be multifaceted and include geographical, social, cultural, sex, gender and familial factors
- Amongst older people a tension can exist between isolation and maintaining independence, and

- Intervention strategies to prevent isolation are preferable to waiting until an older person experiences a crisis due to isolation.

The study's findings include:

- Formal screening tools should be implemented to measure geographical isolation and develop connections in communities to identify isolated older people
- The usability of the My Aged Care portal for older people seeking support should be enhanced
- Health care providers (such as general practitioners) need support to identify isolated older people
- Councils and organisations should provide a sense of community and inclusion for older people

The report has since been used by Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus KC, MP as part of the Federal government's Elder Abuse law reforms.



Passion And Purpose in Alignment According To Our Team

Seniors Rights Service is a truly great place to work according to feedback from our employees. Our teams have told us that they are engaged in all that we do, are satisfied with the work that we perform and believe in the positive organisation we are building together.

In 2024 we partnered with XRef to undertake an Employee Engagement Survey to better understand our employees' experiences and their connection to our Vision, Purpose and the Services we offer to clients.

We are proud to report that employee engagement at Seniors Rights Service is high, with 89% of survey respondents reporting:

- They believe in the purpose and values of the organisation
- They get a feeling of personal accomplishment from their work
- Seniors Rights Service is inclusive of all people.

Overall, 89% of our team are engaged with what we do and how we do it. Key survey highlights include:

- 100% belief in our purpose and values
- 99% would recommend our services
- 98% report client satisfaction
- 93% of staff experience personal accomplishment
- 91% report manageable workloads



- 88% would recommend us as a good place to work

These results set a strong foundation for the future of our organisation. They also position us as an employer of choice in our sector with survey results surpassing other community organisations' engagement rates by 8%.

Seniors Rights Service will continue working to build on these results in the years to come and we look forward to updating you on our progress in future Annual Reports.

Seniors Rights Service is proud to be the Xref Engage Awards 2024 Best Workplace.

The Best Workplace Award recognises exceptional levels of employee engagement and satisfaction as well as demonstrating effective management practices.

This award validates the ongoing efforts across our team to continually improve, implement best practice and ultimately deliver exceptional services to our clients. This is only made possible by everyone working together with shared goals and dedication to protecting and advancing the rights of older people.

Congratulations to our entire team.

Staff Profile Margaret Crothers



We proudly introduce you to one of our Aged Care Advocates, Margaret Crothers who began her advocacy career with us in 2006.

"I've enjoyed a varied and fulfilling career as an older person's advocate. It's given me chances to grow and develop and I'm a kinder, more tolerant person with a better understanding of ageing," says Margaret.

Margaret's career has taken many forms.

"I started as an Advocate/Educator: there were two of us then. I was the first Regional Advocate and became the Regional Co-ordinator. I took on the role of Manager Advocacy and Regional Services, then Senior Advocacy Advisor and then became the Manager of the OPAN National Contact Centre. In semi-retirement, I'm now an Advocacy Specialist Intake Officer," says Margaret.

There have been many highlights for Margaret over her career.

"Working as a team, taking our services to regional areas – there isn't a town in NSW I haven't visited. Meeting great characters and having a good laugh with older people, watching the growth of our service and helping the sector handle the COVID-19 crisis have all been personal highlights.

"First in NSW and then helping colleagues in Victoria; COVID-19 was a very difficult time. We found ways to support residents and families who were distressed because they couldn't see each other due to restrictions. But the way the states all supported one another was really great to see."

"The Aged Care sector is always responding to changes. This means training has been a constant part of my work. It's just so important to be up to date so that we can provide accurate information to clients and support callers."

For anyone considering a career as an Aged Care Advocate, Margaret's progression demonstrates that there are a variety of roles one can take and opportunities to grow into new roles.

"We're still growing as an organisation and adding new roles and specialties; like our Financial Advocates and Home Check-In service. There are many new roles and this gives Advocates the chance to try new things but still remain within the organisation.

"If you're looking for a meaningful role that makes a difference, being an Aged Care Advocate is definitely something you should consider," concludes Margaret.

Aged Care Advocacy



Melanie Lennon
 Manager, Advocacy
 Operations and
 and Regional Services

Seniors Rights Service provides free, confidential and independent information as well as individual advocacy support to older people and their representatives. Our services empower older people to self advocate, and our outreach assists them to understand their aged care rights and ensure they are recognised and upheld.

Our Aged Care Advocates do this by tailoring information to best meet the needs of older people. This can take the form of discussions with clients or information sessions. Where needed we ensure that we have an accredited interpreter available to assist us. We can provide information on older person's specific care arrangements and the services they are receiving or we can assist by being the voice of an older person by speaking up on their behalf and following up to ensure their concerns have been addressed.

At our core, we provide independent advice on the complexities of the aged care system. Having this information, as well as active assistance when needed in speaking up on their own behalf, is an essential right for older people.

The difference our advocacy makes is very significant to older people. Having someone who is on your side can be life changing. When older people reach out to us, they are often feeling overwhelmed by poor communication or a lack of response to issues they have raised. The actions of our Advocates help cut through to aged care service providers so that older people's concerns can be addressed. This results in a renewed connection between our clients and their service providers and ensures an older person's wishes and choices are respected and upheld.

Whenever our Advocates provide tailored information, older people are empowered to defend their rights, and whenever our Advocates speak up on behalf of an older person, their human rights and aged care needs will be better protected.

The Information and advocacy topics we advise on include:

- understanding individuals' aged care rights and responsibilities
- support to engage with My Aged Care,
- aged care service providers fees, rules and charges
- interacting with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
- supported decision making.

Operations Overview

11,301 individual enquiries were received from older people and their representatives who sought Aged Care Advocacy support and information from Seniors Rights Service to:

- make informed decisions about the care they receive
- exercise their right to choice when accessing or receiving aged care services
- have their rights understood and upheld
- increase their capacity to self advocate
- have their care needs meet

Over the course of the year, Aged Care Advocates delivered 887 rights based information sessions to people in Residential Aged Care facilities and 274 Community Care sessions to older people, families and representatives receiving or seeking to receive aged care services. Sessions cover a range of topics relating to aged care, abuse awareness and prevention strategies, charter of rights and self advocacy.

In addition, 597 Seniors events were conducted across NSW to raise awareness, build relationships, and developing community networks.

Cultural safety

Seniors Rights Service received a call from the daughter of client who had power of attorney and enduring guardianship over her father. There had been long standing issues with her father's residential aged care facility that the daughter had been trying to advocate to resolve.

Her father has dementia and does not speak English. He has some challenging behaviours that the facility was struggling to manage.

Issues about the father's case had been raised with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Issues, including:

- Poor communication
- Incorrect information on client file
- Restrictive practice issues including chemical restraints
- Not gaining consent from the enduring guardian for medical treatment or assessments
- Unexplained falls with obvious injuries receiving no medical treatment and no documentation.

Resolutions to the issues raised were taking a long time to produce and limited communication on the process was causing additional stress and frustrations.

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By contacting Seniors Rights Service, an Aged Care Advocate was able to support the client and his daughter while the investigations continued. The Advocate provided referrals, support, information, and coaching to the daughter to enable her to self-advocate on her father's behalf where possible.

Following the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissions investigation, the facility agreed to undertake training to ensure that all staff understand the rights of older people and their enduring guardians and the client and her daughter were relieved that their decisions and choices would be better respected.

Transitioning care

Seniors Rights Service received a call from a client who was in a rehabilitation hospital waiting for a transitional care package.

The client lives with Parkinson's and mild cognitive impairment and a hospital admission occurred after a fall that resulted in a broken hip. With the hospital planning to discharge them, the client was concerned that the package they had been told would be offered would not be actioned until after they returned home leaving them with no means of immediate care.

The client did not know if it was the best option, the costs involved and whether it would provide ongoing assistance.

The client's social worker was going to arrange for a transitional aged care program but the client did not know if it was the best option, the costs involved and whether it would provide ongoing assistance.

The advocate provided information about the available in-home support packages and discussed the process of being assessed and assigned a package.



With client consent, the Advocate contacted the discharge social worker to ensure the aged care assessment team representative would be able to undertake an assessment for a home care package at the same time to reduce the waiting period.

The social worker explained that the aged care assessment team could not undertake an assessment prior to discharge but arranged for it to take place the day after the older person returned to their home.

The client was happy to have a timeframe and felt better informed and in a follow up call the client confirmed the assessment had been performed and they were happy with the services that had been put in place.

Checking In On Home Care: An Advocacy Initiative

Seniors Rights Service is one of three trial sites delivering the Home care check in pilot project. The pilot involves Community Support Advocates supporting highly vulnerable older people in the Hunter New England area, who are vulnerable and/or at risk of harm or neglect due to social isolation. In part this could be because they may be reliant on one provider or carer, are experiencing grief, have cognitive impairment or have difficulty speaking.

Home care check ins provide an opportunity to meet with clients, connect with them, understand their circumstances and to rebuild or enhance their social support network. We can also assist to resolve issues with service providers or identify additional support needs.

Clients are referred into the program by service providers and community organisations, by local Aged care assessment teams and by allied health professionals.

Over the course of the year, we supported 39 clients by making 678 points of contact either face to face or by phone. These actions substantially reduced the risks of isolation, increased support networks and delivered care and respect to vulnerable older people.

Home care check ins provide an opportunity to meet with clients, connect with them, understand their circumstances and to rebuild or enhance their social support network



Restoring connections: Alex's story

Alex lives in social housing and has lived experience of abuse and domestic violence as well as other mental health impacts.

With a history of hoarding and being at risk of homelessness, Alex's family relationships have been sporadic.

The NSW Trustee and Guardian manages Alex's money however Alex has had to cancel medical appointments as they do not have the funds to cover the cost of the appointments. Alex's relationship with their home care package case manager has broken down, in part because the package is overbudget, however Alex does not want to complain.

Within three months of entering the program, Alex had engaged with the NSW Trustee and Guardian and has been able to purchase a washing machine as well as pay for and attend all doctor appointments.

Our Home care check in team has engaged with Alex's home care case manager, to begin to rebuild their relationship. The case manager is more engaged and Alex's home care package has now been reassessed and increased to Level 4.

The advocacy provided by our home care check in team supports Alex to build skills, reduce risk, restore connections to community and to family as well as remain in their own home

The advocacy provided by our Home care check in team supports Alex to build skills, reduce risk, restore connections to community and to family as well as remain in their own home without the threat of homelessness.

A New Way To Help: Financial Advocacy

The Financial Advocacy team has grown to five team members and supports clients to make informed aged care decisions and helps resolve problems relating to the financial aspects of home care packages and residential aged care.

Our Financial Advocates are active in assisting aged care package recipients to review their care costs, understand the fees they are being charged and use information available on the My Aged Care portal to compare service providers.

In cases where aged care providers are not meeting their obligations, our Financial Advocacy Officers have sought financial remedies for clients that can include refunds and waivers of fees. Further, by explaining the fees and rights of the older person receiving care, many older persons and their representatives have been empowered to advocate for themselves. Our financial advocacy on behalf of clients can restore tens of thousands of dollars in aged care services to client accounts and increases in the care clients are entitled to.

To build the capacity of the broader Seniors Rights Service Advocacy team our Financial Advocacy Officers have delivered regular education sessions and workshops to Advocates who are managing the financial aspects of the enquiries they receive from clients.

Our financial advocacy on behalf of clients can restore tens of thousands of dollars in aged care services to client accounts and increases in the care clients are entitled to.



Means assessment for a client in care receiving Department of Veterans Affairs support

A client contacted Seniors Rights Service when he received a statement from his wife's Residential Aged Care Home showing large arrears. Neither the caller nor wife had enough funds to pay this bill.

The client confirmed that they did not own a home, had very little assets and received a Department of Veterans Affairs pension income. The Financial Advocate knew from this information that it was likely that there was an error in the couple's income assessment. With the client's consent we assisted with an income reassessment which confirmed that a house asset had been wrongly included in the original assessment.

With the client's consent we assisted with an income reassessment which confirmed that a house asset had been wrongly included in the original assessment.

It took three months to achieve but the arrears were removed from client's statement. In addition, further financial enquiries resulted in a refund of \$9,387 to the client's account.



Billing issues following a loved one's passing in care



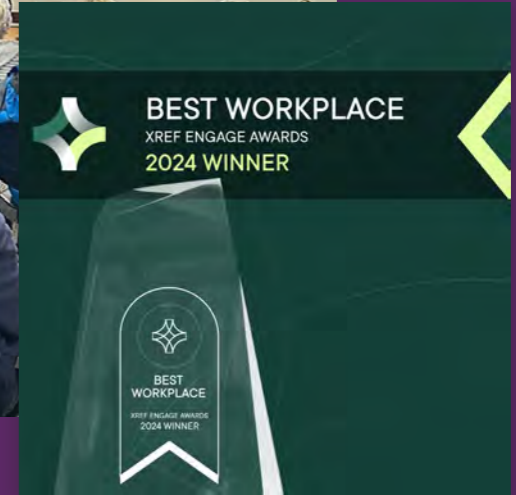
A client contacted Seniors Rights Service following the death of her husband shortly after he entered residential aged care. At the time of his death the means assessment had not been complete and this led to the maximum fee of \$35,884.67 being charged to the client.

The client was fearful of the debt as well as still very much grieving the loss of her husband and was going to pay the full amount.

A review of the fees was recommended by our Financial Advocacy Officer and our team assisted the client to manage the review process herself in the first instance. However, due to substantial pressure from the aged care provider and the added complexities that arose from the estate administration, the client sought further assistance to finalise the matter.

The Financial Advocate took the client through the Services Australia assessment process and additionally advocated to the aged care provider for further time to pay due to processing delays in the Services Australia system.

When the reassessment undertaken there was a \$30,574 reduction in the overdue balance with the client only needing to pay the difference.



Goal Of No Call Left Unanswered

To further reach more people, the Older Persons Advocacy Network and its members committed to increasing access to services through an extended hours 1800 toll-free phone service. To meet this commitment, the National Contact Centre was established and Seniors Rights Service implemented this service in February 2023.

The core responsibility of the contact centre is to support network members through the delivery of nationally consistent, high quality, live call answering of 1800 700 600 from 8:00am to 8:00pm Monday to Friday and 10:00am to 4:00pm on Saturday.

Network members benefit from:

- after hours service
- business hours overflow
- training day diversions
- holiday coverage
- cross state and territory urgent support if required in emergency events. In this reporting period the service answered 11,142 calls on behalf of network members.

This high achievement has been made possible through the direct efforts of Seniors Rights Service staff with the support from our colleagues across the Older Person Advocacy Network.

Statements From Our Board

Some social moments and pressing issues demand an even greater level of engagement than what can be achieved using the influence of our actions and experience. At such times the Seniors Rights Service Board will issue a Board statement to express the Board's position on an issue.

Making such statements is an important demonstration of our willingness to lead conversations around complex topics. It is also meaningful to the older people and communities we support, assuring these communities that we see and understand what is important to them.

Statement on The Voice

Seniors Rights Service exists to advocate for older people, assisting them and their carers to claim their rights and supporting them in the exercise of those rights, so they enjoy a rich life as senior and respected members of the community with dignified and equitable access to the care and support they need.

The Board of Directors of Seniors Rights Service supports and is committed to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, in particular a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

We support a Voice to Parliament as the first step towards implementing the recommendations of the Uluru

Statement and critical to our reconciliation journey as a nation. We believe the inclusion and protection of a Voice in the Australian Constitution is essential to creating a better, more informed and just future for this country.

A Voice to Parliament is consistent with international human rights standards and will help provide for better human rights protections by promoting equality and self-determination for First Nations people. It is right and fair that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples participate in decisions which affect their lives. It is the Board's position that more informed and participatory decision making benefits the entire community, making us stronger and more unified rather than being a cause for division.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognises the right of First Nations to participate in decision making and obliges Australia to consult with First Nations representative institutions before adopting legislative or administrative measures that may affect them. The Voice to Parliament fulfills some, but not all, of the rights within this Declaration.

The Board of Directors of Seniors Rights Service encourages and supports discussion that is well informed, honest and respectful.

Charter of Aged Care Rights and what they mean

1. **Safe and high-quality care and services**
You should be cared for by highly qualified staff who adhere to best practice in the delivery of personal care, clinical care and services and supports for daily living.
2. **Be treated with dignity and respect**
Your individuality is recognised and respected and aged care providers work with you to live your life the way you choose to.
3. **Have my dignity, culture and diversity valued and supported**
The care and services you receive are responsive, inclusive and sensitive to your individual cultural identity. All interactions with you, as well as the delivery of your care and services, reflects you as an individual.
4. **Live without abuse and neglect**
You have the right to live free of abuse and neglect, and the freedom to speak up and tell staff if you have any feedback or concerns.
5. **Be informed about my care and services**
Your individual needs are recognised and staff communicate with you in a way that is clear and easy to understand. Where you have authorised a nominated representative to act on your behalf, the aged care provider will also communicate with your representative to ensure they are informed about your care and services.
6. **Access all information about myself including information about my rights, care and services**
You will be provided with access to your personal information in accordance with privacy legislation, as well as aged care providers' own privacy policies. Sometimes you or your nominated representatives may be asked to put your request for information in writing.
7. **Have control over and make choices about my care, and personal and social life, including where the choices involve personal risk**
Your right to make decisions that affect your life are respected, even where your choices may involve some level of personal risk. In these instances, aged care providers will have discussions with you and your nominated representatives to understand these risks and how they can be managed. Where your wish involves unacceptable risk, such as a wish that impacts the rights or safety of others, you will be supported in identifying alternative solutions.
8. **Have control over, and make decisions about, the personal aspects of my daily life, financial affairs and possessions**
Your right to have control over your personal life, financial affairs and possessions is respected. You have the right to make decisions about your life and how you want to live. You are supported to choose your social networks and have regular contact and care evaluations by staff to ensure your needs and preferences are understood and met.
9. **My independence**
You are supported and provided assistance to help you maintain your optimal independence. You are also supported to maintain the level of control you want and are encouraged to exercise your rights under the Charter.
10. **Be listened to and understood**
Staff listen to you, understand your needs and preferences and encourage feedback about your care and services. You are provided with opportunities to have your voice heard and understood.
11. **Have a person of my choice, including an aged care advocate, support me or speak on my behalf**
Your right to have any person of your choice to speak on your behalf is respected. Your advocate is treated in the same way you would be treated, and your advocate is supported to be involved as little or as much as you would like.
12. **Complain free from reprisal, and to have my complaints dealt with fairly and promptly**
Your feedback is valued and you have a number of ways that you can submit feedback or a complaint. Your feedback or complaint is treated seriously and dealt with fairly and promptly.
13. **Personal privacy and to have my personal information protected**
Your personal privacy is respected and aged care providers comply at all times with privacy legislation.
14. **Exercise my rights without it adversely affecting the way I am treated**
Your individuality is promoted and respected. You will not be adversely affected in any circumstance where you exercise your rights.

Legal Services



Ken Beilby
Principal Solicitor,
Manager Legal Services

As a specialist Community Legal Centre, Seniors Rights Service delivers high quality legal information, referral, advice and casework assistance to older people across NSW in most areas of civil and family law and with traffic matters.

Our legal programs include:

- Supported accommodation legal service assisted clients that live in, or are looking to move into, a range of supported accommodation options including retirement villages, residential age care facilities, boarding houses or hostels. The main areas of assistance we provided this year were in relation to termination of agreements, budgets, repairs and disputes with management.
- Strata legal service assisted clients that are lot owners within a strata scheme and who need advice on a proposed collective sale agreement, by-laws, repairs to common property and other disputes with the Owner's Corporation.
- Domestic, family and sexual violence service assisted victim-survivors with apprehended violence orders, victim compensation and immediate needs payments, early intervention family law advice and general advice on safety planning. Almost all (99%) of our clients were older women.

Seniors Rights Service delivers high quality legal information, referral, advice and casework assistance to older people across NSW

- Generalist legal service assisted clients with all other legal issues that are within scope for Seniors Rights Service, including consumer complaints, guardianship, residential tenancy agreement including land lease communities and national redress scheme applications.

We gratefully acknowledge the funding from NSW Fair Trading for our Strata and Supported Accommodation legal services. We also gratefully acknowledge the funding of the Community Legal Centres Program administered by Legal Aid NSW for our Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Generalist legal services.



Pro bono assistance

We continue to work with and are very grateful for the support of Baker McKenzie, Dentons, Hall & Wilcox, Holding Redlich and Wotton + Kearney in our pro bono clinics.

Each firm kindly contributes the time and experience of their solicitors to advise our clients on a roster basis. Their assistance enables Seniors Rights Service to take on more complex and more impactful casework that would otherwise need to be referred to private solicitors, further placing barriers in front of our vulnerable clients.

Wotton + Kearney, in addition to their pro bono clinic assistance, have provided a secondee paralegal from their team to assist First Nations clients who come to Seniors Rights Service one day per week. The paralegal works with our solicitors to engage with clients and works with our intake team to provide information and referral services to clients that we cannot assist with advice.



Compensation for historical abuse: Uncle Fred's story



Uncle Fred was removed by the Aboriginal Welfare Board in late 1967. He attended Kinchella Boys Home prior to attending an all-brothers Catholic school until 1975. While at the school, Uncle Fred experienced physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse at the hands of two brothers from the Catholic order administering the school.

Uncle Fred attended a community legal education session delivered by Seniors Rights Service on the National Redress Scheme. After the session, Uncle Fred approached our solicitor seeking advice.

We provided advice to Uncle Fred on the different options for compensation arising from historical abuse. Uncle Fred instructed us to prepare and lodge a claim under the National Redress Scheme. Through our assistance, Uncle Fred was awarded \$90,000 as a reparation payment, a letter of apology and trauma counselling for two years.

Recognising that no amount of compensation can adequately address Uncle Fred for his lived experience, we are proud to have been able to advise Uncle Fred and to walk beside him on his journey.

Owner's Corporation inaction: Glenn's story

Glenn is in receipt of the age pension and does not have any notable assets other than the unit that he lives in. For several years Glenn has asked the Owner's Corporation to fix the water leak that is allowing water to enter his garage and storage cage. Items in storage have been water damaged and Glenn could no longer get in or out of his car safely due to the slip hazard caused by the pooling water. The Owner's Corporation has taken no action to fix the issues.

Acting on our previous advice, Glenn took the matter to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal in 2022 where the Tribunal ordered extensive rectification works to be performed by the Owner's Corporation. The Owner's Corporation refused to carry out these works.

Seniors Rights Service attempted to resolve the matter by negotiation, however this was not possible due to the Owner's Corporation refusing to acknowledge or comply with previous Tribunal orders. It was not until we made a further application to the Tribunal that an agreement was made with the Owner's Corporation for them to substantially commence the works inside 12 weeks.

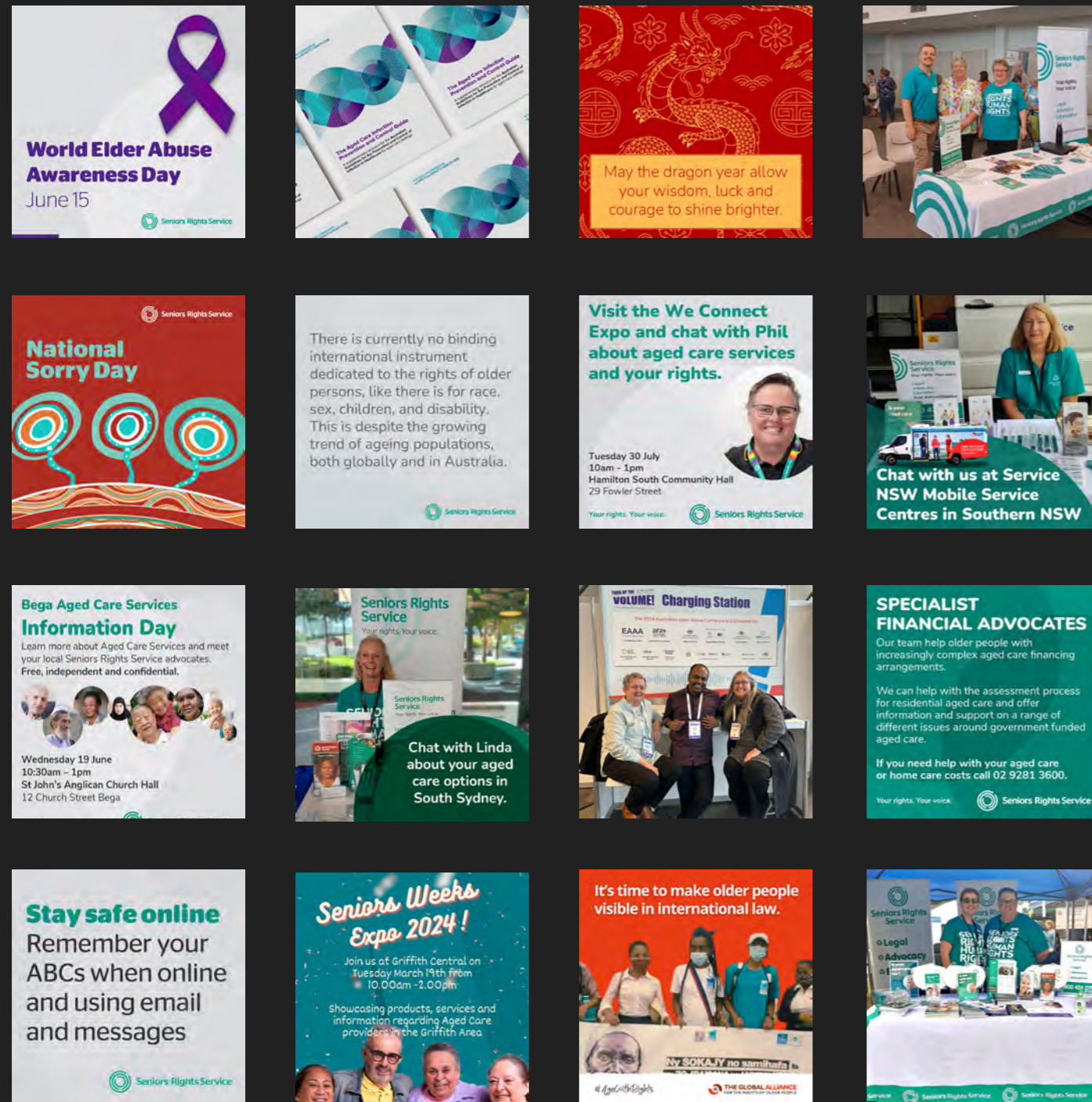
Glenn could no longer get in or out of his car safely due to the slip hazard caused by the pooling water

If the Owner's Corporation does not comply with this agreement, a compulsory strata managing agent will be appointed to manage the premises on behalf of the Owner's Corporation.

Following the second Tribunal application the repairs have been completed without the need to appoint a managing agent and Glenn is able to enjoy the amenities of his strata building once again.



Social Media Review



We have significantly increased our reach during this period through highly targeted campaigns that have informed well over a million older people across NSW of our services.

We continue to engage, inform and empower seniors in NSW and the communities, people and organisations that support them while informing our audience of upcoming opportunities to meet with our team in their local area.

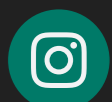
Significant effort was made to better integrate our messaging across the Older Persons Advocacy Network and support each others efforts on our social networks.

We continue to engage and inform on relevant topics including voluntary assisted dying, National Carer Strategy, The Law Society of New South Wales Specialist Accreditation program in Elder Law, ending the abuse of older people, end of life planning and the 2024 Australian Elder Abuse Conference.

We supported and amplified the work of like minded organisations such as OPAN, COTA Australia, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, ACON, Aged and Community Care Providers Association, NSW Fall Prevention and Healthy Ageing Network and many more.

Other topics we have actively promoted to inform and empower older people in NSW include:

- Seniors Gala
- Online safety
- Aged Care Volunteers Visitors Scheme
- Age discrimination
- Safe at Home Day
- National Palliative Care Week
- Volunteer Week
- Retirement village rights
- National Reconciliation Week
- Sorry Day
- My Aged Care
- Medication choice and rights
- Right to intimacy
- WEAAD
- Self advocacy
- NAIDOC
- Age inclusive language
- The New Aged Care Act
- Home care
- Vaccinations and health
- Multicultural communities
- Coercive control
- Translated resources
- First Nations resources
- LGBTIQ+ resources
- Right to make decisions about medication



Financial Report Year Ended 30 June 2024

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS & OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

		2024	2023
		\$	\$
Income	Note		
Interest	4	154,305	79,542
Grant and Other income	3	11,204,200	8,488,505
TOTAL INCOME		11,358,505	8,568,046
Expenses			
Marketing expenses		112,530	504,478
Program costs		192,779	259,701
Administrative expenses		385,347	368,730
Other expenses		379,012	486,641
Employee benefits - Salaries/Wages		8,751,869	6,254,672
Employee benefits - Other		143,876	161,611
Travel and Accommodation		231,598	167,846
Finance expenses	4	42,418	31,665
Depreciation		435,614	413,740
TOTAL EXPENSES		10,675,043	8,649,083
Profit (loss)		683,462	(81,036)
Extraordinary Item	5	437,035	
Profit (loss) for the year		1,120,498	(81,036)

Full financial report
is available at:
report.SeniorsRightsService.org.au

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

		2024	2023
		\$	\$
	Note		
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	4,486,839	4,387,450
Trade and other receivables	7	38,139	112,323
Other current assets	9	3,382	6,544
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		4,528,360	4,506,316
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	8	928,106	1,204,507
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		928,106	1,204,507
TOTAL ASSETS		5,456,466	5,710,824
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	11	2,442,759	3,182,303
Employee benefits	12	455,206	545,243
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		2,897,965	3,727,546
Non-current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	11	444,282	694,123
Employee benefits	12	360,047	655,480
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		804,329	1,349,603
TOTAL LIABILITIES		3,702,294	5,077,149
NET ASSETS		1,754,172	633,674
Equity			
Retained earnings		1,754,172	633,674
Total equity		1,754,172	633,674

DECLARATION

Seniors Rights Service Limited
ABN: 98 052 960 862
Financial declaration for Responsible Person

The Responsible People declare that in the Responsible People's opinion:

1. The financial statements and notes for the year ended 30 June 2024, are in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2022 and:
 - comply with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures and Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, and
 - give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of the performance for the year ended on that date of the company.
2. In the directors' opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable

Signed in accordance with subsection 60 15(2) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulations 2022*.


Director 

 Hakan Harman

Director 

 Matthew Cleary

Dated 16 October 2024



MEAGHER, HOWARD & WRIGHT
 CERTIFIED PRACTISING ACCOUNTANTS
 ABN 42 664 097 441

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Tom WRIGHT JF (CMA, FCPA)
 Greg MIDDLETON B.Com (Hons), Dip. Fin. Acc.
 Mary-Ann HANNEY B.Com (Hons)
 Julia HOWARD (CMA, JF, FCPA, R.S.)
 Emma DIAMOND B.Com

Independent Auditor's Report
To the Members of Seniors Rights Service Ltd

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Seniors Rights Service Ltd (the Entity), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, the statement of comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the Committee.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of the Entity is in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- a) giving a true and fair view of the Entity's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended, and
- b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1 and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2022*.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We confirm that the independence declaration required by Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, which has been given to the Committee, would be in the same terms if given as at the time of this auditor's report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the financial reporting responsibilities under the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and the Committee for the Financial Report

Management is responsible for the preparation of the special purpose financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with the relevant Australian Accounting Standards in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

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Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the special purpose financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Committee are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Committee regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

We also provide the Committee with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.

Meagher Howard & Wright
 CPA

Ken Wright
 Partner

 16th October 2024

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Your Rights

Your Voice

Legal | Aged Care Advocacy | Information

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