

# Annual Report **2019-2020**



**GROW** |   
mental wellbeing programs



## Chair of the Board

# Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck

GROW started this year with a new National CEO and a new Constitution ready to focus on enhancing our products and services. Little did we know that bushfires closely followed by COVID-19 would challenge the very foundations of our approach to bringing people together for mutual support and friendship.

The Board is very proud of the way in which our staff and the people we support responded. Led by our national office and supported by leaders across Australia, GROW has adjusted to a virtual environment with new programs and new ways of connecting.

Our new recruits to the Board, Mark George and Heath Fereday, both come from the community of Growers ensuring that GROW leadership is informed by lived experience of mental health issues and of the GROW program.

My thanks to all directors but particularly to our Deputy Chair, John MacIsaac, for his ongoing support and to Peter Barker and Ian Sloan who chair the Board's committees. Thank you on behalf of all the Board to David and his team for their work this year culminating in many successes, both in supporting Australians with mental health issues and in operating an increasingly effective and efficient organisation.

**Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck**



## NCEO

# David Butt

What a remarkable year was 2019-20 – one we could never have predicted 12 months earlier. We experienced Australia's hottest summer on record, and a record-breaking year of heat and drought, with the 2019-2020 bushfire season beginning in winter 2019. That was followed by catastrophic bushfires in spring and summer, including fires wreaking havoc in areas which were not previously prone to bushfires.

And then along came COVID-19 and the pandemic began.

As I write, there still is no sign of an end to the pandemic. But what I have witnessed during the bushfires and then the pandemic from staff and the people we support – particularly from Growers – has been remarkable.

In early March, the warning signs of risk of infection without social distancing were so strong that we closed down our face-to-face group meetings – and who ever would have perceived that such a foundation of GROW would come to this?

Since 2017 we have offered eGrow – online videoconferencing – as an alternative group service. While there have been several healthy groups participating in eGrow, the vast majority of people have preferred to remain face-to-face. And that preference has obvious strengths with more than 60 years of experience and evidence to back that up.

With the closing of face-to-face groups, GROW had the technical capacity through eGrow to move people quickly to online meetings. Some people could not or would not use videoconferencing, and some groups went into recession. But most people did so that they could continue to participate in peer support, mutual help, self-actualisation and leadership.

Our vital work in schools through Get Growing also had to cease, as did conducting the Grow program in prisons and the Young Adults Programs, while the residential communities at West Hoxton and in the ACT went into lockdown.



One of the most remarkable developments we saw in the first social distancing period was the efforts which so many people put into building their local community – from their balconies, on the footpaths, from their driveways. In fact, during this period we saw local communities building their versions of intentional peer-to-peer support by building a caring and sharing community at the local level to support people to build resilience and coping skills.

Of course, the physical distancing and social isolation did take its toll. In April-May, GROW undertook a survey of eGrow participants to gain understanding of the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on the Grow community and the effectiveness of the rapid shift from face-to-face to eGrow groups. The survey was live for two weeks and completed by 210 respondents – a good response and statistically valid.

The survey identified that:

- More than nine out of every 10 people participating in eGrow reported the pandemic had impacted on their mental health and wellbeing
- A third of participants stated that their overall mental wellbeing had been impacted “A great deal” or “A lot”, while two thirds said they had been impacted “A moderate amount” or “A little”
- 38 percent said their relationships with others had been impacted “A great deal” or “A lot”, while 50 percent said relationships had been impacted “A moderate amount” or “A little”
- More than half stated they had felt lonely, nervous, overwhelmed, uncertain and tired for no good reason
- Almost a third of people stated they felt “a lot” more anxious and almost a quarter stated they felt “a lot” more depressed.

Despite all these challenges, through the Grow program we still managed to hold 5256 individual meetings during the year, with 3897 individual people participating and a total of 31,096 attendances at those meetings.

We also developed and launched a new online program, called Growing Resilience and based on the Grow wisdoms, to assist people in distress or with heightened mental health issues due to the pandemic and increased isolation, uncertainty and risk due to health, financial or housing stresses.



While the numbers involved were never high it provided a useful service and demonstrated our ability to respond rapidly. Work is currently underway on further development of Growing Resilience. With the easing of restrictions, groups began to come back to face-to-face meetings at various times in different states and territories, only with some of them to be forced back to eGrow with further lockdowns in Victoria and then NSW. Get Growing has taken off again in the Northern Territory, West Australia and South Australia, and the residential community at West Hoxton has continued to achieve good occupancy rates.

A highlight for the year was appearing as a witness at the Productivity Commission Inquiry Into Mental Health, to explain to the Commissioners the vital role which intentional peer-to-peer support plays in building social cohesion – reducing social isolation – and how fundamental it is to help people feel less alone, build resilience, self-esteem and self-worth, enabling people to form relationships and build community. One Commissioner noted later that this was the first time she had heard there was a difference between peer workers and peer-to-peer support.

I also enjoyed participation in meetings of the National Program Team which has been having increasingly strategic and insightful discussions about the future. Having Heath Fereday and Mark George from the NPT on the Board of governance certainly helps to cross-pollinate ideas between these two streams of leadership.

We also have been able to build a closer relationship with our GROW colleagues in other parts of the world, including being able to help our Irish colleagues in the transition to videoconferencing. A refresh of GROW's Statement of Strategic Intent was planned for March but the approach had to be altered because of the inability of Board Directors and management to meet face to face. The refresh was considered in staggered Zoom meetings over several months and would finally be signed off by the Board in August 2020.

In the coming year, we face uncertainty about the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the likelihood of more bushfires in the hot, dry months ahead. However, we have demonstrated in 2019-20 our own ability to respond rapidly and effectively in the face of crisis and in so doing built our own resilience and capacities to respond to future challenges.

We continue to operate in a tough environment and once again my thanks to all our staff and wonderful volunteers who have responded so well to continue to support each other and build strong community. I continue to be amazed and delighted by the testaments and stories of recovery which I have heard.

My thanks once again to the Board and our Chairperson, Lesley, for providing clear direction to GROW Australia and for fulfilling their responsibilities in corporate governance. And a final big thanks to the managers, team leaders and the National Office staff who have responded so well to the many challenges that have been thrown at us in 2019-20. By working together as One Grow, we can aim to achieve our new vision:

*"Grow is the premier provider of intentional peer to peer support to promote hope, mutual help and recovery for good mental health for people throughout Australia."*

**David Butt**



# National PROGRAM TEAM

## Meeting Regularly - Working Hard

The National Program Team commenced this year as a fully formed team meeting regularly and moving from being an interim team in the previous year to an approved fully fledged team in its own right endorsed by the GROW Board and no longer a sub-committee of the Board. The NPT Charter was reviewed and amended accordingly. We thank the Board for this significant change and for their confidence and support in the work that we do. The NPT is made up of a mix of Program staff and grass roots leaders working together for the common welfare of the whole organisation nationally.

## Papers Approved

The NPT was very pleased to receive 15 Branch approved Leadership papers for consideration as nationally approved Program Literature. Of those papers 12 were approved for general use in all Grow groups and now proudly become part of our collective wisdom.

## Providing Feedback to the BPTs and Review of Reporting Process

Over the past 12 months the Branch Program Teams in each Branch submitted quarterly reports to the NPT, keeping us well informed of the Leadership and Program development within the Branches. The NPT members each adopted a BPT to review and consider their reports and then provided written feedback to Branches based on these reports. Being actively involved in this process the team identified a need to review this reporting process and conducted out of session workshops to develop and improve this reporting form and process. As a result, the BPT Quarterly Report to the NPT has been amended accordingly and going forward will be submitted to the NPT every 4 months.

## Board Representatives

This year we were pleased to nominate two of our NPT members to the Board of GROW which they and the Board wholeheartedly accepted. We are very proud of Heath Fereday and Mark George who are now active members of the GROW Board representing the voice for our grass roots Growers.

## What's Next?

This next 12 months we look forward to supporting the Western Australia Branch in re-establishing the WA Branch Program Team and encourage our friends in WA to nominate one of their leaders to the National Program Team. We hope to consolidate and build on the written Program adding new Branch Program literature to our national body of Program Knowledge. We will be nominating one of our team to represent Program Teams on the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum and continue the good work of building our relationships with and supporting our Branch Program Teams.

In closing the NPT would like to especially thank the Growers on our team for their wonderful and inspiring spirit of volunteerism. The time you give back to Program Teams is invaluable, thanks for the mighty effort this year and we look forward to another exciting and rewarding year ahead.





# OUR PROGRAMS

## Volunteers

# 262

Without our volunteers the Grow Program would not be able to operate.

## General Groups

# 3897

people participated in Grow Groups across Australia.

## Carers Groups

# 2

Grow Better Together groups delivered in Victoria, designed to support the caregivers of people experiencing mental illness.

## Online Groups

# 752

Growers participated in eGrow - a national initiative and a lifeline during the COVID-19 pandemic..

## Grow Groups

Our program is based on a 12-step program of personal growth, mutual help and support. The Grow Program is all-inclusive and draws on many principles for mental, social and spiritual health. At each meeting, members share about how they came to GROW and how they are exploring self-improvement strategies on their road to recovery.

Grow Groups are free of charge and there is no need to have a referral or a doctor's diagnosis. Members can choose to remain anonymous.

Our meetings take place in a safe, caring and confidential way, whether the meetings are face-to-face, or online, known as eGrow groups. Our members meet weekly and follow the Group Method.

At each meeting, Grow members will have opportunities to share any of their life challenges or issues and first-time members may choose not to speak or share.

During the reporting period we had 5256 Grow Group meetings across regional and metropolitan Australia.

During the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic our physical, face-to-face groups were moved to an online environment, or the group chose to go into recess for any number of reasons.





## eGrow

Our eGrow Groups run the same as the Grow Group. The only difference is we meet using Zoom and the program is offered online. Launched in 2017, eGrow allows our members to still take part in a path to recovery without attending a physical Grow group.

Over the course of each meeting, the group engages in a series of discussions following the same structure and format as a face-to-face meeting.

During the reporting period we saw 752 participants take part in eGrow. In March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic reached Australia, we were prepared to quickly transition our physical face-to-face groups to an online environment so that they could continue their meetings in a time where many people needed the support and encouragement gained from attending a Grow Group.

Within a few weeks of social isolation, all of the physical groups who chose to move their physical meeting to an online version were able to do so with minimal delay.

## Get Growing

The Get Growing program is a specialised mental health program for school aged participants aged from 11 to 17 years old.

This program has been developed to meet the needs of young people, where early intervention can help to prevent mild depression which can often develop into deep despair.

The program runs over 10 weeks with a new topic explored each week including:

- Resilience
- Feelings
- Friendship
- Problem solving
- Safety
- Personal value
- Strengths
- Goals
- Stress
- Dealing with a crisis

There's often only help available to young people who have severe and urgent needs. Get Growing is targeted at young people who may be at risk to prevent or minimise mental health issues before their mental health declines or reaches crisis point.

During the reporting period, Get Growing was held in 21 schools and saw more than 200 at risk students take part in the program across the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. We're planning on delivering Get Growing to the rest of Australia in the next 12 months.





## Young Adults

Our Young Adults Program encourages and supports people aged 18-35 with their mental wellbeing. It utilises the same key elements of the Grow Program but with a tailored method which encourages young adults to further develop their own personal resources, friendships and supports to overcome barriers they are experiencing. Along with Grow material, we also use Ted Talks, YouTube clips, podcasts and articles to assist in our learning and discussions. With a strong caring and sharing community in and outside of meetings, members organise a variety of social activities that are held weekly and monthly (e.g. dinners, coffees, meetups, games nights, movie nights, mini golf etc.).

This program is operated by GROW Vic/Tas with 4 groups available in Caulfield, Carlton, Hawthorn and Springvale, Victoria. During the reporting period we had 220 participants attend. These groups went into recess during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Carers Program

Our Carer Program, Grow Better Together, encourages and supports caregivers of people experiencing mental illness. It utilises the same key elements of the Grow Program encouraging carers to further develop their own personal resources, friendships and supports to overcome barriers they experience as part of their caring role.

During the reporting period we had two groups with 34 participants overall.

## Supported Accommodation

GROW operates supported accommodation for people with a mental illness in NSW and the ACT.

The accommodation in NSW provides a transition from the Residential Rehabilitation Program for up to three people. The ACT house provides accommodation and support for up to five residents as they prepare for independent living.



# Residential Rehabilitation Program

The Grow Residential Rehabilitation program has been successfully providing a structured rehabilitation service for people with a dual diagnosis – co-existing drug, alcohol and mental health issues – for more than 30 years.

Located in Hoxton Park, NSW, our methods have enabled us to identify areas of need and improvement, which in turn has assisted in providing an effective program to combat mental health issues, as well as drug and or alcohol addiction.

This unique facility successfully provides structured recovery and rehabilitation services to individuals first and foremost with mental health issues and further services if an individual presents with the co-morbidity of alcohol and drug addiction, or dual diagnosis as it is known.

The GROW Residential Community offers a safe space where people can recover both their mental and physical health, their belief in their own personal value, go through drug referral, learn to live in community with others and establish habits that will support their transition to a full and purposeful life.

The Grow Program is the foundation of all that occurs in the GROW Residential Community. The commitment of our staff and the lived experiences of Residents and Growers are the key resources that demonstrate the Grow Program philosophy. All the daily activities are designed to activate the proven features of recovery as developed for more than 60 years.

Over the past 12 months, the Residential Program has had more than 520 people make contact about entering the program. We have had 75 residents enter the program since 1 July 2019. We have an ongoing wait list with more than 100 people who have registered their interest since March.

Since mid-March, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the centre was placed in lockdown and had its intake suspended, but throughout that period our occupancy remained relatively high – few people left. With the easing of restrictions in NSW, we have begun to accept new residents and expect to soon be back to 100% occupancy.





# TESTIMONY COLLECTION

## Genuinely valuable - Doug, South Australia

... I have achieved something that is precious to me – something I believe is genuinely valuable for us human beings. Through Grow I have grown up, and I've mostly stopped worrying unreasonably about the opinions of others.

Through true friendship I know at last that I am loved and appreciated, and I worry a lot less about being safe. I now have a better understanding of how we can live well and enjoy life, and I can and do explain it to others.

Through my long association with Grow and its Program, I have come to understand my own past and the lives of others much better. I live much more in the present, not dwelling anxiously in the past or worrying about the future.

Through friendship I am finding I am no longer powerless – I have the power to ignore my disturbing feelings and challenge my unhealthy thoughts. My confidence keeps growing as I keep finding “... the courage to make mistakes.” (Blue Book page 30). I have the power to be creative and helpful. Best of all, I have the power to befriend others. I am OK.



# odd socks day



## Odd Socks Day 2019

Odd Socks Day is GROW's major awareness raising campaign that kicks off Mental Health Week. It's a fun and light-hearted approach to supporting mental wellbeing, raising awareness about the issues surrounding mental wellbeing, starting a nation-wide conversation about mental health, understanding that anyone can have an odd day and learning that we can all make a difference.

On 4 October 2019, Grow delivered its fifth annual Odd Socks Day, rallying support across the country for Australians struggling with their mental health.

Our sock sponsorship partner mitchdowd sold 4000 pairs of socks instore at Myer and 500 through the online store as well as providing their usual donation of their colourful socks.

On the day, we were inundated with event photos using #osd2019 and our social media presences grew significantly with the OSD Facebook reaching 10,000 likes.

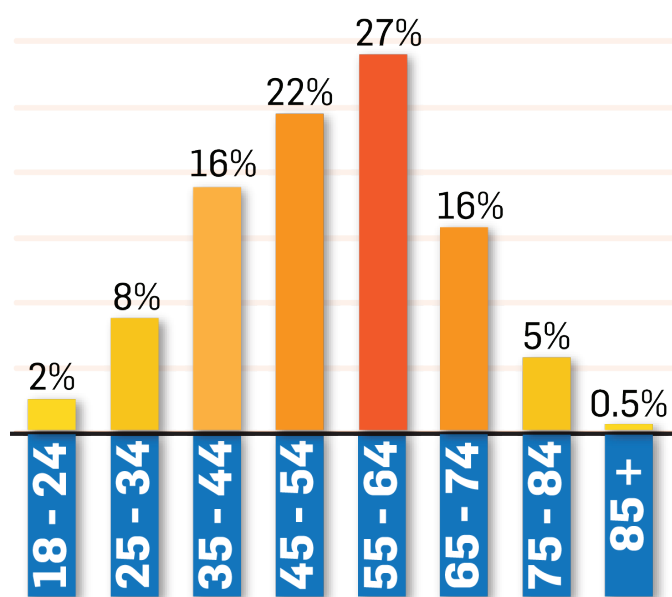
GROW Australia, in partnership with Bowls SA and SA Super League, launched Odd Socks Day on Sunday, September 8th. The event, opened by Grow SA Patron Hon Vickie Chapman MP, Deputy Premier of South Australia and Attorney General, was a great photo opportunity as well as strengthening ties in the region.



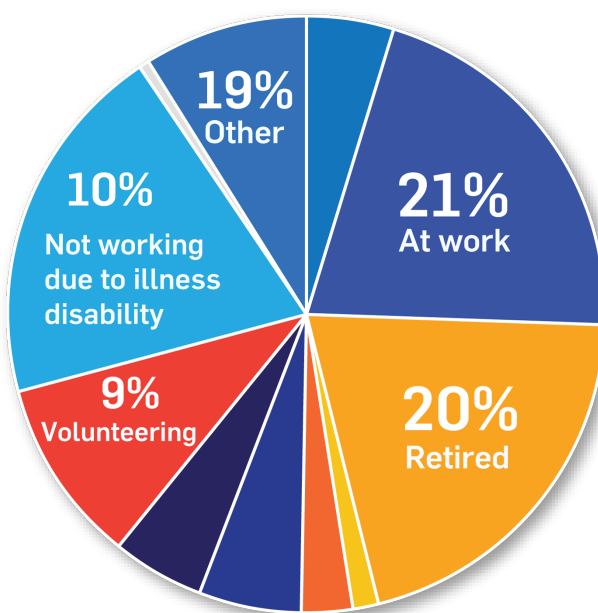
# 2019 MEMBER SURVEY

GROW undertakes an annual national survey to establish a clear picture of our membership and to understand the impact the Grow program has in their lives.

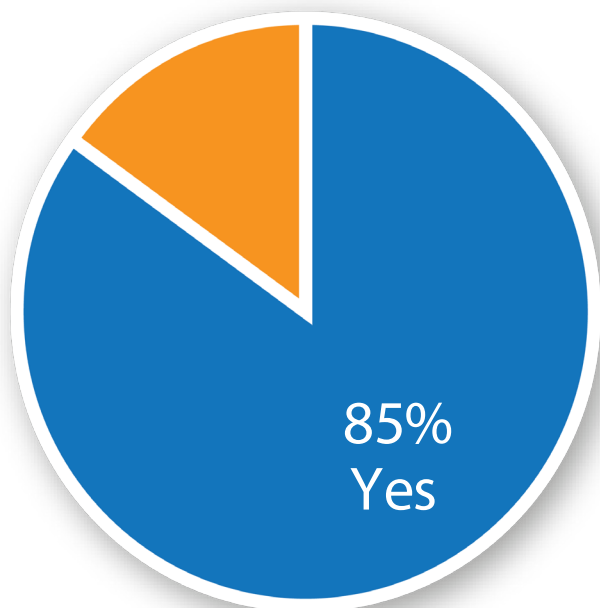
**Age:**



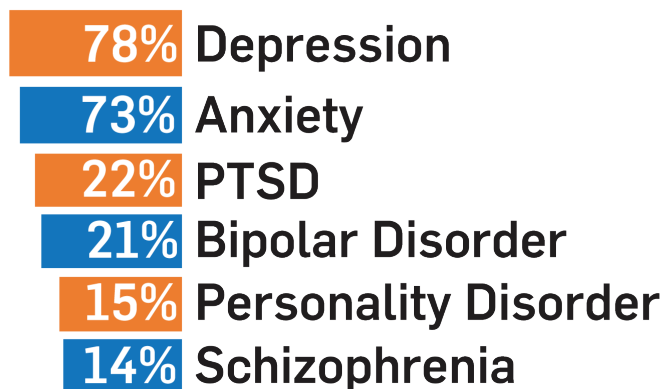
**Status:**



**Rate of Diagnosis:**



**Breakdown:**



## Employment



**15%**

Grow helped gain employment



**21%**

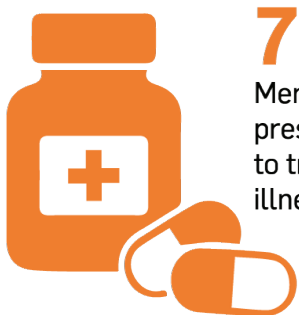
Grow helped retain employment



**25%**

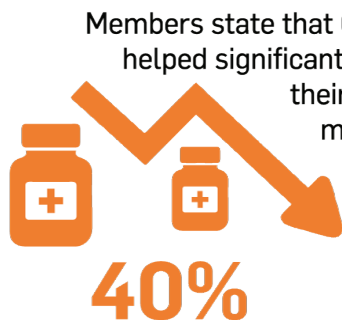
Grow helped to manage relations with employer

## Medication



**70%**

Members have been prescribed medication to treat their mental illness



Members state that Grow has helped significantly reduce their need for medication



**15%**

ceased prescribed medication in accordance with the doctor

## Hospitalisation



**63%**

have been hospitalised for their mental illness



**30%**

state that Grow helped significantly reduce their need for hospitalisation

**31%**

have not required hospitalisation since commencing with Grow



## Professional Help



**85%**

Grow helped to co-operate with professional help under treatment



**70%**

reduced the need for professional help



**24%**

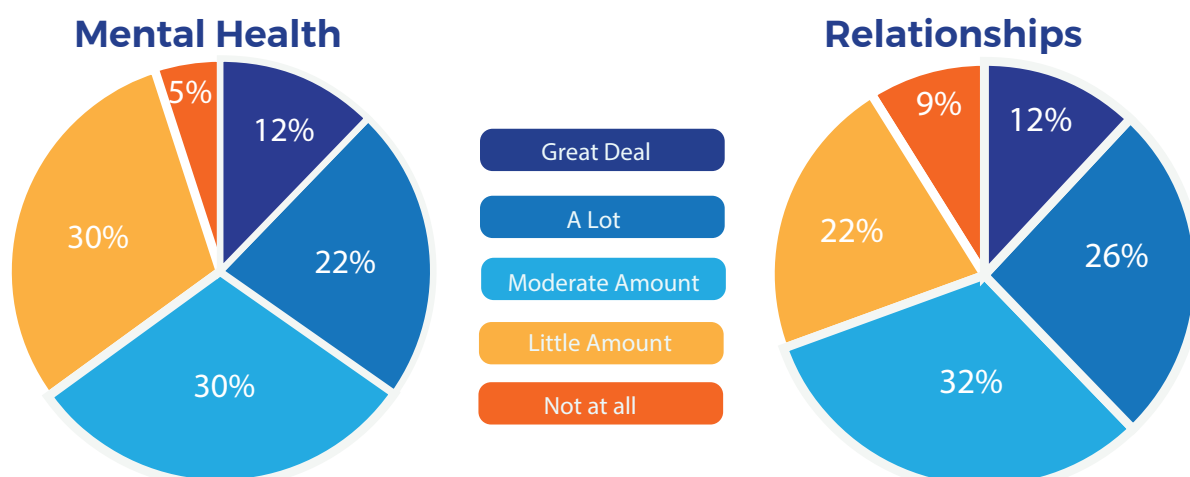
no longer need professional help



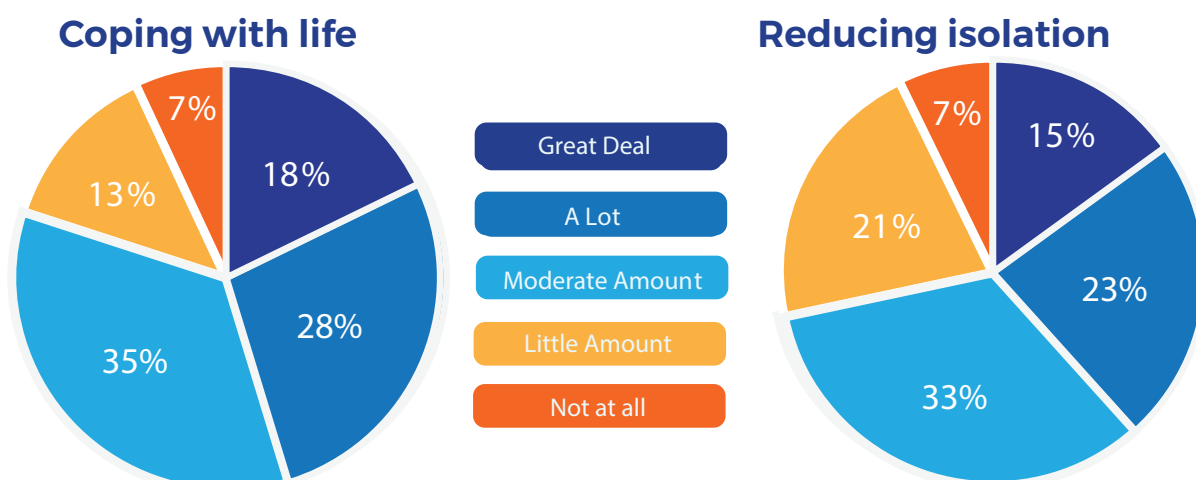
# 2020 eGROW SURVEY

The eGrow survey was developed to gain understanding of the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on the GROW community and the effectiveness of the rapid shift from face-to-face to eGrow groups. The survey was live for two weeks and completed by 210 respondents.

## Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on:



## Has attending eGrow contributed to:



## How do you rate the help you have received from eGrow:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Excellent	20%	41
Very Good	36%	75
Good	27%	57
Fair	11%	24
Not Helpful	4%	9



# 2020 PERFORMANCE FINANCE

## 2019/2020 Financial Year

Grow is predominantly funded by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and through private and community sources. Revenue from both government and private sector increased in the 2019/20 financial year.

## Our Major Funders

### ACT

ACT Government Health Directorate

### Queensland

QLD Department of Health

### Northern Territory

NT Department of Health

Federal Department of Defence

### Victoria

Federal Department of Social Services

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

### South Australia

SA Department of Health

### Tasmania

Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services

### Western Australia

WA Mental Health Commission

### New South Wales

Northern NSW Local Health District

South Western Sydney Local Health District

Western Sydney Local Health District

Sales Revenue	FY19-20	FY18-19
Major grants	\$5,231,564	\$5,320,041
Government subsidies	\$302,000	\$-
Other grants	\$12,186	\$30,853
Fundraising	\$20,915	\$46,812
Donations	\$71,353	\$145,381
Interest received	\$46,394	\$71,863
Other income	\$124,788	\$206,460
Board & lodging	\$351,191	\$274,828
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$6,160,391</b>	<b>\$6,096,238</b>



# GROW BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## **Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck (Chair)**

Lesley is well known in the mental health sector working for more than five years as Queensland's inaugural Mental Health Commissioner and before that, with the Mental Health Commission in Western Australia. Lesley is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



## **John MacIsaac (Deputy Chair)**

John worked as a consulting engineer for more than 30 years in the minerals industry. He has participated and volunteered in the Grow program in various roles since 2006. John is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



## **Peter Barker (Treasurer)**

Peter is a senior finance executive with significant domestic and international experience. He is the CFO & Company Secretary of multinational engineering, scientific and international development company Cardno Ltd. Prior to this Peter was the CFO of Computershare Ltd and before this was with BHP and Cisco Systems. Peter is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



## **Barbara Cunningham**

Barbara has strong research, mental health and aged care credentials and experience, along with experience working with not for profit organisations at the executive level.



## **Heath Fereday - Community Member**

Heath has 10 years of experience in working with the Grow Program and more than 7 years of experience in Program and Consumer Leadership Roles within GROW. Heath is the Chair of the South Australian Branch Program Team (elected peer leaders), a member of the National Program Team and is an active member of the GROW Community and was nominated for the Board by his peers.



### **Mark George - Community Member**

Mark George has been a very active member of the GROW community since 2016 and enjoys the opportunities that GROW offers for friendship, leadership and connection. Mark represents Tasmania in the Victoria Tasmania Branch Program Team of which he is also the Deputy Chair. Mark is also a member of the National Program Team and was nominated for the Board by his peers.



### **Jeremy Morse**

Jeremy holds a BCom and Master of Professional Accounting from UTas and is a member of CPA Australia and the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He brings his professional background as a CPA in the social services sector, strong skills in finance and data management as well as NFP Board experience.



### **Stephen Ryan**

Steve is a senior executive and educator with more than forty years' experience in strategic leadership, governance, and service delivery. He has extensive governance capability from roles in education, as Vice President and President of the Qld Teachers' Union, a Trustee on the QSuper Board, and Director of QInvest.



### **Ian Sloan**

Ian is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has considerable experience in business and technology. Ian has worked with government, private business and other not for profit businesses. Ian is the Managing Director of DSBS IT Consulting and Contracting.





# 2020 Photos

Odd Socks Day  
launched with  
SA Deputy Premier  
Vickie Chapman.



QLD Grow team at Brisbane's Walk for Awareness,  
Australia's largest Mental Health walk.



Victorian Growers choir rehearsal.



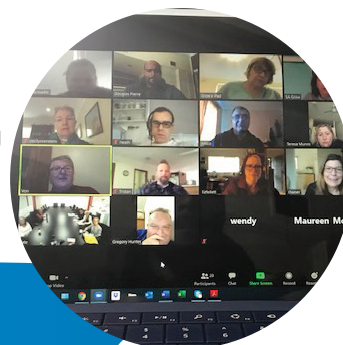
Personal Testimony training in WA




South Australia's  
Community Weekend



Growers receiving  
Zoom training







I have volunteered for Grow for the past 4 years, and it has become an important part of my life. The people I have met have come from all walks of life, but what I have learned is we are basically all the same. Everyone is warm and caring and it gives me the opportunity to give back. I will be volunteering for as long as they will have me!

**Dorothy, Grower**  
South Australia

