

ANNUAL REPORT

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GROW | 
mental wellbeing programs

About GROW

Founded in 1957, GROW continues to provide free, peer-to-peer groups for people looking for support with their mental health and wellbeing. In 1954, Con Keogh, a Catholic priest and founder of GROW, suffered a mental breakdown and was hospitalised. He spent about 10 months in hospital and after being discharged he describes being mortally afraid and suffering from severe memory loss.

In those days of high levels of stigma and discrimination, with enforced seclusion and restraint in a highly institutionalised system, Con believed there must be some better alternatives.

During his time of recovery, a friend invited Con to attend an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting. Despite not identifying as an alcoholic, Con attended the meeting and responded well to the fellowship of the meetings and the AA program. Along the way he met others attending AA who were not necessarily alcoholics but found attending the meetings helped with their mental health.

Eventually this group of like-minded friends started to talk about forming a group to meet their own specific needs to help them recover their mental health. Rather than being locked away and subjected to sometimes damaging treatments, they wanted fellowship, humanity, social serenity, friendship and community, and they realised they could find all those things by being together and providing mutual support.

They began to have group meetings and began to realise the benefits of those meetings. But they knew they needed to document and formalise what worked – these days, we call it evidence. The groups met outside of their normal group to start documenting what helped them get well and what caused them to decline. These were the earliest leadership meetings. This summary of collective wisdom created the early iterations of the program. Some 65 years ago a wellbeing program was written by people with a lived experience of mental illness. Today we stand on the shoulders of giants and continue their work through the same process.

The outcome of this is what we now know as GROW. April 26 1957 marks the first official meeting of the Grow Program – people who were looking for support with their mental wellbeing. Back then we were known as Recovery – a name that emphasised the goal and the solution, rather than the problem. From its very humble beginnings, GROW keeps on developing and expanding across Australia (and indeed internationally).

GROW continues to be a community-based organisation – designed, developed and delivered by people with lived experience – and has helped tens of thousands of Australians with their recovery from mental ill health.



The History of GROW

GROW



mental wellbeing programs

Father Con Keogh was hospitalised following a mental breakdown

1954

April 26 marks the first official gathering of a group of people at a church hall in Hurstville NSW, to begin helping and supporting each other back to good mental health. This group was known as Recovery.

1957

The first version of what is now known as the Blue Book was published

1959

The formation of a central committee of group representatives

1961

Con and others started to attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) groups seeking help for their mental health. After meeting likeminded people within AA, they started to talk about forming a group to meet their own particular needs to help them recover their mental health.

1956

The first version of the 12 Steps were written - known as an 'Amplification of the 12 steps'

1958

By the end of the 60's, there were seven Recovery groups - three in metro Sydney and four in regional NSW

1960-1969

Recovery rents its first HQ in Sydney NSW.

1962

By the end of 1962, Recovery groups had grown to 8 metro groups and 10 regional groups

Recovery receives its first government funding from the NSW Government

1971

Recovery spreads to Hawaii under the name of GROW

Recovery officially changes its name to GROW

1975

Recovery hits 180 groups Australia-wide

1970

Shaun O'Hanlan, who had been a missionary in New Guinea suffered a mental breakdown. While recuperating in Victoria, he attended a Recovery group and returned to Ireland well armed with Recovery literature. He starts the first Recovery group in Ireland.

1969

The first youth group is started in Sydney

Recovery has its first international patron W Clement Stone, an American businessman. By the end of 1964, Recovery had 31 groups across Australia

1964

Recovery spread to New Zealand

1965

Recovery groups now total 120 throughout the country

1967

1963

Recovery spread to South Australia sponsored by Bill Salter, a medical superintendent at Hillcrest Hospital in Adelaide. In NSW another mental health professional, Neville Yeomans sponsored a group at North Ryde Hospital. The value of Recovery groups was being noticed by the medical profession. Groups were also started for patients in hospitals moving toward rehabilitation. Recovery launched its first group for former prisoners at Long Bay Gaol in Sydney - this was the first private group. Recovery gained its first benefactor, Sydney businessman Rueben Scarf. By the end of 1963, there were 24 Recovery groups throughout the country

The first residential program was started in Cairns in Northern QLD

1976

GROW's residential drug rehabilitation program starts in NSW

1979

Fr Con Keogh's health was declining leading him to be less involved, stalling the growth of the organisation.

2000-present

GROW has re-established a National direction, strategy and support that has turned the organisation into the success it is today.

More programs have been added to GROW's portfolio including:

- Get Growing Program for school aged participants
- an online version of our Grow groups known as eGrow
- Young Adults programs
- Prison groups
- Carer's groups

The first mainland Groups take place in the USA

1978

1980-2000

From here on Grow developed and expanded across Australia with Branches being established and funded in each State. The value of Grow was being recognised in supporting community mental health.

GROW National was established at Enmore NSW and for many years nurtured developed and trained Grow leaders and employees from around the country and from overseas.

To date, GROW has helped thousands of Australia recover from mental ill-health.



Our unique structure

The Grow Program symbolises the unique leadership participation structure of our organisation. It is designed to preserve and promote the value of Grow participants' lived experience, foster personal development and provide further opportunities for participants to be involved in the growth and development of the organisation.

People with lived experience remain the valued and respected custodians and developers of the Grow Program. They are involved in all decision-making activities at all levels of the organisational structure of GROW (the organisation). The Blue Book, which is the guiding light in the Grow Program, was designed, developed and written by Grow group participants over the past 65 years. In April 2022, *Growing to Recovery: Readings for Mental Health Volume 2*, was released. Once again, this new book of readings and wisdoms was written by people in the program, with lived experience of the Grow recovery model.

GROW operates like two parallel universes. On the one hand there are the Growers who participate in the program – the individuals, the organisers and recorders, the leadership meetings, the Branch Program Teams, Literature Teams and National Program Team which control the Program, the content and the written material.

On the other there is the management team which operates to support them in what they do, as well as in meeting public, statutory and fiduciary requirements.

All of us work together in accordance with GROW's Chief Operating Principle:
“The development, evaluation, and improvement of each activity in Grow is looked after by the grouping of the people responsible for it, in conjunction with those responsible for the common welfare of the whole movement.”



Strategic Plan

VISION FOR GROW

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.



MISSION

To enable people and communities to grow, recover and maintain good mental health.



VALUES

Personal Responsibility

We act ethically and always take responsibility for our actions.



Personal Value

We believe every person has intrinsic value.



Mutual Help

We collaborate and share knowledge, skills and expertise for the personal development and leadership of all.



Friendship

We support each other and act with courage in the best interests of Grow.



Community

We create a caring and sharing community to provide a sense of belonging, social connectedness, and purpose to everyday life.

GOALS

To be the leader in peer to peer support for good mental health by:

1. Continuously developing the Grow Program of Recovery and Personal Growth
2. Providing new ways to deliver the Grow Program through sustainable and vibrant peer group programs that attract and retain people
3. Developing and delivering prevention and early intervention strategies and programs applying the Grow philosophy and wisdoms
4. Identifying and diversify into new streams of revenue which:
 - a. enable GROW to expand its offerings to the community and
 - b. reduce the level of GROW's reliance on state/territory funding for our long-term sustainability.



IMMEDIATE CHANGE PRIORITIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE OF GROW

- Increase staff foundational knowledge of the Program.
- Clearly articulate the evidence based value proposition for our programs and services.
- Provide well packaged, articulated and presentable marketing products supporting our key Programs and Services
- Enhance communications and marketing.
- Match right people with GROW's strategic intent.



Chair of the Board

Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck

This year has marked a milestone for GROW – 65 years of providing support to people with mental illness. The release of our publication Growing to Recovery not only demonstrated the difference GROW makes in the lives of people with mental health issues across Australia, but also signals that we are committed to documenting evidence of that difference.

Peer to peer support makes a positive difference, and GROW can show that it does.

It seems we have all learnt that business as usual is about living with uncertainty rather than waiting for COVID to “be over.” Ways of working at management level as well as in service delivery now acknowledge that technology can be more than a necessity – it can keep us connected and help us do things differently and even better in some circumstances. Notwithstanding, for most of our people, technology does not replace face to face meetings where personal connections develop and grow.

Our strategic planning session for the board and senior staff in April 2022 was the first opportunity for us to come together for two years. Coming out of that discussion will be some fine tuning of our strategic intent which I anticipate will be approved by the Board shortly.

On behalf of all directors, my sincere thanks to Ian Sloan and Peter Barker who have stepped down from the Board this year. Ian joined the board in 2015 and Peter came on in 2017 as Treasurer. Both have left a strong legacy. The subcommittee chaired by Ian has been revised and is now the Futures Advisory Committee, chaired by Ina Mullin. Jeremy Morse has succeeded Peter as Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk. Mark Lacey has succeeded Mark George as a representative of the National Program Team.

Finally, thank you to my fellow board members for your support over the past four years. It has been an honour to work with such a talented team and I wish you well as I hand over the reins to a new Chair in the coming months. Thank you also to the National CEO, David Butt, and his Executive Leadership Team for their enthusiasm and agility through this challenging period. I look forward to hearing that GROW continues to go from strength to strength.

Lesley



Peer to peer support makes a positive difference, and GROW can show that it does.



National CEO Report

David Butt

When I joined GROW in 2019 I thought I knew a lot about mental health and wellbeing. In the past three years I have learnt so much more about the values of friendship, kindness, mutual support and building community.

This is not new to me – I have for a long time understood the value of fellowship and kindness on the physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing of people because of my own personal experiences. We are social creatures: we thrive on positive humanity. But what I had not witnessed before was the very structured, evidence based and thoughtful way Grow goes about ensuring people are supported and that they are included as a part of a caring and sharing community.

This past year has provided further evidence of that as we have dealt with some of the biggest challenges in our 65 year history. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to severely impact on our ability to hold face to face meetings. But groups continued to meet, often through eGrow and our developing skills in technology. Some people left, some took a break, but others kept meeting and new people joined us. We are not yet back to our pre-COVID numbers but we are on track to get there barring any further major natural disasters. My thanks to managers, program workers and volunteers for their great successes in continuing to provide support to others.

We also had the 2022 floods which really hit South East Queensland and the Northern Rivers of NSW so hard. While people still remain traumatised and we deal with increasing levels of homelessness, a positive coming out of that was that people who had been in the Grow Program felt they were better able to deal with these additional challenges because the Program had helped them deal with other life traumas.

The year also proved a great success for our other programs – we had record numbers participate in our schools program, Get Growing, as well as in our online program, Growing Resilience. In addition, we had a good year with Welcome to Grow, our podcasts and community forum. My thanks to Grow staff who have dedicated so much time to these programs.



Grow goes about ensuring people are supported and that they are included as a part of a caring and sharing community.



Our residential programs in Sydney and Canberra also progressed well – there was a strong focus on helping people to graduate and providing them with support so that they could live and thrive within the community.

One of the great excitements for the year was our 65th anniversary celebration in April, and the associated launch of Growing To Recovery – Readings for Mental Health Volume 2. This was the first new publication of our combined Grow participants since 1975, and much praise must go to the National Program Team for this achievement. The feedback on the book, which aims to support people in their recovery journey by sharing what has worked for others who came before them, has been heart-warming and humbling.

In April, we were finally able to convene a joint meeting of the Board, National Program Team and Executive Leadership Team to undertake some joint strategic planning about the future strategy, operations and priorities for Grow. That was two years in the making – thanks COVID-19. It was a great opportunity and while it does not change our directions significantly it was wonderful to get everyone together and heading in the same direction.

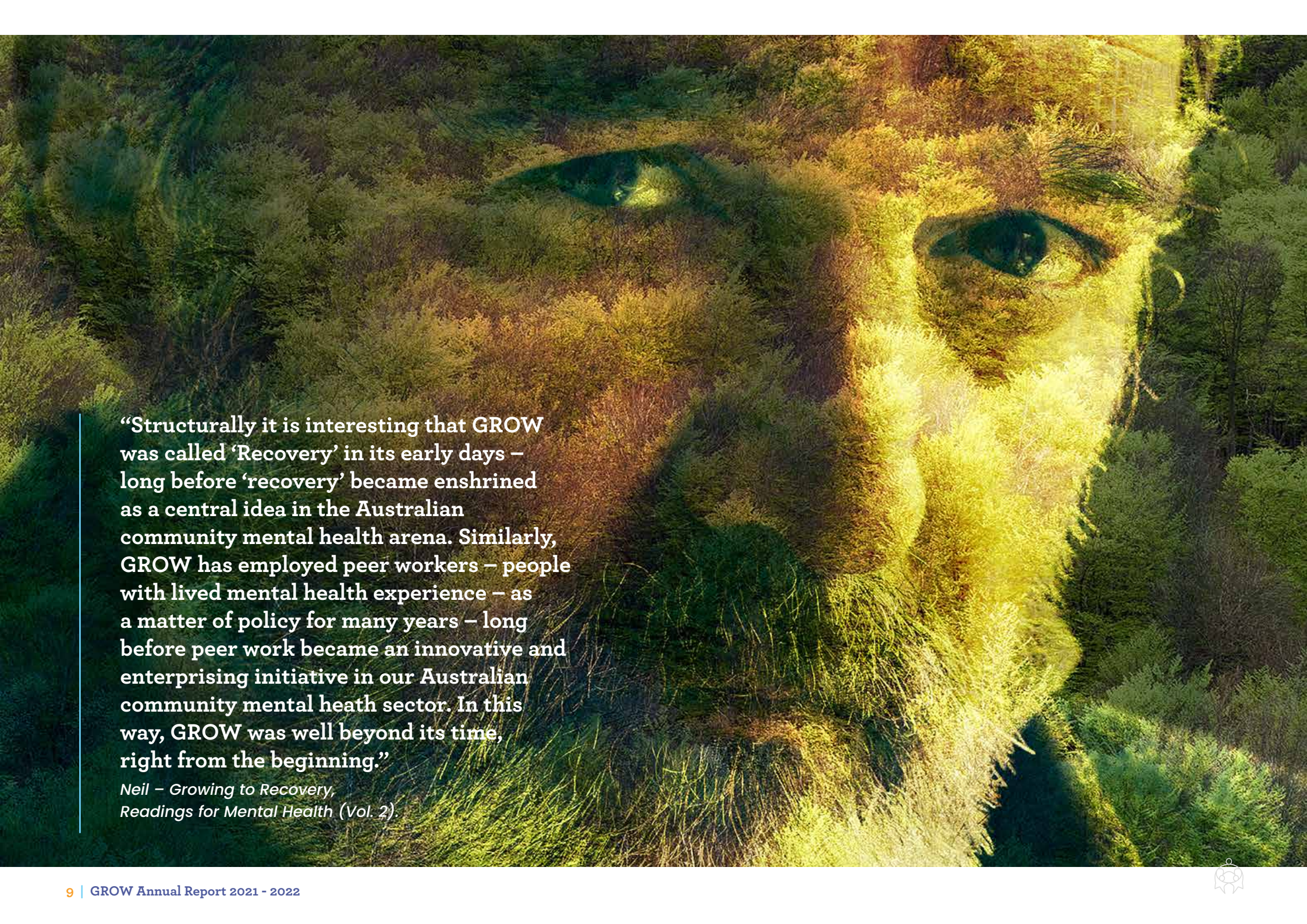
My thanks to my staff for all their support and successes across the year – it has been challenging but we have now demonstrated that we can probably survive and thrive through whatever challenges are thrown our way. But who knows what tomorrow might bring?

A final big thanks to our Board Chair, Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck. Lesley has been a great Chair in my time at GROW and I have really appreciated her support and guidance. Lesley will be stepping down soon and I hope she leaves with a great sense of pride and satisfaction about what she has achieved. She deserves to.

David

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“Structurally it is interesting that GROW was called ‘Recovery’ in its early days – long before ‘recovery’ became enshrined as a central idea in the Australian community mental health arena. Similarly, GROW has employed peer workers – people with lived mental health experience – as a matter of policy for many years – long before peer work became an innovative and enterprising initiative in our Australian community mental health sector. In this way, GROW was well beyond its time, right from the beginning.”

*Neil – Growing to Recovery,
Readings for Mental Health (Vol. 2).*



NPT Report

The National Program Team (NPT) is made up of a mix of principally lived experience or grass roots leaders (volunteers) and some Program staff working together for this common purpose from a national perspective.

In accordance with GROW's Chief Operating Principle – each level of governance has members with lived experience responsible for the welfare of each aspect of the organisation.

Lived Experience leaders in GROW are founded upon demonstrated personal growth to maturity and mental health progress or recovery. It is embodied by their ability to provide leadership to those participating in group meetings through local volunteer teams and leadership meetings. This provides a clear pathway for others to similarly take up responsible positions and share what they have gained at every level of the organisation and contribute to GROW.

Reviewing reports from every Branch in Australia

GROW has built lived experience (GROW leadership) into every aspect of governance in the Organisation. In this regard each GROW group in Australia belongs to a local region and in turn the Organiser and Recorder of each group meet within their region every two months. This meeting provides the opportunity to review group successes and needs and plan for expansion, training and if needed inter-group support. These discussions are collated by member teams into a report that is sent to the NPT to review every three cycles (4 months). The NPT reviews these reports from each branch and offers feedback, advice and leadership support. In 2021/2022 this task was completed thoroughly and successfully with branches able to action and participate in feedback given. It has been a humbling experience and one we hope to build on to maintain and develop more GROW leadership around the country in 2023.

Reviewing Quality Improvement requests in relation to the Grow Program

The NPT is pleased that QIs have continued to flow in from members, leaders and staff around the country and have been reviewed successfully. We have approved and actioned changes and provided policy feedback not least of which will be the upcoming Blue Book review in 2022/2023.

Growing to Recovery – Readings for Mental Health Volume 2

A major achievement for the year was the publication in April of *Growing to Recovery* – the first new published book of readings since 1975. Thanks go to Branch Program Teams and their literature teams, and the Growers who have assisted with review and approval of literature in each Branch. However, first and foremost we thank all the Growers, not just those whose work has been included in the volume, but all those who attend their regional Leadership meetings every two months and take time and effort to write on the topics set.

Review of the Blue Book

Work also has commenced on a review of the Blue Book – the guiding light for the Grow Program. The aim is to ensure that the program is contemporary and accessible to as many people as possible who would benefit from participation in the Program. This will involve extensive consultation, giving local Leadership meetings the chance to provide new Grow wisdoms. Also, local Leadership meetings have been asked to put forward suggestions about updates (such as inclusive language, a section on grief and loss etc).



Our Services

The Grow Program

Our program is 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, emotional and spiritual health. At each meeting, members talk 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.

Service Activity



In FY 21/22 GROW had an average of **118** active groups delivering services each month around Australia. During this time, **4690** meetings were held.



Nationally groups received **25,135** visits for the year, and of those **1318** people visited GROW for the first time.



GROW also provided leadership development opportunities throughout the year, with those sessions attracting **626** visits.

GROW also continues to deliver both online and face to face group meetings, to meet the needs of different locations in Australia still impacted by COVID-19.



Residential Rehabilitation Program

NSW - West Hoxton

The GROW Residential Community offers a safe space for up to seventeen residents where people can recover both their mental and physical wellbeing, and manage their substance misuse disorders. While at the rehabilitation centre, residents learn to live in community with others and establish habits that will support their transition to a full and purposeful life. It has been a challenging year for Residential Rehabilitation specifically in NSW, mainly due to the ongoing COVID pandemic. Despite more than 75% of staff contracting COVID in NSW we managed to keep the centre open and running throughout these trying times. COVID protocols have been put in place and remain in place throughout the year to ensure residents and staff safety. Despite the pressure COVID put on staffing, the occupancy rate remained at an average 82% throughout the year with an increase to 100% in the months of June/July.



Our surveys show that 83% of residents who have graduated the program over the year have retained their sobriety and of that 83% all have secured part time or full-time work.

The staff team now has two ex-residents working within the West Hoxton team.

Our partnerships with Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous have strengthened over the year with speakers coming to the centre weekly to share their stories of recovery and the tools that got them there. Combined with this, residents also attend one meeting a week in the broader community to strengthen bonds and friendships outside the rehabilitation setting.

Following consultation with Greater Sydney Parklands which we lease the West Hoxton property from, we have been advised that they intend to lease the property to Grow for the foreseeable future which has taken some pressure off locating a new premises.

The Transition House remains a vital mechanism in the recovery of our residents. The transition house has remained at full capacity throughout the duration of the year. The transition house provides a safe environment for graduates to stay after they leave the West Hoxton program with all graduates opting to go to the house before transitioning to the broader community.

Before leaving the Grow Centre, residents work with staff and the National Manager to organise an hour-by-hour weekly schedule to keep them busy and focused when they leave. Residents are encouraged to come back to Grow for communal meals, Grow and Focus Groups and to share their story with new residents.





ACT House

The Grow residential rehabilitation unit supports up to five adult dual diagnosis (alcohol and other drugs) residents and is situated in a quiet residential setting located in Narrabundah ACT. The five-bedroom free standing house is located close to shops and transport which supports the transition of those who are in rehabilitation back to meaningful living in society.

The ACT House has flourished, specifically over the past 6 months with the addition of a new Residential Support Worker who has brought a new skillset and connections which have reaped positive rewards.

Throughout the reporting period we have seen four residents graduate from the program and re-join the broader community. All four residents have maintained their sobriety and positive mental health.

Additional activities and partnerships have been formed which include:

- *Collaboration with Landcare ACT to provide opportunities to experience guided walks in nature and agriculture skills.*
- *Collaboration with This Is My Brave Australia to provide art therapy workshops.*

There also have been enhanced weekend experiences with outings arranged on weekends e.g. visits to National Archives, Museum of Australian Democracy, Pitch and Putt Golf, Ten Pin Bowling.

We continue to work closely with the Department of Community Justice and governing authorities to reunite our residents' children back with their families during their recovery journey.

In the month of June Grow was approached by Jonathan Benyei from Barton Housing ACT who wanted to donate \$10,000 to Grow ACT house. The much-needed donation has helped provide new air conditioning to the ACT House, a gym and program enhancements.



Growing Resilience

Growing Resilience was developed in response to the impacts of COVID-19 around the country, including ongoing adaption to the 'new normal'. The program has been positioned to benefit people struggling with day-to-day challenges of managing uncertainty and change, grief, loss and isolation.

Following the initial development of Growing Resilience in the previous financial year, there was a huge influx of registrations and interest to participate in the Program during the last part of 2021. Program delivery increased from running two Programs a week to at one stage delivering eleven Weekly Groups. This increase in delivery was supported by eight Program workers from around the country who upskilled in their resilience knowledge and met the needs of people from around the country.

The Program was delivered on 25 separate occasions over the year, with 130 participants completing part or all of the program.

Get Growing

The Get Growing Program remains in high demand, is well received and achieving wonderful outcomes for the young people that participate in the Program. Over 10 weeks, the young people support each other in learning new ways to better manage and solve their own problems, understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships as well as the difference between feelings and facts. Over its delivery, the young people involved start establishing genuine friendships outside of their normal peer groups while growing skills in leadership and individual confidence.

The Get Growing Program has continued its development over this past year, with some valuable feedback and evaluation data influencing the ongoing success of the program delivery.

A critical piece of work has been the completion of a National Standardised suite of resources including an Organisational information pack, Student Journal and Program Worker Guide.

Get Growing has been delivered on 22 occasions, supporting 200 young people. Get Growing is now being delivered in three states/territories across Australia.

eGrow

Since the onset of COVID-19, eGrow has become a valuable addition to the Grow Wellbeing Programs. The eGrow program grew out of a need to provide members with an accessible option to face to face meetings and while there are some aspects of eGrow meetings that differ from meetings held face to face, such as reduced social contact, the Group Method and use of the Grow Program is identical.



In the 2021/2022 financial year there were 16 active eGrow groups operating nationally. This is an increase of seven groups from the previous financial year.

There were 367 attendees and 3764 attendances and approximately 147 first timers.

The online submission form for new participants is proving an effective method of engagement and on average there would be 2-3 submissions per week for each online group. New participants are encouraged to attend a Welcome to Grow session prior to attending their first meeting and this process has improved the retention rate of first timers.

The need to give our online participants as much access to regional, Branch and National activities as is possible is the current focus of discussion and it is encouraging to note that recently several eGrow participants have attended face to face socials and camps in their local regions.



Program Evaluation

Growing Resilience – University of Queensland Centre for Online Health (COH)

The program was evaluated by the UQ Centre for Online Health and it was found that people had a very positive experience through their participation. 91% of survey participants agreed Growing Resilience was of value to them and their mental wellness and 97% said they would recommend the program to family or friends experiencing mental distress.

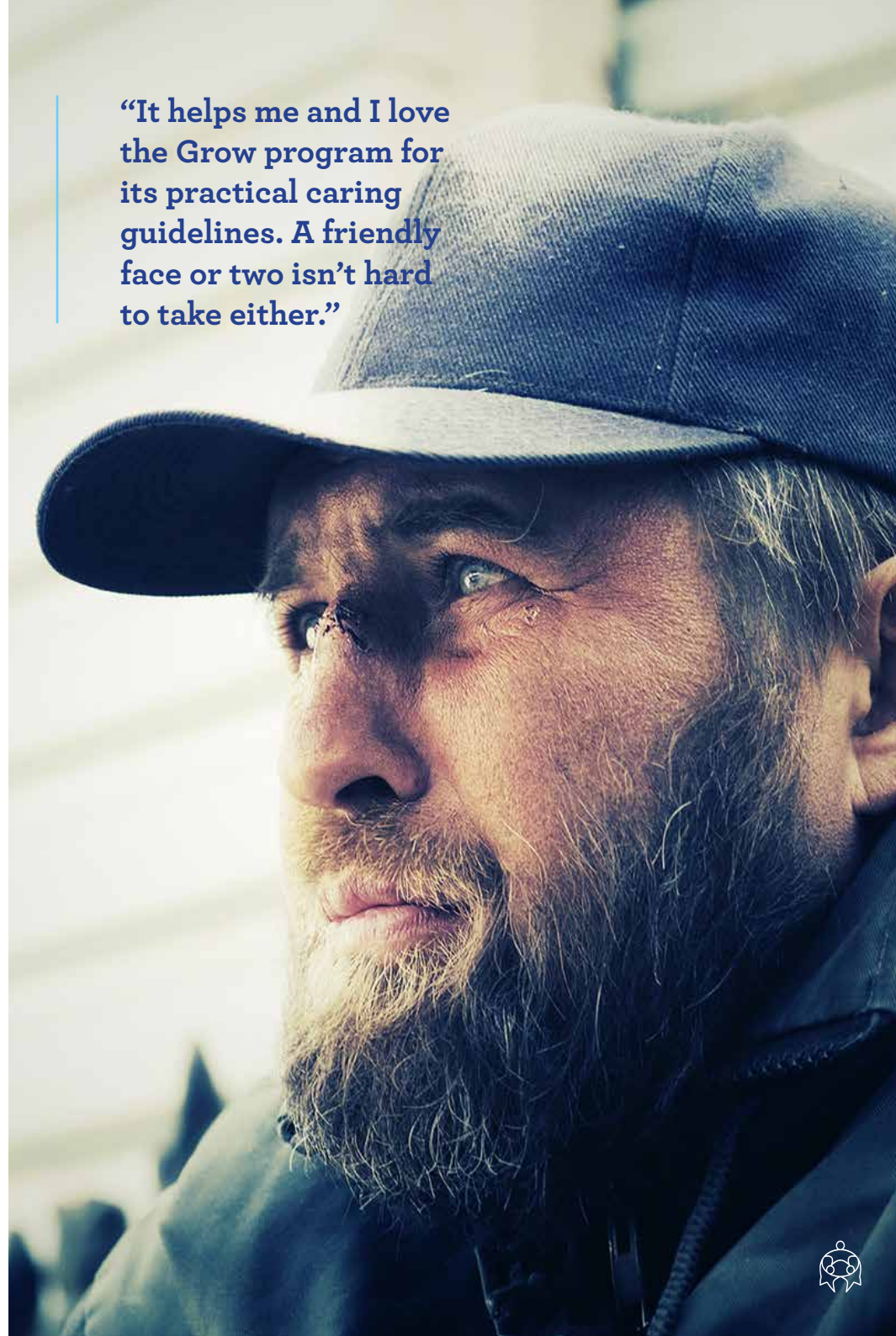
The most valuable aspects of the Program according to participants were:

- *Hearing from others and knowing they are not alone in their feelings*
- *Being able to share and get advice from others*
- *Referring back to content in the workbook resource and*
- *Having skilled and compassionate facilitators.*

The Growing Resilience program was reported by participants to be highly effective. Most respondents (more than 90%) strongly agreed or agreed that Growing Resilience was successful in teaching them the targeted strategies for dealing with uncertainty and being overwhelmed. The majority (more than 75%) also agreed or strongly agreed that the program taught them new strategies on managing loss and relationships.

“Today I am a little troubled but I want you to know that I am trying to focus on the 4 stabilising questions and that is helping!”

“It helps me and I love the Grow program for its practical caring guidelines. A friendly face or two isn’t hard to take either.”





eGrow – Nous Group

The Nous Group was commissioned to conduct a critical evaluation of the eGrow program offering, to ascertain its value and contribution towards the ongoing strategic goals of GROW post COVID-19.

The evaluation found:

- *eGrow provides greater accessibility to support services, however was favoured by specific demographics (younger than 50 and mostly female) which is in line with sector experiences of telehealth services during this time.*
- *There were no significant differences in types of problems that online and face-to-face participants face, indicating similar rates of mental health diagnoses, types of diagnosis and rates of self-harm.*
- *After removing back office costs that are similar for both the Grow Program and eGrow and comparing just the costs of operational delivery, eGrow appears to be less costly. Annual costs of operational support for one eGROW group were estimated to be about half the costs of supporting face-to-face Grow groups.*
- *Both the Grow Program and eGrow have, at similar rates, positively complemented participants' medical treatment, helped to reduce hospitalisations for participants, supported improvements in their employment situation, led to participants finding stable housing, and reduced their drug and alcohol problems.*



“I think that the program is fantastic and allows the students a safe space for them to express feelings and the ability to grow as people. I think it should be used in every school.”

(NT Teacher)



Get Growing

The efficacy of the Program is evaluated in 2 ways:

The Participants of the program complete a Pre- and Post- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire which captures any change that has occurred in behaviour, emotional regulation and relationships from participating in the Program.

GROW now also requests Organisations that host the Program to provide a rating of recommendations of the Program: Our current Net Promoter Score sits at 8.8, including some wonderful testimonials from School Professionals:

“I believe Get Growing has had a significant impact on the students. I have noticed an improvement in peer relationships but also in their ability to reach out and ask for supports from their school. Their trust in adults has increased.” *(VIC Teacher)*

“As a teacher, I have overheard the activities that have been running in GROW. I am pleased to say that these activities would benefit their social and emotional wellbeing. This is an area that our students need support and improvement on. Well done GROW and can’t wait to see more from our students!” *(VIC Teacher)*



Member Survey

Our impact story:

72%

We are a weekly feature in the lives of 72% of our Growers.



36%

say it has helped them overcome thoughts of suicide or self harm.



16%

say it has helped them be a better carer.



59%

of Growers say Grow has given them hope of recovery from mental illness.



80%

of participants rate the Grow program as excellent or very good.



33%

of Growers who have previously been hospitalised for their mental ill health say they have not needed hospitalisation since joining Grow.



53%

say they credit Grow with their recovery from mental ill health.



41%

say it has prevented increasing severity of mental ill health.



41% Male

58% Female

1% Non-disclosed

12% 18-35 years

36% 36-55 years

40% 56-69 years

12% 70+ years



“GROW is different. It’s not like reading a self-help book from which we gain insights or like services provided by other mental health organisations where we might undertake a six-week course or attend activities or visit a drop-in centre. It’s some of that but it’s much, much more! GROW is where I learnt to accept myself and grow in confidence through friendship. My friend believed in me and loved me. He carefully challenged me and affirmed me... Through practice I have gained both knowledge and understanding of myself. This helps me to push through my anxiety, as I keep my thinking true and my behaviour sound.”

*Jane – Growing to Recovery,
Readings for Mental Health (Vol. 2).*



Odd Socks Day 2021

We had a huge Odd Socks Day for 2021! For the first time ever we hosted a national online event which attracted people from all over the country. Approximately 100 people zoomed into the one hour event and the feedback was incredibly positive. We had hundreds of pairs of 'Odd Socks' donated by Upparel which were sold in the lead up to the event at branch social events.

The #OSD2021 pic and tag promotion resulted in great social awareness which was really important with COVID-19 lockdowns. Social media became a real centre point to the campaign and offers a great opportunity for development in future years.

SketchGroup provided this wonderful visual of all of the events happening across Australia. It truly was a whole of country effort that we are extremely proud of.



Sock it to Stigma 2021

In July 2021 GROW Australia launched its first ever sock subscription. The stylish socks contained Grow Wisdoms in the designs and came with a card to explain the wisdom and how people could apply it in their daily life. This was a big step in Grow's fundraising efforts and we had never sold our own socks before.

We were able to attract more than **200 subscribers** who received a pair of stylish new socks every month. The digital campaigns really helped to increase subscribers and increase awareness about the GROW brand. Our digital analytics confirmed our brand awareness campaign worked to uplift brand recognition - with a **9.87% increase in recognition** among those who saw ads or **20,600 people** recognizing the brand and remembering the ad after being served it. Overall, there were **2.2M impressions** for the campaign, with a reach of **1.06M**.

In the first year of sales, Sock it to Stigma generated **\$30,000 in sock sales**.



65th Anniversary

The presence of GROW for 65 years in the Australian community is a milestone and extraordinary.

From humble beginnings lived-experience peers began the GROW movement, creating a program that could help people recover from any sort of mental health issues diagnosed or not. Non-discriminatory and inclusive, GROW believed in the value of peers with lived experiences of mental health issues: that they had strengths and knowledge of, and that would contribute to the recovery of themselves and others. GROW forged ahead with this belief and via constant evaluation and feedback processes from peers in the groups, designed a non-discriminatory program that reaches out to all and steadily works with others to help in their recovery and personal growth.

Over these 65 years we celebrate the many recovery stories from peoples of all different backgrounds across the world. This is the story of personal growth attributed to GROW. It is a story that continues to forge links in communities where intentional peer to peer support motivates, inspires and provides focused commitment on mutual support, reaching out and offering support to all in need. GROW is welcoming of newcomers. It is committed to the gentle healing and ongoing recovery of all and is a story of hope, inspiration, courage and recovery for anyone experiencing mental health issues.

The 65th anniversary in April therefore was an opportunity across Australia to celebrate Grow's achievements and ongoing activities – remembering those who have come before and those who today make Grow such a vibrant factor in people's lives.



65
years
AUS



Extract from Professor Allan Fels AO at 65th birthday celebration:

"I very much like the philosophy of Grow Australia and that it's not just from personal experience. I know the value of peer to peer support. I've actually been chair of the National Mental Health Commission for six years and then a couple of years on the Victorian Royal Commission on Mental Health. And I've had a tremendous exposure to every element of the mental health system, particularly people with lived experience, their families and carers, but also with support providers, with medical people, psychologists and everyone else. And what emerges from all of these hearings, inquiries, meetings, including community meetings, is that peer to peer support is a very foundational part of any society's approach to dealing with the challenges of mental health. I often think that the biggest challenge for most people with mental illness is either that they don't get access to treatment or that they do get access, but it's very limited. If you have a psychiatrist, for example, you might see them for an hour a month or an hour a fortnight. What about the other 168 hours, 167 hours of the week? What happens then? It's those times that are really important, and that's when peer to peer engagement can be really valuable in lifting the quality of a person's life and their happiness. Now, what I would emphasise is that Grow is an entity that supports and provides intentional peer to peer support. Through mutual help. Through social encounters and gatherings, through friendship and through links with the community, whether a community of peer people or the whole community. So this helps drive a better mental health system.

We also need to provide various forms of support to people with lived experience and to change our systems to ensure that they are person centred. The person with the problem is the one who drives the operation of the system. And I know that particularly because reflecting on peer to peer experience in my own family, but also I've seen it in many other cases. If you involve people with lived experience in the operation of the system, it will be much better, much more sensitive to their needs and generate a happier population. So once again I congratulate Grow Australia on its fantastic contribution over the years and I look forward to more of it in the future and an ever greater recognition of the value of peer to peer support."



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Growing to Recovery publication 2022

The Growing to Recovery publication was the first new Australian National Program content published as part of a book in many years. All program related material in GROW has been generated or approved by the grass roots member leadership of the organisation – from those who have learned the way up and out from mental ill health to mental wellbeing, passing on what they have gained.

This new publication focusses on stories of recovery that highlighted how GROW had made (or had been) 'the difference' in their journey, where perhaps other things hadn't before.

In total more than fifty new submissions were produced. The National Program Team carefully reviewed and then approved thirty of these stories of recovery, then a subset of fifteen were published in the new book. These, along with another thirty-five specific mental wellbeing topic-based member generated papers capturing lived experience insights were published alongside the stories in the new Book titled: Growing to Recovery: Readings for Mental Health Vol 2. (also known as 'The Green Book').

The Book has been printed as a special 65th Birthday edition (large colour print coffee table format), an A5 version for use in Group, and also as a digital version through Kindle.

Approved for general use in all Grow groups and beyond, this new volume is now proudly part of our collective Grow leadership wisdom.

growing to
recovery



Board of Directors



Dr Lesley van Schoubroek – Chair

Lesley is well known in the mental health sector. Lesley was the inaugural Mental Health Commissioner in Queensland. She has also held the position of Executive Director Transformation for the Mental Health Commission in Western Australia.



John MacIsaac – Deputy Chair

John has 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 and is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Peter Barker – Treasurer

Former Treasurer Peter is a senior finance executive with significant domestic and international experience. Peter resigned from the Board in May 2022.



Sonia Di Mezza – Director

Sonia is a solicitor and human rights lawyer. She is the CEO of the Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Service in Bendigo, Victoria. She has set up and managed human rights projects in Pakistan and Sudan; worked as a Resettlement Consultant for the UN High Commission for Refugees in Lebanon; worked in India promoting the rights of child labourers; and as a refugee lawyer in Australia. Sonia holds a Master of International Law, majoring in human rights law.



Board of Directors



Heath Fereday – Director

Heath has more than 10 years of experience in working with the Grow Program and more than seven years of experience in Program and Consumer Leadership roles within GROW. Heath is the Chair of the SA Branch Program Team, a member of the National Program Team and is an active member of the GROW community. Heath was nominated to the Board by his peers.



Mark Lacey – Director

Director Mark was appointed to the Board in October 2021. Mark is a mental health professional with 25 years' experience. He has fought for the recovery of those with mental illness and for systems that routinely provide for that recovery over that time. Mark has been a Grow member for 23 years, a leader in Grow for 15 years, and Chair of the Vic-Tas Branch Program Team for four years – from 2017 to 2020. Mark was nominated to the Board by his peers.



Jeremy Morse – Director

Director Jeremy is Senior Business Manager at Hillsong IO. He is a former Business Performance Analyst at Anglicare Southern Qld and was the Financial Accountant and Analyst for Anglicare Tasmania. With Peter Barker's departure, Jeremy was appointed as Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Audit and Risk Management (FARM) Committee.



Ina Mullin – Director

Ina has more than 20 years' experience in stakeholder engagement and communications. She is Director of Engagement and Communication at the National Mental Health Commission after holding business development, brand management and public relations roles at a variety of NFP mental health service providers. Ina holds a Master of Arts in Communications Management, an Executive Master of Business Administration, and a Bachelor of Arts (Hons).



Board of Directors



Steve Ryan – Director

Steve has had extensive exposure across the public, superannuation, union and not-for-profit sectors. He has held roles as a secondary school teacher, Queensland Teachers' Union President, a trustee of the QSuper Board and a director of QInvest.



Ian Sloan – Director

Ian is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has extensive experience in business and technology. Ian has worked with government, private business and a range of not-for-profit organisations. Ian resigned from the Board in August 2021.



Virginia Slaughter – Director

Virginia is a Professor and Head of the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland. A developmental psychologist by training, Virginia's own research focuses on social and cognitive development in infants and young children. In her 25-year career as an academic, Virginia has published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles and chapters, three edited volumes and a first-year psychology textbook. She is the recipient of several teaching awards, including University of Queensland Teaching Excellence Award (1999) and an Australian Award for University Teaching. Virginia is a Fellow of Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.



Branch Reports

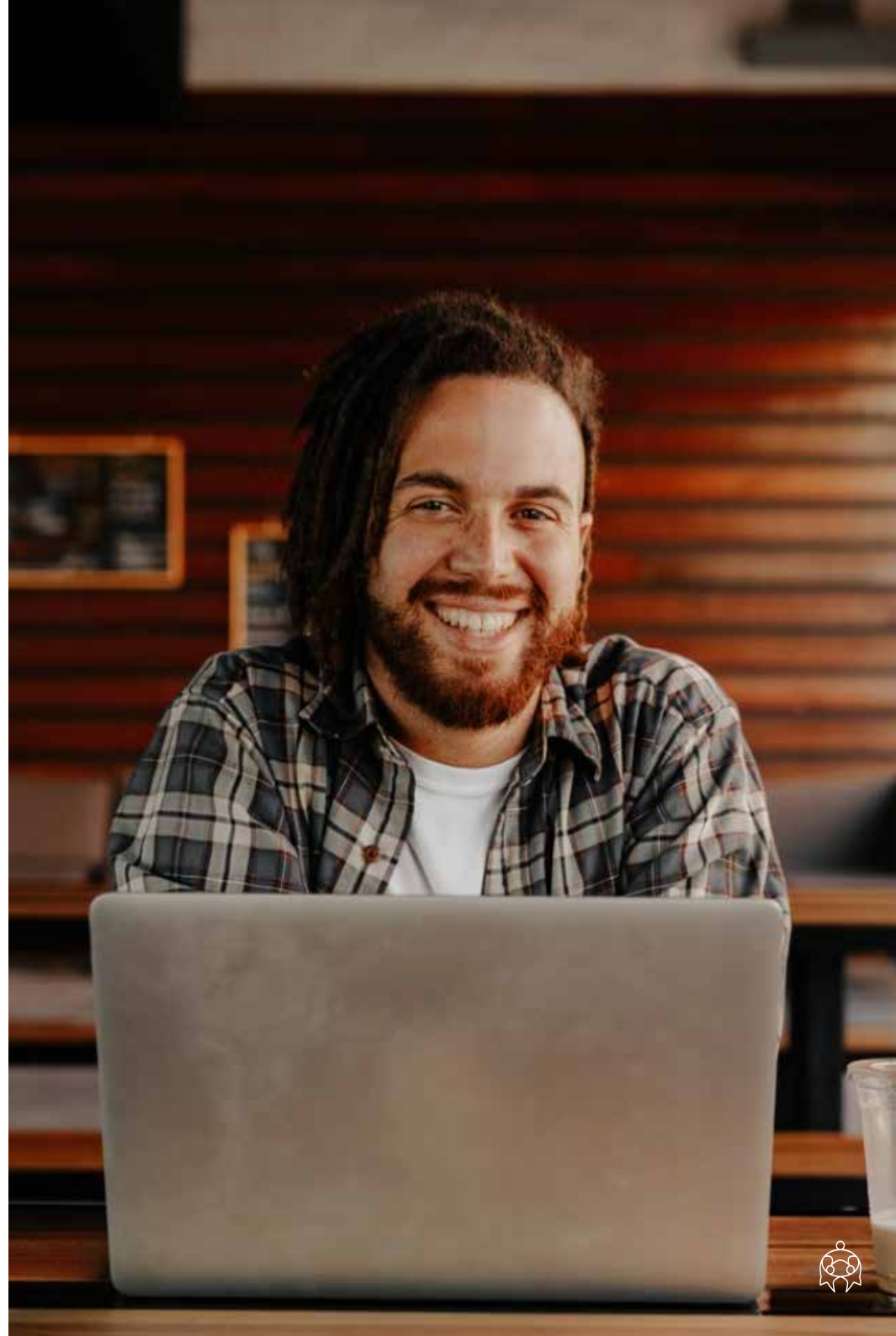
New South Wales

Another huge year for the Grow Program in NSW despite 100 days of lockdown in Metro Sydney and catastrophic flooding in Northern NSW. The region remained strong and with a busy calendar of leadership meetings, O&R meetings, hospital orientations, training weekends, and Branch Program Team meetings.

The lockdowns spurred on our digital transformation and saw the introduction of the weekly tech time sessions which grow the technical capability of our members and volunteers. This digital transformation also included roll out of tablets and a high level of adoption of hybrid meetings to make meetings more accessible during COVID and creating an online mailing list so that we can communicate directly with the Growers through the weekly notices. The Friday 3 p.m. online social continued for the entire year. All this great work in the digital space also attracted a \$10,000 donation from the CommBank Foundation.

One of the highlights was the many contributions by NSW Growers to the 65th Anniversary Readings for Mental Health book. Leadership meetings occurred in all regions and as per usual there were a lot of submissions from New South Wales. The book has been distributed to key people in the state who have remarked that it is a truly wonderful offering.

We also secured ongoing funding from NSW Health which offers great continuity and a security for the NSW Grow Community.





Queensland

This was a great time of rebuilding for Queensland after a challenging few years. We welcomed two new staff, re-established the Branch Literature Team, and secured ongoing funding. It was also a time for growth as we launched our regional QLD eGrow group which is now a well-established group.

We made a submission and appeared as a witness into the Mental Health Select Committees Inquiry into Better Mental Health Outcomes for Queenslanders. It was great to be able to champion the voice of peer-to-peer support and inclusive governance of those with a mental illness.

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT has been undertaking a busy growth period as our staff have worked hard to launch new groups and promote GROW locally. There are now three hospital orientations in the ACT – one in the older persons mental health unit at The Canberra Hospital, one in the young adult's ward at Calvary Hospital (both occurring fortnightly) and one every week at the Canberra Detox Unit. A new group was established at Gungahlin in the northeast and is going well.



VIC/TAS

VIC/TAS GROW supports up to 31 groups across the two states including face to face, eGrow, two specialised Young Adults groups and a carer support group. After a long pause due to lockdowns, we also resumed our long-standing prison groups.

We enjoyed the resumption of socials and group activities after a long time using online activities as a form of socialisation.

The branch and our Volunteers introduced a gardening group which meets once a month. Mindfulness sessions are held for all Growers across the nation once a fortnight and we enjoy fortnightly Wednesday activities in branch. Activities include arts and crafts, playing cards and board games. In the warmer months activities include walks around the community and visits to local spots.

Get Growing expanded into Victoria across 2022 with three High Schools and two Primary Schools in the Southeast of Victoria. The schools have reported noticeable changes in students participating in the program and have given Victoria a net promoter score of 8.67. Feedback received includes *"The Grow program has been supportive to our students that are challenged with their home lives. The program activities benefit their social and emotional wellbeing. This is an area that our students need support and improvement on. Well done GROW and cannot wait to see more from our students!"*

Tasmania has six groups, an active member on the Branch Program Team and an active member on the VIC/TAS Branch Literature team. Tasmania enjoyed their annual training camps and community camps with minimal impact from lockdowns. Tasmania championed eGrow groups during the pandemic while enjoying regular social activities.





South Australia

GROW in South Australia had many highlights for the financial year 2021-2022 – with a focus on maintaining community building activities despite the uncertainty of COVID restrictions, SA managed to have a full suite of program related and social events and new connections.

More people attended GROW SA run groups in 2021-2022 than the previous year through weekly face-to-face GROW group meetings, online GROW group meetings, Growing Resilience sessions and Youth Get Growing groups.

We were incredibly lucky to have two Community Weekends, one at Port Vincent on The Yorke Peninsula in 2021 and one at Barmera in April 2022. Well-attended and fun, these helped keep the spirit of community alive along with monthly socials and group socials.

An Organiser and Recorder Training Weekend was held seaside at Port Elliot south of Adelaide, a wonderful venue. GROW volunteer leadership via the Branch Program Team delivered the bulk of the sessions. GROW SA also held 2 Training days for regular GROW members as well as a Branch Leadership Day to approve new Branch literature.

Odd Socks Day initiated a wonderful new partnership with Seaford Rotary club which garnered a wonderful donation cheque towards Get Growing programs in SA. There were further invitations to participate in Bunnings sausage sizzles with half the proceeds going to GROW and the Seaside walk with Odd Socks. While somewhat COVID interrupted in 2021, it still went ahead and is on track bigger and better for October 2022.



Western Australia

GROW WA has continued with developing great relationships with various stakeholders and services in the community. Over the year, we established new networks; developed peer leadership skills training; engaged in diversity inclusive practices; one of our members won a mental health award; and we have worked in solid collaborations with other agencies.

GROW WA embarked on a highly needed collaborative with AOD residential programs in response to a long-identified gap in service provision for people experiencing co-occurring mental health and AOD issues. Receiving incredibly positive feedback from both the clients and staff, we anticipate that such a beneficial collaboration could have long term positive impacts and outcomes for people's mental and physical health.

Another new initiative arose out of an identified need to develop the leadership in GROW Groups during COVID. The WA Branch Program Team who are 'Seasoned' Growers representing various regions across the state developed an Innovative Combination Series, which involved various peer-leadership topics and a community social. Held across four 'weekends' in the metro and southwest regions during May and June 2022, Growers delivered 25 of these sessions to their peers, helping to support others as part of the GROW philosophy of mutual support and self-help.

The WA team would like to acknowledge that long time Grower, BPT member and former employee, Irene Patroni dedicated 41 years of her life to GROW, winning the 2021 Mental Health Act Belong Commit Award for staff and/or volunteer excellence.

Portrait of Irene painted by WA Branch Manager, Lynda Diagne.





Northern Territory

National opportunities have motivated both group and individual activation throughout our small but growing community in the NT over the past year. Following on from securing our own space at Rapid Creek available for members to meet and socialise late last year, our membership has expanded, and leadership has further grown to secure the need of opening up an extra group to manage high group numbers. Social activities have also increased over this year and has resulted in the formation of a 'Fun Committee' that is committed to arranging monthly activities for all group members: Growing genuine friendships and connectivity.

The NT Team has provided ongoing support to our local groups in their weekly meetings and Training opportunities, while also delivering Get Growing to local schools and supporting the delivery of Growing Resilience nationally.



