



Annual Report 2019-20

We provide disability information.
free | accurate | independent
IDEAS does information so you can do life.



IDEAS acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders past, present and emerging.

IDEAS' head office in Tumut, NSW is on Wiradjuri country.

Photo: 'Common ground' Brungle elder Buddy Freeman and grandson stand in the hollow of a 300 year old River Redgum on the common in Brungle on the Nimbo Creek, by Dean Sewell Occuli.



IDEAS is driven by people with disability for people with disability.

Our vision is a world where people with disability live full independent lives of their own choosing. Our tool is information.

We know information powers better decisions, to make life easier.

Good information is powerful.

Good information makes choices real.

Trust info
real best choice
tailored support **decisions**
free **accurate** independent
timely relevant **accessible**
online **by phone** in the community
for me on my side **the full story**
all the options **ad free** resources
referrals won't try to sell me
anything **figures** truthful
impartial facts
bias free



What we do

IDEAS connects people with disability and their families, carers and supporters to information and services, so that they can reach their dreams.

At IDEAS, we do information so you can do life.

The values which keep us on course, are: Being

- Respectful
- Inclusive
- Ethical, and
- Innovative

In everything we do.

Photo opposite: The Sydney Philharmonia Choir in rehearsal with the Auslan signing choir (sign language) for a performance of Handel's Messiah at the Sydney Opera House. Photo by James Brickwood SMH.



Our vision is a world where people with disability live full, independent lives of their choosing.



Contents

Board members	3
The IDEAS family	5
Chair's report	6
Treasurer's report	8
Executive Officer's report	12
Information matters	14
Outcomes	16
PossABLE Advocacy	17
IDEAS customers	18

Photo opposite: Hanna Cormick as The Mermaid, Throne. Photo by Shelly Higgs.



Information matters to all people with disability, and those who love and care for them, all the time. It helps people to get what they want and need to live and thrive...to build lives of contribution and feel valued. We believe every person can lead a meaningful life and have worked more than thirty five years to help this happen. When recognition of information waxes and wanes, IDEAS hold steady in personalised, accurate responses. Information matters because choice matters.

Always.

A white, handwritten signature of Diana Palmer is centered on the page.

Diana Palmer
Executive Officer IDEAS

Board members



Martin Heng Chair

Martin has over 21 years working as a travel editor in the field of accessible tourism and has a background in communications and publishing. He is a member of the Victorian Disability Advisory Council. Martin joined the Board in May 2016. Martin has an acquired spinal cord injury and uses a wheelchair for mobility.



Chris Dumas Treasurer

Chris is a partner at Bentleys Newcastle (accountants) and CRAG Auditing Services. He has a Bachelor of Business, became a CPA in 1998 and FCPA in 2001. He is a fellow of the Tax Institute. Chris joined the Board in November 2013.



Wendy Bowles Board Member

Wendy is a Professor in Social Work and Human Services in the School of Humanities & Social Sciences at Charles Sturt University. Wendy joined the Board in November 2013.



Andrew Bokor Board Member

Andrew brings the experiences of 18 years in the military and subsequent years working in the wider community. He has a passion for empowering others through information on rights and entitlements. Andrew joined the Board in December 2016.



Peter Hunt Board Member

Peter is Principal of McCabe Curwood Lawyers. He's a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has training in Mediation. He is also a voluntary Director of the Marrickville Legal Centre. Peter joined the Board in May 2019.



Karen Peacock Vice Chair

Karen is an experienced board member, communicator and disability activist. She has degrees in Social Science and Law. She was a full-time Member and Senior Member of the former Social Security Appeals Tribunal. She is involved in peer support and is an Access Advisor for Accessible Arts. Karen joined the Board in September 2018.



Greg Auhl Board Member

Greg is currently a Course Design Lead in the Division of Learning and Teaching at Charles Sturt University. He spent 25 years as a secondary teacher, including as a Coordinator of Science and Learning Support, in rural and regional schools before moving to the tertiary sector as a teacher educator. Greg holds an undergraduate degree in Science education, several diplomas in Religious Education, a Master's degree in Special Education and a PhD in education. He is a carer for his adult daughter with disability.



The IDEAS family

IDEAS employ 33
staff working to 22.89
full time equivalent positions

42% of IDEAS staff
live with disability or have close lived
experience of disability

85% of IDEAS board members
live with disability
or have close lived
experience of disability

Our staff combined share
373 YEARS
of disability sector experience

Our locations

Tumut, Campbelltown,
Nowra, Wollongong,
Merimbula, Melbourne,
Newcastle, Canberra.

**Meet
Margot**



See Margot here

Closed Captioned

[www.ideas.org.au/video/
meet-margot.html#MBCC](http://www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-margot.html#MBCC)

Audio described

[www.ideas.org.au/video/
meet-margot.html#MBAE](http://www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-margot.html#MBAE)



Chair's report



2020 is a year no one will forget.

As the calendar year began, we were already halfway through Black Summer; by early March fires had consumed some 186,000 km², destroyed almost 3000 homes, and killed at least 34 people and billions of animals. And just when we thought we were clear of danger, the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to take off: by mid-March there were just 150,000 cases worldwide; we have now surpassed 30 million, with close to 1 million deaths – and these are almost certainly underestimates.

Sadly, one thing these two crises share is that people with disability have been treated largely as an afterthought by governments here and around the world.

But not by IDEAS. Throughout Black Summer our highly experienced team of information officers and our team of advocates provided invaluable support to our constituents – people with disability, their families, carers and supporters – who were desperate for clear, accessible information. And, because governments had failed to provide information in accessible formats, within 48 hours IDEAS had developed and populated a dedicated accessible webpage with curated, fact checked bushfire-related information.

Our strengths and success in these endeavours gave the federal government enough confidence in us that in April, with the pandemic gaining momentum, it asked IDEAS to staff a national COVID-19 information line for people with disability.

I am proud to say that our people stepped up to the plate and have done the same amazing job providing accurate, up-to-date information to help people cope with the pandemic as we did during Black Summer – and as we've *always* done in helping them to cope with everyday life.



...people with disability have been treated largely as an afterthought by governments here and around the world.

As we did with Black Summer, we continue to maintain a fantastic resource base of COVID-19-related information in accessible formats, and back this up with a rich and up-to-the-minute news feed via our social media channels.

It's no surprise that we have received such overwhelmingly positive feedback from our customers. The relief they express at having their questions answered is almost palpable.

IDEAS' staff know how to *listen* to people with disability, understand the world from their perspective, and are highly experienced in sourcing accurate, relevant information.

But they also know *how to communicate* with people with disability and understand that they might need their information in different formats, whether it be easy English or screen-readable. I commend our staff for the remarkable job they're doing – despite their personal job insecurity as IDEAS continues to face funding uncertainty.

Because amid all this calamity, when operational management has been so vital, senior management and the board have been preoccupied with risk management and the future of the organisation.

With full roll-out of the NDIS scheme, only about 10% of the disability population will be covered, but *all* people with disability need accurate, timely, independent, accessible information to give them choice and control in managing their lives. It's noteworthy that even NDIS Scheme participants and those involved in administering it have continued to turn to IDEAS for answers. We have been eagerly awaiting the release of the tender for the National Disability Information Gateway because we know how great the need is – just as we know we are ready and capable of meeting that

need. Our performance this year proves that, which leaves me quietly confident that we will win the recently released tender and that IDEAS can finally look forward to a period of greater stability and growth.

Martin Heng



Meet
Martin

See Martin here



Closed Captioned

[www.ideas.org.au/video/
meet-martin.html#MHCC](http://www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-martin.html#MHCC)

Audio described

[www.ideas.org.au/video/
meet-martin.html#MHAЕ](http://www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-martin.html#MHAЕ)

Treasurer's report



2020 was a year of continued quality independent service provision for IDEAS seeing us deliver \$3,862,867 worth of service to the community.

This is slightly down on the prior year but given the funding situation, the drought, the bushfires in NSW and beyond, COVID-19 and the challenges brought upon our organisation from uncertain funding models – it is a wonderful achievement. Once more, we as a board are very thankful for the work done by Diana and her operations team in securing the funding to enable this to become a reality and ploughing a tough

road to secure future funding. We note that the funding of the future remains uncertain with future tenders to be decided. The team is working hard to secure that funding from Government and non-Government sources for the 2021 year and beyond. From a financial perspective there are not enough superlatives to describe the difficult process that Andrew, Diana and the team has had to go through to get to where we currently are, but the determination of all is all that has pulled the organisation through.

On a monthly basis Andrew, our Business Manager, and Purpose Accounting have delivered timely and well summarised financial information all year to the Board which has enabled tough decisions to be confronted and informed discussions to take place (particularly through the first half of the 2020 financial year). I once more would like to thank all of the wonderful people involved in the finance team for their service.

The total turnover for the year was down by approximately 10% (inclusive of the Job Keeper income, which we are grateful for). As noted last year our funding has taken a large shift from State based funding to Commonwealth funding as the State's transfer out of the support of disabled persons. We are particularly thankful for the donation received this year to enable our organisation to purchase a new vehicle.

I note that the year saw the recognition of \$226,733 in deferred income and the deferral of \$438,000 of Grants in Advance (which are attributable to the next financial year).



IDEAS remain proud of the efficiency and effectiveness we continue to achieve in the delivery of our service providing strong value for money for the stakeholders in our service.

I note that currently the organisation is funded fully through to 31 March 2021 and will undertake a competitive tender process (either in a joint venture or stand-alone) to secure long term funding for the provision of our services.

I note that efforts to secure further grants funding beyond 2021 remain subject to tender but that we continue to advocate for further funding into the future. Further, **IDEAS is exploring alternate funding sources from joint ventures and direct service models in support of our core business to fund our operations and further work with the disability community.**

I think it is important to recognise the stellar work done to secure the funding that we have for this year and the work being done to finance our future operations.

In IDEAS it is the Treasurer's role to have an overview of the systems that are used, monitor spending and be able to advise the Board of our financial position, especially if new projects are to be undertaken as to their affordability, and the recurrence or otherwise of our funding. The monitoring of these functions has been done primarily by Diana with Board support around the monthly review of IDEAS funding, budgeting and expense allocation being done efficiently and accurately.

All of our accounting is prepared on XERO, reviewed monthly against prior year figures and our budget (and the budget is updated during the year to reflect changes in our operations).

We are audited at the end of every financial year and thank Steven Walker for his services in doing this.

The profit of \$68,008 is very consistent with the prior years \$97,788, \$124,095, and \$25,682 (2019, 2018 and 2017) net results respectively.

IDEAS remain proud of the efficiency and effectiveness we continue to achieve in the delivery of our service providing strong value for money for the stakeholders in our service, particularly the disabled and their carers. Individuals, families, carers and institutions continue to require these services and **we hope that this is recognised by our funding bodies moving forward to ensure that our service remains properly funded on an extended (as against annualised) basis.**

Our net Equity position has improved during the financial year (up 16%) at \$606,246.

Our net total asset position has increased by \$350,000 which has been offset by an increase of the total liabilities by \$282,000.

I note going forward that we will continue to go through restructure of our operations and finance but note we have all liabilities (actual and potential) provided for (noting all employment liabilities are provided for).



I congratulate Diana and her team on their mental strength, determination and resolve in the provision of all services of IDEAS.

Further, I have complete confidence that post our ongoing restructure that we will be a strong, viable provider of services to our customers in the business streams that we provide.

On a personal note I congratulate Diana and her team on their mental strength, determination and resolve in the provision of all services of IDEAS. The Board is supportive to all involved and remains focussed on the organisation's objectives and the work of the staff and friends of IDEAS. Further I would like to commend the Chair and the Board on their stellar work over the year.

This is another good result considering the future that was stared down in the first half of the financial year, the restructuring, negotiations for funding, and significant change over of the team that took place during the year. The nature of the funding environment, the competition in our industry and our integrity and independence standards which define our organisation (who we are) mandate that we do not make large profits and the management and the Board will continue to maintain their fiscal discipline to ensure that we spend in delivering our programs the money we are entrusted to expend by our funding bodies.

From the Board's perspective we are proud of the ongoing work being done by Diana and her team to enable a future provision of information for our community.

Chris Dumas



**Meet
Chris**

See Chris here



Closed Captioned

[www.ideas.org.au/video/
meet-chris.html#CCC](http://www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-chris.html#CCC)

Audio described

[www.ideas.org.au/video/
meet-chris.html#CCAD](http://www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-chris.html#CCAD)

**See IDEAS audited
Financial Statements here**

[www.ideas.org.au/images/
IDEAS_2020_Financial_Statements.pdf](http://www.ideas.org.au/images/IDEAS_2020_Financial_Statements.pdf)

Photo opposite: Julie Mullen and her 10 month old son, Hendrix swim in the Mahon Pool, Maroubra.
Photo by James Brickwood SMH.



Executive Officer's report



Government funding support for the period 1 Sept 2019 – 31 Aug 2020 was received from the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

This agreement provided funding for core information services while IDEAS continued to pursue alternative income streams.

With the onset of Black Summer IDEAS turned to supporting people with disability living in bushfire affected regions and those who had been impacted by fires.

Like many other organisations, this included some of our own employees, Board members and members. **IDEAS was quick to provide timely information for people affected by bushfires via phone, website, social media, newsletters, and in person in fire affected areas. We responded quickly, and, as a result the information distributed, gave people with disability earlier, accurate connection to information that they would not have had otherwise.**

A similar outcome to what we faced and achieved during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The work continues.

Our team worked with speed, agility, accuracy and determination to ensure that people with disability had timely access to the relevant information they need, allowing them to get on with their lives. The crises of 2020 have been challenging for us to gain access to the right information in a timely manner that will assist people. **We continue to advocate for more timely accessible information to support people during times of emergency/disaster or public health crises.**

In March, DSS asked us to turn our service to deliver the COVID Disability Information Helpline. Launched on April 9, 2020, we have operated this line in addition to the IDEAS Infoline. Our team redirected their attention to ensure the additional staff required had relevant training and knowledge to be able to support people with disability through the pandemic.

IDEAS continued to innovate during the year:

- Developed and launched ACCAN's Accessible Telecoms website. Now operated by ACCAN.
- Launched the Ezy-Dun Hire service, a follow on activity for Ezy-Dun after its rollout around the Riverina as part of the PLATFORM project in partnership with Eastern Riverina Arts.
- Implemented a new Client Management System.
- Launched a website in the early weeks of 2020 dedicated to searching, swapping and donating equipment in support of people with disabilities impacted by fire. Probono support provided by Dialog.
- Worked with UNSW Centre for Social Impact on a research project which resulted in the Report – Information sharing as Market Stewardship in the NDIS; launched March 2020.
- Gained accreditation for ISO9001:2015 and against National Disability Service Standards.
- Partnered with The Land newspaper to produce and distribute possABLE Living, 54-page supplement for rural, regional and remote residents in NSW.

The last quarter saw a dramatic uptake in calls and online activity to meet the information needs of people with disability as they dealt with the impact of Coronavirus. IDEAS experienced a growth in online visitors to our site and calls to the IDEAS Infoline, in addition to the activity managed through the COVID Disability Information Helpline.



Its reconfirmed people with disability turn to their known and trusted sources in times of crisis to access information.

IDEAS has been very active in engaging the Australian Government on the implementation of the National Disability Information Gateway. IDEAS has shared information, processes and possible outcomes with parliamentarians and bureaucrats throughout the year. **These conversations were centred on the positive outcomes for people with disability when they get timely, relevant and accurate information tailored to their needs; and how that could shape the practical role for the Gateway.** At the end of the financial year, we still await the implementation of the National Disability Information Gateway that was promised at the May 2019 election.

Our staff has proven again, their incredible team resilience as they addressed their own personal situations this year, while continuing to deliver in the workplace at a high quality. They showed their strong commitment to supporting people with disability get access to the information they need to get on with life. I thank them for their ongoing passion and drive to deliver. The Board has again shown their commitment to people with disability. They fulfilled their duty to steer the direction of the organisation. They continue guiding us through the challenging environment we work in.

I thank them once again for their contribution, commitment, and support.

Diana Palmer

See Diana here

Closed Captioned

www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-diana.html#DPCC

Audio described

www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-diana.html#DPAE

Information matters

4,914,552
connections
across all channels*

8.8% of calls
are from people of
CALD backgrounds

5353 total enquiries
to the info line
51.77% increase on last year

1.5% of calls are from
INDIGENOUS
AUSTRALIANS

Our top ten enquiry topics for the year were:

- 1 NDIS
- 2 Allied Health Care
- 3 Support Services
- 4 COVID
- 5 Health Services
- 6 Recreation/Leisure
- 7 Advocacy/Law/Rights
- 8 Aids/Equipment/Assistive technology
- 9 Home Maintenance & Modifications
- 10 Finance & Income

5353 calls

2542
community
engagement

401,968
web visits

247,296
unique visitors

3,052,302
page views

*Excludes social media

543,918

resources and database records accessed from IDEAS website

331,220

IDEAS records accessed via other sites

545,636

Total e-news distribution

126,696

Total newsletter distribution

IDEAS produces

six newsletters per year. Each a 32 page round up of **information rich, accurate updates** on disability news.

5279

newsletter subscribers

IDEAS produces an **e-news weekly**. A snappy easy digest of **relevant news** for the sector and customers.

10,493

people subscribed to e-news per week



Facebook

Growth in audience (followers)

3209 to 4987
a 55% increase



Twitter

Growth in audience (followers)

3751 to 4245
a 13% increase



Most popular posts

- Bushfire
- COVID19
- NDIS
- Abuse
- News items

Our reach on Twitter is an average of **71,000** per month, with peaks of **200,000** in January bushfire season and **173,000** at the start of COVID 19 in March. This represents a **545% growth** on the previous year.

Outcomes

Nearly 5 million connections were made with people with disability and their supporters across all channels (excluding social media)

Of our customers **more than 92% of people with disability** said they could make an informed decision having received information from IDEAS

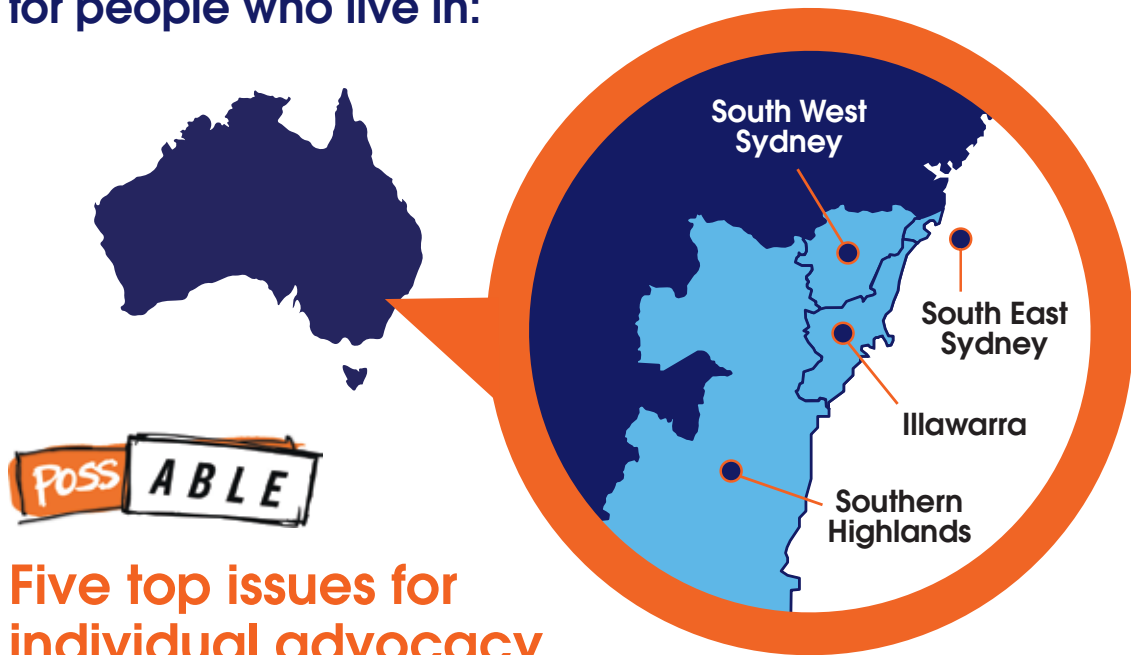
72% of people **said** as a direct result of getting information from IDEAS they either:

- 1** Engaged a new service
- 2** Changed a service provider or
- 3** Engaged in a new mainstream activity



PossABLE Advocacy

PossABLE Advocacy offers individual advocacy services for people who live in:



Five top issues for individual advocacy

- 1 Access
- 2 Advocacy/Law/Rights
- 3 NDIS
- 4 Accommodation
- 5 Finance and Income

311 Number of advocacy matters brought by clients

15% of advocacy customers are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

17% of advocacy customers are Indigenous Australians



IDEAS customers

IDEAS practice meeting people where they are. We do this by outreach into places where people live, also meeting people where they are via phone, web and other channels.

It is all about providing information that makes a difference to the customer in their particular circumstances; where they live, how old they are, how they get around, the changes in their conditions, their health, their family supports, their community supports and what they want to do in the future.

The digital divide is real and complex. Centred on affordability, accessibility and ability, it is a fault line in connectivity that is well addressed by community outreach that is consistent and respectful.

In the last year our community engagement teams met 2542 people at events, field days, networks, and expos. Right now, we are engaged with the transition of many events into COVID safe formats.

- We **co-located** with Service NSW regional and remote mobile van tours.
- We **built** Ezy-Dun, a portable accessible changing place and accessible toilet in partnership with PLATFORM to gig around festivals and arts events.
- IDEAS **partnered** with The Land to produce and distribute 80,000 copies of possABLE Living magazine to roadside mailboxes and as a supplement in The Land newspaper and others to reach rural, regional and remote customers in NSW. It was the most highly re-ordered supplement in The Land's more than 100 year history.

- We visited communities in and around firegrounds to help with advocacy and getting supports for people with disability.



Meet Adam

See Adam here



Closed Captioned

www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-adam.html#ACC

Audio described

www.ideas.org.au/video/meet-adam.html#AAE



Customers have told us this year:

“ Thank you again for helping me and not giving up until we had an answer.

“ What an extraordinary organisation.

“ Thank you Kath, It was great speaking to you today, you really lifted my spirits.

“ I have started looking at the links you have sent me and will start looking into these.

“ Once again thank you for your help and reassurance.

“ Thanks for listening to me properly, I just didn't know how to start.

“ You have calmed me down a lot. I think I can fix this now.

“ I didn't think I would get to talk to a real person, thanks Jess.

“ The resources you have given me will save hours.

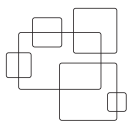
“ I'm going to tell my friends about this. So good!



IDEAS thanks our **sponsors and supporters**



IDEAS celebrates the value added for people with disability through our work with partners



EASTERN RIVERINA ARTS

Eastern Riverina Arts sought to work with IDEAS on their platform project. It makes arts accessible to everyone in the Riverina.



PLATFORM

IDEAS developed disability awareness training for community organising committees for festivals and commissioned EzyDun, an accessible toilet, hoist and change table on the go to accompany Platform. Funded by NDIS ILC program.



Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

ACCAN sought IDEAS' expertise to co-develop and host online their Accessible Telecoms Project. Funded by NDIS ILC program.



Photo: Black Lives Matter protest in Sydney Central, June 2020, by Dean Sewell Occuli.



Information on Disability Education & Awareness Services

53 Merivale Street Tumut NSW 2720

.....
Freecall 1800 029 904

.....
Free text 0458 296 602

.....
Email ideas@ideas.org.au

.....
Web ideas.org.au

.....
Fax (02) 6947 3723

.....
Monday–Friday 8:00am–8:00pm



Front cover: Australian Defence helicopters fly over bushland and houses burnt in recent bushfires, NSW 2020. Photo by James Brickwood SMH.

Back cover: Street art on the wall of Creative Features in Moorabbin depicting the iconic photo of Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany's wearing a face mask. Photo by Wayne Taylor, The Age (Melbourne).