

It is a privilege to present the President's Report for 2023.

Laetare Court, the nucleus of HOPES, was established in 2010 and was the first successfully developed housing community for people with an acquired brain injury in Tasmania.

Like any organisation, particularly in the not-for-profit sector, HOPES and Laetare Court have shared several challenges as we celebrate our thirteenth (13th) anniversary. Coincidentally, Laetare Court has thirteen (13) independent living units supported by our community house.

I first joined the Board in January 2023 as the Board looked to co-opt new members and add different skill sets at the Board level.

Following the resignation of President Mark Lamont, by the HOPES Inc. Constitution, I was nominated and elected President at a Special Board Meeting on 24 March 2023.

My first task as President was to understand the history and original vision of HOPES and introduce myself to one of our founding members, former President and Life Member Sue Hodgson.

Meeting Sue is a moment that will stay with me for a very long time.

The café kindly extended their opening hours as Sue welcomed me to the HOPES family and shared some important history of HOPES. It was clear that I had met a special lady; recently learning that Sue was affectionately known as the “Mother of HOPES”.

Sue was very generous with her time and experiences, leaving me with a document titled "Stepping Stones to Laetare Court”.

With Sue’s blessing, I can share some details of what was once a dream, to what we now know as Laetare Court and HOPES Inc.

It all began in 1986 with five (5) people under the age of twenty-five (25) admitted to the neurological ward of the Royal Hobart Hospital, with two (2) of those people calling the Royal Hobart Hospital “home” for over eighteen (18) months.

By 1994, the situation had not improved, when a small group formed HOPES (Housing Options Providing Extra Support) to look at alternative options.

HOPES became an incorporated body in 1997, to enable the organisation to seek funding.

A questionnaire was later developed and distributed in Tasmania and interstate with the assistance of the Department of Health and Human Services, Councils and several disability support organisations. One result of the questionnaire revealed that there were several accommodation options available for people with intellectual disabilities and as a result, HOPES focussed on people with Acquired Brain injuries (ABI) and neurological conditions.

During the next phase, the search for viable financial options began. Unfortunately, as each possibility appeared, they diminished as quickly because the financial support was not available.

In October 2009, fortunes changed when the Commonwealth Government established the National Building Stimulus Program.

Excitement quickly unfolded when Disability Services supported a joint application to build twelve (12) units in Glenorchy. Unfortunately, the excitement led to heartbreak when an agreement to develop a parcel of land in Glenorchy took too long to be released, and the application was in tatters.

In October 2009, the time finally arrived. HOPES had the opportunity to lease fourteen (14) units in Moonah, Tasmania. Construction plans were approved, foundations were ready to be poured and only minor alterations were possible to ensure that further Council permissions were not required. In May 2010 construction was complete, residents began to move in and Laetare Court was born.

As I walked away from my meeting with Sue, I was in absolute awe. The time, effort, blood, sweat and no doubt many tears to establish HOPES and what we now know to be Laetare Court, could not be described in words. Simply, an amazing achievement driven by an equally amazing lady.

I mentioned earlier that HOPES and Laetare Court have shared some challenges in 2023. On reflection, was it as challenging as it was in 1986 when it all began?
Or eight (8) years later when HOPES was first formed?
Or another fifteen (15) years later when HOPES was finally offered a lease agreement?

In response, I can offer a simple summaryPERSPECTIVE

Our journey in 2023 is all about perspective.

HOPES didn't continue with the trial of the Support Coordinator Services. Sadly, we lost a member of the HOPES family, when one of our valued residents unexpectedly passed. Our Executive Officer was on extended leave throughout the year and tendered her resignation on 10 October 2023.

The positives:

- The Board acknowledged and accepted the challenges ahead
- The Board continued to plan for the successful future of HOPES
- A new Business Plan was drafted and circulated for discussion.
- The Board moved towards a better understanding of the NDIS
- The Keeping Pets Policy was reviewed and adopted.
- The Keeping Pets Policy (easy-read version) was presented to residents to help them understand the policy
- Our Residential Tenancy Agreement was reviewed and adopted.
- The Board has:
 - implemented appropriate Employment Contracts
 - carefully managed the assets and liabilities of HOPES
 - successfully managed the financial interests of our members.
- The nucleus of the current Board will continue beyond 2023
- The Board is committed to the growth and continuous improvement

The positives far outweigh the negatives and again our journey is about perspective.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and formally thank Mark Lamont. When I first joined the Board in January, Mark was the President and was instrumental in establishing the board's subcommittees. Each subcommittee had clear roles and responsibilities that paved a clear path forward for the Board.

Unfortunately, Mark stepped down as President as he prepared to travel overseas and although Mark won't be an Executive member of the Board, he will continue to play an active role on the Board and work closely with our valued residents.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and formally thank David McLaughlin. David joined the Board in January and quickly transitioned to the role of Treasurer. David's contribution to HOPES has been outstanding, managing the financial aspects of HOPES, helping develop the draft business plan and managing our NDIS responsibilities in the absence of our Executive Officer.

Board members make a substantive impact in any organisation, and we feel the loss when they step away.

Sadly, Georgina Doughty will step away from her role on the Board, to spend more quality time with her family. I would like to acknowledge and formally thank Georgina for her invaluable input on the Board. Georgina always provided a clear and objective view that will be missed. On behalf of the Board, we send our best wishes to Georgina and her family, and we look forward to hearing about the family's new adventures.

Linda Seaborn will also step away from her role on the Board as she plans to travel abroad and spend more time overseas. I would like to formally thank Linda for her invaluable input on the Board, which covered many aspects, including finances and the transition towards our Finance & Asset Management Subcommittee. On behalf of the Board, we send our best wishes to Linda and her family, and we look forward to hearing about her travel adventures.

To our continuing Board members, Vice President Bruce Clark, Secretary and Public Officer Harun Abdallah, Liz Coleman, and Nick Leslie.

Thank you all for your support and guidance and for sharing your expertise and life experiences. We are all volunteers, and we invest a significant amount of personal time into this wonderful organisation.

The Board has managed some challenging times in 2023. Many robust discussions have unfolded, numerous objective views shared, and difficult decisions resolved. I am proud to confirm that you have performed your roles and responsibilities beyond my expectations. I hope that we can maintain the nucleus of the Board and continue to replenish the Board with new faces, new skills and expertise as we continue to move forward.

A special mention to our operational team, Renee McGarvey and Karen Fall. Thank you for your support and understanding during some challenging times. The care and compassion that you display to our valued residents is unwavering.

It always puts a smile on my face when you address a challenging moment with a cheeky jibe, which puts a smile on the faces of so many residents.

To our amazing residents.

The year, 2023 will be remembered as a challenging time with many twists and turns. The Board is committed to revisiting the many items that have been so successful for HOPES over a long period as we continue to plan for a bright future.

Last but not least, to our amazing volunteers.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank you all for being such a valuable member of our team at HOPES. You are always respectful and kind to our residents and brighten their day with your smile, encouragement and support.

It takes special people to be consistently so kind but also sensitive to the needs of each resident and their families. You represent our core values at HOPES, and we would love to work with you again.

As I sign off on the President's report, I share a quote from John F. Kennedy.

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

Dirk Gadd
President
HOPES Inc.