

Annual Report 2022



We are here



to take you there

Linked.org.au

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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation Linked Community Services respectfully acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the country on which we work, the Biripi and Worimi people, and their continuing cultural, spiritual and educational practices in the Hastings, Macleay Valley and Port Stephens regions. We pay our respect to them, their culture, and Elders past, present and emerging.



Message from the Chair

By Alan Watts

As a board, we exist to provide good governance, insight, and direction over Linked Community Services. We have been amazed at the number and variety of challenges this business has faced over the last year. However, we are even more impressed by the professional way in which it has overcome these obstacles.

Our staff and volunteers have selflessly focused on those in need, finding new ways to do things, and even more ways to give back. They have not complained, putting the interests of others before their own. They make the sector of Community Services, to which we belong, even greater through their actions and by simply being such extraordinary people.

All great businesses start with great leadership. Carlie has remained focused on supporting her team and driving the business strategy to success. Linked has overachieved in a time of difficulty and evolved to meet demanding restrictions. On behalf of the Board, thank you Carlie and the Leadership team for your hard work and steadfast dedication.

Creating strong foundations for the successful running of Linked is a key deliverable of the Board. As part of our continuous improvement agenda, new Board members will now require accreditation with the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD). This decision requires greater commitment from Board members and a more professional governing output. That said, I want to thank our Board of Directors, who are committed to continuous improvement, good governance, and service excellence.

Again, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank the Linked Community Services Team for their fantastic achievements in 2021/2022. We acknowledge and appreciate each person's dedication, extraordinary effort, and ongoing support.



The Board



Alan Watts
Chair



Ian Skead
Deputy Chair



Christopher King
Director



Annette Messenger
Director



Russell Stockham
Secretary



Susan Judd
Director



Jane Hillsdon
Director



Carlie Comer
Chief Executive Officer

Message

from our CEO



By Carlie Comer

What a year this has been. Our business, like many others, seems to have experienced the best and worst of times. COVID has continued to influence our operations, with the pandemic bringing a constant stream of unknowns. Through all of this we have maintained our services, our passion, and our unwavering commitment to those in need.

If one word could sum up our approach over the last 12 months, it would be adaptable. We faced seating restrictions forcing more trips with fewer occupants, and frequent cancellations, resulting in heavy administrative strain and constant remapping of driver schedules. To meet this demand and evolving safety regulations, we expanded our fleet and became agile in how we operated. At a time when many felt isolated, or were in isolation, we enabled social outings and delivered as much community service as possible.

Our staff and volunteers went above and beyond to create a mobile library, with many of the books donated from their own collections. This initiative allowed some of our most vulnerable clients to have access to reading material when they most needed it. We also created care packages, filled with hard-to-find necessities, and got those out too. This work continues even now. I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of staff and volunteers.

During this difficult period, it was amazing to see how our industry rallied together in support of each other – at both a state and local level. Our peak industry body, Community Transport Organisation (CTO), provided regular health advice updates, ensuring COVID Management Plans were accurate. They have been fantastic industry advocates and we appreciate their involvement.

As life starts to normalise, we have seen much more social activity. While our organisation has not been immune from the impacts of COVID, I can report we have over delivered against our planned financial targets. When I reflect on the above, what an amazing result, made possible only through hard work, commitment, and a can-do attitude from our staff and volunteers.

We have great volunteers. Really great volunteers. Through all the ups and downs, restrictions, and regulations they stayed with us. Some of them working tirelessly five days a week. On top of that, many were facing challenges of their own, including friends and loved ones lost to the pandemic. I am so proud that they chose to be with us. It's just amazing.

It is with excitement that I look forward to the new financial year. We are in the process of refreshing our Mission, Vision, Values, and Purpose statements and finalising our new strategic plan. This drives everything – it is the wheels for our organisation. Key focus areas will include positioning ourselves for growth and diversifying our services. There is a need to re-engage clients for transport services post COVID, along with revitalising the business as we progress through our recovery phase.

Linked is also in the process of developing our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which will enable us to take meaningful action – both sustainably and strategically. The first step towards our commitment to Reconciliation is to provide an inclusive and culturally appropriate service and environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access our transport services; and so, we engaged a local Aboriginal artist who has designed the story of Linked's connection with the Biripi and Worimi community that our service covers.

I am excited to advise that we will soon see this artwork 'wrapped' on a new van. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jamie Donovan (artist) for this design and for capturing such a meaningful story of Linked Community Services' journey in support of our RAP. Employees and volunteers will also have an opportunity to contribute to this plan in due course.

The year ahead will see some sector changes that will affect the way our contract services are offered. This will increase cost pressures and has been a key consideration in the creation of our new strategy. To stay abreast of these changes, we will fast track our growth agenda, broaden our services to the Community and look for business acquisition and/or amalgamation opportunities that align with our Mission, Vision, Values, and Purpose statements.

It is our goal to commence the accreditation process to extend our services to people who have Home Care Packages (HCP), and to people with a Disability who have a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) package.

We are looking forward to expanding our hours of operation on weekends and evenings and outside of usual business hours. This change will make us more competitive and offer more service to the people in our community. These expanded operating hours will also dramatically assist in increasing our trip numbers which is imperative given the advice of changes to our funding arrangements.

I want to recognise the commitment from the Board in their drive for continuous improvement and personal learning. As a Board, they decided that all new directors will now need to complete Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) certification. This is a major milestone in further professionalising our organisation and ensuring it operates with the best governance principles.

Being a part of Linked Community Services is much more than a job. When we succeed, it improves the lives of others. And, in many cases, it helps those most in need. This is something that is really important to me. When I look at our year end results, and all those who gave so much to achieve them, it obviously matters to you as well. Thank you.

We Service

For over 35 years, Linked Community Services has been delivering services to an ever-growing footprint assisting clients to access regular medical, social, and shopping appointments, with client wellness a priority for our service. Our social outings promote Inclusion, connectivity, and a sense of community.

We are proud of our Community Visitors Scheme Program. This program offers companionship to people who are socially isolated, residing in Aged Care facilities and Nursing homes and who don't have regular, or any family or friends contact. Linked Community Services bridges the gap by providing regular visits and creating genuine friendships through our volunteers, proven to improve quality of life.

Port
Stephens



Key Stats 2022

Port Stephens
10,582 Annual Trips
563 New Clients

Port Macquarie - Hastings / Macleay Valley
48,415 Annual Trips
1,420 New Clients

Port
Macquarie

 *1,983 new clients
onboarded this year*
24% growth since 2021

 *58,997 trips
completed this year*
18.5% growth since 2021



36 Fleet Vehicles

23
Cars

11
Vans

2
Buses



Strategic Pillars **2022 2024**

With a newly released Strategic Plan, there is a feeling of excitement, anticipation, and eagerness to continue our growth in delivering services to our community. Concealed behind each challenge is an opportunity; it is challenging, but it is where we put our strengths to work; the capabilities we build are laying the foundation to achieve the targets set in our business plan.

The organisation has just gone through the process of developing our next Strategic Plan 2022-2024.

Through collaboration with employees, the Leadership Team and the Board of Directors, there is a new list of strategic goals and objectives. This two-year Plan focuses on our purpose – that is, our primary reason for being.

It is the difference we make, the value we add, and the change we seek to create. It is our how, our what and our why.

Our values provide an essential moral compass for our Strategic Plan and enable us to focus on how we can best plan and manage our future.

Organisational Strategy

- Secure income and growth opportunities based on structured analysis and market opportunity, aligned to our vision, mission, purpose and values.

Financial Sustainability

- Clearly define objectives and set goals for targeted funding opportunities.
- Ensure we are financially viable.

Services Offered

- Continue our service excellence while expanding into additional services.

People & Capability

- Build on our organisational structure through integrated business and workforce planning.
- Understand and respond to employee and client feedback through continuous listening.

Marketing Initiatives

- Create a new strategic marketing plan.

Business Processes (Technology)

- Align our business processes that enhances capability, efficiency, and client satisfaction.

ICT Technology

- Review of ICT equipment.
- Provide appropriate technology to enhance the day-to-day operations of Linked.

Compliance/Risk

- Maintain a culture of continuous improvement.
- Ensure levels of risk and uncertainty are identified and managed in a structured way through identification, assessment, control, and review.

Our Organisational Values

IMPROVING
PRACTICE

Integrity – In everything we say, we do, upholding the integrity of our brand, each other, and our clientele.

Motivation – We employ motivated people who have the passion to work together as one team to deliver on our goals and objectives.

Personable – We personalise our conversations, ask questions, and learn about each other and our customers, creating a unique experience for everyone.

Accountable – We are accountable for delivering on our mission, our goals, our promises and our commitment to each other to achieve positive outcomes.

Commitment – We are committed to growing our caring reputation throughout the community where we are the leading source provider for our clients.

Trust – We are an organisation who deliver on our promises through the reliability of our people.

Who we are

Our Mission

*We are here
to take you there!*

Our Values

*To be recognised as the
service provider of choice
for assisting the community
in maintaining connection
and independence*

Our Purpose

*We take our clients on a
journey, creating a unique
and positive experience so
they can continue
accessing our services*



Reconciliation Action Plan

Linked Community Services are proud to embark on the journey of developing our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

This RAP enables us to strengthen our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories and how we can support reconciliation in our community. We are committed to providing access and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and building and maintaining a diverse and inclusive community.

Building on our efforts throughout the year, the commitments of our RAP working group will support our future efforts to contribute to strong relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians, promote respect

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, rights, and build opportunities to enrich lives.

We are committed to furthering our community partnerships that promote and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and businesses and continuing with our work to investigate opportunities to encourage inclusiveness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In line with our commitment towards Reconciliation we will provide an inclusive and culturally appropriate service and environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access our transport services; proudly working toward displaying on one of our vehicles the story of Linked's connection with the Biripi and Worimi community that we engaged a local Aboriginal artist to design.



Client Feedback

Transported to and from my appointment, my driver was so kind and caring and she did not know about my health issues, but she sensed I was a wee bit worried. On the way home a beautiful drive past the beach. We were both smiling and saying how blessed we are to live here. My driver was a really special soul, very dedicated to her job and obviously loves it. She is a great Ambassador to your company. Thank you to all the hard-working team, which go over and above their daily duties.

Our client said our driver was wonderful, so courteous and looked after her like he would his own Mother.

We received a call from a client complimenting the service and care provided by our driver to and from their appointment, she said the driver's care factor and nature was of very high standard and she was extremely grateful for the service provided.

A new client could not wait to call and book in again, they said this is a terrific service and commented that our Linked drivers are lovely.

Client called to say she 'felt like the Queen', her driver was one of our wonderful volunteers.

We have been clients for a few months now and we are both so impressed with the Linked

service and cannot talk highly enough of the drivers. We live in a rural location and have booked our regular transport.

Client who received one of the Christmas hampers sent in two notes expressing his gratitude for the excellent service he receives; he has developed a great deal of respect and admiration for the drivers.

Clients called to say how happy they were with our service and for working with their social worker at the local hospital to arrange transport for his ongoing radiation treatment,

Linked made the whole process so much less stressful. Clients

Linked

Community

Transport Services are my favourite agency based non-profit Organisation, the volunteer drivers are great people but your whole team is great.

were very impressed with all the staff's kindness and punctuality.

Client rang to say all our drivers are amazing, and client wonders how we pick them because they are all great.

A local Aged Care Facility is looking forward to when Linked Community Visitor Volunteers can visit again as their residents are missing their 'friends' during this difficult pandemic isolation periods.

Client commented he has only just started with Linked, and he has to say that he is very happy, all the drivers he has had have all been so helpful.

Social Outings 2022



We had 7672 clients who were out and about this year.

At Linked Community Services, we encourage social inclusion and independence through our Social Outings program.

This past year, we have provided a diverse range of activities, we increased our overnight trips, our clients have explored the fascinating local environs, meeting friends and being part of community.

Excellent social outing experiences, promoting connectivity, our social outings positively contribute to our client's health and wellbeing.



Finance Report

by Carlie Comer



Linked Community Services recorded a successful year, recording an operating surplus of \$796,121.

Covid-19 has continued to challenge our organisation with increased risks and compliance costs. We are very pleased with the way our team has adapted to the changing environment. We were able to continue providing safe, quality services and produce strong financial results.

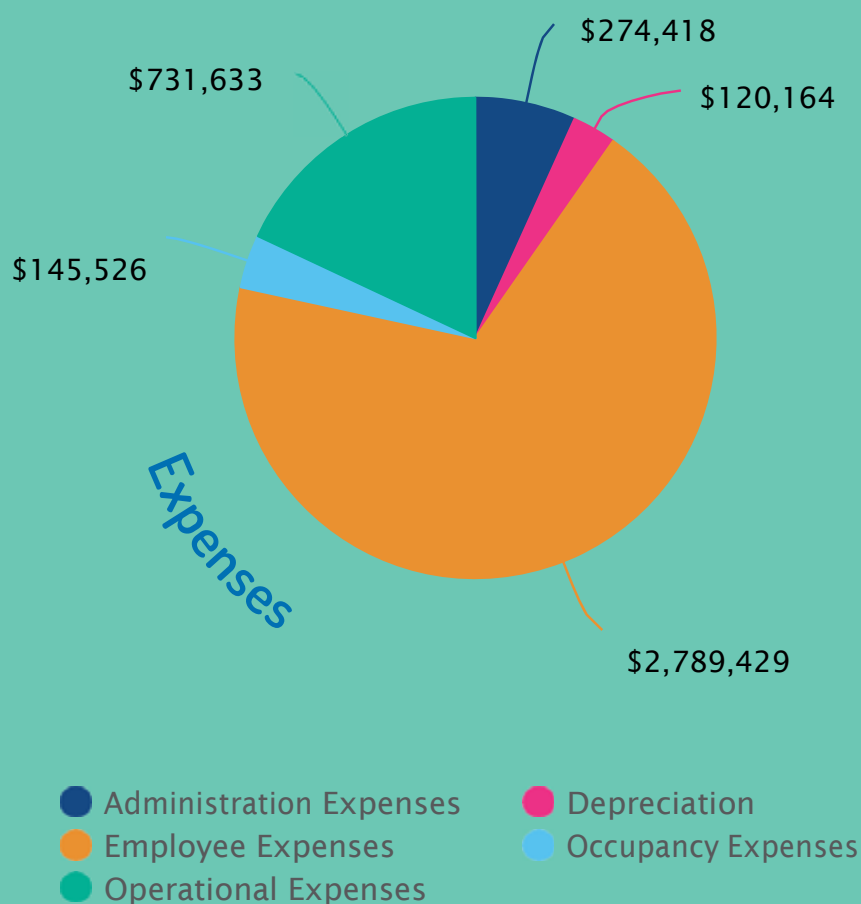
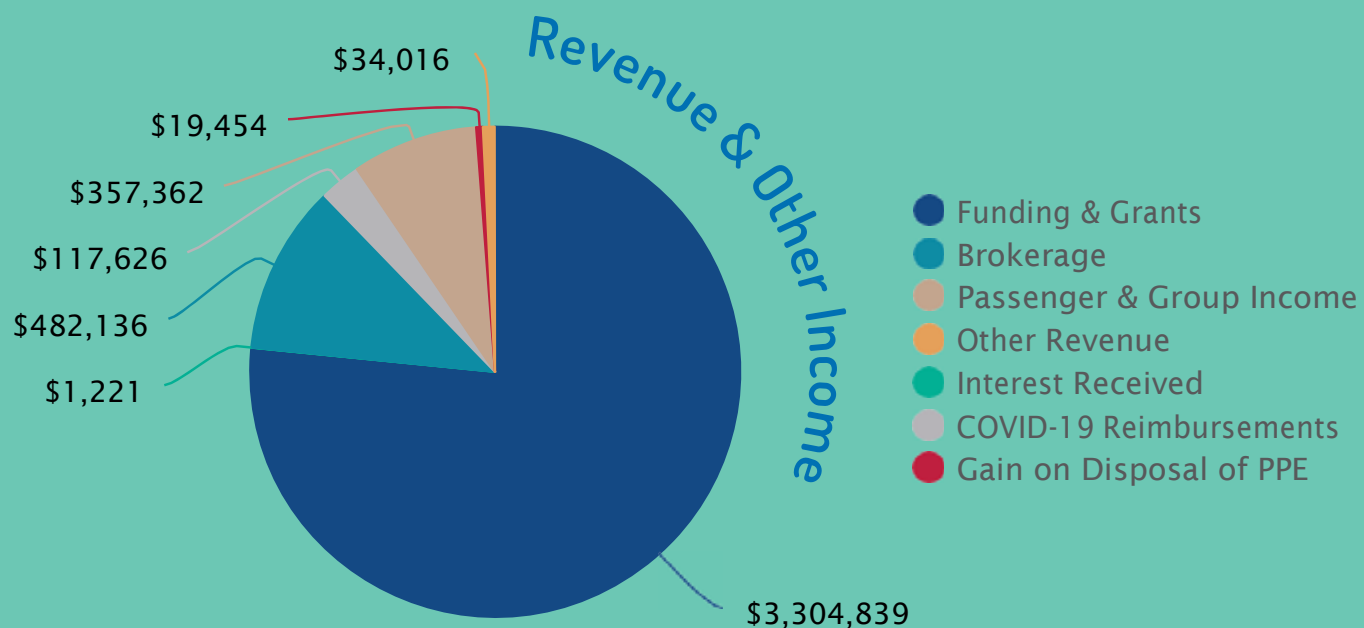
Total income for the financial year was \$4,162M, an increase of 2% from the 2020 year. Government funded income decreased by 5%, but pleasingly, our brokerage income increased by 48% and individual passenger and group income increased by 20%.

While there are additional costs related to Covid-19, a lot of the efficiencies and improved workflows introduced in prior years has seen costs remain at a sustainable level. In addition to our operating surplus, Linked also received JobKeeper payments of \$261,000 and cashflow boost payments of \$37,500. These government subsidies will be used to improve the services already provided and reinvest into the community.

Linked has cash reserves of \$3.369M (last year \$2.297M), of which \$598K is set aside in the Asset Replacement Fund.



Equity, Liabilities & Assets	2022	2021
Total Equity	\$3,802,704	\$3,547,220
Current Liabilities	\$512,320	\$569,900
Non-Current Liabilities	\$18,364	\$11,034
Total Liabilities	\$530,684	\$580,934
Current Assets	\$3,767,052	\$3,491,831
Non-Current Assets	\$566,337	\$636,323
Total Assets	\$4,333,388	\$4,128,154



Moving forward *A Greener Future!*

Linked Community Services is committed to sustainable living, doing more and better as we move forward, we are constantly seeking ways to reduce our environmental impact and natural resource use; we have a vision of a brighter, better future.



Our service encourages active, social, and meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Linked is moving towards introducing low carbon transport options to our fleet; electric and Hybrid vehicles have a significant role in reducing transport emissions and being a major factor in cleaning up the air we breathe. When it comes to making the most significant impact for the least effort, using clean energy is the obvious choice, hence why Linked has initiated a project introducing Hybrid transport vehicles into our fleet. Our vehicles will deliver environmental, financial and health benefits from a transition from internal combustion cars to electric vehicles.

We are on track with achieving a paperless work environment. While it's clear that the use of paper-based systems significantly reduces productivity and increases costs, reliance on unnecessary use of paper has a significant impact on the environment.

Digital transformation will benefit our service delivery while helping us to become more environmentally friendly. In recent months we have been working on reducing our environmental footprint, one of the ways we have initiated this change is by moving to cashless payments. We are excited to take you with us on this new journey for a greener future, keep an eye out for our new hybrid vehicles on the road.



Thank you & *Acknowledgements*

Volunteers

Volunteering builds connections, brings people together, and creates an inclusive community for everyone. Our volunteers tremendously contribute to our client's lives by providing an ongoing commitment to improving social involvement. We are exceedingly grateful to have such compassionate Volunteer Drivers, Bus Carers, and Community Visitors on our team. We appreciate your dedication, thank you!

Appreciation from our communities

We want to express our gratitude to our communities for supporting our inclusion and independence goals. Your continuation of excellent feedback and charity is not disregarded and is held as an attestation to the ongoing efforts of our team.

Our Funding Partners

To the following funding partners, we would like to thank you for your continued support:



Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW)



Hunter New England Local Health District



Department of Social Services

How you can help

Volunteer with us

We couldn't achieve the positive impact we are without the indispensable help from our committed volunteers. Do you know someone, or are you looking for an opportunity to give back to the community and make a significant difference in the lives of others? Volunteering with Linked Community Services can be an excellent option. We offer a broad range of volunteering opportunities, and volunteering is open to everyone, and we don't expect you to have specialised skills or experience.

Charitable Donations

Over the years, how we interact and participate within our communities has changed; understandably, life is full of time restraints. *"I want to help; I just do not have any extra time in my day"* if this is you and you are passionate about supporting your local community services, you still can. Linked Community Services is a registered charity and can accept charitable donations.

Contact us on 02 6583 8644.



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to take you there