



# Annual Report 2020-21





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## The Beginning

Sylvanvale was founded in 1947 when a group of parents united to form an organisation that would give their children with disability a better quality of life through access to education and social inclusion.



## Getting Results

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## Our Vision

A community working in partnership to support people with disability to live the life they choose.



## Our Purpose

Enabling independence for people living with disability.



## Our Values

We embrace a strong person centred approach, underpinned by the values we live by:  
**Belonging, Choice, Contribution, Respect and Safety.**

# Message from The Chairman



“Throughout this unsettled period, Sylvanvale staff showed remarkable resilience; **rising to the task and delivering high quality care.**”

– Jeff McCarthy,  
Sylvanvale Chairman

Over the past year, Sylvanvale continued to be presented with challenges on many fronts.

COVID-19 remained an ongoing disruption for our organisation. The Sylvanvale team did a remarkable job adapting to the ever-changing circumstances, closely following the advice of NSW Health at all times. Our 2020 Voice Survey of the people we support and their carers showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the way we managed and communicated the changes.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) presented us with other challenges. In July 2020, concerning changes were introduced to the funding and provision of Supported Independent Living (SIL) supports, which put NDIS participants' quality of care at risk. Sylvanvale is continuing to advocate and lobby for the 200 plus people we provide SIL supports for. We strongly believe that decisions about access and supports need to be made based on human need in Australia.

Throughout this unsettled period, Sylvanvale staff showed remarkable resilience; rising to the task and delivering high quality care – guided each day by the organisation's values and strategic goals.

Testament to the team's tenacity, the organisation achieved many operational successes. We made significant inroads in the implementation of our Technology Roadmap, receiving much positive feedback, as well as successfully passing our Quality Assurance Audit. In the SIL space, we completed largescale renovations and landscaping improvements across many of our sites.

For the first time in many years we successfully turned the first sod on our first Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) project in Bangor, where we will build new high standard accommodation for eight (8) people to enable them to live independently.

I would like to thank all our staff for their hard work and dedication that has seen us achieve so much in yet another challenging year. This includes the Executive Team, led by Leanne Fretten as Chief Executive Officer.

To my fellow Directors, thank you for your commitment and diligence throughout this year. I would also like to express my appreciation to Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of New South Wales, as Vice Regal Patron of Sylvanvale.

Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge and thank all the people we support and their families for entrusting us with the critical role of supporting them to live the life they choose. We are very grateful for your ongoing support as we navigate through these testing times.

Jeff McCarthy  
Chairman





# Message from The CEO

It's remarkable to think that over the past year our organisation has been operating in the midst of a pandemic.

I have been continually impressed by the resilience shown by staff, the people we support and families throughout this time as they adapted to the frequently changing circumstances.

COVID-19 placed the organisation under financial pressure, with the JobKeeper subsidy ensuring the sustainability of the organisation this year.

Adding to financial demands has been the reduction of funded Supported Independent Living (SIL) supports under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This has resulted in a decrease in hours and level of service for many of the people we support. We have been working hard to persuade decision-makers of the importance of this funding in the lives of people with disability and for the continuity of providers such as Sylvanvale.

Our long-term sustainability is key to us continuing to support people with disability to live the life they choose well into the future. Our forthcoming

company separation will help support our future success, as well as preserve and protect our heritage.

Continuous improvement is also critical to our longevity, and we are always looking at ways to do things even better. To this end, in August 2020, we instructed an external auditor to review how we implement Behaviour Support Plans that contain restrictive practices. We also carried out a Speech and Dietitian's Project across all our SIL sites, improving nutrition and identifying swallowing risks. For staff, we launched new communication tools, including the LifeWorks Wellbeing App and the Keep Connected virtual video Series.

I would like to thank our Chairman, Jeff McCarthy, and the Board of Directors, for their ongoing support. To the Executive Team and staff thank you for your outstanding efforts over the past twelve months.

Finally to you, the people we support, families and carers, thank you for your ongoing support, which is integral to the future success of our organisation.

**Leanne Fretten**  
Chief Executive Officer



“Our long-term sustainability is key to us continuing to support people with disability **to live the life they choose well into the future.**”

– Leanne Fretten,  
Sylvanvale CEO





# Our Strategic Plan

## Our Goals



“Testament to the team’s tenacity,  
**the organisation achieved  
many operational successes.**”

– Jeff McCarthy,  
Sylvanvale Chairman



### 01

#### CUSTOMER-FIRST PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

Provide high quality services that meet the needs of our customers and the choices they make.



### 02

#### QUALITY-DRIVEN PRACTICE

Through a capable and informed workforce, foster a positive culture that supports high-quality supports and flexible service delivery.



### 03

#### SUSTAINABILITY

Improve our productivity and efficiency to support growth, innovation and sustainability.





# Our Stakeholder Feedback

## What People Are Saying

### What our people and their families say...



"Our son is blown away with the **excellent standard of support and personal care.**"



"Always such professional and ongoing support **by my sister's team at Sylvanvale.**"



"Our daughter loves Sylvanvale and cannot express **how grateful she is for Sylvanvale's services.**"



"I have been very impressed by their willingness to actively learn about my daughter **by listening, asking questions and suggesting options.**"

### What our staff say...



"It doesn't feel like a job **because it's my passion.**"



"I love seeing the positive difference **I make for people with disability.**"



"I thoroughly enjoy supporting our participants **have choice and control and reach their potential.**"



"A great work environment with an **excellent team to work with and very useful training.**"

# Our Impacts

Our 2020-2021 impacts reflect our strategic focus on being a customer-first, quality-driven and sustainable organisation.



**Winner**

Winner of 'Community' section of the ShireAbility Film Festival



**33%**

Increase in spaces for kids with high support needs at Mikarie, due to upgrades



**135**

iPads distributed to frontline staff for use on site



**90%**

Family satisfaction regarding Sylvanvale's COVID-19 communications



**43**

Sites where WiFi was rolled out



**34%**

Increase in proactive hazard reporting



**18.19**

Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate – our lowest ever, below industry benchmark



**77%**

Reduction in workers' compensation claims



**70%**

Staff participation rate in the 2020 Voice Survey

# 2020–21 Timeline

## JUL–SEPT 2020

### Sylvanvale Milestones

### External Factors

**4 JUL**  
Sylvanvale's Independent Living and Social Support services resumed in the community.

**8 JUL**  
External auditor contracted by Sylvanvale to review the implementation of Behaviour Support Plans that contain restrictive practices.

**17 JUL**  
Face masks introduced at Sylvanvale sites.

**31 AUG**  
Sylvanvale Community Hubs reopened for people we support living at home with family.

**14 SEPT**  
New speech and dietitian's project got underway at Supported Independent Living (SIL) sites.

**21–23 SEPT**  
Stage 1 of Quality Assurance Audit conducted, which Sylvanvale successfully passed.

**24 SEPT**  
Electronic QR Code entry protocol introduced at all Sylvanvale sites.

**1 JUL**  
New South Wales eased restrictions further due to limited community transmission of COVID-19.

**8 JUL**  
Following a spike in community transmission in Melbourne, interstate border closed between Victoria and NSW.

**17 JUL**  
Following an increase in cases in NSW, tighter restrictions were introduced in the State.

**7 AUG**  
All Victorians arriving in NSW required to quarantine in hotels for 14 days.

**2 SEPT**  
Australian economy goes into recession for first time in nearly thirty years.

# OCT–DEC 2020

**1 OCT**  
New employee benefit, the LifeWorks Wellbeing App, launched.

**13 OCT**  
Community Hubs reopened for people we support living in external Supported Independent Living.

**22 OCT**  
Sylvanvale's new communication tool, the Keep Connected video series, launched.

**27 OCT**  
13 Bobbin Place, Bangor, purchased by Sylvanvale for new Specialist Disability Accommodation.

**16 OCT**  
One-way quarantine-free travel bubble introduced for New Zealanders travelling into NSW and the Northern Territory.

**2 NOV**  
Voice Family, Participant and Staff Surveys launched.

**9 NOV**  
Lorna Stone Development Award winners announced at Sylvanvale AGM.

**23 NOV**  
Community Hubs reopened for people we support living in Sylvanvale Supported Independent Living.

**23 NOV**  
Became mandatory for many businesses to use electronic record systems for possible contact tracing.

**2 DEC**  
Sylvanvale successfully passed Stage 2 of the NDIS Quality Assurance Certification Audit.

**5 DEC**  
Mikarie Child Care Centre upgrade completed, which provided more places for children with disability.

**7 DEC**  
Face masks removed at Sylvanvale sites.

**14 DEC**  
Authorities in the United Kingdom reported a COVID-19 variant to the World Health Organisation.

**18 DEC**  
Authorities in South Africa announced the detection of another new variant.

**16 DEC**  
Job Keeper funding ceases for Sylvanvale.

**21 DEC**  
Facemasks re-introduced at Sylvanvale sites.

**20 DEC**  
Sixty-eight COVID-19 cases in NSW, leading to travel restrictions for some NSW residents.

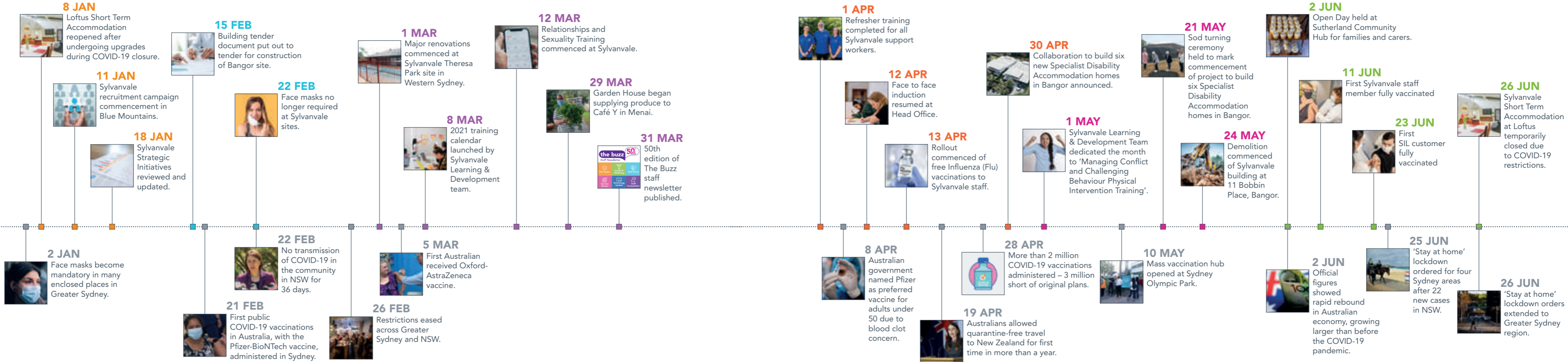
# 2020–21 Timeline

## JAN–MAR 2021

# APR–JUN 2021

### Sylvanvale Milestones

### External Factors





# Three Friends Move Into A New Home

Anne, Lynne and Mark first met at Rainbow Lodge, one of Sylvanvale's first residential properties, in the Blue Mountains.

“The staff have a deep understanding of their needs and their behaviours, **and provide a strong emotional foundation.**”

– Laurie,  
Lynne's brother



They got along so well that when the site closed in 1989, they decided to stay together. They moved into a three bedroom house in Caringbah, in Sydney's Sutherland Shire, where they lived together for 31 years.

“They were like a little family in the home,” says Anne's sister, Catherine.

But over time the property, which was not owned by Sylvanvale, became in need of a lot of repairs and maintenance. This year Sylvanvale made the difficult decision to move out of the site.

Of paramount importance to everyone was that they remained together.

“We didn't want to separate them, as they had been together for so long – like brother and sisters,” says Mark's Mum, Denise.

Anne, Lynne and Mark were offered places at another Sylvanvale property in Caringbah that had some vacancies. They visited the site together, with their families, to see if it was right for them. They decided that it was.

It was also very important to Anne, Lynne and Mark, and their families, that the key staff, who had supported them for all those years, came with them to the new property.

“The staff have a deep understanding of their needs and their behaviours, and provide a strong emotional foundation that Lynne, Anne and Mark really appreciate,” says Lynne's brother, Laurie.

After talking with the team, Sylvanvale ensured that most of the support workers would transition to the new home.

On 28 March 2021, Lynne, Anne and Mark moved into their new home – a larger, more modern property just a short distance away from their previous house.

While the new home has offered the three friends continuity in their lives, it has also given them the opportunity to bond with other people who already live in the home.

Lynne and Anne have made close friends with their flatmate Cathy, and Mark has connected with two existing housemates through a shared love of football.

“Sylvanvale has done a good job matching the housemates,” says Denise.

Surrounded by a strong network of connections and support – and still being together – Anne, Lynne and Mark are feeling happy in their new home, with their new friends.



# Andre's New Home

As soon as Andre stepped into the Sylvanvale residential property in Western Sydney, he knew it was the one. "We'll take it!" he exclaimed.

Andre's new home would be very different to many of the places he'd lived during his adult life, having spent a number of years living in and out of boarding houses.

"Andre has stayed in so many horrible places," says his sister Cara.

In boarding houses, Andre had to share a room and lived under a constant threat of his things being stolen. He got into the habit of writing his initials on all his clothes.

By contrast, Andre's new Sylvanvale home offered him his very own villa and courtyard in a modern, spacious and purpose-built property. His home also provided shared common areas – another plus for Andre, who has a social and colourful nature.

Andre quickly made friends with his housemates and built strong relationships with staff. He initiated contact with a homeless feral cat called "Harry", who had previously hidden in the property's gardens, turning him into a much loved member of the family.



"Michael has a really good insight into Andre. He understands where Andre is coming from."

– Cara,  
Andre's sister



Andre also thrived on the routine his new home provided and the new activities on offer. He began to go for daily walks and reconnected with his cultural roots, learning to make delicious curries. He also stopped labelling his clothes.

In his new home, Andre began to access the services of Sylvanvale Behaviour Support Practitioner, Michael.

Michael worked with Andre, his support team and his family to develop Andre's emotional responses to situations where he was feeling anxious. One such strategy was encouraging Andre to walk away and take a deep breath to help him calm.

"Michael has a really good insight into Andre. He understands where Andre is coming from. It's a definite plus," says Cara.

The support Andre has received in his new home has brought positive changes to his interactions with the environment around him. As someone who thrives on boundaries, Andre now has the structure he needs to relax and just be himself. Andre can finally feel at home.



# Lyndall's New-Found Independence

Lyndall has always been someone who enjoys her independence. "I like doing my own thing," she says.

As well as working part-time, Lyndall would regularly catch a taxi into town to shop and be part of the community.

Lyndall was living in a group home, which offered her social connections and engagement. But she wanted to experience the freedom that living on your own can give you.

So in January 2021, Lyndall moved to into her very own Sylvanvale villa in the Blue Mountains.

She settled in straight away. From the very beginning, she liked her villa, the staff, the location, the peace and quiet and the two kind-hearted gentlemen who share the villa next door.

As soon as she moved in, Lyndall began making her new space a home. She made artworks for the walls and went shopping for decorative ornaments.



Her lovely villa began to look beautiful and reflect her vibrant personality. She took enormous pride in her new surroundings, keeping them very neat and tidy.

Lyndall also made the most of having her very own kitchen, experimenting with new recipes and baking cookies and cakes.

The closeness of her villa to town meant she was also able to walk to the shops.

Lyndall now has the independence she really wanted, "I can do what I want to do." She said.

This has not only boosted her self-confidence and self-esteem, but also led to her being a much happier, more fulfilled person.

According to support worker Courtney, "The people who know Lyndall have noticed many positive changes since she moved into her new villa."

"I am much happier," agrees Lyndall. "I love my new home."

Lyndall now has the independence she really wanted, **"I can do what I want to do."**

– Lyndall



# Exciting Project Brings More Housing Choice

Sylvanvale is committed to offering participants greater choice when deciding where and how they live.

In April 2021, we were excited to announce the construction of a multi-million dollar project, which will give people with disability access to purpose built, luxury home options. The project will accommodate eight people living with disability across six properties.

Each home will be built to accommodate people who require the highest level of Specialist Disability Accommodation, which means that they will be suitable for people with very high support needs to live in. The homes will provide state-of-the-art accessibility and an abundance of open, private and carefully designed living spaces.



The homes will set a new standard, giving people living with disability access to purpose built, luxury home options.



They will also follow universal design principles so that they will be usable by a wide range of people – regardless of mobility, intellectual disability and cognitive ability.

The six new properties will be built on a block of land purchased by Sylvanvale in October 2020 and the adjacent site, which Sylvanvale already owns. The existing site will be demolished as part of the build.

Sylvanvale is thrilled to be working alongside local builders Vista Build, award winning architects Vic Lake Architectural and interior designers Studio Albus, on this exciting project.

The commencement of the project was marked with a special sod turning ceremony on 21 May 2021.

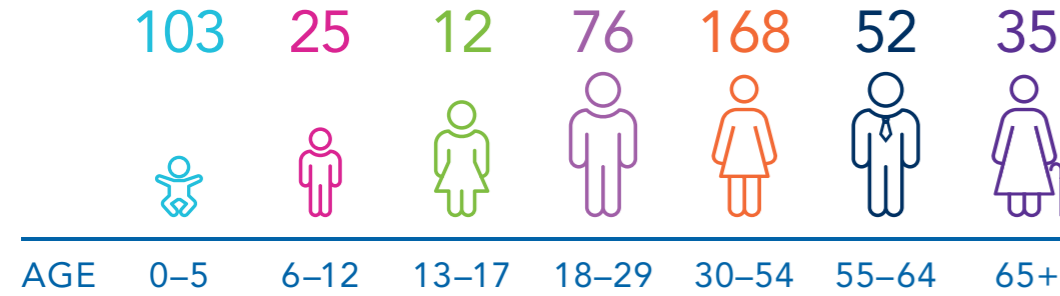
The event was attended by special guests including Sutherland Shire Mayor, Councillor Steve Simpson; Ms Melanie Gibbons, Member for Holsworthy and Parliamentary Secretary for Families, Disability and Emergency Services; and Councillor Peter Scaysbrook of the Sutherland Shire Council. Sylvanvale Board members, staff, families and the project team were also in attendance.



# Our Reach

## The People We Supported

By Age



## Age and Gender of Sylvanvale Employees

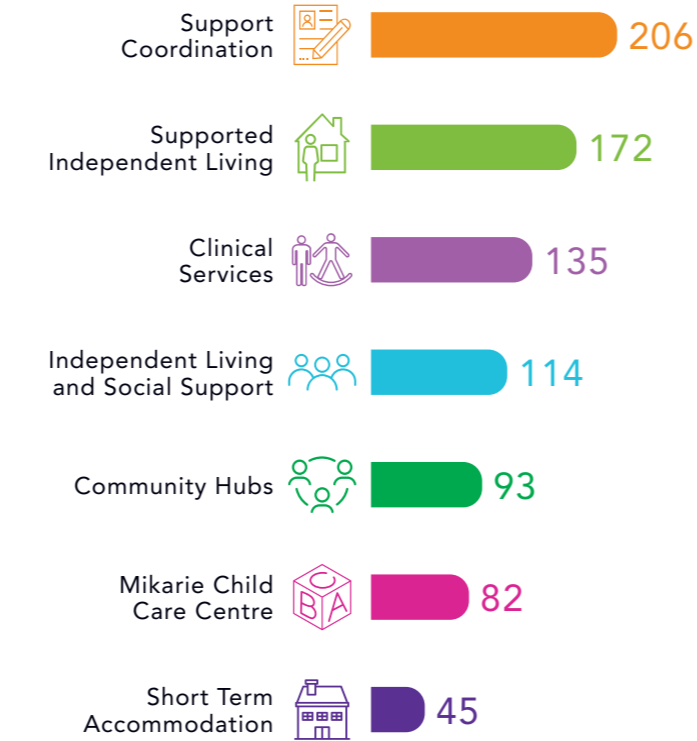
Total Employees



AGE	18-25	26-40	41-50	51-65	66-75
Female	31	131	70	120	22
Male	10	97	55	37	9
Non-binary	—	1	—	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>32</b>

## The People We Supported

By Service\*

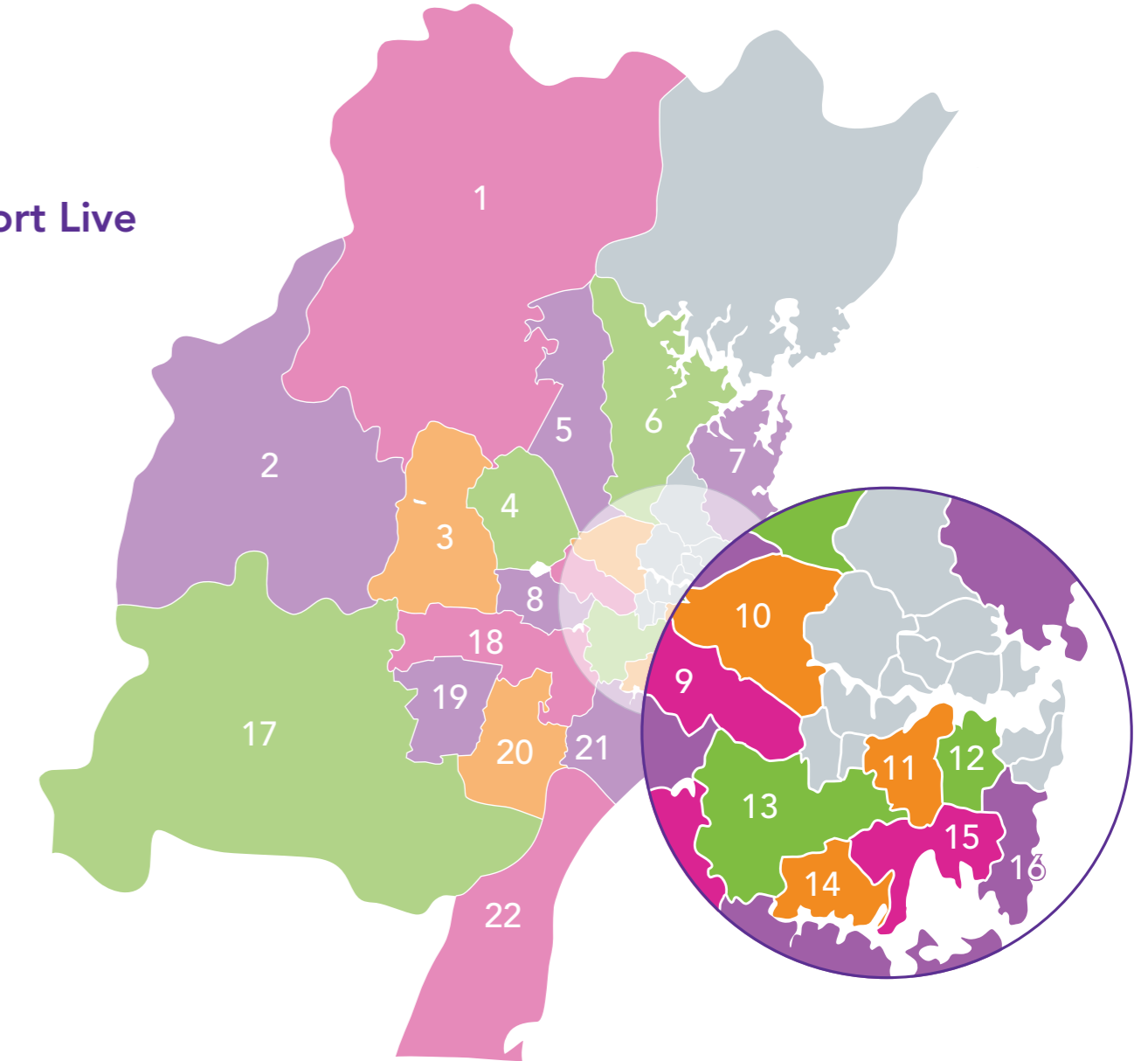


\*Some people access more than one service type.

## Where The People We Support Live

By Local Government Area

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. City of Hawkesbury     | 12. City of Sydney       |
| 2. City of Blue Mountains | 13. Canterbury-Bankstown |
| 3. City of Penrith        | 14. Georges River        |
| 4. City of Blacktown      | 15. Bayside              |
| 5. The Hills Shire        | 16. City of Randwick     |
| 6. Hornsby Shire          | 17. Wollondilly Shire    |
| 7. Northern Beaches       | 18. City of Liverpool    |
| 8. City of Fairfield      | 19. Camden Council       |
| 9. Cumberland Council     | 20. City of Campbelltown |
| 10. City of Parramatta    | 21. Sutherland Shire     |
| 11. Inner West            | 22. City of Wollongong   |





# Thank You

Our enormous thanks to everyone who supported Sylvanvale to achieve its goals during the 2020-2021 financial year. We are extremely grateful for all the contributions we received, including from our regular and workplace giving donors – as well as from the following government agencies, trusts, foundations, businesses and community groups.

## Government

Australian Government - The Treasury  
 Australian Government Department of Health  
 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs  
 Australian Government Department of Social Services  
 Federal Member for Cook, The Prime Minister of Australia

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)  
 NSW Department of Education and Training  
 NSW Department of Family and Community Services  
 State Members for Cronulla, Miranda, Heathcote and Holsworthy  
 Sutherland Shire Council

## Trusts and Foundations

IMB Shire Community Foundation



“We are extremely grateful for all the contributions we received.”

– Leanne Fretten, Sylvanvale CEO

## Our generous supporters

### Business and Community

Ausgrid Employees’ Children’s Appeal	Handyman Timber Sales	Rat Pack Social Club
Arts Theatre Cronulla	IMB Bank Cook Community Classic	Ritchie’s Stores Pty Ltd
Barbara Snel	Lorna Stone	Royal Motor Yacht Club Port Hacking
Good2Give	Mode Installations	St John Bosco Parish
Gynea Women’s Bowling Club	mySupply Store	Sullivan Dewing Chartered Accountants
	Nexon Asia Pacific	Urban Rituelle

## Community contributions

### Generous Donation from St John Bosco Parishioners



Through the incredible generosity of its parishioners’ contributions to direct giving, St John Bosco Parish very kindly donated \$6,200 to support the purchase of equipment for children attending Sylvanvale’s inclusive Mikarie Child Care Centre.

### Beneficiaries of Sylvania BMW Melbourne Cup Luncheon



We were very lucky to again be the recipient of funds raised at the Sylvania BMW Melbourne Cup Luncheon, held at the spectacular Royal Motor Yacht Club Port Hacking. With the very generous support of those who attended, we raised over \$2,733.

## Grants received

\$104,800 Start Strong Pathways Grant  
 \$14,900 Start Strong Long Day Care Program  
 \$12,701 Stronger Communities Programme  
 \$12,700 Quality Learning Environments Grant

### Voted Winners at ShireAbility Film Festival



We were thrilled when ‘James’s Story’ won the ‘Community’ section of the ShireAbility Film Festival, winning by public vote. The short film, which was a collaboration between participant James and Sylvanvale, took home \$500.



# Our Board



**Jeff McCarthy**  
Chairman

Jeff has been a Director and Chairman at Sylvanvale since 2014. He has significant experience in large private and government owned businesses, having held Executive Management roles at Downer, Sydney Water, Integral Energy and Transport for NSW. Jeff is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and a Fellow of Engineers Australia. Jeff holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree and Masters of Commerce degree.



**David Kelly**  
Deputy Chairman

David is a senior airline industry executive with over 30 years' experience, many of those in management roles leading technical, commercial, and business change activities. David holds a Bachelor of Aeronautical Engineering degree and is a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society.



**Bethany Taylor**  
Director

Bethany works in the public sector. She has a Bachelor of Arts (Politics), Bachelor of Law and a Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice. Bethany also holds Diplomas in Business, Business Administration, Management, Human Resource Management and Quality Auditing. Her strong interest in the community stems from family involvement in the sector and a deep sense of community spirit.



**John Slack**  
Director

John brings over forty years of experience in the insurance and funds management industry to Sylvanvale. John was the chief actuary for two life insurance companies and served on the Board of a leading life insurance company in New Zealand. He has also served on the Board of a local Lions club for over 20 years. John is currently a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



**Robert Brown**  
Director and Company Secretary

Robert brings valuable experience in operational governance from his role as Manager International Terminals for Qantas Freight. He is a qualified accountant, AICD member and has solid experience in demonstrating strong regulatory compliance with government agencies. Robert is the Chairperson of the Finding Yellow Disability Foundation and has managed his own freight consulting business since 2014.



**David Rafferty**  
Director

David Rafferty has 22 years in disability service provision. He has participated in National Disability Services committees and also serves on the board of the Centre for Disability Studies. An advocate for inclusion, empowerment and innovation, the result of which he believes should be a new beginning for people who require professional support in their lives. David is a graduate of the long course in Social Role Valorisation (SRV).



**Leanne Fretten**  
Chief Executive Officer

Leanne commenced at Sylvanvale in 2004 as an Occupational Therapist and has since held various management roles in the organisation across a number of departments including Children's Services, Client Services, and People & Culture. Leanne was appointed Sylvanvale's Chief Executive Officer in 2016.



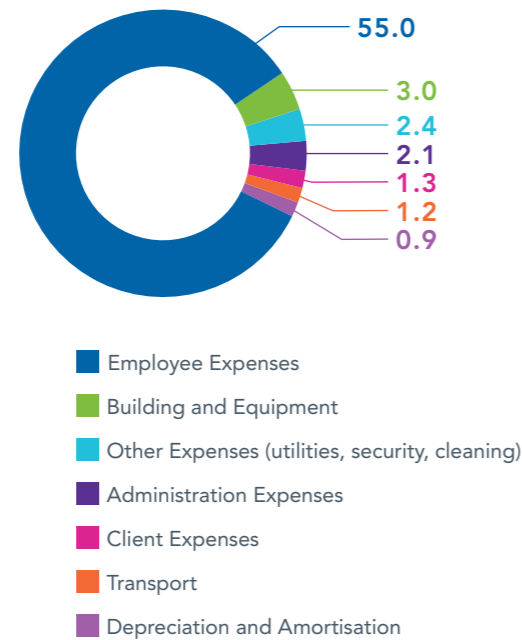
# Financial Summary

In 2020–2021 Sylvanvale achieved an operating surplus of \$7,295 million.

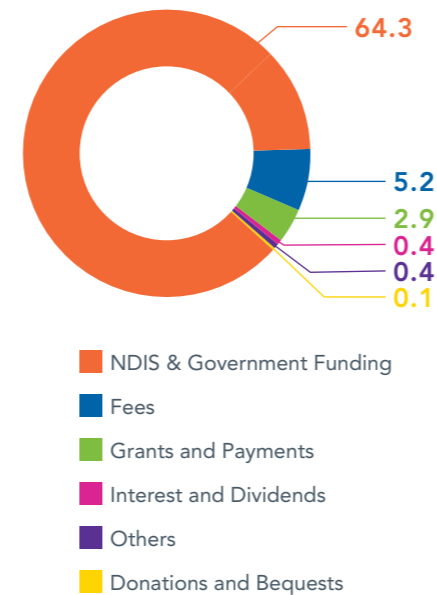
This year's financial performance was materially impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Sylvanvale Foundation remained eligible for the Jobkeeper government subsidy for six months of the financial year to December 2021. This subsidy enabled all staff to be retained with all supports reopened by January 2021, in line with mandated health and safety requirements.

With operational management impacted by mandated health restrictions, this was combined with downward revenue pressure from the NDIA on Supported Independent Living (SIL) participant plans. Despite the overall result, Sylvanvale's underlying operating performance (excluding COVID impacts) gave rise to a deficit position for the year. In the coming financial year management will continue to review strategies to streamline administration, review staffing ratios and improve efficiencies to minimise impacts to the people we support, while also ensuring the viability of the company into the future.

2020–21 Expenses  
[\$ million]



2020–21 Income  
[\$ million]



## Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income [\$,000]

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
Revenue	\$73,190	\$71,539
Expenses	\$65,895	\$67,671
Surplus for the Year	\$7,295	\$3,868
<b>Total Comprehensive Income (loss)</b>	<b>\$7,295</b>	<b>\$3,868</b>

## Statement of Financial Position [\$,000]

As at 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
Total Assets	\$64,390	\$62,652
Total Liabilities	\$21,624	\$27,180
Net Assets	\$42,766	\$35,472
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$42,766</b>	<b>\$35,472</b>





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