

our NEWS

February
2024

From our Chairman



Our auditor (Stewart Brown) has been a leader in reporting independent benchmarks for Aged Care organisations. In the last two years they have started a practice to benchmark NDIS related organisations, with Seton Villa in the foundation group for these benchmarks. We are now able to compare key business metrics and practices across our peer organisations to understand how and where Seton Villa could improve performance.

We are happily placed in the top few for most metrics, including financial resilience, profitability and standards or care. Unhappily, however, it seems that almost half of the organisations surveyed have made substantial losses for multiple years, which does not bode well for the people using their services. I expect that there will be further consolidation of SIL and SDA providers over the next few years.

Marco Colli
Chairman, Seton Villa

From our CEO

Looking forward in 2024

We have begun 2024 in anticipation of announcements by the Commonwealth Minister for the NDIS, Mr Bill Shorten, regarding significant changes proposed to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This follows 222 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC) handed down in October 2023 and it is clear from media releases that the Government intends to rein in the ballooning budget overrun for the scheme and may include narrowing of the eligibility criteria – particularly for children diagnosed with autism.

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From our CEO continued

Increased compliance obligations for registered disability providers have been flagged, along with compulsory registration for everyone in order to improve the quality of service provision across the sector. A renewed emphasis on the human rights of people with disability to make informed decisions about the supports they receive, including preferred providers, is also a likely outcome.

The Minister will also make announcements concerning the 32 recommendations from the 329-page Final Report of the Independent Review into the National Disability Insurance Scheme published in November 2023. The Report presents a vision for a connected system of support for all people with disability (a restatement of the original vision for the NDIS). 'This connected system should include accessible and inclusive mainstream services, foundational supports, support from a navigator and individual support funded through the NDIS.' In many ways this Report presents a 'back to the future' framework whereby State Governments will resume significant responsibility for improving accessibility to mainstream health and education services for People with Disability (PWD).

To prepare for these announcements, Seton Villa employees came together for a Staff Day on Thursday 8 February 2024 at The Epping Club to hear presentations from Sr Debra McCarthy on the charism of the Daughters of Charity; the Seton Villa Strategic Plan from CEO Peter Gardiner; the Stewart Brown Disability Services Financial Benchmark Report from Head of Corporate Services, Chandra Sharma; key takeaways from the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review from Head of Operations, Chandan Sharma; human resources matters from Head of People and Culture, Jessica Dunlop; and Supported Decision-Making from our Participant Experience Lead, Rhondda Vassallo. Feedback from staff members was extremely positive about the day.

It was sobering news from Chandra that only 48% of participating disability providers achieved an operating surplus for FY23, with the average financial loss identified at \$1.2m. This was an increased average loss from FY22 of \$900,000. It underscores the importance for Seton villa to keep corporate overheads as low as possible and to minimise resident vacancies to ensure financial sustainability moving forward.



New NDIS funding portal – PACE

In addition to responding to upcoming Ministerial announcements, the NDIA is introducing a new NDIS funding portal to be known as PACE.

This new technology for managing NDIS plan funding claims will require participants and Persons Responsible to proactively link disability providers to individual NDIS plans in order for providers to claim for services delivered. This new system will be introduced over coming months as NDIS plans are renewed. The NDIA has just announced some information webinars for participants and their families, which I would strongly encourage you to join, if possible, via the following hyperlinks:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/events/9891-overview-participant-journey-making-connections-and-applying-ndis>

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/events/9893-overview-participant-journey-creating-your-ndis-plan>

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/events/9895-overview-participant-journey-changing-and-using-your-ndis-plan>

This major systemic change presents a risk to continuity of funding for Seton Villa, and we will be in touch to convene a meeting with you all toward the end of March 2024 to ensure that you are aware of what will be expected of you as Persons Responsible moving forward.

COVID-19 Update

The Department of Health continues to advise that the community transmission of COVID-19 remains at a high level. Consequently, we will be maintaining the use of surgical face masks within the accommodation settings until further notice. Please wear a mask inside the home whilst visiting family members and remember to wash hands regularly and use the hand sanitiser provided at each location. If community transmission levels subside over coming weeks, the wearing of face masks will be reviewed.

Thank you in anticipation of your co-operation in keeping everyone safe and well at Seton Villa.

Inclusive Governance Initiative

With the support of the Seton Villa Board, we have commenced an initiative to provide our residents with a collective voice through the formation of a resident reference group to provide feedback to the Board about any issues of concern or suggestions for improvements to their experience at Seton.

Following an Expression of Interest (EOI) process, around 12 residents have elected to participate in a two-session Supported Decision-Making training program run by the Centre for Intellectual Disability (CID). The group will then determine the frequency of meetings, and preferred methods of providing feedback. This reference group is an exciting and positive step towards inclusive governance at Seton Villa.

