



**Explorability Inc**

Individualised advocacy for people with disability

**Annual Report  
2019 – 2020**

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## Explorability's Values and Objectives

**Person Centred** – people living with disability, families and carers are central to everything that we do;

**Excellence** – we will lead the way in the development and improvement of best practice;

**Respect** – our actions are guided by a high regard for the inherent dignity and worth of each person;

**Integrity** – we are open, honest, accountable and ethical in all our interactions; and

**Collaboration** – we develop innovative and effective working relationships.

The objectives of Explorability are:

- (a) to ensure that people with disability:
  - (i) are encouraged to maximise an independent lifestyle so as to contribute to and be included in the mainstream community; and
  - (ii) have choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports,by having access to:
  - (i) the provision of sustainable, appropriate and flexible services and supports that meet the individual needs of people with a disability and their family and carers; and
  - (ii) the individualised services, supports and resources they need to optimise their health and well-being and participation in a welcoming community through, but not limited to, community engagement and participation, daily living, family support, systemic and individual advocacy and service planning and coordination;
- (b) to influence the strategic direction of governments and decision makers through an evidence base including formal research, information, policy development and advocacy;
- (c) to strengthen the capacity of all people living with disability and their families and/or carers in metropolitan, regional and remote communities to have a voice and to exercise choice; and
- (d) to build partnerships in the community, business and government sectors.

## Chairperson's Report

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the fantastic work done by the previous chair, Alicia Mason, who is continuing her valuable contribution as a general board member.

I would also like to say thank you to all board members and in particular to those that have filled a constitutional role being;

- Selena Knowles as Deputy Chair
- Punit Agarwal as Treasurer
- Rahul Madan as Secretary

and those that have left during the year

- Nick Dawe who undertook the role as Deputy Chair
- Janet Peacock who undertook the role as Secretary
- Annette Watkins as a General Board Member.

It is a difficult time with the level of uncertainty around the future of advocacy funding but the staff, led by Tracy Foulds, have been exceptional in delivering on our purpose whilst providing a surplus that will continue our pathway to organisational sustainability.

Now I would like to specifically discuss the work of the team and the board.

The Team have done a tremendous job during a tumultuous year with the worldwide impact of COVID-19. It has meant staff were on office rotations and working from home whilst continuing to deliver advocacy support remotely.

We have grown our revenue by 69% to \$1,268k with a surplus of \$62k. Although we enter 2020/2021 with an uncertainty of future funding, I have the full faith in Tracy to deliver for our organisation. During the year, we provided advocacy to 371 unique individuals, which was a substantial increase from the 259 in the previous financial year.

A big thank you to Tracy and all the staff.

The Board have cemented our rhythm of board meetings and strategic objectives this year. Our strategy work has led us to look for other avenues of income that is not solely dependent on grant funding. The board will continue to expand the board composition including director skills and strategically focus the organisation for future success.

Lastly as we continue to be challenged with the demands of our work we will move forward knowing we are making a positive difference to the disability sector and the broader community.

Thank you,

Deane Criddle  
Chair

## Chief Executive Officer's Report

2019 - 2020 proved to be a remarkable year which included both highlights and challenges for the Explorability team. It was a year of growth, change and the unexpected and the team rose to the occasion.

As with previous years, Explorability received additional non-recurrent funding from the Department of Communities (Communities) to increase the capacity of the advocacy service to meet the growing demand. I would like to acknowledge Communities for making this funding available for 2019 - 2020 and I would also like to extend my thanks to Kim Proctor, Service Contract and Development Officer, for his support.

The significant growth was a result of additional funding for three projects:

- The Waitlist Project – aimed at increasing the capacity to provide advocacy, provide capacity building opportunities for self-advocacy and to better understand the drivers of the demand for advocacy.
- The Metropolitan Outreach Advocacy Project – Explorability successfully tendered for a project to provide advocacy outreach to people who are vulnerable and isolated, with a focus on people with disability who are homeless.
- The Wheatbelt Outreach Advocacy Project – Explorability successfully tendered for a locally-based advocacy service to people in the Wheatbelt region.

The above projects were funded non-recurrently and it is hoped that the funding will be extended beyond the current timeframes. There is a demonstrated need for advocacy across all of the projects and services provided and the impacts of the projects not continuing would be significant for people with disability, families and carers.

Communities has advised that the contract for providing Individual Advocacy will be extended until 30 June 2021, which provides some reassurances about the short-term future of the advocacy service.

COVID-19 brought many challenges for people with disability and the focus was on ensuring that Explorability could continue to provide advocacy during these uncertain times. The Teams' transition to working remotely was mostly seamless and several staff continued to work remotely on a rotation basis on the return to the office. Options for working from home in the longer term are being explored with staff while ensuring that Explorability can continue to provide a quality advocacy service.

Explorability continues to explore ways to meet the growing demand for advocacy. A review of the advocacy model is currently underway and it is hoped that this will be finalised and introduced in January 2021. The aim of the review is to increase Explorability's ability to respond to the requests for advocacy in a timely way, while continuing to provide an individualised advocacy service.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all staff. Everyone was highly supportive of one another, worked collaboratively and focused on ensuring that people with disability had access to the supports and services they needed.

I would like to acknowledge the Board and, in particular, Deanne Criddle, Chair, and Alicia Mason, previous Chair, for their support and direction during 2019 – 2020. The contribution and commitment of the staff and Board has been highly valued and I look forward to working with everyone in the next 12 months.

Tracy Foulds  
Chief Executive Officer

## Explorability Board

Deane Criddle – Chairperson

Nick Dawe – Deputy Chair

Punit Agarwal – Treasurer

Rahul Madan – Secretary

Alicia Mason

Kim Law

Marina De Kwant

Selena Knowles

Janet Peacock

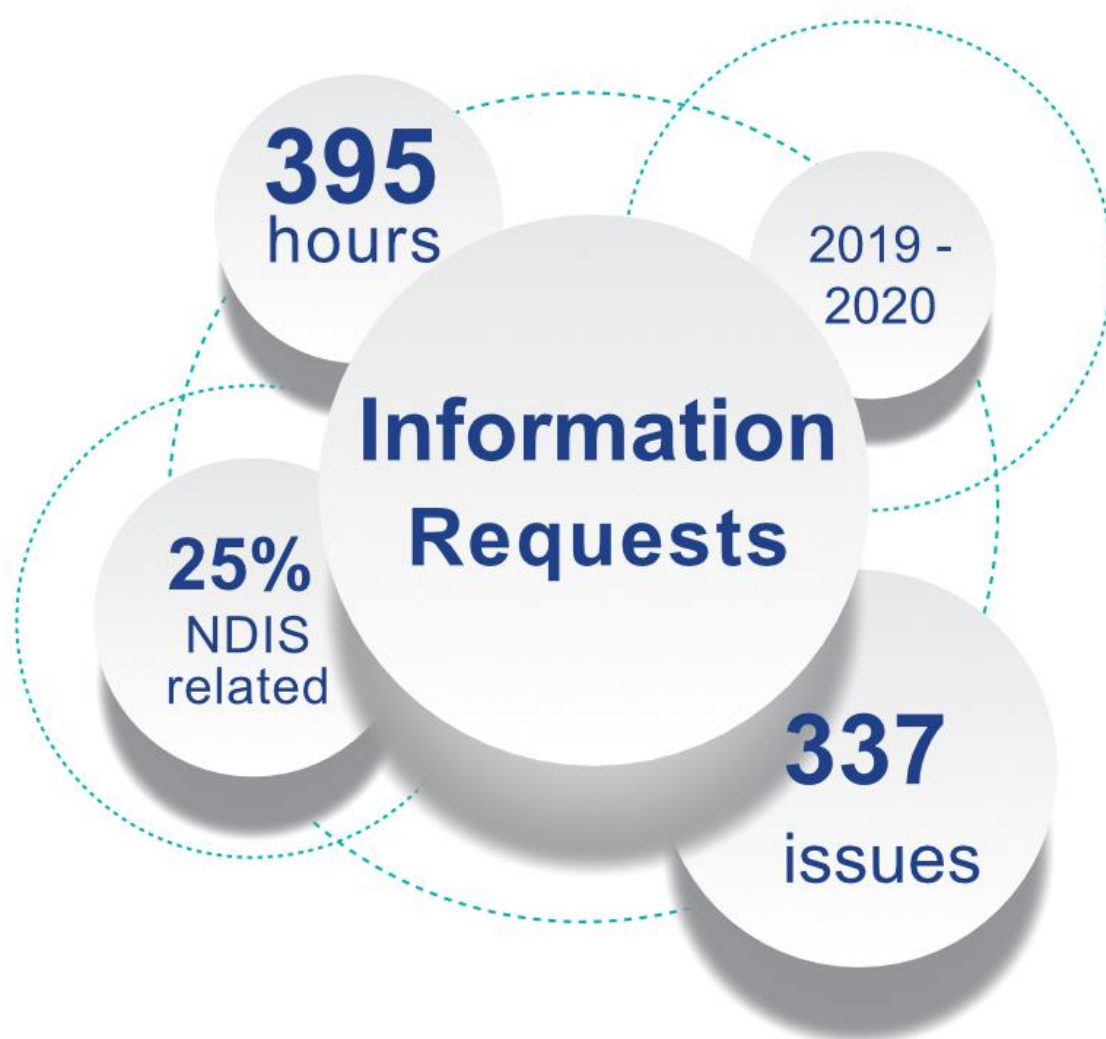
Annette Watkins



## Individual Advocacy

### Information Service

Explorability provides an information service for people with disability, families and carers to assist with self-advocacy or family advocacy relating to their particular issue. In addition, disability sector organisations, community services organisations, mainstream services and the broader community are able to access information relevant to people with disability, families and carers.

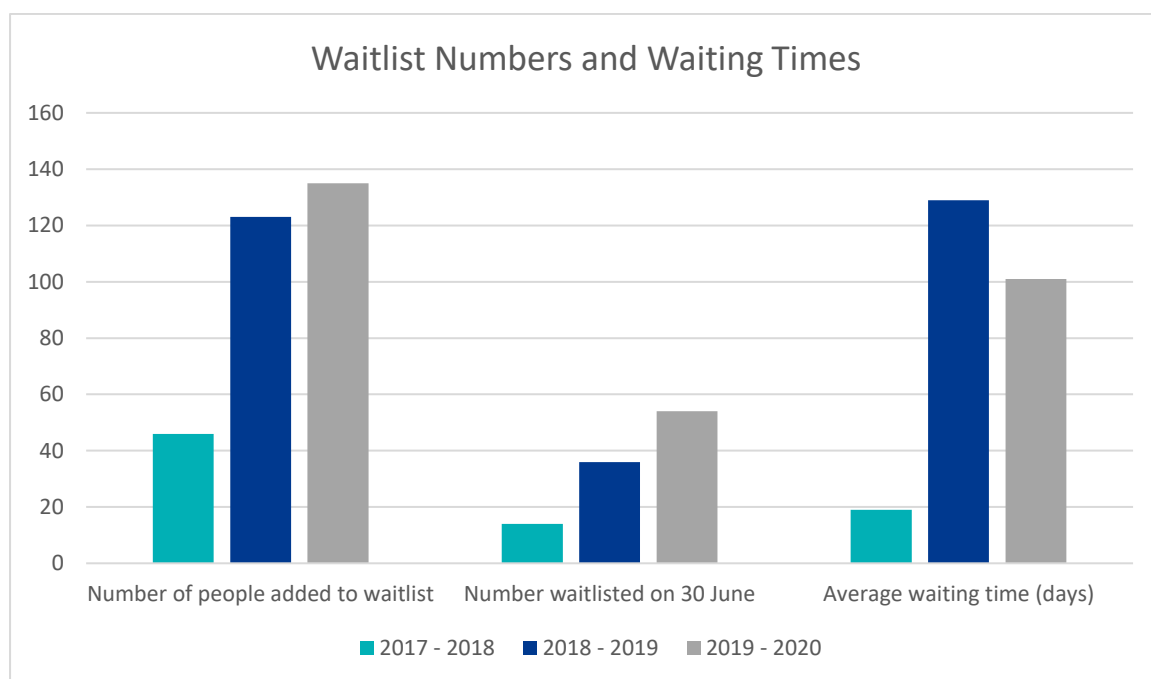


In 2019 - 2020, Explorability received 337 requests for information totalling 395 hours. The main areas of information requested were in relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and housing.

## Referrals and Waitlist

Referrals for advocacy are accepted from people with disability, family members, carers and significant others as well as a range of community services with the consent of the person. As with previous years, referrals from people with disability and their significant others were one of the main referral pathways, with service providers also being an important referral source.

Explorability continues to have a waitlist which has been in place since its introduction in October 2017. On 1 July 2019, there were 36 people on the waitlist, with an average waitlist time of 97 days. Throughout the year, 135 individuals were added to the waitlist and by 30 June 2020, there were 53 people on the waitlist, with an average waitlist time of 101 days.



Due to the growing demand for advocacy across all disability advocacy organisations funded by Communities, Explorability received non-recurrent funding for a 'Waitlist Project' in late 2019 until December 2020.

While one of the main aims of this additional funding was to assist in lowering waitlist numbers across the sector, further aims included providing qualitative and quantitative information to Communities to better understand the reasons for the increasing demand and the development of capacity building activities to promote self-advocacy, wherever possible.

As a result of this funding, Explorability created an 'Intake Team' and reviewed its procedures for coordinating the requests for information and referrals for advocacy.

Between November 2019 and June 2020, the key achievements for the Waitlist Project included:

- Recruitment and development of the Intake Team.
- Review of information, referral and intake procedures and processes.
- Development of capacity building sessions and resources to support self-advocacy by people with disability and family members.
- Provision of the information service from 1 November 2019.
- Coordinate referrals and waitlist for advocacy.
- Provide time-limited interim support for people on the waitlist.

Initially, the Waitlist Project funding resulted in reduced numbers on the waitlist and waiting times, however, the demand for advocacy continues to increase which has a significant impact on people seeking advocacy support and increased pressure on staff and the service.

The inability to hold the capacity building sessions in the community as part of the project's deliverables were affected by COVID-19. The team held several Question and Answer sessions on Zoom during this time, with a focus on topics related to the NDIS, including access and internal reviews. With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the Intake Team is working towards delivering the community sessions in the new financial year.

In addition to the above, between 1 May and 30 June, the Intake Team provided advocacy to 56 unique individuals with 157 issues. Prior to 1 May, individuals supported by the Intake Team were accounted for within the Individual Advocacy statistics.

The Intake Team are also contributing to the review of the advocacy model and exploring alternative ways to provide time-limited support to people on the waitlist to better meet the needs of people seeking advocacy and reducing the pressure on the waitlist. It is anticipated that several strategies will be put into place by October 2020.

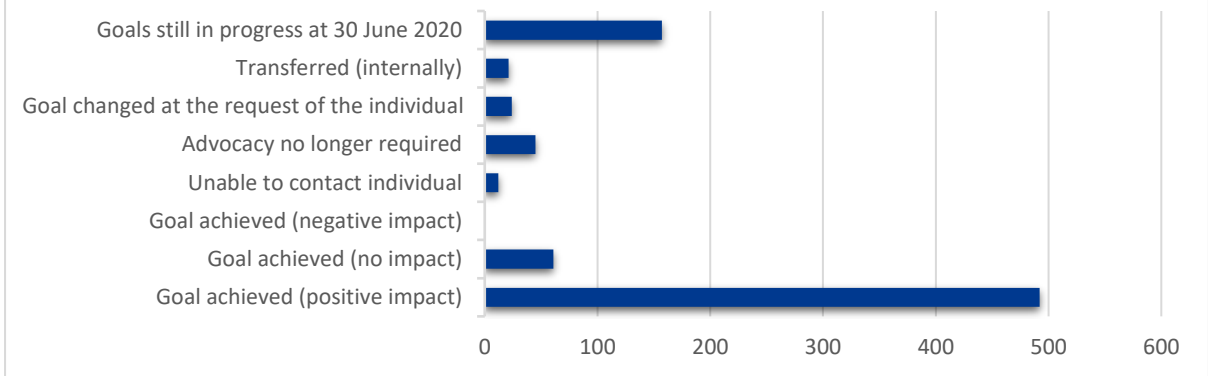
## Individual Advocacy



In 2019 – 2020, Explorability supported 216 unique individuals in the Individual Advocacy service, providing 9,932 hours of advocacy for 751 issues. Of the 216 individuals, 80 individuals were new to the service.

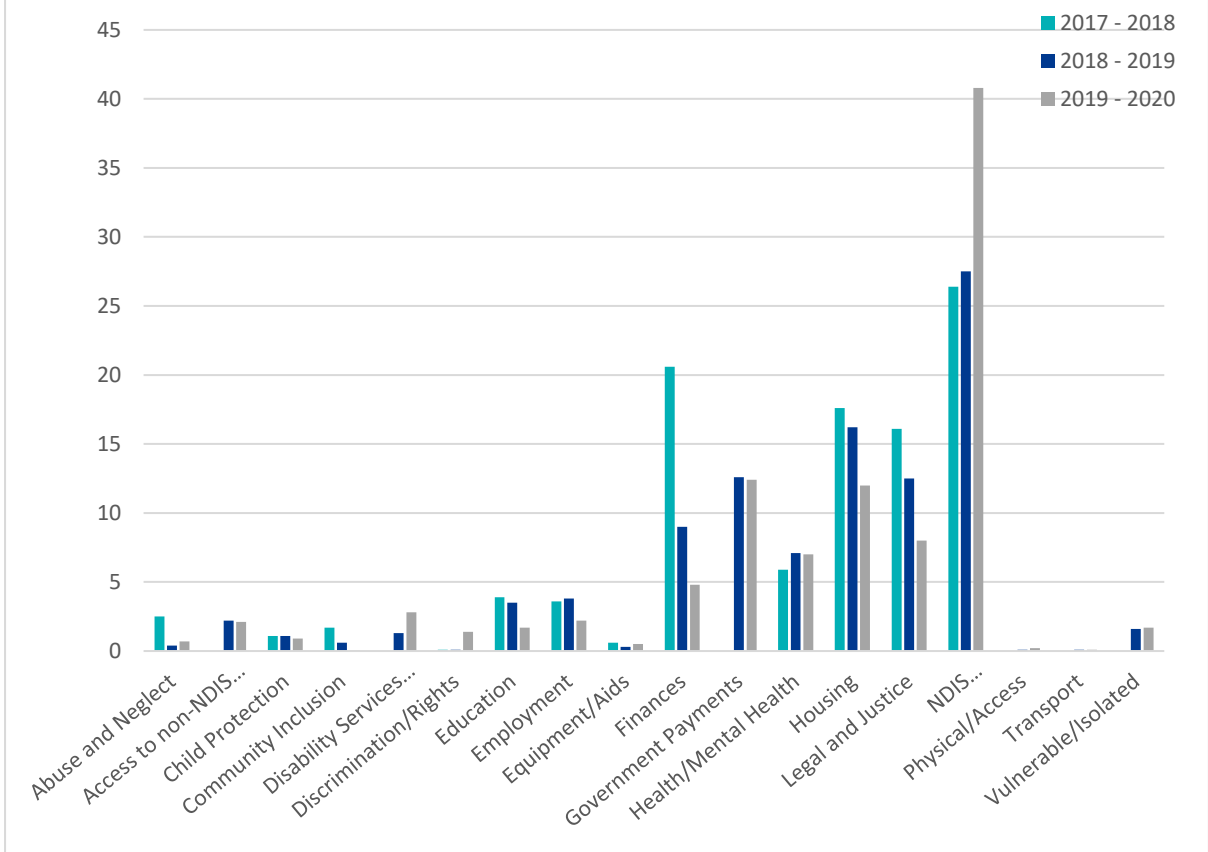
Of the 751 issues supported throughout the year, 594 goals were finalised and 157 goals were still in progress and would continue to be supported beyond the end of the financial year. A positive outcome was achieved in 82.8% of the finalised goals. Please see the graph on the following page for the breakdown of outcomes for the advocacy goals.

### Achievement of Advocacy Goals 2019 - 2020



On average, each individual is supported for more than three issues and the average time to finalise a goal in 2019 – 2020 was 13.23 hours. NDIS continued to be the main area of advocacy within the Individual Advocacy service, with 228 (30.4%) of all goals directly related to applying for the NDIS, implementing the plan, accessing services and internal reviews. Consistent with previous years, goals related to housing (12.5%), legal and justice (10.4%) and government payments (9.3%) were the next highest categories of advocacy goals.

### Individual Advocacy: Percentage of Hours per Category of Support



The individual advocacy team is contributing to the review of the advocacy model and have highlighted a range of benefits and challenges to the proposed models. Currently, the team is developing strategies for the identified challenges. It is anticipated that the introduction of the new advocacy model will occur in January 2021 and include a range of communication strategies for advising new and existing service users.

## Outreach Advocacy Services

Towards the end of 2019, Explorability was successful in applying through a tender process for funding for two outreach services as 12-month projects in partnership with the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre.

### Metropolitan Outreach

The Metropolitan Outreach Advocacy Service provides an outreach information and advocacy for people with disability, families and carers in the metropolitan region with a focus on people who are homeless, isolated, vulnerable and at risk due to the additional barriers experienced in accessing services which meets their needs. This included youth and people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people who identify as LGBTQIA.

COVID-19 proved to a significant barrier to providing the outreach services. Firstly, it resulted in a delay in the recruitment of the Outreach Advocates as the organisation transitioned to working remotely. Secondly, a number of partner organisations changed their way of operating at the height of the COVID-19 restrictions which meant that providing an outreach service based in partner organisations was not suitable.

During this time, the team engaged and consulted with 24 community sector organisations to support the deliverables of the project and had identified locations for outreach services to start in July with Memorandums of Understanding in development with a number of key organisations.

In addition, during the height of the COVID-19 restrictions, the advocates created resources on locally based services in each region to support their role once the outreach services commenced.

The team also supported the collaborative work of the Disability Coalition in assisting with staffing the 1800 COVID-19 telephone number one day a week and contributing to information on locally-based services in each local government area across the state to be used by all organisations.

As at 30 June 2020, seven individuals were supported with 31 issues by the Metropolitan Outreach Team with a further four individuals with referrals in progress. Three individuals were from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Five individuals were homeless or in need of housing and one person was in Acacia prison.

The areas of support provided included:

- Access to non-NDIS services (2)
- Employment (1)
- Health (1)
- Government payments (7)
- Housing and homelessness (6)
- NDIS access/planning (7)
- Vulnerable/isolated (7)

## **Wheatbelt Outreach**

The Wheatbelt Outreach Advocacy Services provides a locally based outreach advocacy service for people with disability, their families and carers in the Wheatbelt region.

The impact of COVID-19 significantly delayed the establishment of this service. Prior to travel restrictions, a suitable shared office location was identified with Avon Community Services in Northam with access to their offices located in Narrogin, Merredin and Moora. With the inability to travel across regions of Western Australia and office closures, the recruitment of the Wheatbelt Outreach Advocate was put on hold until the offices re-opened. The recruitment of the advocate was completed in June with services to start from mid-July.

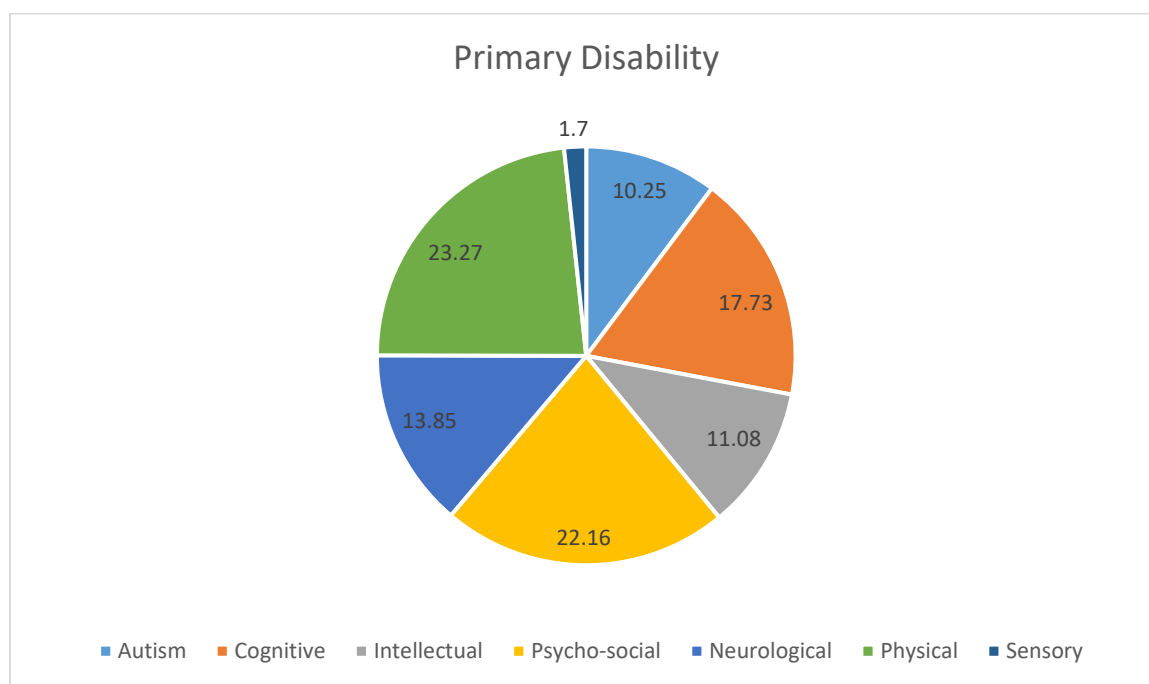
In the interim, stakeholders were identified and contacted to advise of the service development and to assist in identifying individuals who would be interested in participating in the co-design working group.



## Demographic Information of Service Users

Across all service areas, Explorability supported individuals ranging in age from three to 73 years. 171 individuals (46%) identified as male, 197 individuals (53%) identified as female and three individuals (1%) identified as non-binary.

The primary disability of people accessing services through Explorability has been changing. For example, in 2017 – 2018, people with a cognitive disability account for 46% of individuals receiving a service. In comparison, 17.7% of individuals accessing services have a cognitive disability. The number of people with a psychosocial disability receiving services from Explorability has increased from 5.8% in 2017 – 2018 to 22.16% in 2019 – 2020. This is the first time since Explorability was established that cognitive disability was not the main primary disability, with more people with psycho-social disability or physical disability accessing support.



93 (36%) individuals reported having a secondary disability with psychosocial disability (34%) and physical disability (29%) being the most prevalent.

19 individuals were from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and 36 people were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Of the 371 individuals supported by Explorability, 23% were known to be in receipt of funding through the NDIS at the time of their referral for services and 27.2% reported not being in receipt of any funding. 47.2% reported as being eligible for funding while 52.8% self-identified as being eligible.

## **Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project**

In late 2018, Explorability, in partnership with Ignite Community Network, was successful in a grant application under the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building funding through Disability Services to increase the awareness and inclusion of people with disability from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in the community.

Following the recruitment of a new Project Officer in June 2019, it was identified that an extension to the project would be preferred to ensure the project deliverables could be met. Communities agreed to extend the project until 31 December 2020 within the original funding allocation.

Through the project, connections were made with community connectors and Aboriginal Elders to establish links with Aboriginal people with disability, their families and carers. Meetings with community groups were held to support the participation of people with disability, families and carers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in the yarning groups.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the face-to-face yarning groups were put on hold and engagement of the community connectors decreased due to the impacts of COVID-19 on their own lives. Alternative online options were offered in the interim with limited success. The yarning groups have been scheduled to meet from July onwards with plans for an ongoing yarning group to be held in partnership with the South Lake Ottey Family and Neighbourhood Centre and Explorability.

## **Disability Royal Commission**

In May 2020, Explorability received Disability Royal Commission Small Grants funding distributed by the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) on behalf of the Department of Social Services to share information and increase engagement with people with disability with the Disability Royal Commission. The grant funding included \$10,000 for 2019 – 2020 and \$10,000 will be allocated each year for 2020 – 2021 and 2021 – 2022. Due to the timing of the funding being allocated, it was agreed in discussions with DANA that the funding for 2019 – 2020 would be carried over into the next financial year.

## Acknowledgements

Explorability wishes to acknowledge the Department of Communities for funding the advocacy programs and projects and the support of the Service Contract and Development Officers, Mr Kim Proctor and Ms Claire Dolling.



**Explorability Inc**  
Individualised advocacy for people with disability

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