



**EQUITY WORKS**

Everyday. Opportunities. For individuals with a disability.

# Annual Report 2023



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**Artwork by Florence Ash**

In the spirit of reconciliation Equity Works acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land where we work, play and live, the Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi and the Jinibara peoples. We acknowledge and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture, with sovereignty never ceded. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples today.

# Our Why

## VISION

A community of inclusion with full participation by people with disability.

## MISSION

To facilitate a community of choice, one that is reflective and defined by equity and justice.

Equity Works has identified these essential elements of our organisational intent, connecting back to our Vision and Mission. We examine our actions as to how they align with our strategic focus.



### FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALS

We deliver flexible services that respect the rights of individuals and encourage participation, independence, and growth.



### SUPPORT FAMILIES

We offer services that acknowledge the natural authority of families and assists in keeping families strong.



### CONNECT TO COMMUNITY

We actively promote and develop inclusive communities that fosters sustainable participation and values people with disabilities.



### SUSTAIN AND GROW

A strong organisation that has capacity to meet expansion and growth opportunities.

# Spotlight



Story about  
Here Now Next

## HERE NOW NEXT

Young people with disabilities.  
Working together to **change** employment.

Equity Works has received funding to assist young people with disabilities access real, sustainable, and open employment. The project will be working with young people with disability aged 14-24 through to June 2024. Equity Works is funded in this project by the Department of Social Services, Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program. Our project approach uses the Customised Employment approach.

Customised employment (CE) is a method of tailoring the job relationship between a job seeker and an employer to make sure it works well for both of them. CE occurs when the interests and contributions of the job seeker are a fit for an unmet need of the employer – achieving mutual benefit. This is especially important for individuals with disabilities. In CE, the job seeker's unique skills, interests, and requirements are figured out through a process called "discovery," and then the job responsibilities and work conditions are adjusted to fit these factors through a negotiation process.

As a result of their participation in the project, Here Now Next aims to secure meaningful, paid employment for young people. We also aim to support all people, organisations, and local businesses to take their very next step towards inclusive employment and become a community of leaders for social change on the Sunshine Coast.



We travel near and far with our Out and About activities. When we're with the Out and About crew, the best part isn't just where we're going. It's also about meeting new people and becoming friends. It's about seeing the world in new and exciting ways and realising all the things we can achieve.

Be ready to expand your understanding of what you can do.

**Out &  
About**

**EQUITY WORKS**

# Treasurer's Report

2023FY (Financial Year) was a challenging financial year for Equity Works. The Supported Independent Living services continued to provide a stable foundation, while the programs of Brookes Street and Community Access suffered from a tight labour market. The tight labour market led to high employee turnover, high training costs and restricted the programs' ability to renew and grow.

Equity Works posted a net deficit of (\$36,202) for the 2023FY. This is a turnaround of \$253,610 from the previous year's net surplus of \$217,408. The most significant factor in the decrease of net surplus was the one-off government contribution of \$170,000 received in the 2022FY. Brookes Street also sustained a deficit for the first time in 4 years, while Community Access showed a marked decline and posted a net loss. The bottom-line decline of these programs is consistent with industry trends from current labour market conditions, combined with low net profit margins in the NDIS pricing model.<sup>1</sup>

As expected, employee benefits were the largest expense for Equity Works over the 2023FY. It has stayed consistent with last year at 91% of total expenses. The number of employees increased from 86 at the beginning of the financial year to 89 at the end, however 31 employees left Equity Works over the course of the year.

<sup>1</sup> [Strengthening Queensland's NDIS Workforce](https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/strengthening-ndis-workforce-2022-report.pdf)  
<https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/strengthening-ndis-workforce-2022-report.pdf>

Despite the 2023 net deficit, the Association continues to be highly financially stable.

Total Equity rose to \$5.1 million, with \$4.3 million held in cash. The cash reserves could pay approximately 34 weeks of operating expenses without receiving any income before these funds were depleted completely.

The short-term liquidity position of the organisation is also positive. The quick ratio remained steady at 1:3 showing that Equity Works could pay its short-term debts three times over.

The Audited Financial Statements give the full detail of the organisation's financial position.

I would like to thank the Equity Works Finance Team for their diligent oversight of financial matters.

I would also like to thank SRJ Walker Wayland for the high standard of their audit work.

I hereby table my report.

**Jan Bell, Treasurer**

# Chief Executive Officer and President Report

Presented at the Annual General Meeting, 23rd November 2023

## Reporting Year—July 2022 to June 2023

The reporting year has brought challenges and opportunities in equal measure. Without doubt our biggest challenge has been the recruitment and retention of a workforce to meet the service requirements of people we support.

As mentioned in the finance report, 31 people left the organisation in 2022-2023. The high turnover during the period created a range of flow on impacts on continuity of support, overhead costs, and workplace culture. The reasons for the turnover are complex (and in common with the sector) and we continue to develop strategies that will improve the outcomes for staff and clients. We offer significant training and support during the onboarding processes, and this receives consistently positive acknowledgement from new staff.

Over the year, all staff have worked hard to continue to offer quality supports and minimise impact on the more than 70 people to whom we provide direct support.

The provision of Short-Term Accommodation/Respite (STA) was the original service offered by the organisation twenty-three years ago and continues to be a significant focus of our operations. In the reporting year, our teams delivered 534 nights of support, split between Brookes Street and Out and About events where groups of people travelled away together, building friendships and skills. The level of service was a 5% decrease from 2021-2022. The team continued to provide a small school holiday program for young people familiar with the service we provide.

Towards the end of the reporting period, we were able to secure a lease on a purpose-built house owned by the Queensland Government with respite services gradually transitioning from July 2023 onwards. We look forward to being able to offer services to new people whose needs can be better met from the purpose-built house in Yandina.

Our community-based supports continued steadily with over 16,000 hours of support provided to around 35 people. These supports are often provided 1:1, based on the client requirements. However, we continue to seek to create meaningful opportunities for shared supports, to foster social connections and assist with cost effective utilisation of each person's NDIS plan.

In May 2023 we commenced supports to a new household with Supported Independent Living Services. The new household are all people who have moved out of home for the first time and were excited to come together in a shared home of their choice. With this growth we now support ten people living across five households.

A small team of Support Coordinators continue to support over 75 people with the implementation of their NDIS plans. A creative team of problem solvers, the Support Coordinators value add to the people they support and the organisation through their depth of knowledge of the scope of the NDIS and the diverse disability service community on the Sunshine Coast.

This year we ceased our Plan Management service. We provided extensive notice and support to the 60 plus people who used this service and during the transition received lots of positive feedback about the service we had offered since the rollout of the NDIS (on the Sunshine Coast) in 2019. Plan Management was a service we offered to meet the needs of people we supported who were transitioning into a brand-new model of supports and wanted us alongside them for many of the new and (then) unknown NDIS ways of service management. Over the years, people we support became more confident in the use of NDIS plan management services and we identified that Equity Works was no longer needed in this role, with lots of local, specialised plan management services available.

The Here Now Next project (funded by the Department of Social Services, Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program) has continued to receive funding, with an extension to June 2024. The Here Now Next project uses the principles of Customised Employment to achieve meaningful and paid employment outcomes, outside of the traditional job market. The Customised Employment model has been drawn from the work undertaken in the United States over many decades and is being introduced here in Australia by a number of disability organisations and a growing number of individual families.

We have continued to partner with other community organisations and to offer community events open to all people. This engagement of community has been a foundation of the organisation and with that purpose in mind we have opened an outlet in the Sunshine Plaza, enabling a range of opportunities. The preparation of this new venture was undertaken in the current reporting period and will be reported on fully in coming years. With a 5 year lease in place, we look forward to using the Equity Works Sunshine Plaza space to create impact and achieve outcomes towards inclusion.

On behalf of the Management Committee and the Chief Executive Officer, we thank the eighty plus members of the Equity Works team who take forward the organisation values to their daily supports.

**Stephanie Whelan, CEO  
and Graeme Bowden, President**

# Focus on Individuals

We deliver flexible services that respect the rights of individuals and encourage participation, independence, and growth. We recognise and respect the unique needs of each individual, tailoring our services to provide not only assistance but also opportunities for empowerment.

We support people across a range of their daily living activities and in the pursuit of their goals. An important focus for some people is the development of friendships that can lead to long term connections, independent of family.

In addition to individualised supports, we encourage the people to take a design role in the development of group activities around their interests and skills.





# Support Families

We offer services that acknowledge the natural authority of families and assists in keeping families strong.

Throughout the year we connect with families in planning supports that suit their unique needs. Along with providing services that support their family member with disability, we also aim to provide social and connection opportunities for families.

These events range from luncheons, topical workshops, and pure celebration events, such as the annual Christmas Party where staff, clients and families are all invited.



# Connect to Community

We actively promote and develop inclusive communities that fosters sustainable participation and values people with disabilities.

Each year we develop, maintain and support events that provide opportunities for inclusion and support people to explore new valued roles in their community.

A Fair Day Out has been a signature event at the Eumundi Markets since 2013. Since 2021, the ArtWorkz exhibition has been the result of a collaboration between Equity Works and Spiral Inc. A weekly class of Inclusive Yoga takes place each Friday at the North Shore Community Centre, open to the public and affordable for all.

## A FAIR DAY OUT

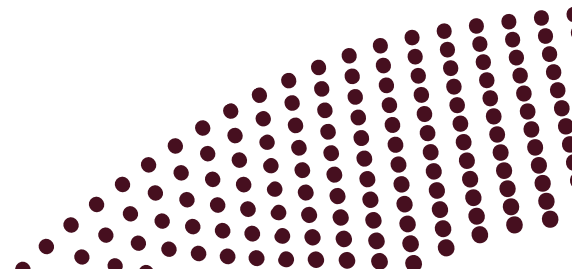
a free sunshine coast event to create and celebrate inclusive communities



**Story about**  
**A Fair Day Out**



**Story about**  
**ArtWorkz**



# Sustain and Grow

We are a strong organisation that has capacity to meet expansion and growth opportunities.

Workforce capacity and capability are at the heart of our ability to meet demands for service. We aim to develop employment relationships that are meaningful and sustainable. Continuing efforts are needed to ensure Equity Works is an employer of choice where people are recognised and encouraged to grow.

This year we have increased our footprint in the community through the leasing of two additional properties. Yandina House and Equity Makers enable new service offerings and platforms for creative growth.

Yandina House is a purpose-built, fully accessible home (including ceiling hoists) set in beautiful rural surrounds outside of Yandina. Equity Works has leased the property from the Queensland Government to deliver diverse services, during the day and overnight. Future plans include the development of projects that can take full advantage of the 2-acre property and enhance impact and outcomes through community partnerships.



Our new outlet at the Sunshine Plaza incorporates offices for the Here Now Next team, a meeting room for internal and external users and a retail space for artist and makers. Equity Makers is a platform for artists to have their art visible to the public, to sell their art, share their individual stories and open opportunities for their individual growth and economic participation. All proceeds of sales are returned to artists.



# Partners and Supporters

Each year we work hand in hand with individuals and groups who share our values, support our work, and partner with us to achieve outcomes in our community.



Inspiring Inclusive Communities  
through Self Advocacy



Department of Social Services, Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program.



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