



2024

ANNUAL
REPORT

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ConnectGroups acknowledges the traditional carers of country throughout Western Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures; and to Elders past and present. ConnectGroups further acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation as the traditional carers of the land on which our office sits.

Patron Report

“In these times, where connection and support are more essential than ever, the peer support group sector has proven invaluable to WA communities.”



I am delighted to warmly welcome you to ConnectGroups’ Annual Report for 2023/2024. This year has underscored the vital importance of peer support, especially amid the challenges posed by the rising cost of living. In these times, where connection and support are more essential than ever, the peer support group sector has proven invaluable to WA communities.

This report offers a comprehensive overview of our achievements, community impact, and financial performance. The past year has brought significant change and transition for ConnectGroups, yet our commitment to fostering healthy, connected communities remains unwavering. We have dedicated ourselves to supporting, empowering, and funding our membership while engaging with new and emerging groups to develop initiatives that combat unique challenges and unmet needs.

A key focus this year has been establishing place-based partnerships to enhance our outreach and build stronger local communities. By meeting groups where they are, we can respond directly to local needs, foster meaningful collaborations, and encourage collective impact. An emphasis on regional engagement has been crucial in ensuring that our regional membership thrives. Our valuable

partnership with People With Disabilities WA has expanded our regional reach, allowing us to establish a presence in new locations where peer support initiatives can significantly benefit the community.

In 2023, we celebrated a remarkable milestone: 40 years of ConnectGroups. This achievement was commemorated at our Ruby Red Gala, where over 200 attendees gathered to honour the peer support group sector. The turnout highlighted the strong recognition of the essential role peer support plays in fostering community connections and resilience.

As we reflect on this year’s accomplishments, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our members, stakeholders, partners, and supporters. Your unwavering support enables us to fulfil our mission, and we exist to serve you. Together, we can continue to build healthier, more connected communities. Thank you for being an integral part of our journey.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lyn Beazley".

Prof. Lyn Beazley AO
Patron

Chair Report

“The past year has marked a period of significant transformation for ConnectGroups, yet we have remained steadfast in our commitment to advancing our Strategic Objectives.”



As the Chair of ConnectGroups, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our Annual Report for 2023/2024. The past year has marked a period of significant transformation for ConnectGroups, yet we have remained steadfast in our commitment to advancing our Strategic Objectives and fulfilling our promises to our members.

This year, we have witnessed challenges within the community related to rising cost-of-living, which have been exacerbated by the under-resourcing of community services. As the demand for accessible, community-based support intensifies, it is evident that the contributions of peer support groups to community health and mental health outcomes are imperative. We are committed to championing this essential work, ensuring that these supports are readily available to all who require them.

We were delighted to receive a Lotterywest grant at the end of 2023, which will support the development of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Grants Management System. This initiative will enhance our capacity to provide ongoing support and resources to grassroots peer support groups—organisations that serve as the backbone of community assistance. This grant will significantly strengthen our ability to meet their needs effectively.

This year, we bid a fond farewell to CEO Dr. Vicky Vass, whose leadership was instrumental in ushering in a new era for ConnectGroups. We are deeply grateful for her dedication and vision. The Board has welcomed Amanda Muir as the new CEO, her decade-long tenure with ConnectGroups effectively informing the organisation’s next chapter.

I extend my deep appreciation to our Board of Management and staff for their unwavering dedication and hard work, as well as to our Patron, Professor Lyn Beazley AO, whose ongoing advocacy for ConnectGroups and the peer support group sector greatly strengthens our cause. Additionally, I offer my sincere thanks to our members for their continued support and belief in our mission. Collectively, we are making a meaningful difference to the WA community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian O'Keefe".

Brian O’Keefe
Chair

CEO Report

“I am excited about the revitalised organisation we are building and I look forward to bringing you - our members and stakeholders - along on this journey with us.”



As I write my first CEO report, since stepping into the role in early 2024, I am both honoured and excited to lead ConnectGroups into a new chapter. It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge the outstanding leadership of Dr. Vicky Vass, whose work at ConnectGroups laid a strong foundation upon which we will continue to build.

This year has brought significant transformation for ConnectGroups. Several staff members transitioned to new opportunities, making way for new faces in a reorganised structure that enhances our ability to serve the peer support group sector. We’ve refreshed our strategic direction and thoroughly reviewed our internal processes to boost efficiency and effectiveness, further supported by a new client management system funded by a generous grant from Lotterywest.

We were delighted to secure a new grant from the Department of Health to continue our work in the Rare, Genetic and Undiagnosed Conditions Sector. The funding will help to ensure this invaluable sector remains robust and sustainable, and it will provide essential resources and support to those affected by these unique challenges.

Advocacy is a top priority for ConnectGroups. Our members consistently share challenges in

sustaining their groups, heightened by rising cost-of-living pressures. We are committed to advocating for support, resources, and recognition for the peer support group sector to ensure ongoing support for vulnerable communities in WA.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated team of staff and volunteers, and the Board of Management for their unwavering support during this transformative year. Your commitment and hard work are the driving forces behind our continued success.

As we anticipate the year ahead, I am excited about the revitalised organisation we are building and I look forward to bringing you—our members and stakeholders—along on this journey with us.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Amanda Muir
CEO

“Invaluable. Practical. Never enough. Keep up your invaluable support and innovative programmes.”

-Lynette, Solace Grief Support Group WA-

“The assistance through the Dream it Forward grant has been the catalyst for the good work we’ve been able to create and drive down here! We have gone from strength to strength due to the support ConnectGroups has provided.”

-Stuart, Kadajiny Aboriginal Corporation-



“ConnectGroups is valued because they create connections between groups and their educational programs are always beneficial and provide me with practical skills and knowledge”

-Workshop attendee-

“We felt so privileged to be in the presence of such an awesome gathering of people. Very well done to the entire ConnectGroups Team for your remarkable effort [and] with all you do to help us support groups thrive.”

-On My Feet-



Our Year in Review



JULY

Pay it Forward 23-24 Round 1 launched.



AUGUST

ConnectGroups is successful in receiving a grant from the City of Wanneroo to deliver an Awareness Expo during Support Groups Awareness Week.



SEPTEMBER

ConnectGroups is awarded Highly Commended in the 2023 Mental Health Service Awards Australia and New Zealand under the Mental Health Promotion or Mental Illness Prevention Category.



OCTOBER

ConnectGroups delivers its Support Groups Awareness Week Campaign and Expos in Applecross, Wanneroo, Busselton, and Mandurah.

ConnectGroups hosts its 40th Ruby Red Gala and Support Group Recognition Awards.

ConnectGroups travels to Broome for the Kimberley Remote Aboriginal Community Leaders Network Forum.



NOVEMBER

ConnectGroups travels to Karratha for grants promotion and sector development, in partnership with City of Karratha.

ConnectGroups launches its 2024-25 Budget Submission.

ConnectGroups is successful in receiving a Lotterywest grant towards the development of a new CRM and Grants Management System, and website redevelopment.



DECEMBER

ConnectGroups celebrates its volunteer team with a Volunteer Thank You Afternoon Tea.

Kim Giddens MLA, Member for Bateman, presents ConnectGroups with Lotterywest cheque.



JANUARY

ConnectGroups participates in the 2024 Invasion Day Rally.

Pay it Forward 23-24 Round 2 launched.



FEBRUARY

ConnectGroups travels to Albany for sector development and engagement, in partnership with People With disabilities WA (PWdWA).

ConnectGroups hosts a Rare Disease Day Expo at Fiona Stanley Hospital and Perth Children's Hospital.



MARCH

ConnectGroups travels to Geraldton for sector development and engagement, in partnership with People With disabilities WA (PWdWA).



APRIL

ConnectGroups launches the South Metro Peer Support Network.

ConnectGroups is successful in receiving a grant from City of Mandurah to continue the delivery of the Mandurah Peer Support Network, and an awareness expo for Support Groups Awareness Week.

Dream it Forward 23-24 Round launched.



MAY

ConnectGroups hosts a Public Liability Insurance Info Session and Sundowner.

ConnectGroups travels to the South West for sector development, grants promotion, and engagement during National Volunteer Week, in partnership with the City of Busselton.



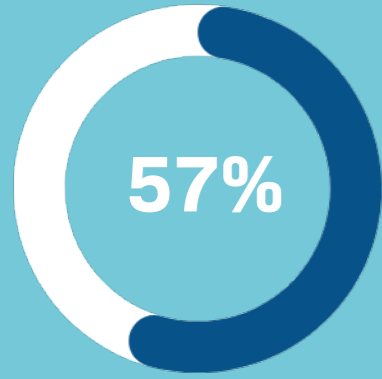
JUNE

ConnectGroups hosts an EOFY Finance Essentials Info Session and its Blokes and Bridges Walk for Men's Health Week.

ConnectGroups attends the WA Men's Health and Wellbeing Conference and the Mandurah Grantmakers Showcase.

ConnectGroups is successful in receiving a grant from PEACH towards new laptops and monitors.

Reach and Impact



average confidence level increase as a result of workshop attendance

38
workshops delivered to
300
group representatives



\$122,306
awarded in small
grants funding

41
support groups /
organisations and
42
projects awarded funding



63
New Members



409 Affiliate Members



333 Associate Members



37 Allied Members



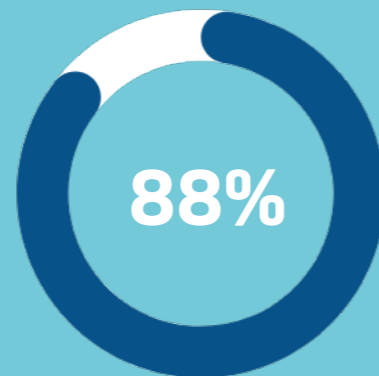
185 Regional and Rural Members



63 New Members




9
events hosted
381
event attendees




average event satisfaction rate

Reach and Impact






6,870
Resource Downloads

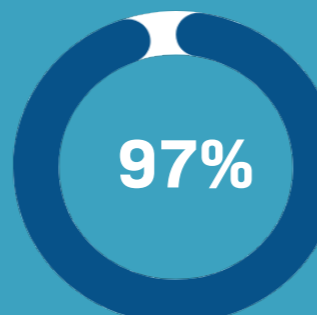


88,519
Website Hits



90%

of members surveyed believe
ConnectGroups provides a
quality service



97%

of members surveyed agreed
ConnectGroups met or
exceeded expectations



-  **2,545 Facebook Followers**
-  **1,265 Instagram Followers**
-  **268 LinkedIn Followers**
-  **999 e-Newsletter Subscribers**
-  **12 e-Newsletters Distributed**



40,305
Directory Visits

Treasurer Report

“This year, we remained committed to strong and transparent financial management, making notable improvements in both our accounting and operational processes.”



I am pleased to present the financial overview for ConnectGroups for the 2023/2024 financial year. This year, we remained committed to strong and transparent financial management, making notable improvements in both our accounting and operational processes. These efforts have reinforced our strong financial position, enabling us to meet our goals and continue supporting our community effectively.

We are immensely grateful to our funders, partners, and members for their continued support. Your contributions have been integral to our success, and we are committed to upholding the highest standards

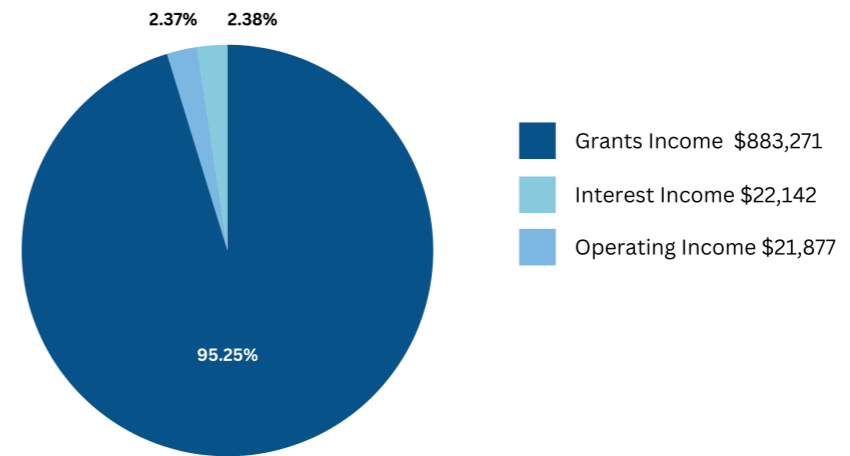
of financial stewardship moving forward. With your continued support, ConnectGroups will remain well-positioned to thrive, meet future challenges, and achieve its goals in the year ahead.

JRM de Mel

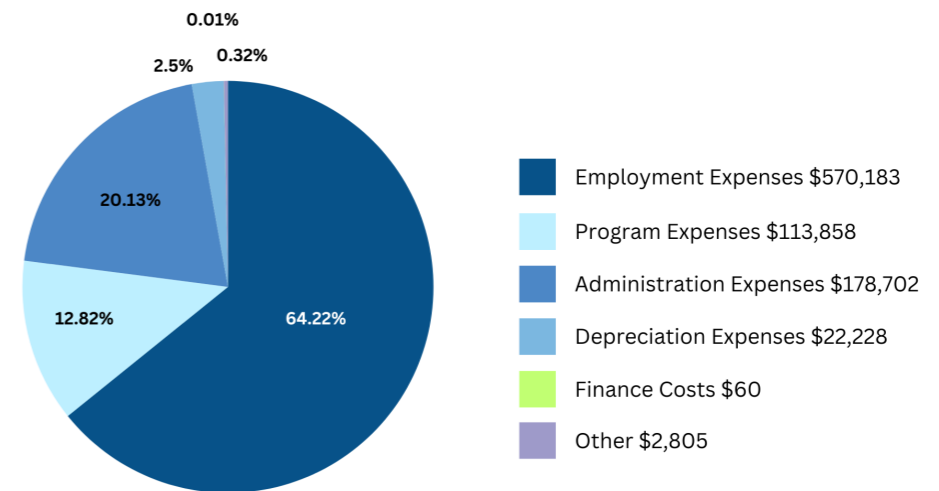
Milindha de Mel
Treasurer

ConnectGroups’ financial position remains stable, with net assets totalling \$507,582, an increase of \$39,454 compared to the previous year. As of the balance date, 99% of assets are held in cash and receivables. Current assets provide a strong coverage of current liabilities, with a ratio of 2.77.

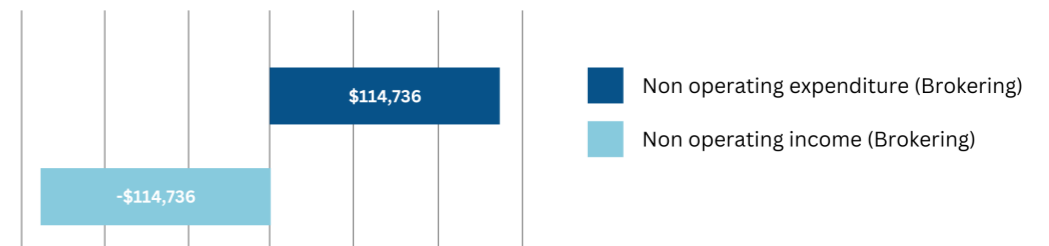
Operational Income



Operational Expenditure



Non Operating Expenses



Board of Management



Brian O'Keefe
Chair



Jonine Collins
Vice Chair



Eimear Quigley
Secretary, Support Group Rep.



Milindha de Mel
Treasurer



Conrad Pires
Board Member



Peta Van Heurck
Board Member



Ross Campbell
Support Group Rep.



David Cox
Board Member

Former Board Members:

Kaine Grigg



Staff



Amanda Muir
Chief Executive Officer



Gemma Hughes
Operations Manager



Kathryn Stewart
Engagement Manager



Emily Mostyn-Brown
Engagement Officer
Training and Development



Lisa Ticehurst
Engagement Officer
Grants and Membership



Carolina Hernandez
Operations Officer



Stacey Kyle-Johnson
Operations Officer

Former Staff:

Abbey Grosse, Christine Hendricks, Elsa Samuel, Karen Silverthorne, Dr. Vicky Vass

Volunteers

Sonaa Aneja
Christine Baldwin
Julie Ann Clift
Evelien Dupont

Maram Dalab
Yu Geng 'Jerald' Goh
Barry Hatton
Kam Ying 'Olivia' Luk

Stephanie Nagel
Rohit Sanjay Shinde
Lai Kuen 'Polly' Tsang
Sandra Wieman

Acknowledgements

ConnectGroups Board and staff thank and acknowledge the Department of Communities, its Minister the Hon. Sabine Winton MLA; Minister for Health, Mental Health the Hon. Amber-Jade Sanderson BA MLA. The Director General of the Department of Communities Mike Rowe and Grant Manager Theresa Foote. The Mental Health Commissioner Maureen Lewis, Senior Contracts Officer Donna Harrison, and Contract Manager Sarah Green; Lotterywest's A/Manager Grants and Development Caitlin Morgan, and former Grants and Development Manager Elaine Walsh.

ConnectGroups extends its thanks and gratitude to all of the organisations whose support has been key to its growth and development. A special mention to:

Act Belong Commit

Busselton Volunteer Resource Centre

Carl Holroyd

City of Busselton

Jessica Watts

City of Karratha

Jo Gibellini
Christy Reed

City of Kwinana

Sarah-Jane Patton
Samantha Hay

City of Fremantle

Kay Raymond

City of Mandurah

Donna Fahie
Fiona Allen

City of Melville

Gail Bowman
Meriel Pickering
Deena Lazzari

Department of Health

Belinda Burns
Jessica Cheng
Kristen Nowak

Fiona Stanley Hospital

Tim Leen
Sam Collins

Health Consumers' Council WA

Clare Mullen
Tania Harris

HelpingMinds

Debbie Childs

Lakelands Shopping Centre

Linkwest

Jane Harwood

People With disabilities WA

Brendan Cullinan
Andrea Surman
Grace Rosales
Vanessa Jessett
Nicola Brown

Rare Care Centre

Dr. Gareth Baynam
Sue Baker
Sian Gannon

Shelter WA

Social Reinvestment WA

Support Groups Queensland

Selina Utting

Swan River Rowing Club

Alan Stewart

UWA McCusker Centre for Citizenship

Michelle Scott
Barbara Goodwin

Viva Executive

Dr. Vicky Vass

Volunteer Melville

Sarah Stephenson
Philippa Aitken

Volunteering WA

Tina Williams
Meredith Blais

WA Association for Mental Health

WA Council of Social Service

WA Recovery College Alliance

Naomi Carter

ConnectGroups Advisory Network Representatives

Cheryl Ackoy
Ken Bezan
Jo Brown
Sandra Button
Ross Campbell
Ron Deng
Jo Drayton
Melissa Dumitru
Amber Gilkes
Michelle Greenwood
Julia McDonald
Cara Philpott
Paul Rogers
Rachael Schwarz
Lisa Taylor
Helen Wilson-Smith

Friends and Supporters

Kim Giddens MLA, Member for Bateman
Sharon Wood-Kenney

"Everybody is always very helpful and friendly."

-Solace Grief Support Group WA-

"ConnectGroups has always been available to respond to our queries and provide us help wherever possible. It's a great organisation staffed by kind and approachable people."

-iDareDream-



"I feel ConnectGroups provides an exceptional service with networking and resources."

-Sclerodema WA-

"ConnectGroups is doing amazing things! Im so glad i came across this organisation"

-Peel ADHD Parent Support-



www.connectgroups.org.au
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ConnectGroups
helping support groups & individuals