

employment **options**

EMPOWERING PEOPLE

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Our Mission

Our mission is to contribute to equity and social justice in society by directly assisting disadvantaged people to achieve employment, education or training goals.

Our Vision

A team of passionate and innovative professionals delivering excellence in service provision

Our Values

Excellence
Leadership
Innovation
Integrity
Respect and Empathy
Empowerment

From The Chair

This past year has been the most tumultuous and personally disappointing of the 14 years I have had the pleasure of being involved with Employment Options. Tumultuous because of the major upheavals, uncertainties and sadness caused by the loss of the bulk of our business due to the changes to service delivery imposed by the government. Disappointing because we are a highly professional and caring organisation with a long and successful history of service to the community but because of our small size, we were penalised and in many respects, nearly wiped out.

Because the board made some rapid decisions concerning the disposal of our three properties, we are now in a position to reset our goals and again make a positive contribution to the community. I look forward to working with all members of the board and management as we work through a new planning phase.

For me personally, I was deeply saddened by the fact that we were forced to reduce the size of our workforce so drastically and force many into uncertainty and unemployment but I am extremely happy that it was achieved in a highly professional and caring manner. Good financial planning by Lesley and the board ensured that when the time came, Employment Options was able to discharge its financial obligations to our staff and I know that many were able to obtain employment with the companies that replaced us.

Now is a time of change, planning and growth for us. It is a time of challenge and excitement and I look forward with great anticipation to the planning processes we as a group will go through.

My sincere thanks to Lesley, the management team and all staff who have contributed to our past successes. My thanks also go to every board member and for those remaining, next year, I look forward to working with you all. Heather will be retiring at the next AGM and on behalf of our board, I offer my special thanks for her outstanding input to our planning processes.

ANDREW WOOD

“...we are a highly professional and caring organisation with a long and successful history of service to the community”

“Now is a time of change, planning and growth for us.”

From The CEO

While there were many highlights and achievements during 2014-15, it was also a watershed year for Employment Options.

Among the highlights were:

- The addition of a new youth services program, with funding from the SA Office for Youth
- Completion of our organisational Continuous Improvement System, including an updated Risk Management Framework and Work Health and Safety Management System
- Continuing to provide high quality services for people in the communities we serve, with more than 1500 people assisted over the year

But 2014-15 was also a year of enormous change, as a result of the major tendering processes for all Employment Services conducted by the Department of Employment.

The tenders detailed sweeping changes to service delivery specifications and to the obligations placed on job seekers, and every current provider was required to re-tender for the chance to deliver future services. Among the changes was the consolidation of service regions into massive super-regions. In our case, our traditional service areas in the Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island were amalgamated with the Adelaide CBD, and the whole Eastern and Southern suburban areas. Even with the strong back-up of our partnership with Job Futures, it was impossible for us, as a regional provider, to compete with established metropolitan providers, and we were not awarded a tender for future service delivery.

“Employment Options is in an exciting phase of renewal.”

The combination of the tender results and the cessation of the national Youth Connections program by the government on 31 December 2014 meant that it was necessary to part with many staff from our youth and employment programs and associated administrative services, which was one of the saddest times in the 26 year history of our organisation. Nevertheless, everyone continued to do their very best for their clients and for our organisation right to the last day, resulting in increases in Job Services Australia Star Ratings, the meeting of all performance targets in NEIS, and successfully transitioning our Youth Connections participants into other programs or services.

With the changes now behind us, Employment Options is in an exciting phase of renewal.

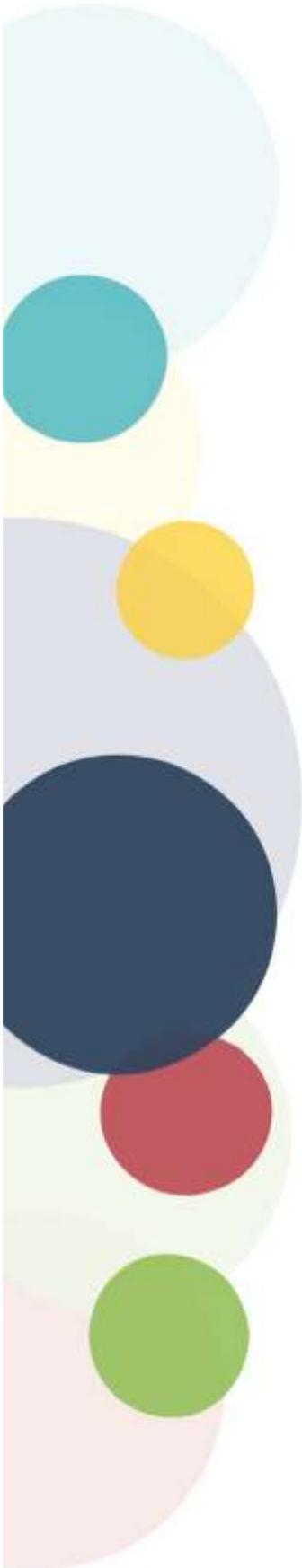
Building on the organisation’s strong core of expertise and experience, the board and management team are leading the organisation into new areas of service delivery, with a focus on youth services, flexible and experiential learning, career development, and on skills and training, especially for foundation skills in literacy, numeracy and core skills for employment.

My sincere thanks also to the Board, executive team, and to all our staff, for your commitment and dedication through a most difficult year of changes in our services; partings with long-term co-workers and friends; and office relocation.

I have every confidence that with its sound foundations and the dedication of its people, Employment Options will move into a successful new stage of its history, and that we will continue to make a relevant and significant contribution.

LESLEY KENNEDY

Events and Highlights



1489 people *helped*

587 *sustained periods of*
employment

50 *disengaged young people*
assisted

132 *people studied business, then*
started their own
businesses

New Youth Programs

Successful Transitions

In April 2015 Employment Options was selected to deliver the SA Government's new Youth Mentoring program, *Successful Transitions*, funded by the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI).

The program came about in response to representations by the Youth Connections State Providers Network highlighting the lack of youth services after the closure of *Youth Connections* by the Commonwealth Government. Employment Options' Youth Services manager John Coates made a significant contribution to the representations.



The new program has enabled us to work with 17 to 24 year olds who have become disengaged from education, training and employment in Mt Barker and Murray Bridge. There has been significant demand for assistance in both areas, and our service is currently operating at capacity.

ICAN

During 2014-15, we were awarded another Provider panel contract for ICAN Case Management Services and Flexible Learning Programs. This has enabled us to develop two exciting new projects which we are currently establishing, and will deliver during 2015-16. Our new services will support young people aged 15-18 who are struggling to continue with Years 10-11, or who have disengaged from school before completing their SACE.



Industry Engagement - Hospitality Project

During 2014-15, we surveyed 94 businesses in key industries to assess their requirements in candidates, recruitment intentions, and emerging issues, and to identify common themes. One of the key industries we surveyed was the Hospitality Industry, which is significant employer, and especially in the Fleurieu Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and Adelaide Hills areas.

In 2014-15 we developed a project to prepare candidates for the employment requirements in the industry. The project comprised

- employability workshops, which addressed the soft skills required such as understanding and meeting employer expectations, customer service skills from an attitudinal perspective, presentation skills and the importance of reliability and being able to implement conflict resolution skills;
- a tailored Certificate 2 in Hospitality, which reinforced the soft skills required and included specific vocational competencies requested by employers -Barista training and Responsible Service of Alcohol

The training was delivered by DOME and graduates were well received by the industry, with 66% of participants securing employment in the Hospitality Industry.

Successful Outplacement Project

This year, we had to say farewell to 65% our staff in the first half of 2015. We implemented an outplacement plan to assist staff transition to new jobs and maintain a high morale across the organisation during the downsizing period.

Outplacement assistance refers to a variety of services provided to employers and employees when they are faced with the loss of employment, redundancy or career change. These services are often provided by external organisations however Employment Options elected to do it internally to ensure our staff received the best care during this stressful period.

The following strategies were implemented as part of our outplacement plan:

- Communication about the change was very important in reducing the emotional impact for staff. We used a variety of communication mediums to ensure everyone was kept up to date with events. This included face to face meetings at both team and organisational level, the establishment of a central information portal on our intranet and regular emails to the whole organisation
- We provided coaching to managers and staff about grief and how to manage the emotional impact of the change
- In addition to support provided by Employment Options, Employee Assistance Program counselling was available to staff who were struggling to cope
- We established connections with other employers who were able to offer suitable jobs for our staff and expedite the recruitment process.
- Career development services such as resume and cover letter preparation, job search techniques and interview preparation were facilitated.
- We took a planned approach to enable staff to job search and attend interviews thereby reducing unscheduled absenteeism from the workplace.

Whilst this period was unsettling for everyone involved, the end result for most was positive. The outplacement plan was successful with 16 of the 17 (94%) receiving offers of or starting new jobs.

As well, we were able to ensure that staffing numbers and morale were maintained at levels that enabled us to complete all the requirements of our contracted programs, and continue to provide high quality of services to our clients throughout the change .

*“Whilst this period was unsettling for everyone involved,
the end result for most was positive.”*

Enhancing Quality in Training and Program Delivery

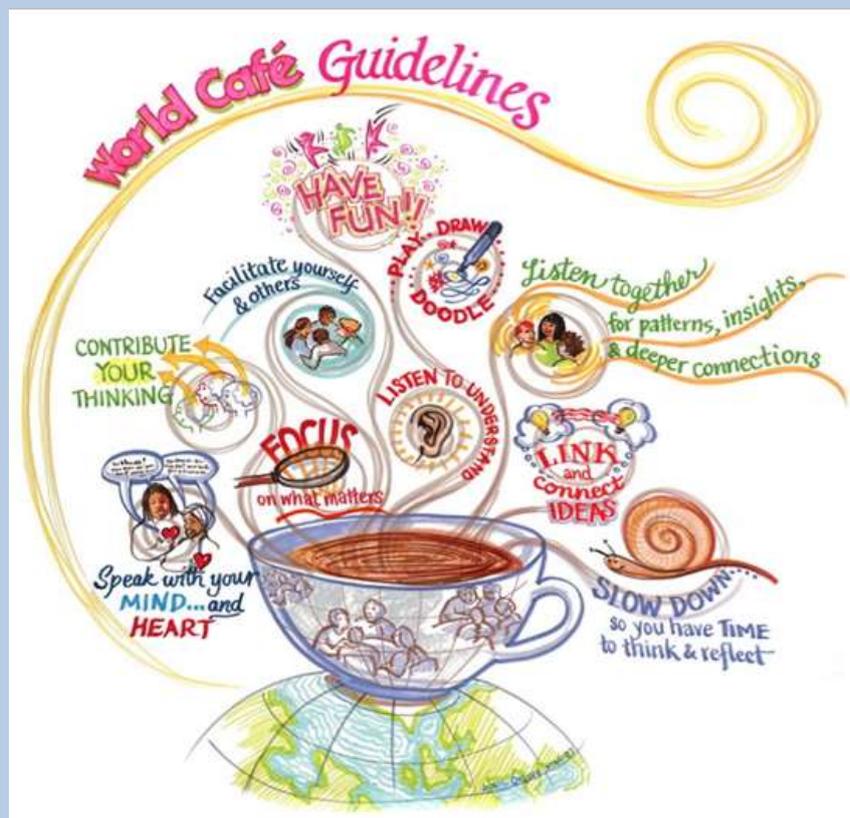
An exciting project this year was designed to further increase the quality of our training and student support services, and maximise the number of students who completed their business management training and started new businesses through the NEIS program.

Using the World Café concept, our training staff had the opportunity to take stock of their work, discuss possible future directions and create a work plan to guide us into the future. Each participant had a unique vantage point, and contributed ideas – what was working well, where we could improve, and how to manage the limitations placed upon us by external factors.

The team’s experience, perspective, ideas and questions in the project helped us explore different possibilities for a path forward.

The World Café helped us to achieve record success results. In the months following, team members were able to work with clients to meet or exceed all performance targets within the time available, and we achieved our highest ever annual number of new businesses commenced.

“An exciting project to further increase the quality of our training and student support”



<http://www.theworldcafe.com>

A New Home for Employment Options

In June 2015, a major project to lease and then sell our owned buildings was undertaken, with above valuation prices achieved for the sale of all three buildings.

This was a significant project which required a high degree of planning and execution to ensure tight deadlines were achieved. The incoming tenants were employment service providers needing to gain access to set up their operations in time for the commencement of their new contracts on 1/7/15, and we also needed to ensure that Employment Options' contract obligations until 30 June could be fulfilled.

The project also involved the relocation of Employment Options operations to our new home base in Nairne, with youth services locations being sourced in Mt Barker and Murray Bridge.

A successful disposal program was conducted for our surplus furniture and office equipment, which included donations to other charitable organisations.



Maximising Jobs and Training Access

Job Services Australia

Once again, our JSA services helped a large number of people, with over 1300 people participating.

Our JSA services help by providing

- referrals to jobs and employers
- job placements ,with 26 weeks of support to stay in the job
- referral and support to access services in the community to overcome barriers to employment
- access to accredited training courses and a wide range of work experience places including Work for the Dole programs.

Over the year, our JSA participants achieved nearly 600 sustained periods of employment, self-employment or education. Many of these were for people who had been unemployed for a long period, or who faced some significant barriers to returning to work. Consequently, achieving and sustaining employment has had a significant positive impact in their lives, and those of their family.

This year, we provided an important new initiative for those job seekers. Through our partnership with CoAct, our staff were trained to deliver a workshop series which supports participants to build resilience, to manage change positively, and to develop a more positive mindset- providing a vital foundation for a successful return to employment. More than 200 people completed the workshops over the year, with participant feedback strongly positive. The workshops were also an important factor in the very pleasing achievement of increased star ratings for our JSA service.

During 2014/2015 we also focused strongly on understanding employer needs and requirements, and in tailoring our services to ensure those needs were met. This included a detailed survey of 94 employers in our region, to identify emerging issues in recruitment, skills in demand, and requirements in vocational training.

We continued to build partnerships with community organisations, health and welfare service providers, Industry Skills Councils, and Registered Training Organisations so that our job seekers have the broadest range of expertise and assistance available to them, and variety and choice in work experience placements and training.

“We focused strongly on understanding employer needs and requirements.

This included a detailed survey of 94 employers in our region to identify emerging issues in recruitment, skills in demand, and requirements in vocational training.”

New Enterprise Incentive Scheme

Now in its 22nd year, our NEIS program has assisted more than 1500 new business start-ups. Department of Employment Labour Market Assistance Outcomes as at March 2015 show that there are positive outcomes of 86.7%, and our own participant follow-ups show a consistently high rate of positive outcomes, with 87.1% of the businesses we supported to commence over the five years 2009-14 still operating after 12 months (82.4%), or their proprietors having returned to full-time employment (4.7%)

22 Years

**1500 +
New Business
Start Ups**

**Over 5 years, 83%
still in business 1
year later**

This year, the program again attracted strong interest, with 483 enquiries about the program, 160 prospective clients attending information sessions, and 137 people participating in NEIS training.

Help given included initial training in identifying a market and researching market opportunities for a business idea; then, for those with potentially viable business proposals, accredited training in Certificate III in Micro Business Operations or Certificate IV in Small Business Management; help to develop a business plan; assistance during start-up and the first 12 months of business operation, including mentoring and income support through the Department of Employment.

New student numbers remained stable this year, and during the year, 132 new businesses were established.



*Valley Laine Pampered Pooch, Dog Grooming
Salon and Retail Shop Nuriootpa SA*



*Beachside 4 wheel bikes,
Victor Harbor SA*

Participants said:

"...after I applied, I found myself in difficult personal circumstances, but really wanted to complete the Certificate IV in Small Business Management. My trainer was able to 'rise to the challenge' with me. They were extremely supportive and flexible, gave me some good guidance and put a lot of effort into helping me achieve the end result. I could not have completed the course without their dedication and assistance."

Jan L.

"The person to person training was really great. I was very energised by the course and felt that my needs and ideas were being personally responded to by my trainer. There was also a lot of information about pitfalls from others in small business in the past, and a lot of ...support, to help me professionalise and be confident. ... very valuable as a learning experience."

Wendy W.

Youth Services

2014-15 was the final year of our Youth Connections program in the Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island regions, for 6 months only. 31 young people commenced with the program in that time, and over the final 12 months, 153 participants achieved positive life outcomes. In our final monitoring visit from the Department of Education Employment Options assessed our performance at the highest rating.

*Over the five years
of the program Employment
Options supported
898 young people
to achieve positive life
outcomes*

On the 31st of December 2014 the Youth Connections program came to an end with no federal government youth program to replace it, even though, sadly, the program had provided outstanding results both locally and in the national context. Over the five years of the program Employment Options supported 898 young people to achieve positive life outcomes, which included returning to education or training, gaining employment including apprenticeships and traineeships or minimising a young person's barriers to re-engagement into education. I would like to thank all the staff involved with the program over that time for their contribution to the improvement of the welfare of so many young people.

ICAN

Employment Options has been working closely with the Mt Barker High School and the Adelaide Hills Vocational College to develop a program for 15-18 year 10 students who are either at risk of disengaging, disengaged or attending school but not involved in learning. The program objective is to support the student to complete their Personal Learning Plan (PLP), and it will include specific help to improve literacy and numeracy levels, a community work placement at Monarto Zoo for each student, and a range of life skills and career development topics which will be delivered by Employment Options.

With the support of funding through the Department of Education and Child Development's Innovative Community Action Network this program will run over Terms 3 and 4, 2015.



Successful Transitions

This new program, designed and funded by the SA Government's Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, provides vulnerable and severely disengaged young people aged 17-24 with supports to make a successful transition into further education, vocational training or secure employment.

Successful Transitions will provide young people with intensive case management to help address barriers to participation in education, training and work. A core focus will be the development of a mentoring relationship, with a possible combination of group assistance, counselling, work and life skills development, remedial education, vocational placements, community building activities, advocacy and/or referrals to external support or specialist services. The program began in late April 2015.

Employment Options is responsible for the Mt Barker and Murray Bridge Regions with the majority of service in Murray Bridge, and we have established an office and training room in the main service area of Murray Bridge. The service is funded to assist up to 30 young people over a 12 month period.

A culture of leadership and learning

During 2014-15, the Management Team took on the challenge of strengthening their leadership skills to improve staff's experience of working at Employment Options. They recognised that there would be flow on to both clients and individual staff by reinforcing the culture of leadership and learning throughout the organisation.

An internal leadership development program was initiated which was able to focus on the needs of the organisation and individual managers. A series of learning activities were placed on the Management Team agenda enabling managers to focus at a strategic level.

Across the organisation staff responded favourably to the efforts of the Management Team which was reflected in the annual staff survey. As shown by the results below, there was a significant improvement across all areas leading to increased staff engagement and better outcomes for clients between 2013 and 2014.



Increasing service quality through technology

This year we have built the efficiency of our administrative systems by moving some functions into a cloud computing environment. The changes include the migration of the organisation's accounting system, Reckon Accounts, onto the Reckon Accounts Hosted system in March 2015, and the transfer of the payroll system, Micropay Meridian, onto the private cloud version during May.

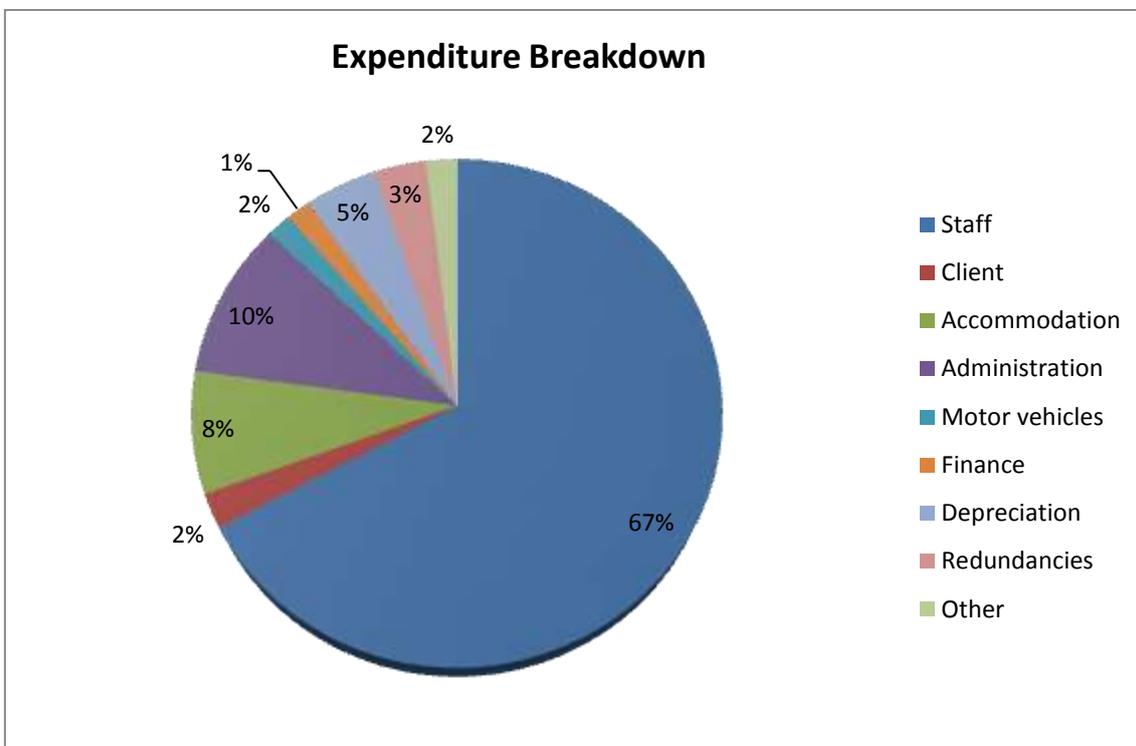
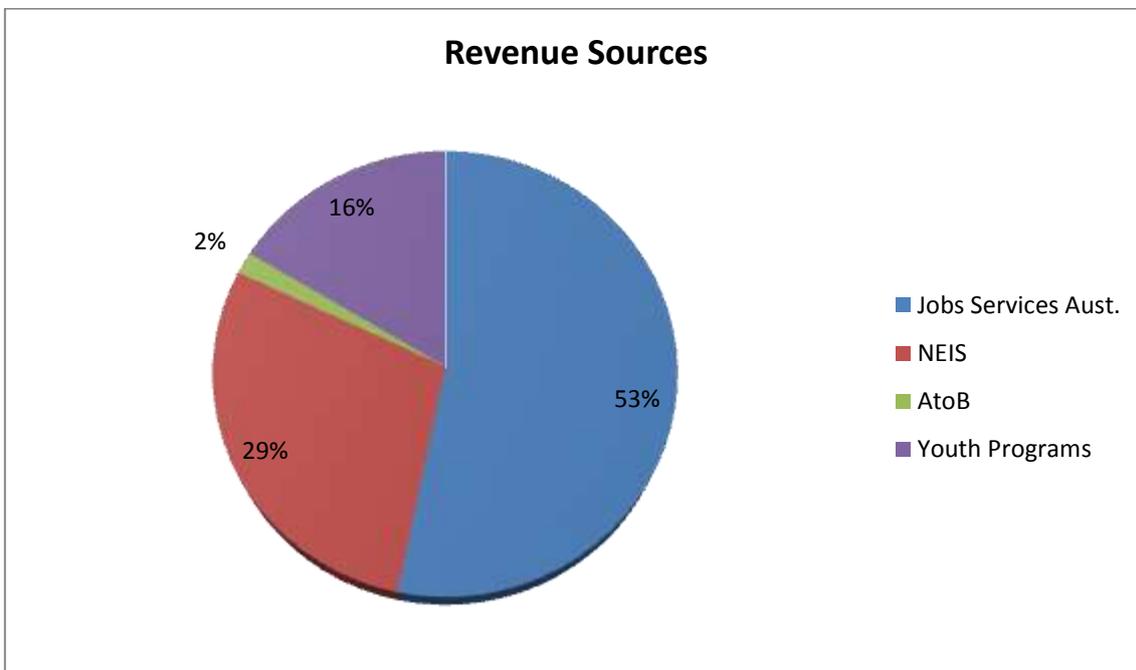
The new hosted environments for these vital financial functions provide significant benefits:

- The ability to access both the accounting and payroll systems from any location where there is an internet connection
- No need for regular software updates on local servers
- Automatic backups done by the hosting organisations
- Security firewalls handled by hosting organisations
- Reduced future expenditure on hardware
- Low monthly costs

We also continued to develop our Moodle Learning Support Platform, which is now used to deliver a range of induction modules for new staff members, and our in-service Work Health and Safety training programs, as well as programs for students of accredited training programs, where it is especially useful for students studying in external or distance mode.



Revenue and Expenditure



2014-15



Chairperson:	Andrew Wood
Deputy Chairperson:	Michael Coulson
Treasurer:	Trish Crosby
Public Officer:	Trish Crosby
Members:	Vivienne Barker
	Heather Trenorden
	Lesley Kennedy