

# employment **options**

EMPOWERING PEOPLE

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

## ***Our Mission***

To contribute to equity and social justice in society by directly assisting disadvantaged people to plan and achieve their work or learning goals.

## ***Our Vision***

A community where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their aspirations.

## ***Our Values***

Innovation  
Connectedness  
Integrity  
Collaboration  
Respect  
Entrepreneurial thinking

# From The Chair

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Last year I reported my disappointment because of the sadness, upheaval and uncertainty which Employment Options was forced into, through no fault of its own. It was clear that we needed to undertake a broad ranging and thorough planning process to determine how we would move forward. And so, in January 2016, we commenced a planning phase and developed a new Strategic Plan for 2016-18. The Plan sets out five new strategic directions for our organisation and, as part of the process, we reviewed our mission, vision and values statements. The new directions will guide us in our efforts to identify community needs which we, as a charitable organisation, can contribute to meeting.

Throughout the year 2015-16, our organisation, led by the Board, made major changes, including the leasing and subsequent sale of our properties, which were no longer needed following the cessation of our previous programs (Job Services Australia, NEIS, and Youth Connections). We now have a central administrative office in Nairne and deliver a range of new programs and services from Murray Bridge, Mt Barker, Stepney and Port Adelaide. So our planning for renewal is now a tangible reality.

As in the past, the Board has continued to maintain its focus on sound governance which has allowed a smooth transition through this period of change. The annual work plan has been completed, and included oversighting risk assessment and management, maintaining close scrutiny of the finances of our organisation; and oversighting processes to ensure we are compliant with all our legal and contractual obligations.

This year has been about renewal and calculated decision making and I congratulate and thank the Board members for their input and support. Our organisation has successfully navigated a period of uncertainty through sound governance and careful planning, and we have laid solid foundations for future success. New and exciting opportunities to provide important services in our communities await us.

We are delighted to welcome two new Board members, Jacqui Coates and Daniel Antonis, and look forward to their input. I would also like to thank Heather Trenorden, who retired from the Board in November, for her four year contribution.

Finally, my thanks go to Lesley and all the staff and volunteers of our organisation, for their professionalism and dedication. I look forward to the coming year and I know that our governance and management systems will continue to support us to be a successful and relevant contributor to our communities.

*“Our planning for renewal is now a tangible reality.”*

*“We have laid solid foundations for future success.”*

**ANDREW WOOD**

# From The CEO

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Following the development of a new Strategic Plan for our organisation in January 2016, we have now moved into the exciting phase of renewal, when sound planning foundations support the building of new ways of delivering services to our communities.

An important aspect of our approach this year has been consultation with our participants to make sure we understand what they want from our services, and especially, how new services should be designed so that they will match the goals, preferences and needs of our service users.

With the completion of the last of our former programs, this year we have been free to innovate, to imagine and create new ways of achieving our mission, and to broaden our connections in our communities.

The result has been very pleasing, with new services for disengaged young people established in eastern and western Adelaide; our Successful Transitions program in Murray Bridge and Mt Barker redesigned to include what young people told us they most need if they are to find employment - a drivers' licence; a new focus on Foundation Skills for our Registered Training Organisation, and a suite of career development services to support people to identify, plan and pursue achievable training and employment pathways suited to their strengths and preferences.

*“This year we have been free to innovate, to imagine and create new ways of achieving our mission, and to broaden our connections in our communities.”*

Innovations in our services this year included redesigning delivery models (Successful Transitions); using experiential learning and Maker education methodologies in our Learning Centres; and embedding digital and on-line resources into programs and using technology to broaden our service delivery reach.

This year, our services have been strengthened and greatly enhanced by the contributions of volunteers, especially in our Learning Centres, where they have brought exciting ideas and projects to engage and inspire our students. I'd particularly like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for their generosity in giving so freely of their time and expertise.

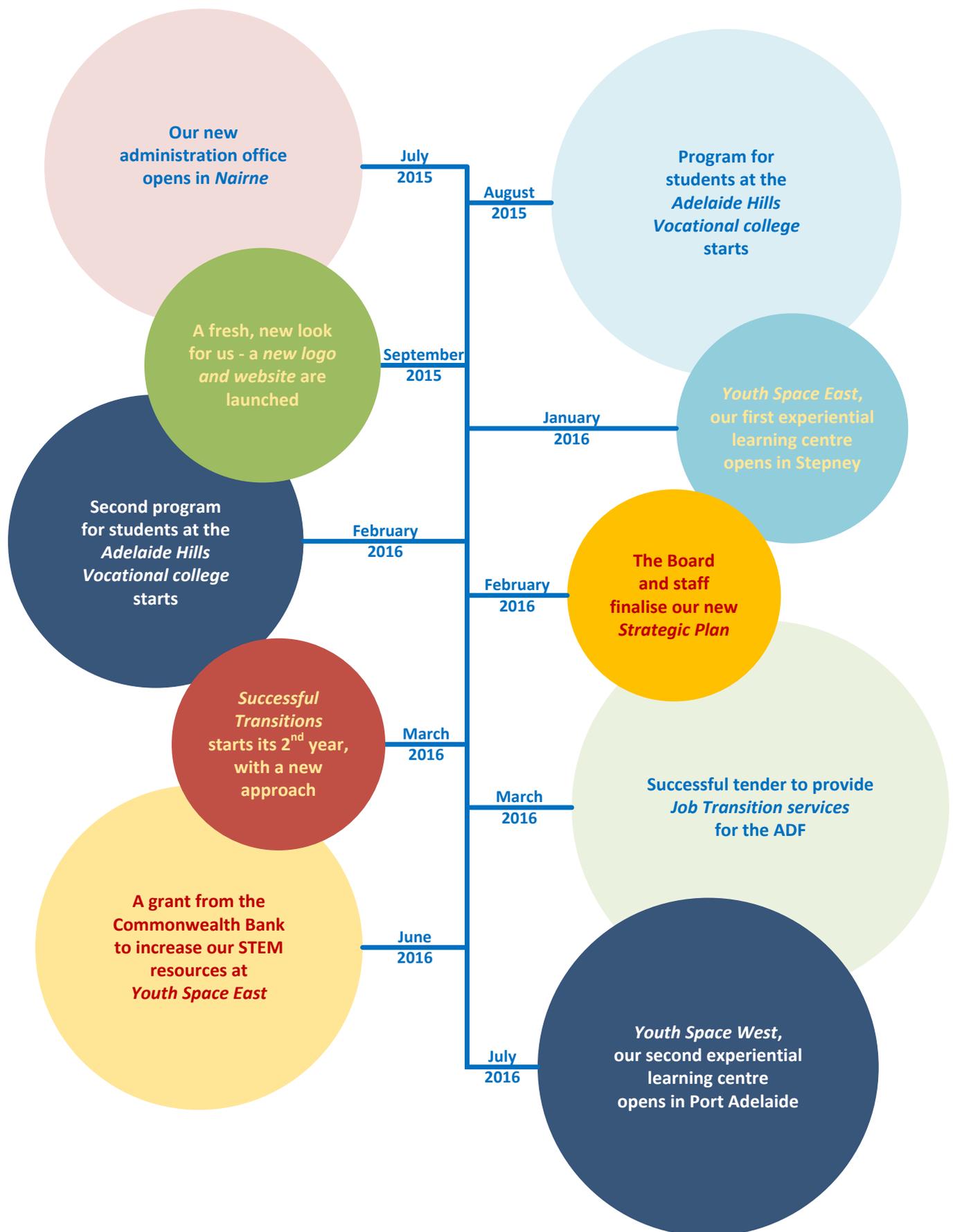
I'd also like to extend my thanks to the organisations which have supported us financially over the year, including the Departments of Communities and Social Inclusion, and Education and Child Development; the schools of the Felixstow and Flinders Park regions; the Commonwealth Bank; the Defence Community Organisation; The Adelaide Hills Vocational College and Mt Barker High School.

Once again, the staff and Board of our organisation have unstintingly contributed energy, ideas, commitment, and passion for our organisational mission, without which none of our achievements would have been possible - thank you all!

**LESLEY KENNEDY**

# Events and Highlights

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## Youth Spaces

During 2015-16 we identified a need for extra services in the Eastern Adelaide and Hills areas for young people who have disengaged from school without completing Year 12.

We undertook extensive consultations with agencies such as the Department of Education and Child development (DECD), Secondary Schools (FLO and VET Coordinators), local councils, youth agencies, and educational programs specialists, and we visited and researched alternative education centres, including invaluable advice from Ron Parker, an experiential and maker education practitioner with many years of experience.



Based on our findings, Youth Space East was established in Stepney, with contributions from our own reserves and the support of a DECD Community Partnerships Grant of \$20000.

Youth Space East is an experiential learning centre which engages young people with learning through participation in hands-on practical projects which are chosen and designed by the young person themselves. Centre resources support a wide variety of possible projects including, for example, IT/electronics, 3-D printing, robotics, drone building and flying, graphic design, woodworking, art activities, sewing, and mechanical activities such as motorbike restoration or bicycle repairs.



As well, students are supported with case management, access to career exploration and planning assistance, and for those who don't want to follow a SACE pathway, access to accredited training such as the Certificate 2 in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways. The centre has also established links with other community agencies and activities which broaden the scope of centre activities, for example with the Linde Community Garden, where students have established a veggie plot and are building seats for other garden users.

The Centre opened in January 2016, and student enrolments have increased each term. Its resources were boosted with a grant from the Commonwealth Bank in June to purchase \$9000 worth of STEM equipment and materials.

# Services

The main goal of our Youth Spaces is to re-engage young people with learning. Our students had all not been attending school at all, frequently for 6 to 12 months, or even more. Research clearly shows that people who don't have school or post-school qualifications have disproportionately high rates of joblessness, and employment which is erratic, low-paid and low skilled, throughout their lives. Consequently they are also more likely to experience financial distress, homelessness, family disruption, and social exclusion.



Attendance rates at Youth Space East increased steadily over the first 3 terms of its operations, reaching an average across all students of 79% in Term 3, clearly illustrating the effectiveness of the experiential methodology.

The success of Youth Space East encouraged us to research and plan a second centre, with Youth Space West opening in Port Adelaide in July 2016, using the same methodology and approach. Students have all the options available at Stepney, plus additional project opportunities, including metal fabrication, metal art, and screen printing; and to accredited training opportunities which the centre hosts. For example, 12 students, 6 from our centre and 6 from schools in the area, completed a Certificate 2 in Civil Construction at Youth Space West in August 2016.

Both centres are self-supporting from enrolment fees paid by referring schools and agencies.



## Youth Mentoring and Support

We have delivered the Successful Transitions program in Murray Bridge and Mt Barker since early 2015, providing individual support and case management/mentoring to young people aged 17-24 who are disengaged from education, training or employment. In its first year, we achieved 100% of our planned participation numbers, and 37% of those young people found employment, or undertook training or education.



With the aim of identifying ways we could enhance the program, we conducted a structured consultation with young people in late 2015. The consultation gathered information on how we could increase our program's relevance to young people, and on their preferences and aspirations.

Our participants identified that they have, and want our programs to have, a clear focus on careers and jobs, and they indicated job preferences and choices which require mobility. In regional areas such as Murray Bridge and Mt Barker, this means a drivers licence which most participants didn't have. They also identified preference for on-line or app-based program elements, and gaming.

Using this information, we redesigned our Successful Transitions delivery model to incorporate three new elements. Being able to drive improves job prospects and independence, so our program includes an experiential learning program to support participants to learn the road rules and gain a learners permit; support to work towards achieving a provisional driver's licence; and a Career Development program, which assists participants to explore jobs and plan career pathways, to identify work experience options matched to career goals/job preferences, to complete a work experience placement, and to learn about applying for and winning jobs. Tapping into participants' enjoyment of computer games, the program used on-line resources for understanding and learning road rules, and career exploration software to identify potential career pathways.

Since its inception in April 2016, the new approach has proven to be both popular and successful. In only 5 months, 90% of the commencements planned for an entire year have been achieved, with 92% of those young people engaged in career planning, and 36% participating in the learners' licence program. 34% have already found employment, or undertaken training or education.

## Career Services

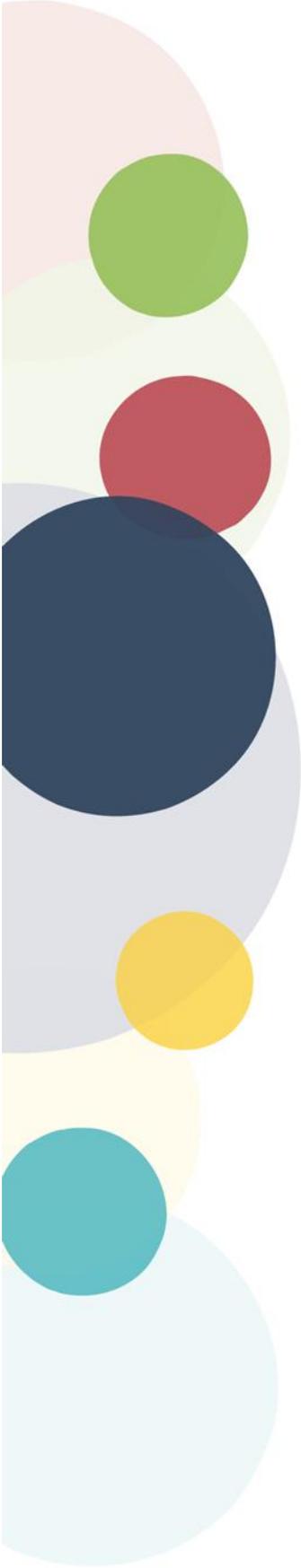
This year we delivered two pilot programs in partnership with Mt Barker High School and the Adelaide Hills Vocational College. Each program ran over a semester and provided students with career pathway planning activities, using an engaging, interactive and experiential approach.

Students identified potential careers based on their individual interests, values and preferences, using the Career Voyage software, a well-recognised career planning tool. Then they researched their career or industry of interest through the creation of a visual job board; visited industries/ employers in their chosen career area, and created their own career action plan. Importantly, students developed the evidence they needed for the Personal Learning Plan, which will enable them to progress towards SACE achievement, and began to think positively about work, with the realisation that work can be enjoyable and can align to one's interests and strengths.



This year we were also successful in our application to provide Job Transition Services to the Australian Defence Force. Our services will involve career planning and investigation, development of self-marketing products and strategies; and labour market information and advice for members transitioning out of the forces.

# **2015-16**



Chairperson:	Andrew Wood
Deputy Chairperson:	Michael Coulson
Treasurer:	Trish Crosby
Public Officer:	Trish Crosby
Members:	Vivienne Barker
	Lesley Kennedy
	Jacqui Coates
	Daniel Antonas