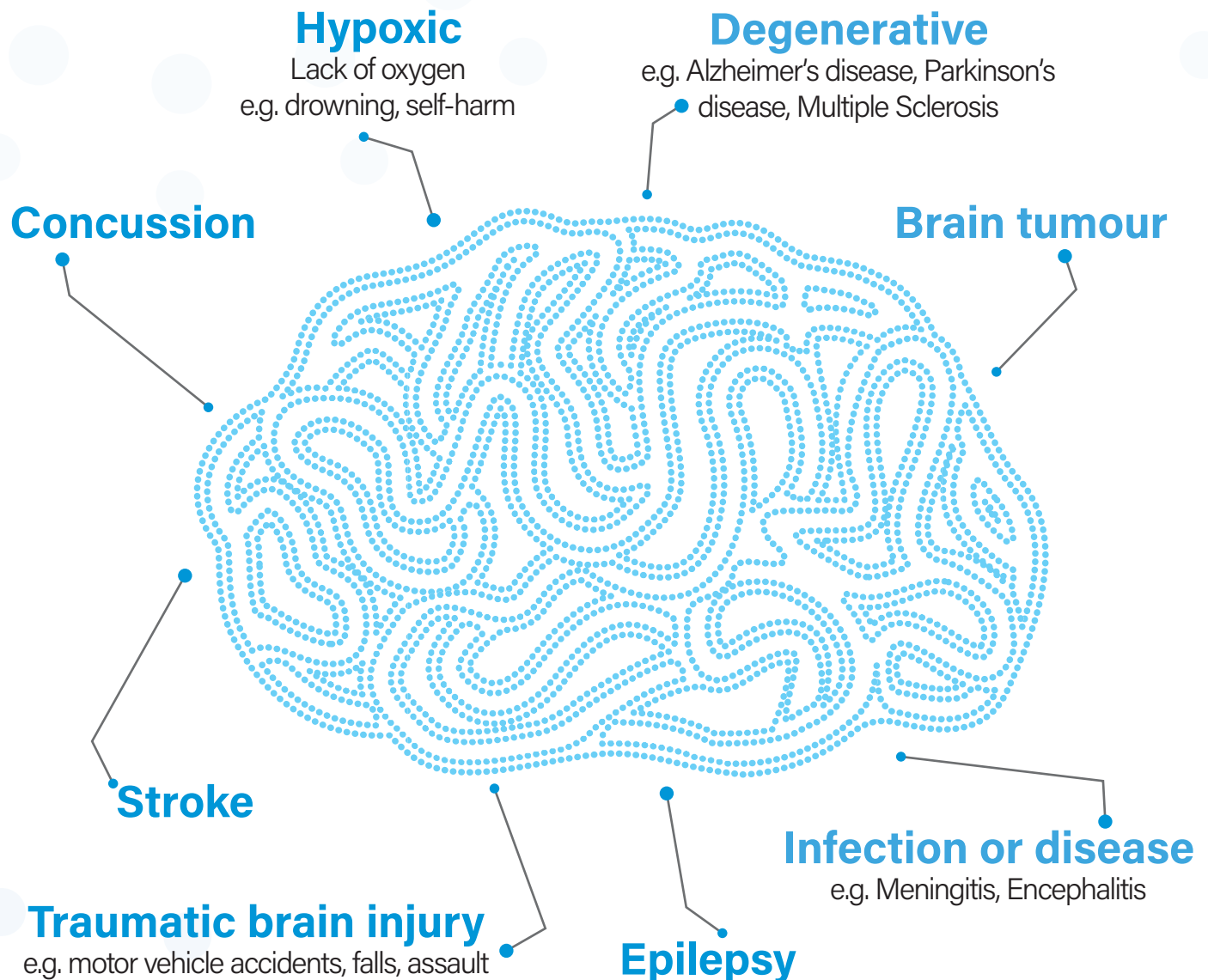




Annual Report

2016

About brain injury



We use the term 'brain injury' in referring to a multitude of conditions that can result in neurocognitive impairment, distinct from intellectual disability. The diagram above illustrates these conditions.

Generally brain injury is defined as damage that occurs after birth (with the addition of some injuries caused during pregnancy such as Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder).

Over 2 million Australians are affected according to the World Health Organisation (2006). Around twice as many people are diagnosed each year with brain injury compared to breast cancer and yet very few people know about brain injury (AIHW, 2010).

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Executive summary

Growth and stability



Executive summary



Jennifer Cullen
CEO, Synapse

It has been another exciting year for Synapse as we continue to develop strategies that support our everyday work.

Unfortunately, in Australia we still see the under representation of marginalised people's access to disability services and this has forged our resolve to influence the NDIS. Our challenge is to ensure that we remain a quality service in responding to the personal needs of each individual. Our achievements have not been in isolation and we thank our partners for their commitment with us.

Through our partnerships with First Peoples Disability Network and Suncare, our Murri Disability Advisory Network (Murri D.A.N) has grown to provide gatherings across Queensland, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn about the NDIS and how to access the scheme. The development of our new company Synapse Songlines shows our further commitment to working with Indigenous communities.

In this report we refer to Australia's First Peoples as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Indigenous Australians. Both terms are applied with deep respect and acknowledgement of the distinct identities and different ways Australia's First Peoples contribute to Australia.

In 2015-16 we made major steps towards our unification project in partnership with the Brain injury Association of New South Wales, and are delighted that they will join our journey. The last twelve months has seen our NSW team develop NDIS pre-planning workshops and services such as Support Services Coordination and the Reconnections program.

Each year builds on our previous commitment to support people with brain injuries. We have moved into the criminal justice area, expanded our work in homelessness, and strengthened our role in supporting people in the accommodation of their choice.

I thank the Board and the Synapse team for the work throughout the past year as we prepare for the future. I commend our annual report to you and trust that it inspires you to be part of the work we are doing across Australia.

Our Board

John Chambers

John had a varied experience in his early career - working as a carpenter, boat builder, commercial fisherman, and in real estate. He later gained entry to the University of Queensland where he graduated with degrees in Commerce and Law. John commenced practice as a solicitor in 1991. In 1994 he was made a Senior Associate at Ebsworth and Ebsworth, becoming a Partner in 1996. In 1998 John became a Partner at Murphy Schmidt until his retirement in 2015. John also serves on the Queensland Board of the Nurses and Midwifery Board of Australia.



Adam Clark

Adam Clark has spent the past seven years as the Managing Director of Sharing Minds an information strategy organisation. Inside of over fifteen years in information management and consulting, Adam has a range of experience across many sectors including state and federal government, as well as the mining and health care sectors. He is a man of strong values, married with two young children. Adam joined the Synapse Board with a personal story of a close family member who suffered a neurocognitive disorder.



Neil Jackson

Neil retired as Assistant Auditor-General with the Queensland Audit Office, after nearly 40 years' experience in financial and information systems external audit. He is a past President of the Queensland Division of CPA Australia, and was a Queensland Divisional Councilor for eight years. Currently he is the external Audit Committee Chair of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, and an external member on the Audit Committees of the Departments of Housing and Public Works, Transport and Main Roads, and Premier and Cabinet.



Siena Perry

For over 12 years Siena has worked in Australia and internationally in the strategic communication, fundraising, digital communication, change management and engagement space, with a focus on not-for-profit organisations. She currently works for an Asia Pacific Internet governance and development organisation, and in the past has advised on strategic communication for the University of Queensland, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Suncorp Group, Queensland Government Department of Premier and Cabinet, Jeans for Genes Day and Surf Life Saving Foundation, among others. A family member of Siena's suffered a severe brain injury, and she serves in his memory.



Paul Raciborski

Paul experienced a severe brain injury as the result of a fall on 22 December 2003. Since then he has strived to make a difference for others who have been through similar experiences. Paul works as a Practice Leader in a residential home for three people with severe intellectual and physical disabilities. In his previous career he worked in corporate project management, with additional experience in manufacturing and supply chains. Paul is married with four children, his wife is the Principal of a special school. In his spare time he enjoys choral singing, rock climbing, mountaineering and woodwork.



Our Board



Tracy Sharp

Tracy is passionate about equity, justice and the empowerment of people with disability. As the CEO of Equity Works, she has more than 20 years' experience in disability, community, and consultancy services. Tracy began her career in front-line service delivery before working in management. She also spent two years in Dubai as a special needs consultant at the international school, Al Ittihad. Across her involvement in the not-for-profit sector, Tracy has promoted strong governance and community-private partnerships. Tracy has held a Board position with the Children's Therapy Centre, has qualifications in disability, law and criminology.

Anthony Thompson

Anthony has over 25 years' experience in senior executive, consulting and company director roles in Australia, Asia, Europe, and the USA. Originally qualifying in engineering, Anthony subsequently completed an MBA and further qualifications in areas including corporate governance and risk management. He has also lectured at QUT in Brisbane. In 2005 with three others Anthony founded and became Chairman of what has become the not-for-profit 'Safe Places for Children', operating number of states. Anthony currently serves as a director for a number of companies across Australia and Asia. He also spends time coaching senior management across private and government organisations.



James Alley

James is a descendant of the Kuku Yalanji, Waluwarra and Kalkadoon peoples of Far North and North West Queensland. He has a strong public sector experience that spans 20 years with various Federal and State Government and private sector bodies. He has considerable expertise in helping community and not-for-profit organisations. James founded 'AJA Solutions' - an indigenous business building partnerships between community groups, business, industry, government and local families. James left the Synapse board in 2016.

Gordon Geoghegan

Gordon qualified as a CPA accountant, working for many years as the Assistant Manager and Company Secretary of a commodity board majority of his career. For over 40 years he was a professional tennis coaching, including with teenagers with an intellectual disability. In 1986 he sustained severe head injuries, a double fracture of the occipital condyle, and severe memory loss as a result of a motor accident. He has served previously as the Secretary of the Brain injury Association of Queensland (now Synapse). Working with "differently-abled" folk has been one of his passions. Gordon left the Synapse board in July 2016.

Our Leadership

Synapse has a very capable leadership team that is responsible for providing strategic and operational management for the organisation. The team represents a wealth of experience in specialist disability services, research, and corporate management.



Jennifer Cullen,
Chief Executive Officer

Adjunct Associate Professor, Jennifer Cullen has been with Synapse since 2004. Jennifer is a community services professional with over 26 years' experience working in disability and aged care services. She is committed to Indigenous issues, rural and remote disability service delivery, and strategies for building on service innovation and delivery for people with disabilities and their families. A descendent of the Wakka Wakka people, Jennifer has extensive networks with Aboriginal and Torres Strait people and communities across Queensland and other parts of Australia.

Jo has over 20 years' experience in the community service and disability sectors. She began her career in education for young people with disability, before progressing to roles in residential support and service management. Jo believes strongly in social justice and equity – driving her passion to respond to individual support needs through innovative accommodation and support models.

Jo Priestley,

National Business Development Manager



Marie Hamilton-Smith,
NSW State Manager

Marie leads the team of Synapse in New South Wales. With over 15 years in health and human service management, across both Sydney and in London - she has managed hospital services including allied health, clinical, and information services. Marie has a passion for organisational improvement including using information technology for positive organisational change. She also has experience commissioning new services in both the healthcare arena and the community sector.

Our Leadership

Dr Clare Townsend,

Research and Development Manager

Clare is the national manager of Research and Development at Synapse. She is also an Adjunct Associate Professor at Griffith and James Cook Universities. Publishing in a number of journals, Clare has held leading roles in behavioural research since 2000. Clare is committed to undertaking research in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve positive outcomes for people with disabilities, their families and community. She manages a portfolio of research including the Guddi Project which aims to ascertain the level of neurocognitive disabilities amongst Indigenous homeless people in Cairns.



Judith Hunt,

Chief Financial Officer

Judith's role includes the management of accounting at Synapse as well as the general business support in corporate services, marketing, and communications. She has over 20 years of financial management across two counties, and including in the not-for-profit environment. Judith also serves in a volunteer role on the Board of Directors for Communitify Queensland.

Paul Calcott,

Murri D.A.N. Manager

Paul is a Wiradjuri man on his father's side from the Bathurst and Dubbo areas of NSW. His mother is Irish from Guyra NSW. Like many of his people since colonisation, his father's family moved to suburban Sydney in the early 1950s. In 2010 Paul started the Suncare Nandjimidji art group and exhibitions for Indigenous Australians with disability. Paul believes that providing opportunities to connect with culture through art significantly contributes to the healing process and resilience in individuals, family and community.



Dr (Aunty) Janet Hammill OAM,

Senior Research Fellow

Jan leads the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorders Research stream at Synapse. She is also the coordinator of related research at the University of Queensland and is a member of the National Indigenous Disability Researcher's Network. Having a shared ancestry with the Gomeroi people Jan's primary interest is in Indigenous health outcomes and advocacy for children and adults invisible to early diagnosis and intervention.

About Synapse

Nationwide

- Synapse Options
- Advocacy
- Information, Linkages & Capacity Building

Queensland

- Accommodation and Lifestyle support
- Assessment and Planning
- Indigenous services

New South Wales

- NDIS pre-planning
- Reconnections
- Support services coordination
- Brokerage

About Synapse

Synapse is dedicated to reconnecting the lives of those affected by brain injury.

Our vision is that those affected by a brain injury in Australia are able to lead a life of quality, based on their own decisions and choices.

We do this through excellence in services delivered with integrity, fairness, and a vision for what the future for people with brain injury could be.

Increasingly our information, linkages, and capacity services are supporting people across Australia.

Accommodation & Lifestyle Support

We provide accommodation for people with brain injury at seven locations in South East Queensland. Our services provide a sense of home for our residents in a supportive environment. We build on the strengths of each individual, developing independence, and in some cases employment opportunities.

Our team also visit people in their own homes, empowering their independence while supporting their day-to-day tasks.

Advocacy

We advocate within industry and government at both state and national levels for policy change, and in individual situations with those we support.

Brokerage

Our Brokerage Program enables people with access to a limited amount of money for goods and/or services that will help people reach specific goals.

Indigenous services

Synapse aims to educate, support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability and their communities. We deliver a range of information sessions, networking groups.

National Disability Insurance Scheme Pre-Planning

As the service is progressively introduced across Australia it is essential to ensure that people with brain injury understand how the scheme affects them. The program is designed to help individuals to prepare for their possible entry.

Support Services Coordination

We assist people to access services, coordinate supports and help individuals participate in the community. We can help people to find the right service, maximise informal supports, and make meaningful connections in their local community.

Information, Linkages & Capacity Building

Synapse works to inform affected individuals, general public, and service providers on brain injury issues. We deliver referral services, workshops, and networking initiatives.

■ Synapse Options

An information and referral service responding to enquiries on all issues. Our team will listen to concerns, respond with appropriate assistance or information, then facilitate access to support.

■ Assessment and Planning

Synapse Assessment and Planning can offer support, advice, consultation and assessment services for individuals and their families.

■ Reconnections program

We offer the opportunity to create personal networks between individuals with brain injury, as well as their family members or people within their support networks. The program also offers support to make social connections or join with others who share common interests.



New South Wales

During the year Synapse unified with The Brain Injury Association of New South Wales (BIANSW). We are pleased to report that during the year we were in operation in NSW as Synapse with final entity changes to be complete by September 2016.

In NSW Synapse provides information and referral through Synapse Options, Advocacy, Capacity building, Services coordination, Reconnections, Brokerage, and NDIS pre-planning.



A peak body in NSW

Synapse in NSW inherited a wealth of advocacy experience, representing those affected by brain injury in both policy and practice.

We do this by developing the capacity of the sector to act as a strong and unified voice for people affected while forming strategic partnerships that assist us in fulfilling our role. For example we sit on a number of advocacy panels, including Transport NSW's Accessible Transport Advisory Committee.

With the introduction of the NDIS in NSW much of our work as a peak body this year has focused on working to align existing funding with the NDIS functions.

We also use media to support our systemic advocacy efforts and promote awareness of issues faced by people living with brain injury.

NSW brain injury support needs survey

This year we conducted a survey of the support needs of people affected by brain injury in NSW. The survey was distributed online and over the phone to approximately 1,000 members. There were 111 responses to the survey.

People affected by brain injury said they were most in need of the following supports:

- social participation for people affected by brain injury
- carer support
- clinical services
- case management (or support services coordination).

To meet these support needs, in NSW we responded by:

- launching a new social participation program called *Reconnections*
- establishing a new *Support Services Coordination* program.

Our Synapse Options staff connect people with appropriate services to meet their clinical/ rehabilitation or ongoing support requirements. We also link carers to support services.

Indigenous services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians experience higher rates of disability than do other Australians. After taking into account age differences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, the rate of disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is almost twice as high as that among non-Indigenous people.

In response to this, Synapse aims to educate, support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability and their communities.

MURRI D.A.N

Murri Disability Advisory Network

The Murri D.A.N project continued to grow strongly with 238 individuals engaging online with the project. We predict this will continue to grow as we further develop our networks throughout Queensland. Through the NDIS Participant Readiness Initiative (PRI) we delivered information sessions to 536 individuals, reaching many more online.

At the end of the financial year we commenced recruiting for six facilitators as part of the PRI. These roles will develop culturally safe yarning circles and information and referral points where local Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders living with disability can access NDIS information and assistance in developing their plans.

The Murri connections art group in Zillmere continued supporting the development of the Nandjimadji group on the Sunshine Coast as an NDIS information support and access point.

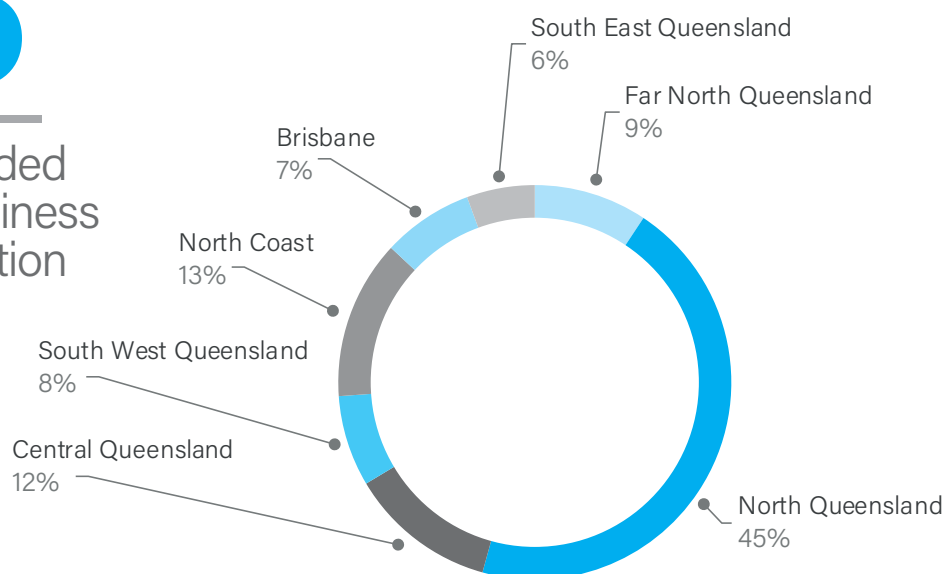
Over the past year we developed a significant culturally respectful and relevant resource, 'The proper way planning book' designed to assist Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander living with disability to prepare for the NDIS and demonstrate ways they can be supported in the areas of relationships, family, community, and culture. We also developed an explanatory DVD and video resource to accompany the book. The resources utilise traditional art and storytelling as a way of engaging individuals - and addresses that English may not necessarily be their first language. The resources have been extremely well received across Queensland and parts of the Northern Territory.

Murri D.A.N has been working with both community and service provider groups in the NDIS early roll out locations of Palm Island and Townsville. We also continued strong relationships with the Queensland Government's Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) and community leaders in promoting the resources.

We supported several Murri D.A.N members to participate in an art from the margins art exhibition at St. Andrews Hospital in Brisbane as part of black history month. Murri D.A.N is a consortium between Synapse, First Peoples Disability Network and Suncare.

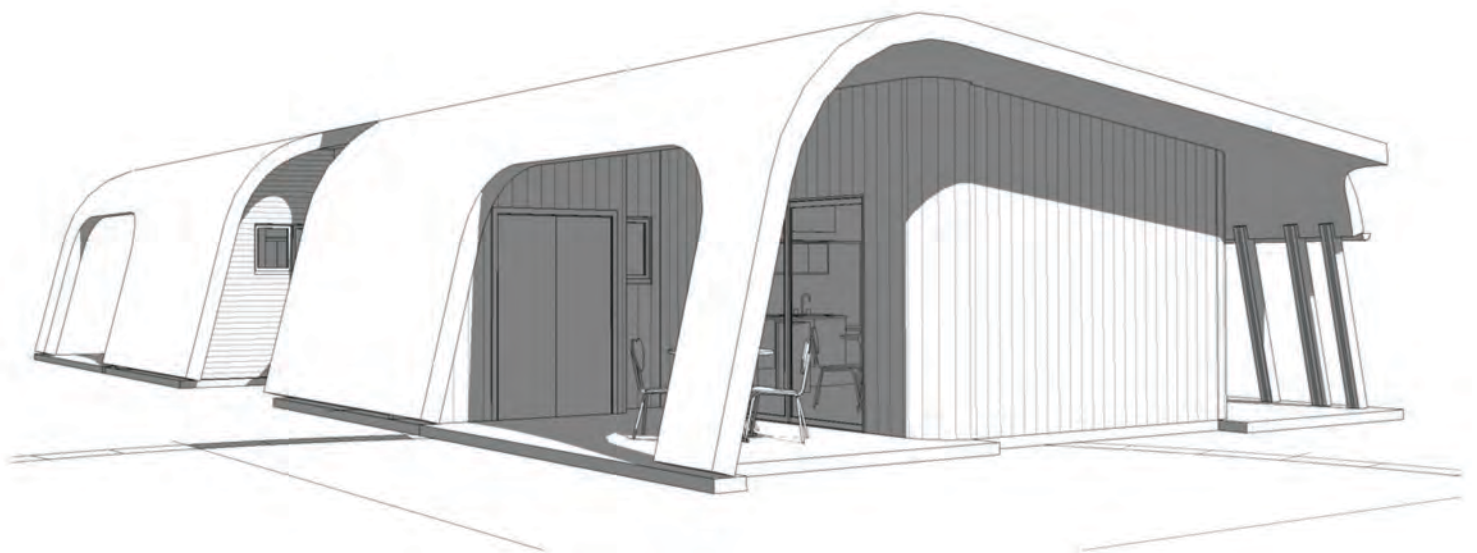
536

individuals attended
Participant Readiness
Initiative information
sessions

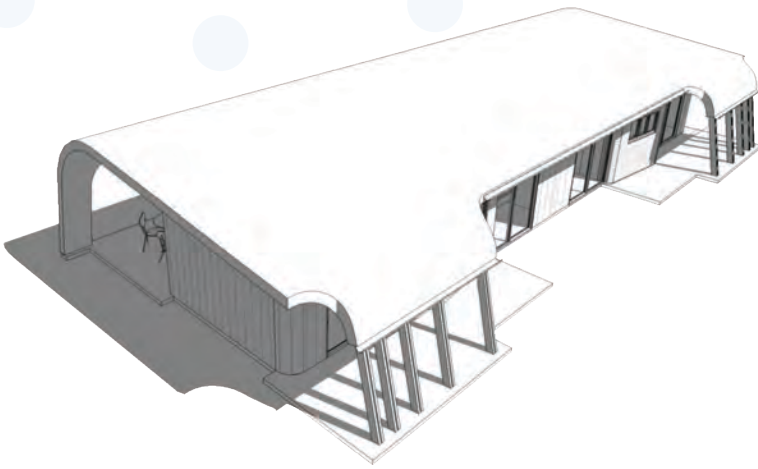


Supported Accommodation Innovation Fund Project

SAIF is a project to build a facility that will provide culturally appropriate supported accommodation for eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with severe and profound disabilities.



The SAIF Project



The project is the result of a consortium of non-government, corporate, Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations working together to provide an innovative accommodation facility and model of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with brain injury and severe and profound disabilities.

The SAIF Project will be the first of its kind in Australia. Due for completion in early 2017, the building of the facility has followed designs influenced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture. Local Cairns architects, People Orientated Design and Indij design have been involved in shaping the project.





The power of the right support

Katrina* moved into Synapse accommodation in August 2014. She had already made significant progress with her rehabilitation since her accident in 2010 but still had many challenges to overcome.

Katrina struggled to verbalise her emotions and her needs. This caused her to become very frustrated and at times aggressive. All personal care was difficult for Katrina and it was imperative that Katrina trusted and understood her support workers in order for them to support her. It was a major change for Katrina to move into a home with three house-mates and it took Katrina a few weeks to settle in and become comfortable with her new living arrangements.

It was only a short amount of time before Katrina was ready to show everyone her incredible personality and sense of humour, her desire to be independent and her resilient never-give-up attitude. Katrina soon built a wonderful rapport with her team and her house-mates. She began her weekly physio and speech therapy sessions and was introduced to her occupational therapist who would soon be teaching Katrina all the skills she required to boost her independence.

At this point Katrina still required a high level of support but was participating in a range of activities including bowling, grocery shopping and going on picnics. Katrina was using a wheelchair in the community, by choice, but after only one month her support workers were successfully encouraging Katrina to walk for further distances and even walk along the beach.

Two years later and Katrina is completely mobile and going for daily neighbourhood walks. Katrina has less intensive support and wonderful, positive relationships with her staff and house-mates. Katrina is able to look after her own personal care.

There have been many small but gratifying milestones achieved, such as learning to swim, ride a bike, brush her teeth, prepare herself a hot drink, and initiate speech. The aggression previously displayed is now a very rare occurrence and Katrina seems to feel better understood. The familiarity and bond with her team has been key in Katrina's evolvment into a much more relaxed and happy woman. The Synapse team are excited to continue to support Katrina's learning and development.

*Real story. Name changed at request

2016 highlights



Providing **24/7** supported accommodation at **7** sites in South East Queensland, for **23** people



Brain Injury Association of **NSW** joined Synapse

- new social connection program "**Reconnections**" connecting people
- responding to the NDIS planning and roll out already underway in NSW



Synapse Options

- responded to **over 500 new callers** seeking support and information on brain injury
- provided **ongoing phone support** to existing people
- **delivered training** on brain injury to aged care and respite service



Indigenous approach

- **536** individuals attended information sessions
- published a **culturally appropriate planning book** to assist in NDIS readiness
- construction about to commence of Australia's first **culturally appropriate accommodation** for indigenous people with brain injury



Early **Guddi** research findings into Indigenous Australians with brain injury

- greater disadvantage than broader community with a neurocognitive disability
- very high levels of complex neurocognitive disability, acute and chronic illness, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and high levels of abuse/neglect.
- complex disablement impacted by intergenerational physical and psychological trauma and poverty; lack of opportunity; domestic violence; substance abuse and recurrent involvement in the criminal justice system.
- disengagement from existing services and from the NDIA. There are limited and/or culturally inappropriate services and service systems available to respond to their needs.



191,082

facebook impressions



137,464 website visits, with **967,137** visits including additional synapse websites



86 staff



Accommodation & Lifestyle Support

67,904

hours of support delivered
in 2015-16



A sense of home

Synapse Accommodation and Lifestyle support is all about home. Providing a place to belong, in much the same way broader society would expect themselves.

Our team strive to ensure that those engaged in either one of our seven locations, or in their own house - have a sense of home in where they live.

We aim to increase each individual's level of independence. Knowing that everyone has differing abilities, this can be as simple as improving mobility, through to more complex support such as in living their own unit, or finding supported employment.

Relationships are key

Relationships are an essential part of everyone's lives. That is no different for the individuals engaged in our services, many of whom have immediate family including their own children. Our team actively encourage and facilitate reconnections and relationships with family and friends, knowing the benefits that this brings.

More broadly we also encourage participation in community activities. Our team regularly arrange activities such as inter-location barbecues, visits to major attractions, and the pursuit of individual passions such as hiking in nature.

Advocacy

Synapse recognises that disability accommodation today has come a very long way over decades past. The move to services based on community integration has led to greater benefits both for the community, and in outcomes for those with a disability, particularly for those living with a brain injury.

Unfortunately, we also recognise that currently there is limited availability in this type of accommodation model. This is particularly acute in the time following post injury, for example through from hospital discharge and early recovery.

This year

We continued to support the day-to-day living of our clients and promote their individual development and life choices with 67,904 hours of support.

As Queensland continues the NDIS roll out over the next three years, our services will experience significant changes in the frameworks that resource our accommodation and lifestyle support delivery. Through this, we remain committed to delivering the quality services and home environments fitting for those we serve.

Synapse Options



Over **500** new people supported

80 existing people supported
with additional information

Training and awareness

Synapse Options aims to improve awareness and understanding of brain injury within the community. We offer training sessions for organisations/community groups who want to learn about the issues, how to work with individuals with an injury, and how to understand and respond to challenging behaviours. Over the past year we have delivered training to aged care facilities, & respite services, as well as training our internal staff.

Assessment, planning and behavioural consultancy

To best support individuals we need to understand the complexity of their disability. Our behavioural support and planning specialists will visit the individual in their home environment to determine the type and level of support an individual will need to consider for the future.

Youth Justice Conferences

Youth Justice Conferences are run by the QLD Department of Justice and aim to keep young people who show remorse for their actions, out of the criminal justice system. Within the Brisbane region the Synapse Options team attends Youth Justice Conferences when the case relates to assaults. We present information on the brain, its structures and functions, as well as providing real life examples of what can happen to people when they are affected by suffer an injury. We raise awareness and discuss the many examples of recent street violence which results in death or brain injury.

Research & Development

Synapse research aims to improve the quality of life of those living with brain injury. Presently our core research programs are working to achieve this with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We are committed to culturally safe and appropriate research methodologies. Using these methodologies we will create an evidence base to inform and influence government and private sector policy and services within the NDIS context.

There are a range of issues that stand between disability policy reforms envisaged by the NDIS and its fulfilment in particular relation to Indigenous Australians particularly those living in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia. These issues include:

- the lack of accurate evidence about brain injury amongst Indigenous Australians;
- the long term effect of profound intergenerational disenfranchisement of Indigenous Australians, and Indigenous cultural perspectives around disability;
- the lack of cohesion between NDIS principles and systems and the experience of complex brain injury and mental health disability;
- the absence of appropriate and accessible assessment tools and services;
- complexities associated with establishing meaningful outcome measures.

The Guddi Project

Throughout the year Synapse continued to undertake The Guddi Project in Cairns, in partnership with Traditional Owners and Elders, Anglicare Far North Queensland, the Specialist Disability Assessment and Outreach Service, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability (SDAOT), James Cook University and University of Queensland.

Initial findings this year have shown that the experience of marginalised people with neurocognitive disabilities brain injury is far removed from community norms and their disadvantage is extreme. When screened using culturally appropriate tools marginalised people, including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, experience very high levels of complex neurocognitive disability.

They experience statistically high levels of acute and chronic illness depression and PTSD and have been exposed to high levels of abuse & neglect. In fact, many experience complex disablement that is impacted by intergenerational physical and psychological trauma and poverty; lack of opportunity; domestic violence; substance abuse and recurrent involvement in the criminal justice system. Participants are disengaged from existing services and from the NDIA. There are limited and/or culturally inappropriate services and service systems available to respond to their needs.



Neurocognitive disability

Synapse research aims to improve the quality of life of those living with neurocognitive disability. In research, we use this term as a more comprehensive term to 'brain injury'. A neurocognitive disability involves a cognitive decline from a previous level of functioning in one or more cognitive areas of the brain — such as attention, executive function, learning, memory, language, or social cognition. Neurocognitive disability can result from a range of impairments such as traumatic brain injury, infection, dementia, or substance abuse.

Synapse Research and Development Strategy 2016-2019

From 2016-2019 Synapse will work to maximise NDIS participation by marginalised people with brain injury through its research strategy. The strategy consists of a suite of research projects and research translation activities. Research projects will include:

- ongoing dissemination and development of a culturally safe and appropriate tool – 'The Guddi Tool' in sites in Victoria and Far North Queensland. The tool will enable services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to identify whether a person has an injury.
- the development of a centralised data repository of Indigenous brain injury based on multi-site experiences that will inform the NDIS in regard to need and demand
- community mapping using GIS technology
- dissemination of project findings to a range of stakeholders in formats that are culturally appropriate and 'user friendly'.

Through this strategy we aim to provide:

- an accurate picture of the number of marginalised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a brain injury;
- an evidence base about the lived experience of marginalised people with complex brain injury and their experience of disability services including the NDIS;
- a body of knowledge that can be applied to the ongoing development of the NDIS to ensure marginalised people are supported to access and participate in the NDIS;
- an evidence base from which to advocate for full inclusion and participation of marginalised people in the NDIS.

We disseminate our findings through talking with stakeholders including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders, NGOs, peak bodies, community groups and government, media, publications and conferences.

People and partnerships

In partnership with Griffith University, Synapse has established a three year, post-doctoral Fellowship and a research support position.

Aunty Jan Hammill continues to support Synapse research and her commitment to FASD research and dissemination is ongoing. Additionally our partnerships include:

- The Menzies Health Institute at Griffith University.
- Hopkins Centre alongside Metro South Hospital's Rehabilitation division and the Queensland's Motor Accident Insurance Commission.

Our voice



Over 936,000

website views

Synapse communicates with purpose to inform and advocate around the issue of brain injury. Using both print and digital platforms we publish a regular newsletter eConnect and a biannual magazine Bridge.

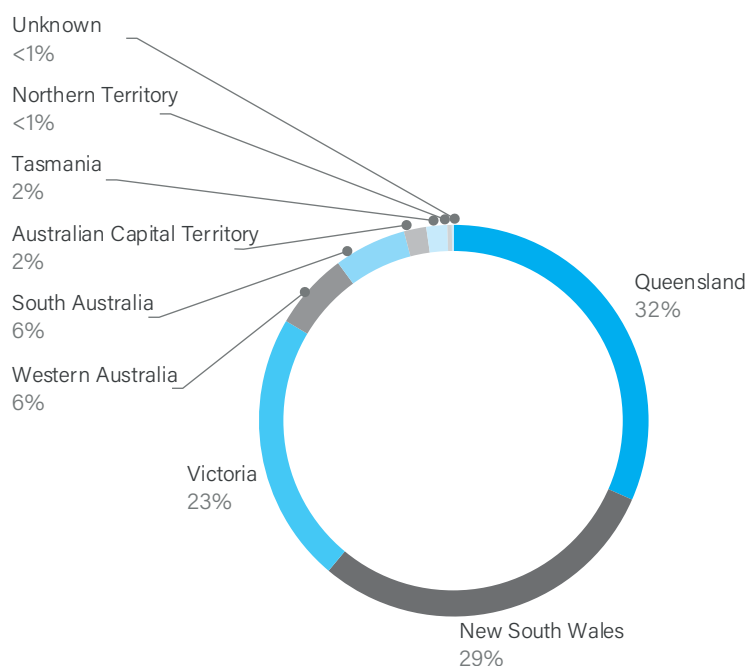
During the year our two Bridge editions focussed on mental health and inclusion issues for people with brain injury. Each edition included articles from people with lived experience, and industry information.

In our online presence we maintain our website and affiliate sites with information on brain injuries for people, carers, and professionals. The Synapse website had over 137,000 visits over the year. In Australia almost one third of visits came from Queensland, followed by New South Wales.

An affiliate information site that we maintain in Synapse branding on the issues of Autism reached 829,000 during the year with strong international interest.

On social media, our facebook page reached 191,081 impressions on our content.

Australian website views



Corporate services

Behind our service delivery team are a number of key support roles that ensure our front-line service team are able to work at their best. This team includes roles in finance, people and culture, administration support, information systems, marketing and communications, and business development.

In 2015-16, the team has continued to support day to-day service delivery, service developments such as NDIS readiness, and importantly played a core role in business changes such as in the unification with BIANSW.

External support

Recognising that wealth of knowledge and investment that these roles have in our work at Synapse – and that for small not-for-profits this support represents a significant expense, Synapse also offers the support of this team to other not-for-profits.

Currently the team is supporting externally with accounting, payroll and financial planning.



Our people

As a service-based organisation we believe that in creating a culture of excellence in our team and working environment we will also impact the quality of the services we deliver. We have a team of 86 including full and part time employees, casual staff, and volunteers.

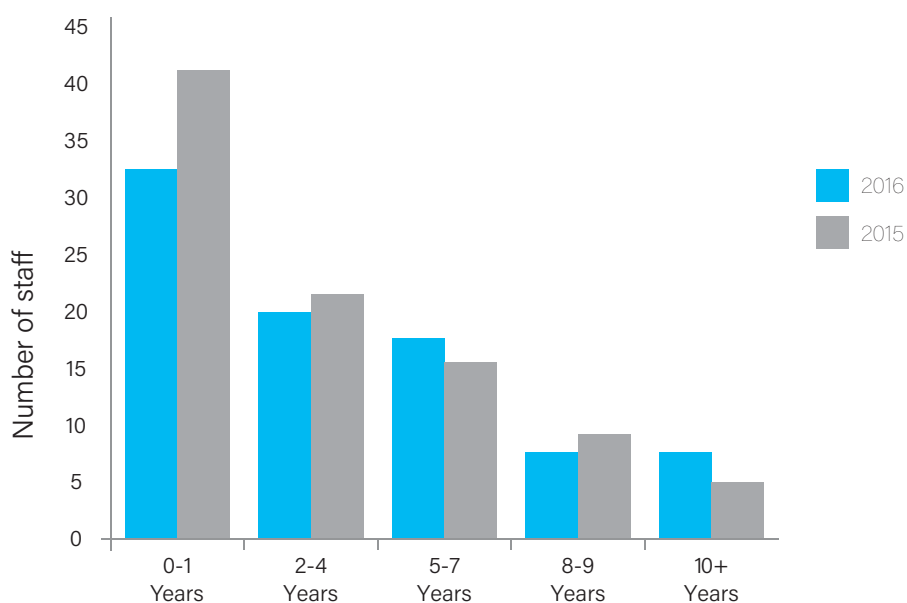
In creating this environment Synapse aims to be an employer of choice. We offer our team flexible employment arrangements and policies that have included school holiday activity rooms and pets in the office.

Diversity

Just over 70 per cent of our team are female, this is representative of the sector in which we work. We are conscious of the value in greater diversity, and we seek to increase both gender and broader diversity through our recruitment practices.

Long-serving staff

Synapse prides itself in the tenure and retention of our wonderful team. In this financial year we have one employee approaching their 16-year anniversary of employment, one employee their twelve year anniversary, two employees their eleven year anniversary and a further five employees about to reach their 10-years of service.

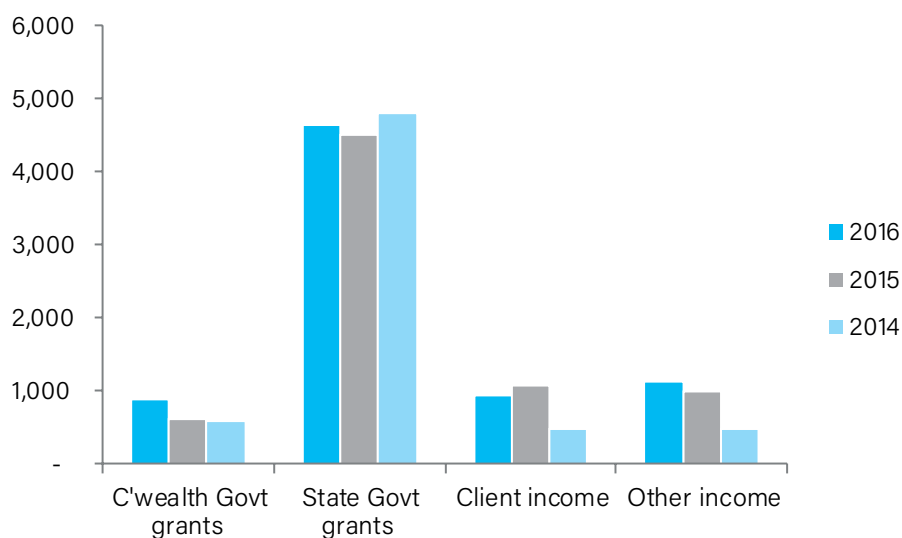


Financial summary

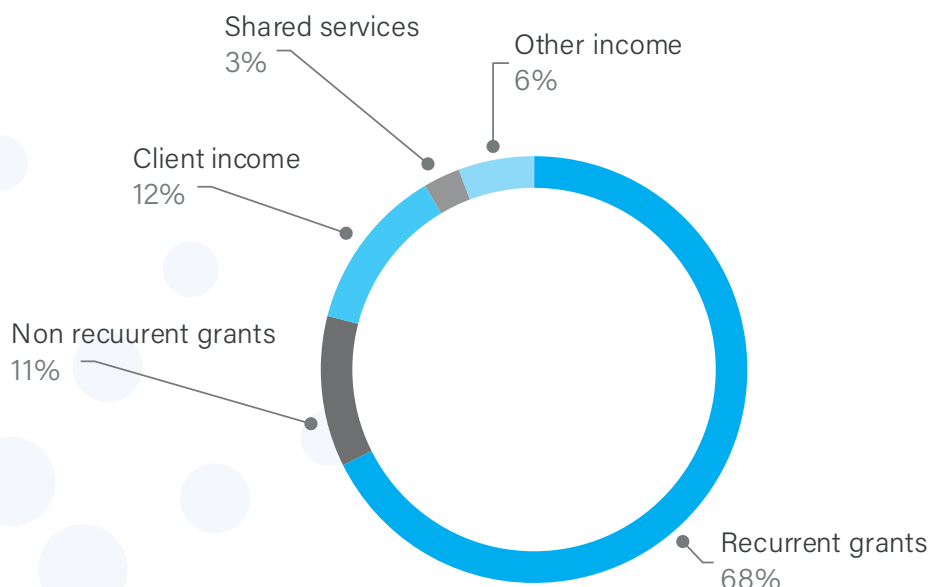
This year Synapse continued to improve both in operating revenue and in reducing expenditure. This is the second consecutive year where such result has been reported and we recognise the strong position that this success places the organisation in as we look to future developments.

Revenue

Operating revenue increased by just under ten per cent on the previous financial year. State Government funding represented the largest majority of our income. Synapse also made noticeable increases in Commonwealth Government and other income sources. The chart to the right shows the sources of Synapse revenue over the last three financial years.



During this financial year, revenue for Synapse came from the following sources:



Financial summary

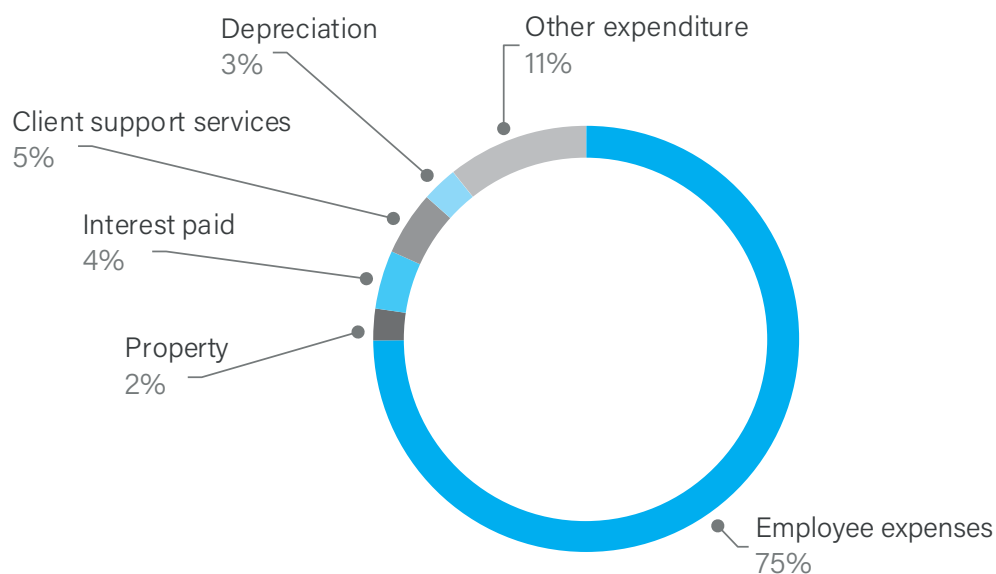
Expenditure

Total operating expenses in the financial year 2015/16 recognisably decreased on the previous financial year. Employee expenditure remains the largest item of expenditure, representative of the main cost of our support delivery.

The chart to the right shows the areas of expenses compared over the last three financial years.



During this financial year, the expenses of Synapse made up of the following:



The following financial statements are extracts from our annual audited financial statements. Our Auditors, HLB Mann Judd were engaged for the financial year to June 2016.

Statement of **comprehensive income**

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016 \$	2015 \$
Operating revenue	7,262,425	7,115,489
Accountancy and Auditor's remuneration	(23,075)	(24,832)
Advertising and promotions	(38,328)	(24,844)
Client support services	(314,063)	(378,389)
Computer expenses	(111,217)	(125,975)
Consultancy fees	(27,383)	(66,640)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(175,774)	(218,092)
Employee benefits expense	(4,848,521)	(5,053,845)
Finance costs and charges	(287,280)	(326,282)
Insurance	(64,316)	(76,219)
Legal expenses	(18,489)	(15,311)
Office expenses	(126,289)	(137,465)
Motor vehicle expenses	(52,938)	(56,662)
Other expenses	(233,315)	(228,467)
Property expenses	(155,702)	(170,501)
Loss on disposal of assets	1,325	(1,683)
Operating surplus / (Deficit) for the year	787,060	210,282
Non-operating activities	343,596	(236)
Surplus / (Deficit) for the year	1,130,656	210,046
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	1,130,656	210,046

Financial summary

Statement of financial position

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016 \$	2015 \$
Current assets		
Cash on hand	4,644,877	4,363,080
Trade and other receivables	195,001	175,772
Inventories	-	20,233
Other current assets	71,989	79,132
Total current assets	4,911,867	4,638,217
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	7,901,030	7,441,981
Total non-current assets	7,901,030	7,441,981
Total assets	12,812,897	12,080,198
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	416,367	483,765
Grants and revenue received in advance	3,947,338	4,296,899
Borrowings	161,383	161,501
Lease liabilities	-	7,563
Provisions	280,242	330,330
Total current liabilities	4,805,330	5,280,058
Non-current liabilities		
Borrowings	3,832,942	4,015,777
Lease liabilities	-	6,711
Provisions	96,263	95,057
Total non-current liabilities	3,929,205	4,117,545
Total liabilities	8,734,535	9,397,603
Net assets	4,078,362	2,682,595
Equity		
Accumulated surplus	3,606,405	2,475,749
Property revaluation surplus	471,957	206,846
Total equity	4,078,362	2,682,595

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 30 June 2016

	2016 \$	2015 \$
Cash flows from operating activities		
Receipts from donations, grants and client related activities	7,127,686	6,963,684
Payments to suppliers and employees	(6,089,563)	(6,297,501)
Interest received	109,542	122,465
Finance costs	(287,280)	(326,282)
Net cash generated from operating activities	860,384	462,365
Cash flows from investing activities		
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment	2,273	727
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(383,633)	(10,304)
Net cash used in investing activities	(381,360)	(9,577)
Cash flow from financing activities		
Repayment of Bank Borrowings	(182,953)	(336,075)
Repayment of finance leases	(14,274)	(42,014)
Net cash used in financing activities	(197,227)	(378,088)
Net increase in cash held	281,797	74,700
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	4,363,080	4,288,380
Cash on hand at end of financial year	4,644,877	4,363,080



Thank you

Synapse gratefully acknowledges the support and partnership received to deliver our services.

Australian Government

Department of Health
Department of Social Services

NSW Government

Family & Community Services

Queensland Government

Department of Communities



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