



Annual Report

2018–19

About Catholic Social Services Australia

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) is the national peak body for social services of the Catholic Church. For over 60 years we have assisted and promoted better social policy and programs for some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in Australian society.

At CSSA we work with our members to undertake research and advocacy to inform public opinion and to assist policy makers to create a fair and inclusive society. We do this within the frame of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

Our Vision

Envisages a fairer, more inclusive Australian society that reflects and supports the dignity, equality and participation of all people.

Our Mission

Is to promote a fairer, more equitable society that preferentially assists those people most in need.

Acknowledgement

CSSA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and Community. We pay our respects to them, their culture and Elders past and present, and emerging.

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Chair's Report

Dr Maria Harries AM



On behalf of the Board and all members, I welcome Dr Ursula Stephens to the role of CEO of our organisation. We are fortunate indeed to be able to capitalise on her wisdom and experience. I also thank Father Frank Brennan SJ for his contribution over these past years and thank and acknowledge all staff who have remained steadfast in their commitment to our work during yet another turbulent time for Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA). Particular thanks to Mary Jamieson, Joe Zabar and Dr Brenton Prosser.

Every year has its challenges for all of us and for the services we provide and manage: the pervasiveness of challenges is particularly present for those we serve. Whenever my attention is drawn to the challenges we face at CSSA I am reminded of how desperately tough life is for so many people in Australia or those wanting to settle here. These fellow human beings include many of our Indigenous brothers and sisters, refugees, asylum seekers, victims and survivors of all forms of abuse and trauma, and children, families and whole communities facing daily adversities that defy resolution. Sobering and balancing are these reminders as I again congratulate our members for the work they have done this past year to advocate and fight for change and to ease the lives of individuals, families and communities who struggle in our 'lucky country'.

A new national government, and some jurisdictional political changes found CSSA and our members adjusting their strategies and recalibrating policies to accommodate new horizons and imperatives. Alongside these adjustments was, and is, the ongoing requirement we all share and that is to continue to prioritise and understand the lived experience of the ever present blights of poverty, trauma and disadvantage and the corrosive impact of these on the human spirit. We are indeed privileged to work with inspirational colleagues and peers who daily bear witness to the courage, resilience and tenacity of people who struggle and yet find hope, healing and success.



The restructuring and simplifying of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) locates CSSA within a new Secretariat called the *Bishops Commission for Social Justice—Mission and Service* under the most welcome chairmanship of Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM CONV. There was clear purpose in positioning CSSA in this secretariat alongside organisations such as Caritas and the Migrant and Refugee Office. Doing so acknowledges the synergies in our various works and aims to increase our joint capacity for leverage in research, public policy, intervention and action. We also continue to confront the endless ramifications for our Church of the gravity of sexual abuse—never resiling from the need to care for survivors and ensure safety for children and vulnerable people. It is gratifying that the Catholic Professional Standards body is now well established and dynamic.

On the international scene, intense political turmoil in various countries in our region and worldwide appears not to abate: there would not be any one of us who has not uttered or heard the phrase, “the world is going mad”. Climate change, terrorism, the evident inhumanity of a number of world leaders, and, closer to home, the alarming statistics on sexual abuse, family violence as well as youth mental ill health, are just a few of the elements of a simmering cauldron of disturbance you, our members, live with. As well as this, all of us in community and other human services continue to confront and implement the recommendations of various previous and current Royal Commissions and Inquiries. At the same time you, our members, hold your organisations as stable as you can and manage the ‘here and now problems’ of those you serve.

The ongoing goal is to support members in providing a strong evidential base for our collective work.

As captured in our Value Proposition, our ongoing commitment at CSSA is to continue to assist you to do your work in whatever way we can. In his concluding statements as CEO in this Annual Report, Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO describes our accomplishments at reducing our costs and organisational size and re-orienting our work. The ongoing goal is to support members in providing a strong evidential base for your work and ours. Importantly, this work is based on the contemporary conception of co-design which focuses on undertaking research that emerges from the lived experience of need. I am grateful to Fr. Frank Brennan, Dr Brenton Prosser and all members of the Research Advisory Panel for their energetic work to date. They have developed an enviable consultative model of research grounded in the practical world of members’ work. We do have other more routine organisational work to do and that is to tidy up our two rather dated constitutions—and that is now a work in progress.

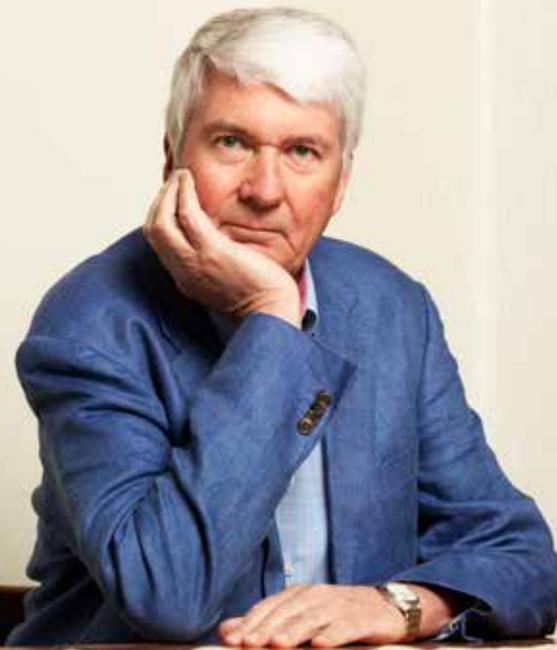
CSSA is but one part of a complex national network of Catholic social services and I acknowledge the leadership of all—particularly noting with thanks the longstanding contribution of Denis Fitzgerald who leaves Catholic Social Services Victoria this year. In doing so, I also acknowledge the work of colleagues from a wide range of faith based, private and government agencies. We value the ongoing links and collaboration with so many people who work for justice and for a fairer Australia.

My personal thanks go to all Board members for your unfailing support this year while you have managed your own organisations and trials therein—Michael King, Sr Kath Tierney rsm, Dr Robyn Miller, Bishop Paul Bird CSsR and Michael Austin. I acknowledge the departure of Paul Vane-Tempest who made an invaluable contribution to our Board with his legal acumen, witty insights into Canberra life and his zany sense of humour. I also warmly welcome Clare McNamara who has been a great supporter of Catholic social services and is the nominee of the ACBC. There is much work to do and as I said in my last annual report, together “we look forward to discerning how to repair so many wounds, help healing and contribute to the visions for the 2020 Plenary Council”.

**We value the ongoing
links and collaboration
with so many people
who work for justice and
for a fairer Australia.**

Message from the CEO

We prize all the human rights of all those we are privileged to serve.



Father Frank Brennan SJ AO

This is my third and last CEO report to you, the Catholic Social Service Australia (CSSA) members. A year ago, if you'd said to me that the financial year of 2018–2019 would end with Cardinal Pell in prison, Notre Dame Cathedral partially destroyed by fire, and 50 people killed, soaked in their own blood, having been gunned down while attending Friday prayers at their mosque—gunned down by one of our fellow Australians, I don't think I would have believed you. I'd be asking for proof. And when these things did come to pass, I, like you, was left wondering what room is left in our world, and even in our Church, for the joy, hope and glory of the Easter message which is the key to our Christian faith and the centrepiece of our Catholic mission to the world. Existentially, it's been a demanding year for all those who work for the member agencies of CSSA.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to travel the country extensively providing staff formation on Catholic Social Teaching. We have had a productive year faithfully implementing CSSA's new value proposition:

'As a national advocate, CSSA works with its members to produce evidence/research which informs public opinion and assists lawmakers to develop just and compassionate social and economic policies that will improve the lives of the poor and vulnerable in Australia. In doing so, CSSA fosters connectedness and partners with Catholic social services providers.'



We know that a constructive way forward is the breaking down of silos and the integrating of parish, education, health and welfare services delivered by the Church.

The restructure of CSSA we embarked upon is now complete. Our membership fees have halved and the reduced Canberra secretariat reflects this. We are working diligently on creating new value offers that link member needs and sector priorities with national research and advocacy. Examples of this include the NDIS grant national consortium, our national submission to the Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health and the research/evaluation/outcomes training that we are providing directly to branches and members. There has been an enthusiastic, generous response by members to the initial design and delivery of research projects funded by members buying in and participating in co-design.

The return of the Coalition Government at the May 2019 election meant that many of the reform proposals being proposed by the welfare sector had to be put on hold. At CSSA we are fortunate to have in place a Research Advisory Panel able to advise on research proposals which can be useful contributions to policy development regardless of which party is in government.

We need to look for the opportunity for the 'value add' by those of us who are church providers in a competitive and under-resourced space, ensuring a distinctive voice, which is tailored with a message grounded in the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching.

On 18 January 2019, I visited Fr Leo Donnelly in the Intensive Care Unit at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney. Leo had been the long-time parish priest of St Agnes Parish in Port Macquarie. We were preparing for the CSSA national conference to be held at Port Macquarie in co-operation with the parish of St Agnes. Leo said to me, 'Some say I'm a Legend. I'm no legend. I just work with others.' He said he did not need to be honoured. 'My life has simply been about empowering others to do the work. When I drove down from Lismore to become parish priest, I wondered, "What is it to be a parish priest?" I had only been involved in administration at that stage. I say "only", but it was important work. As I drove into Port Macquarie, I saw two street lights out the front of the church. One was not working. I thought, "Well that's what the parish priest can do. I can replace the light and light the place up for everyone". That's what I did. I was there to meet people's needs, to help them. We were able to do a lot.'

Sadly Leo died before the conference in February 2019. But we were all able to honour his memory and learn from his parish's achievements in the delivery of services. At the conference, we reflected on who we were as members of CSSA. I suggested that we were:

- Australians on the verge of an election, having endured two royal commissions where our trust in traditions, institutions and authority has subsided
- Australians on the verge of an election worried that we are letting go our commitment to the first and most recent Australians while being hamstrung in our efforts to be good stewards of creation
- Australians worried that our society is becoming more unfair, with inequality on the increase, and we feel powerless to do much about it
- Members of Australian society increasingly wondering about the place of religious faith and spirituality when dealing with trauma, mortality, loss of meaning, and the need for forgiveness
- Members of Australian society providing for the welfare needs of those doing it tough who are worried that our politics leads to further disadvantage for those without a voice—the one who falls through the cracks or who can't get through the door of the NDIS; those whose basic income is not addressed until budget repair is concluded; those who have to endure experiments and trials like the cashless debit card which may provide pathway from welfare to work or else a dead end of welfare dependency and loss of self-determination
- Members of Catholic organisations troubled by the findings of the royal commission which found our church to be insufficiently transparent, accountable and humble
- Members of Catholic organisations who wonder if the name 'Catholic' is now a label for an outdated and failing morality, failing to keep up with society's new moral agendas—whether it be the rainbow tick or environmental issues
- Citizens, church members, and service providers who want to break down the silos in our church and society so that we might more integrally provide services, presence, and community for those most on the margins.

The conference was a great success. We know that a constructive way forward is the breaking down of silos and the integrating of parish, education, health and welfare services delivered by the Church.

In these demanding economic times when the Catholic Church is 'on the nose' with many people, our Catholic social services organisations need to build a sustainable mission driven future. There is a need:

- To be an organisation fit for purpose to deliver cost effective, dignified services to all whom we serve
- To be an organisation focused on wrestling with the big moral questions from the perspective of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised
- To form a staff animated (and not simply weighed down) by wrestling with the big moral questions, knowing that together as Church we are at the cutting edge making a difference.

Following in the footsteps of Pope Francis, the means by which we are to build a sustainable mission driven future are:

- Being grounded in proximity to those who are poor and marginalised
- Participating in policy and advocacy work with competence and compassion
- Feeding the soul through relationships, prayer, respectful dialogue across difference, and ritual
- Working creatively, constructively and with an eye to 'value add' with the limited resources and the unique connectedness we have as Church.

We need to enunciate our principles clearly when dealing with the powerful, and in a non-threatening way; we need to be proximate to the powerless, standing in solidarity with them; and we need to publicly reflect on our engagement on both sides of the river, both with the powerful and the powerless.

In shaping our organisations, we have a stark choice. We can stick to our narrowly defined tasks of service delivery and leave the moral/political/social/economic questions to others OR we can encourage a discerning workplace where reflection on the great moral challenges of the day is encouraged. It was heartening to see the Australian Catholic Bishops during the 2019 election campaign speaking about climate change.

They wrote:

‘Pope Francis appeals to all of us to start “a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet” and calls for a “new universal solidarity”. Climate change is a complex reality of international import. It is both social and environmental, with solutions that Pope Francis says demand “an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time protecting nature”.

I served on the Ruddock Committee set up after the same sex marriage plebiscite. The Ruddock Committee conceded that in theory there is a major lacuna in the array of anti-discrimination legislation. If you legislate to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, age, race, or disability, why not on the basis of religion? During this last year, there has been a lot of discussion about human rights and freedom of religion.

I constantly meet well educated, compassionate human rights advocates who view religion as a hangover from a long past era. While conceding that human rights are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, they basically think that freedom of religion is more trouble than it is worth, a hangover from a past era. They find religious belief and practice marked by notions of tradition, authority, ritual and permanent commitment mystifying and counter-productive. They prize individualism, freedom, personal autonomy and non-discrimination. They not only welcome increasing manifestations of the secular with a strict separation of church and state. They also relish increased secularisation of society with less reliance and respect being shown to the religious inclination which is quarantined to the sole preserve of the individual's private life—not to be shared in polite company and not to be aired on the public airwaves. Or if aired ever so briefly, to be silently tolerated or publicly declaimed.

CSSA members prize all the human rights of all those we are privileged to serve. But we need to be ever on our guard when particular human rights are invoked with insufficient regard for the human rights of all.



The work of our members in serving thousands of people across Australia each and every day is truly inspirational.

During the past year, we were delighted to witness the award to Mary Clare Jamieson, CSSA's director of corporate services, of the papal medal—*Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (for services to the Church and to the Pope), which is instituted for persons distinguished for outstanding service and zeal. Mary, who has worked for CSSA for the past 15 years, said 'It's been a great privilege working for CSSA and our members. The work of our members in serving thousands of people across Australia each and every day is truly inspirational. Over the years, I have witnessed immense change both at CSSA and across our member network, but our foundational purpose of supporting the needs of our communities, especially people who are vulnerable and marginalised, has remained constant. Our current research agenda to address the root causes of poverty and disadvantage in Australia will be important in shaping social and economic policy into the future. It is a really exciting time for CSSA and our members.'

When I came to CSSA as CEO in February 2017, I quickly discovered that Mary was the heart and soul of the network. All our members, the length and breadth of the country have held Mary in their highest esteem. She has been the collective memory and conscience of the national secretariat. She has given selfless service to the Church and to the poor and marginalised whom we are privileged to serve at CSSA.

As I leave CSSA to take up my new appointment as the Rector of Newman College at the University of Melbourne, I am delighted that Dr Ursula Stephens has been appointed my successor. I was privileged to know Ursula during her many years in the Senate when she always showed a keen interest in the delivery of social services, happily drawing on her deep knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching.

I thank you all for the opportunity to lead CSSA these past 2.5 years. I thank Professor Maria Harries and her fellow board members. They have been ever attentive to the needs of CSSA. I acknowledge the service of Paul Vane-Tempest and welcome Michael Austin to the board as his replacement. The restructure of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is now complete. I thank the past members of the Bishops Commission for Health and Community Services and wish the members of the expanded Commission for Social Justice all the best as they bring better co-ordination to the Church's work for social justice.

I am delighted to stay on as Chair of CSSA's Research Advisory Panel and would be delighted to provide ongoing assistance with the formation of staff in Catholic Social Teaching.

Message from the incoming CEO

Dr Ursula Stephens



In June 2019, I was privileged to be recruited as the incoming CEO of Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA).

As successor to Father Frank Brennan I have somewhat large shoes to fill. It is with deep gratitude however, for the opportunity, that I accept the baton of leadership from Father Frank.

Father Frank's connectedness with opinion leaders and decision makers across Australia, and his profile across the Australian Community has given CSSA a very strong position from which to advocate on behalf of people marginalised and disadvantaged.

During his tenure at CSSA Fr Frank's dynamic approach to engage across sectors, issues, and faiths resulted in collaborations and partnerships that leverage for reform. As CEO, Frank promoted our mission across many platforms, including parish communities, politicians and the parliament, international speaking events, and the media.

I will continue to build on this great legacy, strengthening relationships across Church Ministries and building the capacity of our social services through advocacy and research.

In the coming year we will be developing a number of significant research projects with various member partners and the ANU Centre for Social Research Methods. The *Countering Entrenched Disadvantage* research project will seek to develop a nationwide comparison of poverty drivers which most impacts across suburbs. The outcomes of this research have the potential to influence and target service delivery design and implementation for our member organisations.

In the short time since I have arrived at CSSA I have been out and about connecting with members, understanding their work and their issues of concern.

I look forward to leading CSSA in its next phase, where we continue to strengthen our engagement and capacity to influence for reform, and be a strong, robust and distinctive voice, tailored with a message grounded in the gospels and Catholic Social Teaching for disadvantaged people and communities in Australia and for our members—whose services transform lives.

Our work for the year

National Conference 2019– “Meeting the Unmet Need”

In February CSSA staged its National Conference, “Meeting the Unmet Need”. The conference took an in-depth look at how we might break down silos, and work more effectively across agencies and ministries to support the communities and people we seek to serve.

The conference honoured the work of the late Fr Leo Donnelly OAM whose tenacity and focus on the whole of community led to a model of operation which blended the best of the Church’s ministries in service to the poor and vulnerable in Port Macquarie and surrounds. We thank St Agnes Parish for hosting our National Conference and to Fr Leo for his inspiration.

The Conference welcomed 200 delegates from across the diverse Church ministries including social services, health, education and parishes. The speakers and conference delegates provided a thought provoking contribution as to how we, as a National Network of social service providers, might better work together to meet the unmet need in our local communities and more broadly in Australia.

Delegates debated and discussed a range of issues including that of safe guarding and national standards in child protection and the critical need to ensure a child-safe organisation. Dr Robyn Miller, discussed the key elements of MacKillop Family Services’ experience of ‘walking the talk’. Dr Jen Cleary with Michael King discussed differences across regional and remote Australia, relating operating challenges and stepped through some alternative approaches to mitigate the risk of people falling through the gaps in these locations. Overall, the conference offered many pertinent speakers and workshop topics which were very highly received by delegates.

Building our Evidence Base

Over the last twelve months, with our members, CSSA has developed and adopted a new approach to building evidence and research. Based on two listening studies, including over 60 member representatives (and a further 30 CSSA stakeholders), we have developed a research strategy that links local need, national relevance and rigorous evidence. This is a research strategy that embodies CSSA’s Strategic Intent and provides a tangible blueprint for a modern and equitable society and social services system.

A key pillar of this approach has been the collaborative development of national research partnerships with members to commission or compete for research funding. Prominent examples of this work include:

- Our research partnership with the ANU and 20 members to co-design and commission research that identifies the drivers of disadvantage in every Australian suburb over the next 10 years.
- Our consortia of 16 members that applied for competitive NDIS grant funding around building the evidence base to grow your own psychosocial service workers in your local setting (value \$1.4 million). The outcomes of this application was unknown at June 2019.
- The production of an edited collection that draws on research evidence and our expertise across the membership about the role of spirituality in Catholic social service delivery, including the importance of caring for the carer. This is due for publication in early 2020.

Engagement and Advocacy

During the course of the year CSSA engaged and advocated in Australia's national conversation on many and varied nation building issues. These issues included the need for a fairer and more inclusive economy, the National Disability Insurance Scheme and concerns that participants were falling through gaps, and the need for the progression of the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's National Constitution. We discussed and advocated on issues impacting families, the homeless, the unemployed and people with disabilities. We engaged in the discourse on refugees and asylum seekers, and we discussed and advocated for solutions on welfare payments and regulatory oversight of charities, and issues of rural and remote Australia, including drought relief.

Our communication and engagement included to Ministers, Parliament, their advisors, key departmental officials, the broader social services sector, research institutions and politicians.

Federal Election Statement 2019

This year saw the nation go to the polls on the 18 May. Our Federal Election Statement 2019 called for an Australia that has a vision of social and economic inclusion where the inherent dignity and potential of each person can be realised.

Our six key asks were:

- Adequate income for vulnerable families
- The establishment of a job guarantee program
- Constitutional Recognition for Australia's First Nations Peoples
- Resettling refugees from Manus Island and Nauru to Australia
- The establishment of a charter for the common good

The statement was used as a platform for community and political advocacy in the lead up to the election and remains.



During the course of the year CSSA engaged and advocated in Australia's national conversation on many and varied nation building issues.

Collaboration

New entities

We continuously promote and facilitate cooperation with and between our state and territory partners to achieve the mission of CSSA. Collaboration between our members at the state and territory level enhances and advances our advocacy and research work at the national level.

During this period we were very pleased to welcome the establishment of new state and territory entities, Catholic Social Services NSW/ACT and Catholic Social Services WA.

Rural and regional forums

In October we hosted a gathering of CEO's from rural and regional Australia. The gathering provided the opportunity to bring together members to discuss the unique needs of regional and remote service delivery and to provide an opportunity for the group to meet with officials from the Department of Social Services (DSS) to discuss these unique issues.

The gathering provided CEO's new to the CSSA family an opportunity to network with their colleagues. It also allowed CSSA to showcase its location in Canberra, and to highlight its capacity to easily engage with senior federal government representatives, politicians and decision makers.

The launch of *Hearing, Healing and Hope*

During the year we were pleased to work with Catholic Social Services Victoria to launch the publication, *Hearing, Healing, Hope: The Ministry of Service in Challenging Times*. The publication gathers up the great work of the 2018 conference across issues for people with a disability, refugees, people suffering entrenched long-term unemployment and youth with high levels of under-employment. The book examines the issues and considers new approaches for a way forward for social service organisations and for the wider Catholic Church.

The launch of the 2018–2019 Social Justice Statement

In September we spoke at the Brisbane launch of the Social Justice Statement on homelessness, "A Place to Call Home: Making a Home for Everyone in our Land." In October CSSA joined with St Vincent Health Australia and St Vincent de Paul to facilitate two events to mark the launch of the Statement. The events were held at public hospitals, bringing together practitioners, in the medical and social housing environment to encourage the sharing of information across sectors.

World Poor Day

As part of World Day of the Poor, CSSA worked with the Bishops Commission on Pastoral Life. To commemorate World Poor Day communication activities highlighted the existing work undertaken by CSSA members, and encouraged local Parishes to share a meal with people who may be marginalised in their communities.

Financial Summary

Summary Financials—for period ended 30 June 2019

This year was CSSA's first year of operation under the reduced membership fee model. We are grateful for the strong ongoing support and commitment from our members in designing a sustainable financial model to ensure the national voice for Catholic social services is maintained. We also thank the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for their financial support, through their annual grant.

The new streamlined operations implemented from 1 July were delivered within the set budget.

The financial year outcome is a surplus of \$604,481. Included in this result is the profit on the sale of the Curtin Convent, our previous office base in Canberra since 1984. Removal of this extraordinary item leaves a profit of \$128,000. The proceeds of the Curtin property have been invested with Catholic Church Insurance (CCI) Catholic Values Investment Trust ensuring these funds remain separate from CSSA's normal operating funds. The 30 June 2019 income includes the accrued distribution income from the CCI investment of \$64,912 which further contributed to the positive outcome in the 2019 financial year.

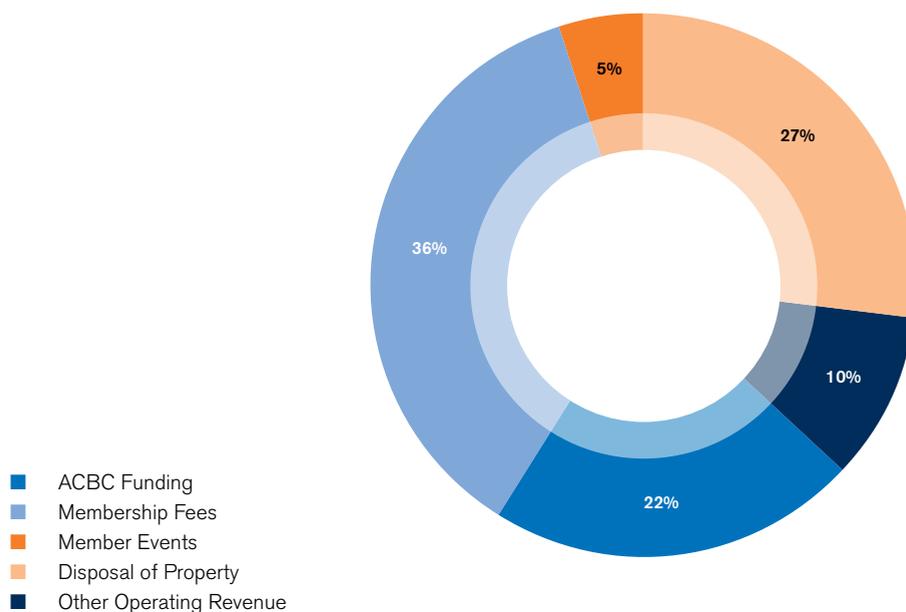
A sound net asset and cash position has been maintained.

In May, we farewelled Paul Vane-Tempest, Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee as he concluded his tenure on the Board. We thank Paul for his leadership and expertise particularly noting his steering of the lengthy sale process of the Curtin property.

A full set of the financial statements are available online at cssa.org.au

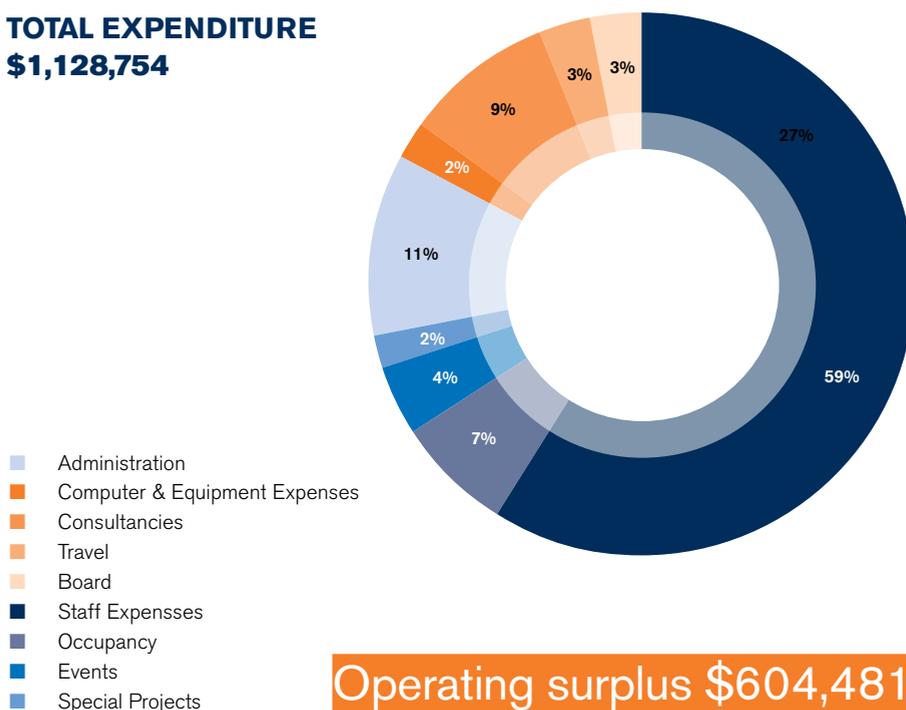
Income

TOTAL REVENUE
\$1,733,235



Expenditure

TOTAL EXPENDITURE
\$1,128,754



Operating surplus \$604,481



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