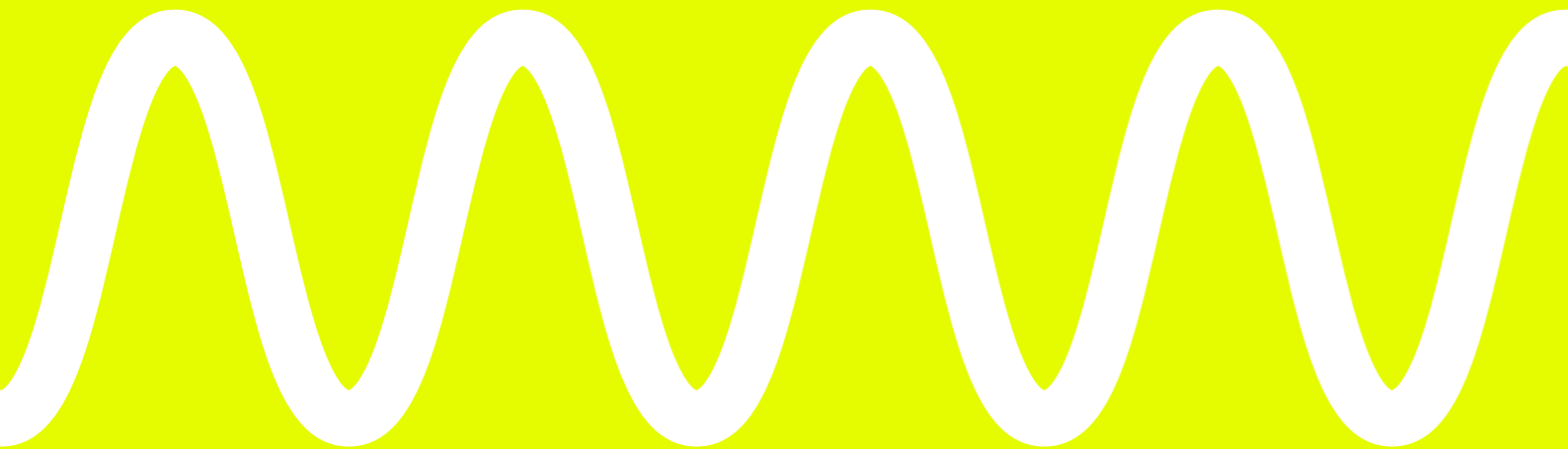




# Building what's next.

# Annual report 2022

—the 162nd edition



Annual report of Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children trading as NextSense

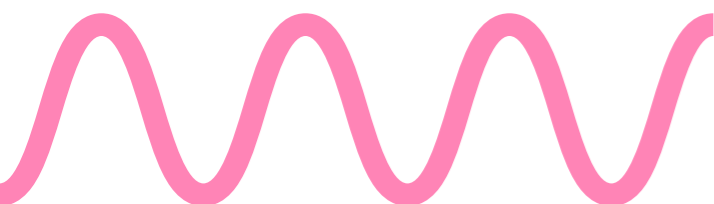
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# Who is NextSense?

**We are a not-for-profit organisation supporting people across Australia who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or have low vision.**

Our wide range of experts work with children, adults and their families to educate or create an individual program of care to meet their unique needs. We've been providing services since 1860 and now deliver Australia's largest cochlear implant program. We harness the latest technology, educate the next generation of experts and are world leaders in research.



# NextSense. Enhancing lives every day, by redefining what's possible.



## Our purpose

We exist to enhance lives by working with people who have hearing or vision loss, so together we can redefine what's possible.



## Our values

- **Integrity**  
We make sure our words and actions align
- **Empowerment**  
We own our roles and experiences
- **Community**  
We connect and collaborate
- **Respect**  
We all matter and have different strengths
- **Courage**  
We look and go beyond fear
- **Communication**  
We share and communicate with purpose



## Our ambition

We lead and influence the field of hearing and vision, through dedication to our services, and advancing research, education, innovation and technology.



## Our strategic priorities

- Grow and evolve our offering
- Build a unified organisation
- Create a people-first culture
- Lead and influence the sector
- Future-proof a sustainable business

# 2022—the year in numbers



Clients supported in 2022

10,000+

5,200+

people supported by our cochlear implant program

404

cochlear implant surgeries

19

of Australia’s top ear, nose and throat surgeons worked with us

3,500+

children received diagnostic audiology services

480+

children supported who are blind or have low vision

1,200+

children supported through our early intervention programs

172

children supported by NextSense education services

17%

of hearing and vision sessions delivered by telepractice

3,427\*

professional education training and development days delivered by NextSense Institute, and UEB Online (our accessible braille training portal)

51

students completed the Master of Disability Studies

\*Corrected and updated online on 29/5/23

# Message from the President and Chief Executive

Every year is unique as organisations propel forward to meet their strategic goals. Some years are watershed years, where key transitions take place, and landmarks are reached.

At NextSense, we're in the midst of a three-year phase of change that is pivotal to the organisation we want to become.

In 2021 we met important milestones in our strategic goal of building one single, strong, unified organisation. We transformed our brand to NextSense to bring all of our services and staff under one umbrella to ensure our clients and the partners we work with have one cohesive, streamlined experience with us and understand the full extent of what we offer. We also harmonised our internal work environment, bringing most of our people under one enterprise agreement in an inclusive way that staff overwhelmingly supported. Both of these big changes helped us better harness the strength across our organisation, making it easier for us to pull together and head boldly forward.

And this past year, in 2022, we put significant new foundations in place to take us into the future. We did this through breaking ground at our centre for innovation within the Macquarie University precinct, which will be a social infrastructure project of national significance.

We began reviewing and building new operational frameworks to guide our services into the future. Much of this was quiet, behind-the-scenes work that will form the bedrock of our success. And we did all of this in an environment of operational disruption, as the impacts of COVID-19 were still being felt, and natural disasters affected our regional operations.

We have a big year to come. In 2023 we will open the doors to our centre for innovation. We'll expand the way we work internally and externally to build partnerships that nurture, trial and share ideas that will change the game for people with hearing and vision loss.



## Navigating operational challenges

COVID-19 impacts—such as disability and health mandates, illness-related appointment cancellations, and elective surgery delays—continued to bite further into the year than expected. While the full force of the pandemic was felt most acutely in the previous two years, we found ourselves still feeling the impacts in 2022, and our reserve and resilience were called upon once again. We were agile in implementing COVID-19-safe measures in line with government and public health advice and went above and beyond to take the steps we needed to keep our people, and our clients, safe.

In February, the NSW floods devastated homes, businesses and entire communities. After more than 12 years as part of the Lismore community, the damage to our NextSense centre in Conway Street was too great to recover from. Our Board took the difficult decision to relocate and acted swiftly, enabling us to secure premises in nearby Alstonville. During the time it took to re-establish ourselves, we were incredibly fortunate to have had the support of our partner Hearing Australia. By allowing us to use their premises in Lismore and Ballina, they ensured we could continue to offer a level of service much-needed by these regional communities.

The relaxing of COVID-19 travel restrictions meant that we were able to visit our regional centres for the first time in two years. It was incredible to see first-hand the way our dedicated teams have continued to deliver for the clients they are so passionate about.

# Building our future

**In 2022 we reached a major milestone on the project that will set us on course for a bright new future.**

Construction began on our new centre for innovation on the Macquarie University campus. Breaking ground on this project was the culmination of years of planning. And we have made incredible progress, despite operating within what the World Meteorological Organisation describes as the “exceptional situation” of a La Niña event that has been running for three consecutive years. By December, the building was well out of the ground, with slabs for both our school building and central building poured and wall framing under way.

During the year we worked with the Federal Government to finalise its commitment to retain \$12.5 million in funding earmarked earlier in 2022 for our centre for innovation. We were also pleased to see \$7.5 million in National Health and Medical Research Council funding devoted to improving wellbeing for those with hearing loss—including \$1.4 million for a prototype Child Hearing Health Outcomes Registry for Australia. Two of our leading academics—Professors Greg Leigh and Teresa Ching—have been named as Chief Investigators on this grant, which is being led by the Murdoch Children’s Health Research Institute and has multiple collaborators. This collaborative approach will be an even greater feature of our work at the new centre for innovation.



**\$12.5 million**

Federal budget commitment of funding for our centre for innovation

## Building our talent

People are at the heart of all that we do, and we strengthened our team in 2022 in numerous ways, including by welcoming new senior leaders to our organisation. David Eljiz, our new Chief Operating Officer, and Arani Duggan, our new Director of Fundraising and Development, have joined our high-performing executive team and bring a wealth of experience to their roles.

During the year, 38 new staff members joined us from a wide variety of disciplines including speech pathology, education, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, administration, IT, risk management, and people and culture. We are incredibly fortunate to have such strength in our team. Their skills and experience are what has propelled us forward for more than 160 years. We operate in a landscape where employees have many choices. We acknowledge this and continue striving to be an employer of choice—a destination for top-tier talent.

Bringing our staff together in one unified, sustainable organisation remained at the forefront of our work. After harmonising and modernising our workplace Enterprise Agreement, we continued to embed it across the organisation. And we continued to cement our NextSense brand and began to consider new opportunities for collaboration and ways of working that will be a feature when we relocate in the second half of 2023. The foundations we put in place in 2022 will help us continue to evolve, renew, and create new opportunities to attract the best people.

## Building new models of service delivery and education

Our unification work was also evident in the conversation and planning around our service delivery in 2022. We undertook a program of work to ensure the services we offer our clients are exceptional.

This work began with a comprehensive review of current operations to identify where we can improve in our processes, client journey and engagement and clarifying our roles and responsibilities. The changes we make will prepare the groundwork for our move to Macquarie in 2023 and will be felt across every

one of our centres as we build a holistic approach to our operations. As we move into 2023, we will also focus on our services in Victoria, where we have a strong history, loyal client base, supportive donor community, and rich environment to grow and further develop our offering.

During the year, we participated in an NDIS mid-term audit and successfully achieved a very positive outcome. The auditors noted our exceptional service and commitment to continuous improvement. This is a strong base indeed for the work we are now doing to strengthen our service delivery even further.

We also began to think broadly about the education models that will serve us best in the future and attract others to our new centre to understand what inclusive education might look like for all schools across Australia.

## The NextSense Board

The leadership and support of our Board of Directors was critical to our ability to do the foundational work required in 2022. The Board began to map our 10-year horizon and explore future strategies for success. It was also pivotal in supporting the organisation through the continued operational challenges caused by COVID-19.

During 2022 we said goodbye to Roger Gee, who announced his retirement from the Board after 14 years as a Director. Roger’s contribution has been immense. He has led long-term fundraising initiatives such as Pathfinders and made an important contribution to the strong governance of our organisation. Thank you, Roger, for helping shape the NextSense of the future.

The achievements of 2022 would not have been possible without the exceptional support of our Board, our staff, our donor community, and our many partners and stakeholders.

The past year has been a richly rewarding one, reminding us that we are adept at challenge and change. We have demonstrated that in our people we have the talent and skill to simultaneously build on the past and look to the future. The foundations are in place for us to thrive and grow.

**David Dinte**, NextSense President  
**Chris Rehn**, NextSense Chief Executive



# Laying new foundations

In 2023 we will open our doors to clients, staff and partners in new ways. Through our new centre for innovation within the Macquarie University precinct, we'll create a focal point for the expertise that we have across our 20 centres, remote services, and research and education programs.

We'll connect that expertise more effectively with leaders in the hearing and vision sectors more

broadly. And we'll use these connections to drive collaborations that will address the big issues in hearing and vision loss, advocate for change, and drive policy and practice.

Combining world-leading knowledge with real-world expertise across multiple fields, such as service delivery, research, health, disability, education, government and industry, will give us the right

ingredients for change. NextSense will bring a valuable service delivery perspective to the conversations we have and the work we do together. But doing that work together is key. A collective approach is the only way forward.

We have been conceptualising and planning this significant project for some years. And in 2022 we were able to turn those ideas into bricks and mortar. In the face of weather-related challenges, we pressed forward, and by December our building partner ADCO had moved 17,500 cubic metres of earth, poured 2,895 cubic metres of concrete, and inducted 662 workers who worked more than 64,000 hours on the project.

Staff teams have begun to spend time getting to know the vibrant Macquarie campus, and all of the benefits it will bring in 2023 and beyond.





## Building sustainability

While this impressive large-scale construction was taking place, we were simultaneously doing some building of a different kind as we reimagined what our service and education models might need to look like in the future. We recognise the need to adapt in the face of new knowledge and technological change.

In 2022 we gave considerable attention to the way we deliver our educational services. Building on our 162-year history, we looked at how these might evolve to meet the changing needs of the communities we serve. We began to look at new ways to demonstrate inclusive practice and how we can share our rich insights more broadly. This will be particularly important as we move to a more integrated location on the Macquarie campus. Here, we will also build on our work to educate the professionals of the future to meet the worldwide demand for skilled practitioners in the field of sensory disability.

During the year, we also conducted a major review of our operations, forensically looking at how we can be true to our commitment to continuous quality improvement. We began to explore our processes, how people experience our services, and our roles and responsibilities. We began to look at how these intersect, and where we might need to streamline things to drive better outcomes.

We also began to explore new opportunities to work innovatively together as we prepared to move to a physical environment that is designed specifically for networking and collaboration. We will continue this work in 2023.

## Rebuilding in the Northern Rivers region

The devastating 2022 floods in Lismore continue to affect so many. We were not immune—our Lismore office was destroyed and we were forced to pivot quickly to resume services where we could for people who needed us.

With the help of Hearing Australia, we were able to deliver some services from their premises in Lismore and Ballina. And thanks to the generosity of the Parramore Family Foundation, which has supported us for many years, we were able to secure new replacement premises in nearby Alstonville. We also received significant support from the JLDJS Foundation.

As the year came to an end, our new Alstonville centre was partly operational and we look forward to continuing the full level of dedicated service to clients from our new Northern Rivers home from early 2023.

We thank our Northern Rivers clients and staff for their resilience and their patience. We are privileged to be part of this amazing community and confident that we will remain so, for many years to come.



# Hearing services

**Our whole-of-life approach to hearing services means we can support people regardless of their age or when they first experienced hearing loss.**

For children who are deaf or hard of hearing, early intervention is critical. Evidence shows that acting quickly positively impacts how children develop. And those children with the greatest degree of hearing loss benefit the most from early action. Supporting early language, whether that is spoken language, sign language, or taking a bilingual approach, is important in helping children reach developmental milestones and engage with the world around them.

To that end, we offer hearing services to suit individual needs and family choice, and we're committed to a best-practice approach.

The release of the 2021 First Voice Sound Outcomes report showed excellent results for the children we support. The report data included results for children under age six who accessed our Early Intervention (Hearing) services. Language results for children with a cochlear implant at 5 years of age without additional needs showed 86% had age-appropriate spoken language at school entry.

In 2022 we undertook a comprehensive review of our early intervention framework, as part of our ongoing commitment to evidence-based best-practice and benchmarking service delivery. The review ensures we will continue to align with international and national evidence-based best-practice principles. As part of this work, we also began to explore ways to enhance our best-practice Early Intervention Auslan services based on the latest evidence. This included assessing current practice in Australia for children and families for whom Auslan is their language of choice.

We also showcased our service delivery model in several forums, including a presentation on our

'team around the child/keyworker' approach to an international audience at the AG Bell Symposium in June.

And we supported Macquarie University's LiLAC project, which brings early intervention hearing partners together to help Indigenous children at risk of chronic otitis media get early access to the right services.

In Victoria, with generous anonymous support received via the Perpetual Foundation, we purchased new audiological equipment that allows us to test babies' hearing objectively, while they are asleep. This makes it much easier to diagnose the severity and type of hearing loss in newborns referred from hospital following newborn hearing screening.

Families in this situation have many questions about 'what next' but with the help of the Interacoustics Eclipse equipment we can provide a full and comprehensive understanding of their child's hearing condition.

Nationwide, we conducted a cochlear implant services pilot to assess babies' gross motor skills. As a result of the pilot, we developed a gross motor screening service framework for babies before and after implantation. This will help to monitor gross motor development and ensure each child reaches gross motor and balance milestones. And it will provide a solid foundation for their communication and learning development, ultimately improving outcomes of young children with cochlear implants.



# Leon’s just five but he’s already learning two languages

For five-year-old Leon, being bilingual is a source of excitement and achievement.

He has had cochlear implants in both ears since he was eight months old, after being diagnosed with auditory neuropathy and permanent bilateral hearing loss. But due to his type of hearing loss, over time his listening skills improved with the introduction of Auslan – Australian Sign Language.

Leon’s family chose to introduce him to Auslan with the help of a Teacher of the Deaf – and he hasn’t looked back.

He has received early intervention and cochlear implant services through NextSense, as well as attending our Sign Bilingual Preschool, and now our school, where he participates in the sign bilingual program. Mum Jennifer has also valued the support from Leon’s early intervention specialist and one of our on-site psychologists.

‘I did all my research and decided to go with NextSense because the team was amazing and I liked that Leon could have access to spoken language and Auslan,’ Jennifer says.

Learning Auslan has actually helped Leon’s spoken language and he is soaking up his language-rich environment.

For some families, there is not just one way to develop language. Research indicates that children can learn both spoken and sign language given adequate exposure to each language.

Teacher of the Deaf Katie has supported Leon and his family since he was a toddler.

‘It’s been really exciting seeing what he has been able to do, and the outcomes Leon has achieved. Auslan input has really helped him with his spoken language—he’s made connections between signs and words,’ Katie says.

Jennifer says it has been amazing to watch Leon thrive and make friends at school.

‘The preschool was right there at NextSense, so Leon started there at two and a half until it was time to start school. Then I didn’t need to look any further, because NextSense has a school as well—how awesome!’

‘It’s been amazing to watch him grow in that environment, I feel very lucky that I found NextSense.’

Leon and Jennifer see his key worker and Teacher of the Deaf Katie once a week and the family is learning Auslan in the home.

‘Leon runs in to our sessions,’ says Katie. ‘He has gone from knowing a single Auslan sign to putting sentences together. It’s very rewarding to watch his growth and development continue to go on the up and up.’

## Consulting Otolologists

- Professor Bill Gibson AO  
MBBS, MD (London), FRCS, FRACS  
Clinical Professor Catherine Birman OAM  
MBBS, PhD, FRACS, GAICD
- Dr Tristan Allsopp  
MBBS, MPhil, FRACS (Otolaryngology)
- Dr Daron Cope  
MBBCh, FRACS (ORL-HNS)
- Dr Toby Corlette  
BMedSci, MBBS (Hons I), FRACS (ORL-HNS)
- Dr Daniel Cox  
FRACS
- Dr Graeme Crossland  
MBChB MRCS DOHNS MD FRCS FRACS
- Associate Professor Melville da Cruz  
MBBS (UWA), MSC (UWA), FRACS (OTOLARYNGOLOGY), MD (U. SYDNEY)
- Dr Markus Dahm  
MD (RWTH Aachen), PhD (Humboldt U Berlin), FRACS (ENT, H&N Surgery)
- Associate Professor Robert L Eisenberg  
MBBS FRACS (ORL-HNS)
- Dr Johnson Huang  
MBBS BSc, MS (ORL), FRACS (ORL-HNS)
- Dr Joshua Jervis-Bardy  
MBBS PhD FRACS
- Associate Professor Jonathan Kong  
FRACS(ORL-HNS), FRCS, MBBS(Syd), AMusA
- Professor Kelvin Kong  
BSc, MBBS (UNSW), FRACS (ORL-HNS)
- Dr Jennifer Lee  
BSc (Med) MBBS(Hons) MS(ORL) FRACS
- Dr Timothy Makeham  
BE, Bec, BM, FRACS
- Dr Hemi Patel  
BSc MSc DLO MRCS FRCS FRACS
- Associate Professor Alexander Saxby  
MB BChir MA (Cantab. 1st) FRACS
- Dr Joanna Walton  
MBBS, BSc (Med) (Hons), MS, FRACS

## Consulting Paediatrician

- Dr Elizabeth Peadon  
MBBS, DCH, MPH, PhD, FRACP

# Cochlear implant services

As Australia’s largest cochlear implant program, we support more than 5,200 clients across our physical centres, outreach programs and telepractice services. And we’re committed to increasing awareness of, and access to, services that can change the course of people’s lives.

For adults with hearing loss, understanding what services are available, and what difference they can make, is challenging. We know for example, that while one in every three adults over 65 is affected by hearing loss, two-thirds of people go untreated. And only about 10% of adults who could be helped by cochlear implants currently access them.

In 2022, our expert network of surgeons performed more than 400 cochlear implant surgeries. This is an increase on the previous two years, when COVID-19 significantly affected access to surgery.

We worked to extend the geographical reach of our cochlear implant services and also partnered with audiologists from across the hearing healthcare industry to develop shared models of care for clients who may have both hearing aids and cochlear implants.

We provided support to audiologists from organisations such as Hearing Australia and Amplifon in their conversations with clients about cochlear implant technology and whether it might be right for them. We plan to extend this work in 2023 to help grow awareness around hearing health options, the benefits of cochlear implantation, and when it might be appropriate to refer clients to cochlear implant services.



5,200+

clients supported  
across our physical centres



More than 100 people attended our regular Discover Hearing Implants events and gave us positive feedback about the information they received to help them navigate decisions around managing their hearing loss.

During the year, we also worked with the team at Cochlear Ltd on a range of important priorities, including investigating ways to better support those who are considering cochlear implants, and ways to expand access to audiology and surgery services. We worked together to pilot new technologies including Remote Assist and Remote Check, aimed at improving support for our clients, wherever they are.

And we launched cochlear implant services in Victoria, through our partnership with surgeon Dr Markus Dahm. Dr Dahm is one of 19 leading surgeons

who are now part of our network. Dr Dan Cox, who practises in Wollongong, also joined us in 2022, and performed the first local surgery for a NextSense client in that region.

Our Medical Director, Clinical Professor Catherine Birman, is one of the most experienced cochlear implant surgeons in the world, and in 2022 her services to medicine through otolaryngology were recognised when she was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia.

The working relationships we have with such leading and senior medical professionals, combined with the breadth of expertise among our allied health staff, is one of the features that sets us apart. It is a key reason we deliver so effectively to the large numbers of people who trust us to be their hearing health partner.

## Professor Bill Gibson AO: a giant contribution

Pioneering cochlear implant surgeon and founder of the Sydney Cochlear Implant Centre (now part of NextSense), Professor Bill Gibson knew from the age of five that he wanted to be a doctor. Hailing from a long line of English medics, he gravitated towards otology because of the advances that were occurring in the field.

In London, in the early 80s, he happened to attend a talk by Professor Graeme Clark, pioneer of the multi-channel cochlear implant, dubbed the 'bionic ear'. Professor Clark extended an invitation to join him on the cochlear implant program in Australia.

Professor Gibson left one of the top ENT consultant jobs in the UK to do just that. He became the inaugural Professor of Otolaryngology at the University of Sydney in 1983 and established a cochlear implant program that is thriving. It is now Australia's largest and one of the largest in the world.

This year marked a huge milestone for Professor Gibson, and for NextSense, when he announced his upcoming retirement after remaining at the forefront of cochlear implant surgery for 30 years.



In 1984, the young otologist was one of only a handful of pioneering cochlear implant surgeons in the world. He performed the first cochlear implant surgery in NSW, the first surgery in the world for a child deafened through meningitis, and the first surgery in the world for a child with congenital deafness. He also became a world expert in Ménière's disease. During his distinguished career, he became the first surgeon to perform more than 2,000 cochlear implant operations.

NextSense Chief Executive Chris Rehn has worked alongside Professor Gibson for more than 25 years. He describes as 'incredible' Professor Gibson's vision to enable access to cochlear implants for all Australians who need them.

'He has literally changed the world for children born with significant hearing loss through his pioneering paediatric work which is second to none.'

Professor Gibson's contribution and legacy can't be overstated, and his humanity and dedication—both to his patients and the surgeons he has mentored—is widely recognised. NextSense, like so many others, has so much to thank him for.



# Elizabeth’s determination helps her embrace cochlear surgery

As a nurse, Elizabeth Ellis had plenty of exposure to surgery. But when it came to her own health and the prospect of addressing her hearing loss, she was reluctant. She had been dealing with hearing loss all her life.

We first met Elizabeth three years ago, after she moved to Wollongong in NSW. By then she had overcome her concerns about her ability to adjust to the device and had undergone cochlear implant surgery in her right ear. In 2019, hearing in her left ear had deteriorated to the point where she could no longer hear on the phone. It was time for a second implant.

‘It was far better than I ever imagined,’ Elizabeth says. ‘When you have struggled all your life, you don’t know any different. I didn’t realise what strain I had put myself under by not having it. I used to think, who’s running their air conditioner at five o’clock in the morning? Then I realised, wow, it is actually the ocean.’

Elizabeth’s audiologist says the secret to her good outcome was her realistic expectations and her diligent listening and practising.

Now, she has come full circle, and works with us to help other adults understand what having a cochlear implant means and what is involved in surgery.

‘I now have confidence with my hearing,’ she says. ‘My advice would be to look into it earlier rather than later, because many people put it off just like I did. It worked wonderfully. I can hear without concentrating on listening.’





# Vision services

**In 2022, NextSense Vision Services continued to support children who are blind or have low vision, and their families, through early intervention, preschool, primary school, groups and high school support. We empowered children and families to achieve their goals.**

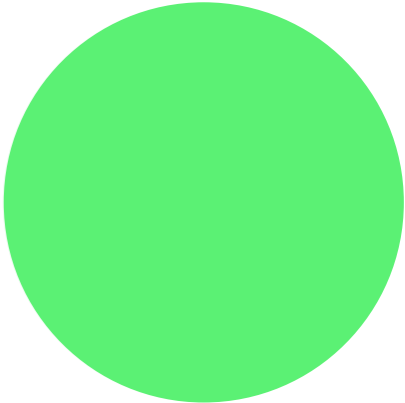
Our long history of producing accessible information and teaching braille literacy continues to break down barriers. And during the year, our experts in vision and accessibility collaborated with industry colleagues in Australia and internationally to drive change and influence outcomes for children with vision loss.

We worked on the international Raised Maths collaboration, which is making it possible to transcribe maths textbooks for a fraction of the cost and time required for manual transcription. For students who use braille, innovations like this are enablers of equal access to education and all the downstream benefits that brings.

UEB Online, our world-first, free, online collection of braille training programs, received new funding from the Fleming Foundation and philanthropist Ian Sharp in 2022 which will mean our 31,000 subscribers will soon be able to sit an exam to achieve a competency certificate to show their employer. This will give

teachers of braille tangible evidence of their braille knowledge and skills, which they can use to meet employer requirements to advance their careers. UEB (United English Braille) Online is an important tool for promoting the right to braille literacy and addressing global challenges for people with vision loss identified by the World Blind Union.

We were pleased to be able to develop a keyworker training package for our early intervention vision services in 2022. This will give our people a set of tools and skills based on best-practice standards to ensure consistency in the way we support children with Cortical Vision Impairment, who are deafblind, blind, or have low vision.



## Accolades for a career of service

Tricia d'Apice's professional dedication to children who are blind or have low vision was recognised twice in 2022—with a Medal of the Order of Australia and an honorary Community Fellowship from Western Sydney University.

Tricia, a key member of our Vision Services team, has taught braille to many children over the years. One of her clients, young Joshua Wood from Brisbane, has been learning since he was a baby, and working with Tricia since he was four. Now he is 14 and has developed such a strong bond with Tricia that he nominated her for the Medal of the Order of Australia. Joshua's mum Jenny says that Tricia has dedicated her life to children like Joshua and has become like a part of the family.

'I accepted the award not just for myself, but on behalf of my colleagues at NextSense in telepractice, those who develop the braille and tactile images, and anyone else who works with these children. I am the one holding the medal,

but I am doing so on their behalf,' says Tricia. Her second award—the Western Sydney University Community Fellowship—is awarded to alumni who make an outstanding contribution to the Western Sydney region and is seldom given.

Tricia founded d'Ap Dots, a collection of braille books and resources that help with learning and understanding the basics of the United English Braille code, by providing an effective foundation for braille literacy for parents and children. She is an adjunct lecturer at NextSense Institute, organises the NextSense braille camps, and holds senior honorary roles in international industry associations.

We're incredibly fortunate to have people like Tricia on our team. Her skills and her exemplary commitment to her work are a wonderful example of how our people go above and beyond every day for their clients.





## For Atylda, distance is no barrier

Townsville mum Rebecca Holman knew braille skills would be essential for daughter Atylda, who was diagnosed as legally blind when she was just three. But despite living in a busy regional centre, there were no local services the Holman family could access. Remote braille sessions through NextSense have given them a way forward.

Atylda was diagnosed with Knobloch syndrome, a rare condition that causes extreme short-sightedness, and which for Atylda, has increased over time.

Learning braille was an important life skill she needed but with no local support in Townsville and no guidance, Rebecca did her own research, which led her to NextSense. Atylda has had weekly virtual braille sessions for the past four years.

Today, the budding artist has made so much progress with braille that she and her NextSense teacher Kirsten Hill produced a braille book about an alligator in an elevator—the first braille book to find its way into the Cranbrook State School library.

‘We are putting everything in place for Atylda to have all the resources she needs to learn,’ Rebecca says.

‘Kirsten has given us emotional support and understanding and just wants Atylda to be able to learn like her peers. It’s important for us to have the right knowledge because if you don’t understand you don’t know what to ask for. As parents, we are giving her all the skills she needs to live as an independent adult just like anybody else.’



# School and preschool

**Our commitment to education builds on our foundation as the first school in Australia where children with hearing or vision loss were able to access education. Today our inclusive school and our preschool programs continue to focus on high-quality teaching practice through continuous improvement and reflection.**

## Best-practice school education

Our clear focus on student progress and achievement continued in 2022. Following the release of the NSW Curriculum Review final report in June 2020, and the State Government's Response to the Review, the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) is now leading an ambitious program for streamlining and strengthening what is taught in NSW schools. Reform recommendations will shape the new syllabuses, with new English and Mathematics syllabuses for Kindergarten to Year 2 due for implementation in 2023. Throughout the year our school leadership team developed a new K-2 Scope and Sequence for Maths and English and provided extensive professional learning to support teachers in implementing these new syllabuses.

The school leadership team also worked closely with our NextSense Institute—Australia's leading centre for research and professional education in the field of sensory disability—to share evidence-based and innovative thinking in designing and implementing school programs that deliver measurable improvements in student achievement.



In 2022 we also worked closely with the families and students enrolled in secondary education to support transition to a mainstream school environment. This is so they can access the full high school curriculum and the benefits it provides. We liaised with specialist units in existing high schools and helped establish two new specialist units to assist students in the mainstream setting. Consistently striving to meet schools and student needs, we reviewed and streamlined our school support units, with our blind/low vision support team and deaf/hard of hearing support team coming together as one team working with guidance from a specialist lead teacher.

Looking forward, we also began to explore how to develop our school and preschool model so that we can expand our contribution to the field of inclusive education. As we build partnerships, learn from others, and share our own deep knowledge, we will influence how all schools approach teaching children with hearing and vision loss. This will be a particular focus as we prepare in 2023 to become a part of the Macquarie University precinct, with its rich academic expertise and commitment to innovative thinking.



From left to right: Trudy Smith, Dr Sue Silveira, Alison Hawkins-Bond, Dr Robyn Cantle Moore, Professor S. Bruce Dowton, Professor Greg Leigh AO.

# Education and research

Our professional development programs for adult learners range from short continuing professional education courses and workshops, through to our Master of Disability Studies. They are focussed on ensuring those who work in the field of sensory disability can stay at the forefront of new knowledge. We also have an important role to play in knowledge creation through academic research.

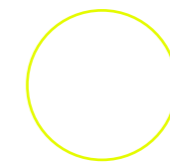
## Advancing knowledge through research

During the year, we continued to contribute to Australian and international understanding of hearing and vision loss through our own research.

As part of a research team with Macquarie University and National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) we published important new information showing how children's early ability to understand speech in noisy environments can help them develop better language at school.

Until now, there has been a major gap in existing knowledge about what impact early speech perception might have on later language ability in young children with cochlear implants. The team's research paper, 'Predicting 9-Year Language Ability from Preschool Speech Recognition in Noise in Children Using Cochlear Implants (CIs)' was published in the journal Trends in Hearing. The research showed that children's ability to understand speech in noisy environments at five years of age was a significant predictor of their language ability at nine years of age. This suggests there may be just as much need to enhance children's early skills to perceive speech in noise as there is to develop early language skills.

In July, NextSense Institute Director Professor Greg Leigh AO chaired a workshop hosted by the Australasian Newborn Hearing Screening Committee to discuss reaching consensus on screening beyond the newborn period and into childhood. Currently, there is no universal approach to screening this group of children. But gaps in the evidence base mean more research is needed to ensure there are no unintended consequences or harms of screening in this group, such as poor follow-up rates or delayed identification of some children who develop hearing loss in later childhood.



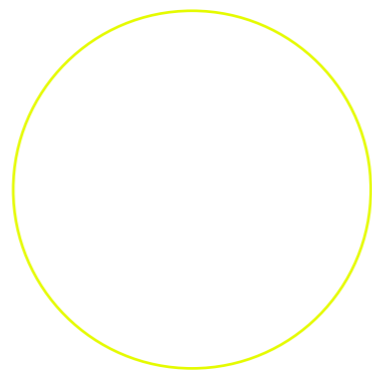
During 2022 we also shared promising early results of an Australian-led, world-first gene therapy trial that is re-growing hearing nerves to make cochlear implant technology even more effective. All of the trial participants receive cochlear implants and support services through NextSense, and Medical Director of the NextSense Cochlear Implant Services, Clinical Professor Catherine Birman, is a key investigator. The research collaboration behind the trial is a partnership between NextSense, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, University of NSW, Macquarie University, the University of Sydney, University of Melbourne and Cochlear Ltd.

## Educating future leaders in sensory disability

More than 50 students completed our Master of Disability Studies run in affiliation with Macquarie University in 2022 and we worked with the equivalent of 57 full-time students during the year. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to return to the university campus and finally celebrate with our 2019 and 2020 graduates after two years of COVID-19 delays.

Our Continuing Professional Education (CPE) program attracted industry experts who presented eight in-person events, 55 masterclasses, eight online workshops and took part in 22 podcasts. The events continue to meet accreditation standards of the New South Wales Educational Standards Authority, The AG Bell Association, Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia (OOMA), and Audiology Australia.

The CPE program and the Masters qualification are important to our leadership role in building the skills and knowledge of professionals who work with people who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or have low vision. This work is critical to ensuring those who access hearing and vision services get the best support that drives the best outcomes.



## Lifetime Achievement Award for Professor Greg Leigh AO

NextSense Institute Director Professor Greg Leigh has dedicated more than 40 years to the hearing sector and in 2022 we were delighted that Hearing Australia chose to recognise Greg's immense contribution by presenting him with its inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award.

The award, presented by the Hon Bill Shorten, Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, recognised Greg's unwavering efforts to build better research knowledge, education and services for Australians who are deaf and hard of hearing. It was testament to his standing in the sector, where he is immensely respected.

Greg has been the long-term chair of the Australian Newborn Hearing Screening Committee and played a central role in advocating for the establishment of Australia's world-leading newborn hearing screening programs.

He led the establishment of our Master of Disability Studies qualification, and he continues his commitment to cutting-edge research. Greg has mentored and supervised many PhD students who have gone on to make impressive contributions of their own to the field of sensory disability. His many research and other professional collaborations and his collegiate approach to finding solutions that drive better hearing outcomes make the award so well deserved. Greg was presented with the award at the Hearing Australia 75th anniversary celebration.



From left to right: Kim Terrell, Professor Greg Leigh AO, Hon Bill Shorten MP and Elizabeth Crouch AM.



# Sally uses her new knowledge to deliver for students

With 25 years’ experience in her field, Teacher of the Deaf Sally Pape wanted to keep pace with the rapidly evolving field of hearing loss. So, she embarked on a Master of Disability Studies degree from NextSense Institute. Now Sally has a new appreciation for the importance of individualised support and new strategies to make her practice even better.

Assistant Principal—Hearing at a public school, Sally had seen major shifts in thinking, technology and educational approaches over the course of her career, so in the spirit of lifelong learning, she opened the books again to evolve with her students’ needs and the changing world.

Sally had already encouraged many teachers in her team to complete the Master of Disability Studies and had supervised students during their placement. In embarking on the course herself, she was keen to immerse herself in the latest evidence.

‘I felt I needed to do some refresher training because as an assistant principal leading a team of teachers, I have to be current in my understanding of audiology and all of the current research around speech and language,’ she says.

‘All the information is now front of mind, and I have a greater understanding of the current research and understanding around the needs of children who are deaf. I now work better with my team of Teachers of the Deaf because I can answer all their questions.

‘It’s all about building a team around the child and I try to embed that within the team all the time. The Masters course gives you the understanding that it has to be about the individual needs of the child because no two children who are deaf are the same.’

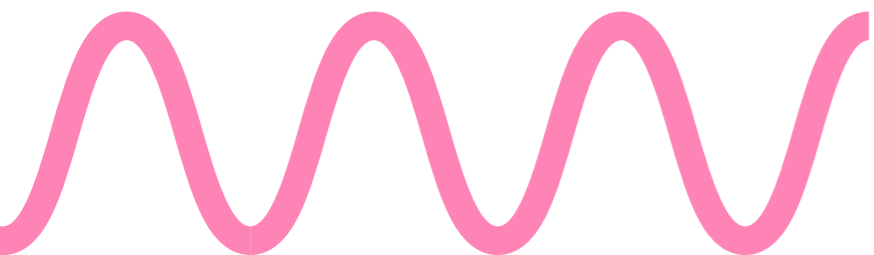
Sally excelled in the Masters course, and was awarded the Macquarie University Award for Academic Excellence. She and her peers were finally able to celebrate their achievements in 2022 after two years of delayed graduation ceremonies due to COVID-19.





Qantas staff members performing at the 2022 Pathfinders Revue.

# Our supporters



From people all over Australia to corporate partners, philanthropists, and lifetime supporters, our donor community believes in us and our clients, shares our goals, and is the difference between good and great services at NextSense.

We were excited to see the gradual return to in-person events in 2022 and reconnect with our broad supporter base. The impact of their generosity is seen every day. In our ability to offer cutting-edge equipment. In the life-changing hearing services we deliver on our outreach to rural Australia. In the braille camps where children who are blind and have low vision travel from across the country to connect, bond, and learn with their peers.



**7,101**

Donors who gave one or more gifts in 2022

**19,619**

total number of donations in 2022 (including bequests)

**\$19,135,201**

total value of donations (including bequests)

## Pathfinders: half a century of support

In 2022 we were delighted to see the annual Pathfinders charity flight take to the skies once again, after being grounded due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pathfinders is a volunteer community of dedicated current and ex-Qantas cabin crew, pilots, ground staff, and their families and friends who have been raising funds solely for NextSense for 55 years. The Pathfinders flight travelled to Longreach—the destination of the very first flight two decades earlier. The event raised an impressive \$70,000 for the children, adults, and families we support to achieve their unique goals. In October, we also saw the return of the Pathfinders Annual Revue. The riotous show held at Norths Cammeray also re-emerged after a two-year hiatus, and it didn't disappoint, entertaining the packed venue for six shows and raising a record \$170,000 for NextSense.

## Hyundai Help for Kids: champions of early intervention

Hyundai Help for Kids has been a generous partner for nine years, and we were incredibly pleased to see that commitment renewed in 2022. The \$150,000 annual partnership supports our early intervention services, which are so critical to setting children on a path to meeting the developmental milestones that help to set them up for the future. Hyundai Help for Kids also generously support us with three Hyundai motor vehicles that are used by our therapists. This partnership has directly impacted the lives of thousands of children with hearing or vision loss, and their families. It has delivered \$1.1 million in support and has made it possible for us to deliver more in-person and telehealth services, as well as running 30 camps for children in more remote areas to come together for group education and social development.

## Our Vice Regal Patrons: bringing our donor community together

Our Vice Regal Patrons, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley, made it possible for us to celebrate the support of our long-standing friends and supporters with a reception at Admiralty House, Sydney.

As well as enjoying the historic house and grounds, guests were privileged to hear first-hand Olivia Depares' story. Olivia is now 25, but we have known her and her family since she was three months old. She has navigated hearing loss, receiving bilateral cochlear implants, and vision loss, being diagnosed with Usher's Syndrome when she was just four. Olivia talked about the importance of getting the right support to help her reach her potential. And she certainly has an impressive list of achievements under her belt already. She achieved an ATAR of 97.5 in her Higher School Certificate, graduated with honours in Arts and Law from Macquarie University, and has been admitted as a lawyer to the Supreme Court of New South Wales.

## James N Kirby Foundation: funding technology to break down barriers

Generous philanthropic supporters who have committed to our work over the long-term play a foundational role in our success. One such supporter is the James N Kirby Foundation, which has donated more than \$400,000. Since 1976, the Foundation has enabled us not only to run programs but also to purchase next-generation equipment to help us carry out our work. This includes a state-of-the-art 3D printer—made possible through the Foundation's generous donation in 2022—that will allow us to produce a wide range of braille and tactile materials.

Life Members  
appointed in 2022

Mr Norm O’Neill  
Mr Leslie B Blackshaw  
Mr Leo and Mrs Ann Browne  
Mrs June Stanfield  
Ms Janet Wright  
Dr John Saunders  
Ms Felicity Hogg  
Miss Sandra Barnett  
Mr Mark D Chapple  
Mr Graeme Rochfort  
Mr Alan Fonseca  
Miss Rosemary MacDougal  
Mr John and Mrs Ellen Kilpatrick  
Dr Peter C Taylor  
Mr Geoffrey Llewellyn  
Professor Philip Newall

Life Governors as of  
31 December 2022

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Mr Robert Otto Albert, AO  
Richard Bonynge, AO, CBE  
Broadspectrum (Aust) Pt Ltd  
(prev Transfield Services)  
Bruce and Joy Reid Foundation  
Mrs Janet Calvert-Jones AO  
Mr John Calvert-Jones AM  
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Cochlear Limited  
Crane Group Limited  
Mr Charles Curran, AC  
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Ian Holmes  
Merry Howie  
Kathleen Breen Children’s  
Charity Trust  
Kumagai Australia Group  
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Limb Family Foundation  
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Myer Community Fund  
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Opera Australia  
Mr Richard Owens, AM  
Sir Michael Parkinson CBE  
Dr Andrew M Pethebridge  
Mr John Race  
R.A. Gale Foundation  
F B Rice  
Rotary Club of Carlingford  
Rotary International District 9680  
Rotary International District 9690  
Rotary International District 9750  
Royal NSW Bowling Association  
Mrs Lynda Rydge Guyton  
St Andrew’s Cathedral School

Skipper Jacobs Charitable Trust  
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Patricia Tang  
Terrace Tower Group of Companies  
The Donald Boden Memorial Trust  
The Miller Foundation  
The Perpetual Foundation  
The Profield Foundation  
Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation  
Mr Sean Wareing AM

Prescribed Purpose Funds

18th Australian Infantry Brigade  
Association of NSW Fund  
Ann Ratcliffe Fund  
Dora & George Garland Memorial  
Fund Elsie McLachlan Bursary Fund  
Frederick Gregory-Roberts Prize Fund  
Ian Paul Fund  
Ivan Rado Memorial Fund  
Jack and Gwen Freeman Fund  
Jane Vickery Memorial Fund  
Japan Australia Friendship Fund  
John B Bedwell Fund  
Joseph Tyrrell Fund  
Neville McWilliam Prize Fund  
Robert Simpson and Amy Caroline  
Brown and Family Fund  
Stan and Betty Graham Bursary  
Fund for NextSense School  
Spoken Language program  
Stan Graham Bursary Fund  
for NextSense School Sign  
Bilingual program  
The Estate of Joan Isabel  
Craven Fund  
Vera Rado Fund  
William and Gladys Judd  
Memorial Fund  
William H Boydell Fund

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Optical Dispensing  
Canterbury Lodge No 312  
Carlingford Rotary Club  
ClearaSound Pty Ltd  
Endes Pty Ltd  
F B Rice  
Hyundai Motor Company  
Australia Pty Ltd  
Intopia  
JJ Richards & Sons Pty Ltd  
LaManna Supermarket  
Lee & Sons (Aust) Pty Ltd  
Maxim Accounting &  
Business Advisors  
Mitsubishi Electric Australia Pty Ltd  
Noah’s Ark Toy Library for Children  
with Special Needs Inc  
Security Portman Pty Ltd  
Strikeforce AMC  
T. Rowe Price Australia Limited

Trusts and Foundations

Ausgrid Employees’ Children’s Appeal  
Australian Chinese  
Charity Foundation  
Australain Philanthropic  
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Bruce & Joy Reid Trust  
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The Ruth Marie Sampson Foundation  
The Rydge Foundation  
Victorian Fdn for Promotion of  
Oral Education of the Deaf

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Norm O’Neill  
Evelyn Ong

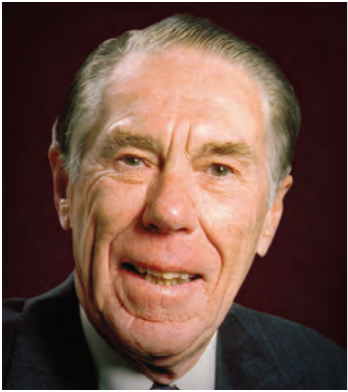
Mary Payne  
Andrew Pethebridge  
Tom and Robyn Pinzone  
Janet Pruden  
Nathalie Quinlivan  
Hugh Ralston AM and Jan Ralston  
Michael and Karen Rich  
Tony Robinson  
Peter Robson  
Alison Rosenberg  
Sophie Rothery  
Bernard Royle  
Richard Rydge  
John Scollin  
Ian Sharp  
Carolyn Shih  
Charles Shuetrim AM and  
Sandy Shuetrim  
Guy Silberstein  
Jatinder Singh  
Barbara Stone AM  
Helen Swan  
Anthony Sweetman  
Patricia Tang  
David Taylor  
Barry Tilker  
Matt Tillotson  
Graham Timmins  
Graham Todd  
Hendrikus Verhoef  
Anthony Wales AM and Gai Wales  
Brian Ward  
Ken Williams  
Brian Winter  
Roy and Gay Woodward  
Janet Wright  
Jason Yeo

Bequests received in 2022

Kaleria Avramenko  
Lloyd Birdsall  
Cynthia Birrer  
Margret Borg  
John Boyle  
John Brodrick  
Elizabeth Brolly  
William Brown  
Wendy Burcher  
Enid Burge  
Yvonne Byrne  
George Clark  
Kathleen Clarke  
David Couszins  
Doris Cox  
Margaret Crawley  
Dorothy Dare  
A Deane  
Lionel Dege  
Kostantin Doku  
Hazel Dunstan  
Jean Elliot  
Neville Ellis  
Patricia Everett  
Lilian Forbin  
Marie Foy  
Eileen Gabriel  
W & S Geeves

K & G GluckTrust  
Cynthia Goundry  
Ann Gray  
John Grundy  
Julia Haldane  
David Hancox  
Maureen Harty  
Douglas Haynes  
Norman Heaton  
John Hickenbotham  
Judith Hodge  
Clare Humphries  
Pamela Hunter  
Ruth Hurrell  
Alla Kamaralli  
J & C KennedyTrust  
Gwenneth Kirtley  
Denis Klein  
Miroslav Koutsky  
Angelo La Rocca  
Shirley Larcombe  
Thomas Leake  
Leone Liapis  
Patricia Lyle  
Sylvia Mason  
Anita McKenzie  
Eleanor McRobie  
William Moore  
Arthur Neill  
Norma Osborne  
Ethel Partridge  
Stanley Pendall  
Aaron Polak  
Vera Rado  
Keith Reeve  
Edmund Resch  
Bernard Rothbury  
Allan Rowling  
Peter Scotton  
Olive Shearer  
Valerie Smith  
Norman Steadman  
David Swinfield  
Kyrill Taylor  
Beryl Tidex  
Basil Vincent  
Sir William Walkley  
Warren Watkins  
H Weatherhead-Long  
Judith Wellings  
Sidney Williams  
Walter Williams  
Vivienne Windsor  
Graham Zink

## Vale Norman Rydge, NextSense Vice Patron



We were greatly saddened by the passing of Norman B Rydge AM OBE in January 2022—past President and true friend to NextSense.

Norman was 93 years old. Over 32 years, from 1977, Norman served on the Board with great distinction. President for 14 years, and appointed Vice

Patron on 24 June 2009, he was also appointed a Life Governor in 1986, in recognition of his significant contribution to the organisation, including financially. We remember Norman for his incredible generosity, great leadership over the decades, as a true friend, gentleman, and beautiful human being.

## Thank you Roger Gee, NextSense Board Member



Longstanding supporter and board member Roger Gee announced his retirement from the NextSense Board in 2022.

Roger joined our Board soon after retiring from Qantas. He served on our board for 14 years and has

made an immense contribution to our organisation, particularly in areas such as governance and fundraising.

A former Qantas pilot, Roger has been a mainstay of the fundraising committee, Pathfinders Auxilliary, for more than 30 years. Pathfinders was established by Qantas staff more than half a century ago as a volunteer fundraising committee to raise money solely for NextSense. Since then, it has raised over \$8 million through a variety of events such as the annual Charity Flight, which Roger instigated. The Charity Flight itself has raised an incredible \$1.6 million

for NextSense, over and above Roger’s personal contributions.

In 2007 Roger was awarded Life Membership of NextSense for his outstanding support. As well as devising the Pathfinders Charity Flight in 2002, Roger has piloted the annual children’s Joey Joy Flight on many occasions.

Although Roger will no longer be joining us on the Board, he will continue to have an impact with his ongoing work on the Pathfinders Auxilliary. Thank you, Roger, for your leadership and unwavering support.



**In our people we have the talent and skill to write our next chapter.**

**Our organisational leadership has expertise that is both broad and deep. Learn more about our [Board here](#) and our [senior leaders here](#).**



# Financial summary

It has been a year of significant capital expenditure as we entered the construction phase of our centre for innovation at the Macquarie university precinct. As we were coming out of the COVID-19 impacted years, we balanced between transitioning clients and staff returning to services which also required a close eye on both revenue and expenditure streams. Sustainability into the future is a key priority together with quality outcomes for our clients, for the next 162 years.

Total Revenue was \$56.7M, an increase of \$0.8M or 1.4% from 2021.

Our generous donors and bequestors contributed 34% of our revenue in 2022, compared to 32% the previous year. We are enormously grateful for their foresight and generosity.

Whilst the fundraising environment continued to be challenging in 2022, with the impacts of COVID-19 still playing out, we were fortunate to bring the Donald Boden Memorial trust into NextSense management, positively impacting fundraising revenue by \$6.9M.

Commonwealth and State Governments contributed 35% of our revenue in 2022, 55% of which related to fee for service NDIS revenue generated from client activity.

Total Expenditure on activities decreased by \$1.5M or 2.9% to \$49.9M, with 75% of our outgoings directed towards delivering student and client services, including our cochlear implant services.

General and Administration costs were 9.1% of operational expenditure.

We reported a net loss of \$10.5M compared to a surplus of \$19.5M in 2021. 2022 included an unrealised loss of \$16.5M on the restatement of our investment funds compared to a gain of \$8.3M in 2021.

The NextSense Board and leadership team are committed to achieving long term sustainability and delivering on our purpose through diverse activities and solid fiscal management. We are grateful to our donors and funders who continue to contribute towards the work we do for our clients.

## 2022 income and expenditure summary

	2022 (\$'000)	2021 (\$'000)	% Change
Total revenue	56,736	55,932	1.4%
Total expenditure	49,950	51,423	-2.9%
Net operating income	6,786	4,509	
Unrealised/realised gains/(loss) on financial assets	(17,268)	15,025	
Net (loss) surplus for the year	(10,482)	19,534	

### Auditor

Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd

### Banker

St George Bank

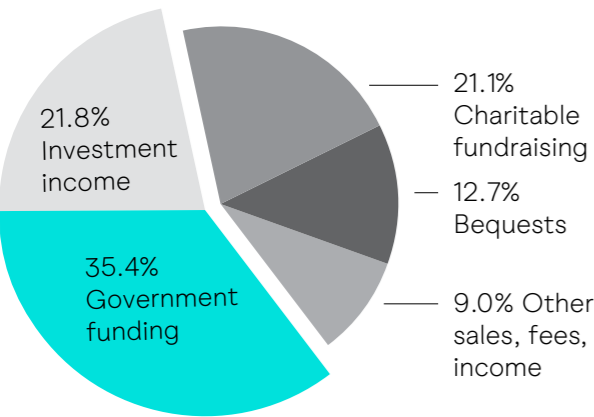
### Investment adviser

JANA Investment Advisers

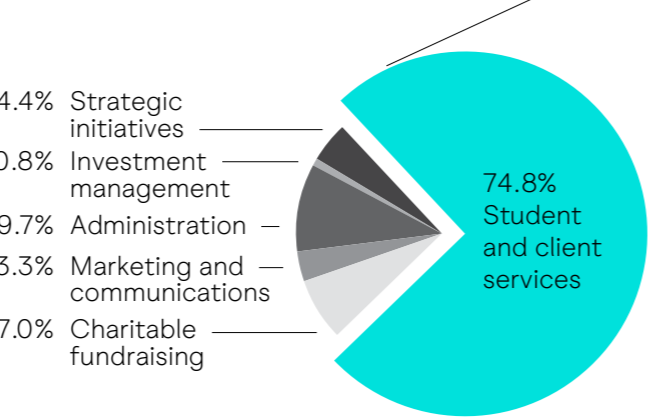
### Solicitors 2022

Bartier Perry  
Corrs Chambers Westgarth  
Integroe Partners  
Makinson d'Apice  
Marquette Intellectual Property  
Matt Crouch Legal  
Meyer Vandenberg  
HB Legal

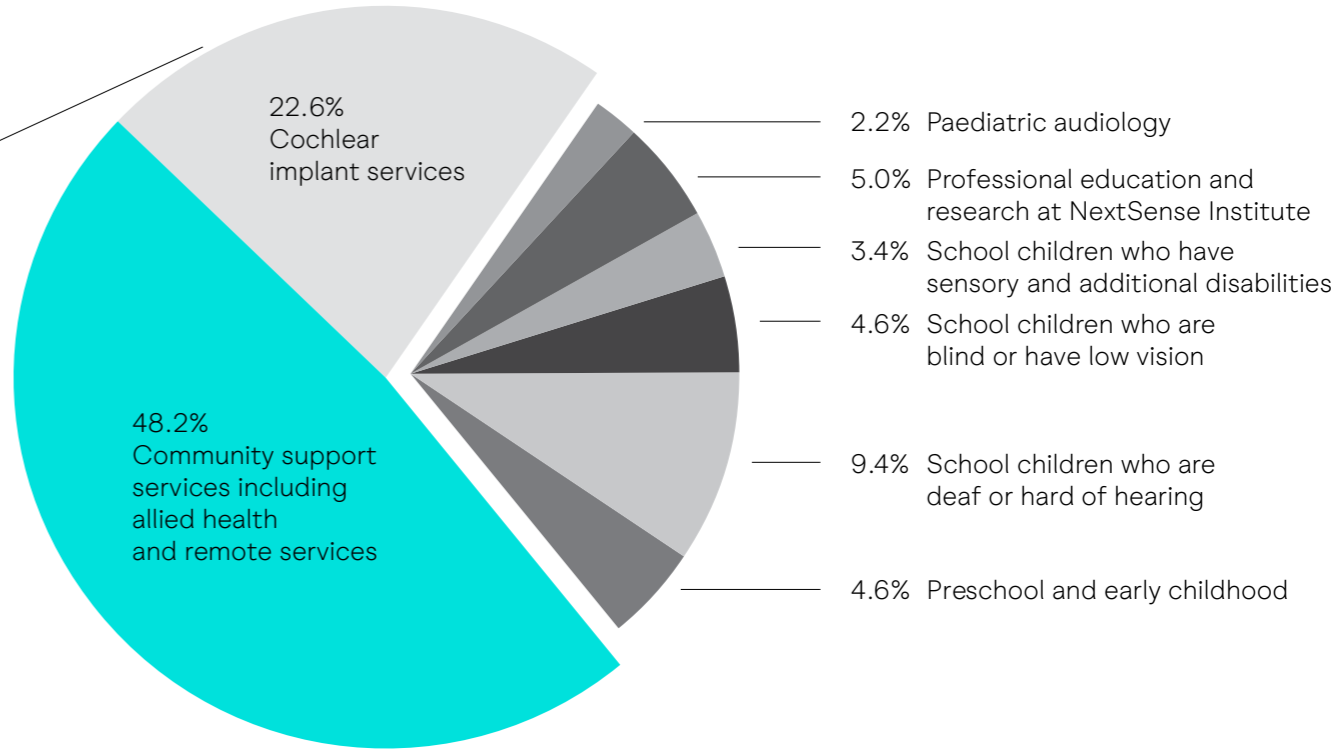
## 2022 revenue



## 2022 expenditure



## 2022 expenditure: student and client services



# Get involved

**As a registered charity, NextSense relies on the support of the community to help deliver our vital services to those who need us. With the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic this has never been more important. Here are some ways you can help:**

## **Make a philanthropic contribution to our future**

Our move to establish a new NextSense best-practice centre for innovation at Macquarie University is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for philanthropists, corporate partners, and governments to invest in a new era of service provision for Australians with hearing or vision loss, and their families. We'd be delighted to discuss your personal philanthropic goals, and tailor an opportunity for you to make an impact that will reach long into the future.

## **Make a donation or become a regular giver**

Your gift, large or small, supports the ongoing delivery of services that help redefine what's possible for children and adults with hearing or vision loss, and their families.

## **Leave a lasting legacy**

Funds donated through leaving a kind-hearted gift in your Will, or through trusts, foundations, or permanent funds, continue to support future generations of children with hearing or vision loss.

## **Create a strategic corporate partnership**

Talk to us about becoming a NextSense corporate partner and how your organisation and staff can make a difference, while building staff and customer engagement at the same time.

## **Become a community fundraiser**

There are all sorts of ways you can fundraise to support NextSense—your imagination is the limit! Create or join a fundraiser to help Australians with hearing or vision loss access the services they need to reach their full potential.

## **Join a fundraising committee**

Raise funds for children and adults with hearing or vision loss, and their families, and support our community through fun social events and activities.

Get in touch with our friendly fundraising team to find out more about how you can make a difference.



**1800 043 411**



