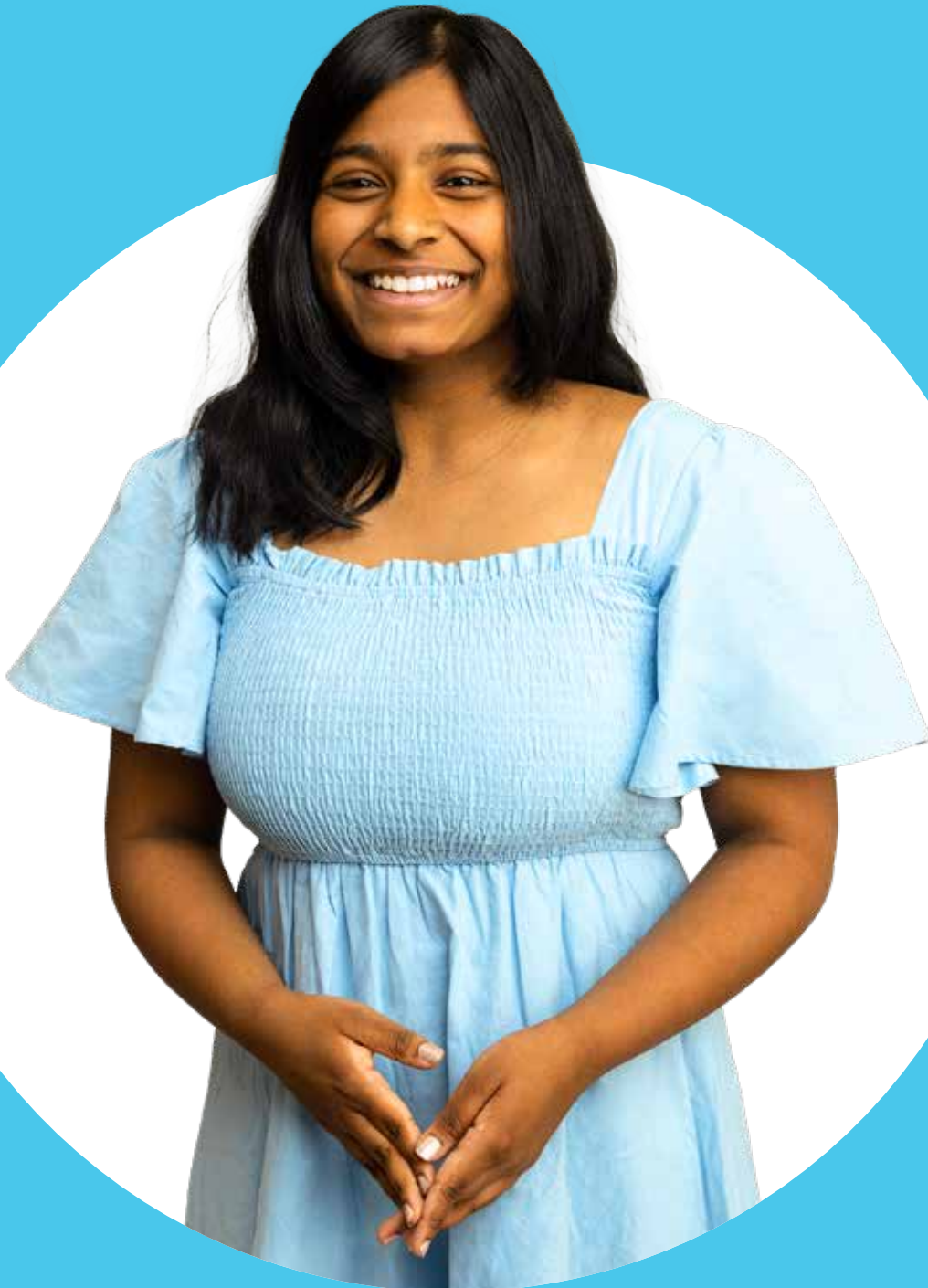


A new era of

Next



Annual report 2024
—the 164th edition



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Our story

NextSense has been an important part of Australia's social fabric since 1860. First, providing education for children who were deaf, hard of hearing, blind or had low vision. Then, expanding to deliver best-in-class services in early intervention, therapy and cochlear implant services to both children and adults. And all while building an internationally respected research and professional education program that is changing the field of sensory disability.

We've always been at the forefront of innovation. We intend to keep that momentum.

This annual report 'A new era of Next' celebrates the steps we took in 2024 to prepare for our next chapter. It was the beginning of an exciting new era for NextSense. One where we intend to make an even greater impact.

What will drive us forward? The same thing that motivates us every single day. The privilege of being able to walk alongside our clients as they write their own story, reach their own goals, and realise new and exciting possibilities.

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 ambition

As a unified organisation, we lead and influence the field of hearing and vision, through dedication to our services, and advancing research, education, innovation and technology.

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 strategic horizons

Enhanced outcomes and access for more people

We'll refine, expand and partner to deliver for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision—right across Australia.

Innovation-led best practice

We'll lead and embed the co-design of innovative best-practice services, education, research and professional development.

Influencing the global position

We'll advance the field of sensory disability through influencing the global position in service provision, education, and research outcomes.

2024— the year in numbers



10,730+

clients supported in 2024

5,685

people supported by our cochlear implant program

1,240+

children supported through our early intervention and therapy programs

412

cochlear implant surgeries performed this year

180+

children who received support from NextSense Education Services

60,000+

pages of text produced in alternative formats

18%

of individual therapy sessions delivered by telepractice

1,130+

adults and children assessed for a cochlear implant

1,858

days of continuing professional education delivered

19

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

196

students enrolled in the Master of Disability Studies program

3,600+

children received diagnostic audiology services

63

professional events hosted

450+

children who are blind or have low vision supported



From the President and Chief Executive

It's an immense privilege to lead an organisation that has delivered 164 years of continuous service to the Australian community.

With our proud history in mind, we are always looking to the future. It's imperative that we do because it means we can stay relevant, stay at the forefront of innovation, and continue to deliver for the people who need us.

We don't do this alone. We are extremely lucky to share this journey of discovery with an incredible community of people. Our clients, who are the reason we do what we do. Our staff, whose deep knowledge and dedication really set us apart. Our donor community, whose invaluable support means we can reach ever higher. And our partners across government, industry, the hearing and vision sectors and beyond, with whom we collaborate and drive new thinking.

In 2024 we began to write our next chapter. We moved beyond the extensive consideration and foundational thinking of recent years to enter a new era of Next.

Exploring new approaches

We made important progress in our efforts to better harvest the rich expertise across our organisation. This meant beginning to work in new ways, creating opportunities for greater collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Our national expertise across 18 sites and our wide range of clients gives us unlimited opportunities to learn from each other. Seizing more of those opportunities, building more shared frameworks for quality and service standards, and better using our data to drive our decisions is creating a more seamless experience for clients.



It will also expand the opportunities open to our people and give us powerful insights to share with the field.

Building these new structures and ways of working has been an important consideration for us over the past two years. A fresh approach was vital in the wake of a decade of significant change, including mergers and growth, and the challenges of operating in a post-COVID era.

In 2024 we moved beyond thinking and designing, to putting these plans into practice, all while meeting the highest compliance and best-practice standards.

This work will continue. As we progress, we'll be agile, learning as we go and committing to a cycle of continuous improvement.

In 2024 we began to explore how to share our insights on best-practice education services more broadly and reach more children with sensory disability through remote models of education.

During the year we renewed an important organisational conversation about what it means to be part of the NextSense team. We launched the Incredible Colleagues program—a roadmap for our 'heart skills', or the way we relate to each other. It was wonderful to see our staff so highly engaged in this exciting program. We will continue to celebrate behaviours like courage, respect, and lifelong learning as we roll out the program and introduce it to all new staff who come on board.

Expanding our horizons

A key feature of our next era will be the role we play in the wider world. We want to open our doors to others, to share what we know, and to build wider and deeper partnerships that will really change the game for people with hearing and vision loss.

An important symbol of this ambition was the opening in 2024 of our new centre for innovation on the Macquarie University campus by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP.

Close to 700 people gathered both in person and virtually from our sites across Australia for the launch of this \$75 million facility. We were delighted to

showcase our new centre's best-practice accessible design and construction to so many clients, policy makers, staff, partners and supporters. And we celebrated those integral to its creation: the Australian Government, through a \$12.5 million contribution, and generous contributions from the Australian philanthropic community.

Our centre will make many things possible. We'll scale up, test new ideas and technology, ask new research questions and expand the knowledge base. It gives us unparalleled opportunities to advance the existing ecosystem, bringing more policy makers, researchers, industry, and service providers to the table. This will be a place where knowledge cycles in and out. We will learn from others, use that knowledge to continuously improve our own practices, and share what we learn with the field.

This gives us a springboard for work that will reach well beyond the physical presence of our impressive new site. We'll capture insights from all our sites across Australia, build collaborations with our fellow innovators at the Australian Hearing Hub, and with other leading thinkers across Australia and the world. We will increase important conversations with governments and our sector about how to provide the services and remove barriers to help Australia become a more inclusive society.

It was certainly exciting in 2023 to see our new centre emerge from its foundations. But in 2024 we witnessed something even more thrilling: our clients and our people, working more closely together, and with so many others, to reach new goals—our building came to life.

It was fitting that in 2024, at this important juncture between our past and our future, that we took the opportunity to reflect, and capture our history. 'The Story of NextSense' book is a curation of the stories that have helped make us who we are today. It marks the innovations that have come before. It shows how our story is intertwined with the Australian story. And it demonstrates how far we have come in realising what's possible for those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision. As we move into a new era, it is important to acknowledge the achievements of those who have paved the way.

Challenge and opportunity

No journey is without its obstacles. And while we've come far, there are still hurdles to clear. Such as, how we can achieve the rates of phenomenal success in adult hearing loss that we have already achieved with young children?

There are still many barriers to adults getting the support they need to get access to sound and stay connected as they age.

In 2024 we continued to work with Cochlear Ltd and our other valued partners to explore creative solutions to these barriers. We looked at new options for connecting implant candidates with their communities and new ways of sharing information. While we are assessing more adults than ever before for cochlear implantation suitability, too many people still fall through the cracks because the wider community supports are not always in place to help them navigate this life challenge.

There are so many opportunities for us to make a difference. Our strong focus on our Victorian operations in 2024 is a case in point. During the year we began to plan our next steps to renew, refocus and grow our services here. Adult cochlear implant services are an important part of this strategy but by no means the only part. As our second-largest client base, we are committed to ensuring that Victorian families can access the support they need at the time they need it. We will continue this investment in coming years.

We, like many others in Australia's not-for-profit sector, face a challenging operating environment. One where indexation for Medicare and NDIS services is not keeping pace with the cost of providing those services. Where the national allied health workforce shortage makes it extremely difficult to attract qualified staff—and why we work so hard to retain our wonderful people. This is an environment where every dollar from our generous donors must work even harder than in years gone by, and where there are many competing calls on the philanthropic community.

In recent years, there has also been an elevated conversation around professional standards and what best practice looks like, particularly in the area of cochlear implant services. These are important discussions to have. We were fortunate to have a key role to play after being invited by the South Australian Government to reassess its paediatric cochlear implant program and offer advice on best practice approaches to care. In 2024 we handed down our technical review of the South Australian Women's and Children's Hospital cochlear implant program and will continue to share our knowledge with the field around what we have learned from more than four decades of running Australia's largest cochlear implant program.



Governance

During the year, the Board and the organisation finalised our Strategic Plan, producing a clear vision of our horizons for the next decade and the roadmap to get us there.

This exciting strategy has three key pillars: enhancing outcomes and access for more people; driving innovation-led best practice; and influencing the global position. Under each of these pillars sit a range of strategies that will build and maintain NextSense as a sustainable organisation for future generations of people with hearing and vision loss.

This work was critical to us protecting our legacy and future proofing the important role we play in the field of sensory disability and non-profit leadership.

In 2024 we were thrilled to announce two new NextSense Vice Patrons: the Hon John Howard OM AC and Mr Michael Easson AM. The contributions these eminent Australians have made to public life, their extensive knowledge, and their advice will be extremely important in enacting our vision for the future.

Heartfelt thanks must also be extended to the NextSense Board, whose leadership and support has been critical in positioning our organisation for the future.

We were delighted to welcome Jane Simmons PSM to the Board in 2024. An education leader with 35 years of experience in public education, including senior executive roles in NSW and the ACT, Jane has significant expertise in leading through change. She will make an invaluable contribution to our ability to continue as an education pioneer in the field of sensory disability.

We congratulate and thank Barbara Stone AM, who served on our Board for 22 years, including as Vice President, and who retired from this role in 2024. Barbara is a former National Chair of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia and her deep expertise in the education sector has been instrumental in guiding our thinking around how to remove educational barriers for students with hearing and vision loss.

Thanks must also go to those who spearheaded the Comprehensive Campaign to raise funds for our centre for innovation, including campaign committee chair Anthony Sweetman, and committee members Lauren Sutton and Claudia Stahl.

This campaign is ongoing and secured significant donations during 2024 from Anthony Sweetman, Lauren Sutton, and companies including Higlett Pty Ltd, UBS Optimus Foundation Australia, and Cochlear Ltd, among others.

We look forward to showcasing the impact of these valued contributions. They will be reflected in so many ways. In the child who is deaf who matches his peers in speech and language. In the grandmother who feels reconnected with her family after years of isolation through hearing loss. In the HSC graduate whose access to braille and assisted vision technologies supported her to pursue a dream career.

Our work we did together this year has laid the foundation for the NextSense of tomorrow. We hope you will continue to be part of our ongoing story.

David Dinte: NextSense President

Chris Rehn: NextSense Chief Executive

An organisation of firsts:



Then

When we opened our doors in 1860, society had no expectation that a child born deaf or hard of hearing, blind or with low vision would even receive an education at all. Thomas Pattison, our founder, turned that notion on its head.

After establishing Australia's first school for children who were deaf, we expanded nine years later to cater for children who were blind.

From the 1880s, our trailblazers would champion compulsory education for children who were deaf or blind. The law would finally be changed in NSW in 1944. In that time, we set about building formal structures for teaching, pioneering teacher training and establishing the Australian Association of Teachers of the Deaf, which still exists today.

In 1978 we established the first computerised braille production unit, building pathways to education that did not previously exist. By 2013 we would launch the world's first online braille training program.

By the 1990s we had established Australia's largest centre for professional training and research in sensory disability—now called the NextSense Institute, where our academics continue to be globally recognised.

We were at the forefront of the medical technology revolution, overseeing the first person in NSW to receive a cochlear implant in 1984 and in 1987 one of the youngest children in the world. From these early successes we built one of the world's largest cochlear implant programs—and the largest in Australia. In doing so we broadened our scope to work across the age spectrum—and now support clients from newborns to ninety-year-olds.

We led the way on remote practice, making our services available via telepractice in 2001 and conducting research on how technology could be used to reach rural and regional children and their families. This was an important hallmark of our organisation and its commitment to reach people who need us, regardless of where they live.

then, now, and tomorrow



Bringing it all together: **‘The Story of NextSense’**

These are but a few of our many achievements. To document our 164 years and capture our organisation’s incredible history, we published ‘The Story of NextSense’ in 2024. In his forward to this work, our President David Dinte reflected that even after more than a century and a half, NextSense is now more relevant than ever.

“We will continue to be inspired by our past Board, staff and leaders’ relentless dedication to innovation,” he writes. “This book ensures we always remember what it took to get where we are today. It also serves as the foundation for what we want to achieve together in the future.”



Now

Today, we reach more than 10,000 people a year via our remote services and across 18 physical sites from Darwin to Melbourne. Our people come from many disciplines, from teaching, audiology, and speech therapy to occupational therapy, psychology, research, and administration.

In 2024 we left our North Rocks site of more than 60 years to join a community of leading thinkers at Macquarie University. We opened the doors to a new centre for innovation, creating a focal point for our national operations that Thomas Pattison could never have dreamed of. Our purpose-built \$75 million centre is custom designed for people with hearing and vision loss, and is a warm and welcoming environment built with connection and collaboration in mind.

Addressing a packed foyer of several hundred clients, staff, partners and supporters, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said our centre embodied Australia's 'fair go' ideal.

"This is world's best practice and it's being done right here in Macquarie," he said. "It is what a future made in Australia looks like.

"We have a universal health system built on fairness, a system that is the envy of the world. And, driven by the great ethos of the fair go, we share an instinct for opening the doors of opportunity and possibility for all Australians.

"All of that is so important to who we are as Australians. All of that comes together here."

The centre for innovation houses allied health, education, disability and cochlear implant services for children and adults, and our major research and professional education program. It will bind all our people closer together, and support new ways of working for all staff, regardless of which of our 18 sites they call home.

Importantly, this world-class facility will connect us even more closely with our partners on campus at the Australian Hearing Hub and support new partnerships in research, service delivery, and policy. It will be a place where knowledge cycles in and out. Where we learn just as much as we share.

All of this will mean we shift the dial for all people with sensory disability and drive a more inclusive Australia.



Tomorrow

The NextSense of tomorrow will be a beacon for best practice, a drawcard for national and international thinkers, an organisation sought out by those who want to remove barriers for people with sensory disability.

Our ambition is to play a larger role in cementing Australia's world-leading position in the fields of hearing and vision loss. We want to honour our legacy and make an even bigger contribution to keeping the bar high and keeping Australia at the forefront of innovation.

We have already begun to explore new ways to advance education for all children with hearing and vision loss, regardless of their location. And the next decade will see

us scale up to meet the growing need for in-person and remote hearing and vision services right across Australia.

By 2050, more than six million Australians will have hearing loss and more than one million will be blind or have low vision, and this will continue to grow.

We're now in a better position to be there for those who need us than at any other time of our history. And we have the potential to further shape the way services are delivered right across the sector.

We will trial and share new ideas, advance the field, and drive better outcomes. We will champion collective thinking to drive change.





Early intervention and therapy services

Decades of evidence shows that intervening early for children with hearing or vision loss makes a big difference to their language, communication, cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. That's why our expert early intervention teams are committed to tailored, ongoing, respectful care.



In 2024

We collaborated with TSH in WA to compare the results on three existing early listening and communication assessment tools

to identify early warning signs that young babies who are deaf or hard of hearing might need extra support. This method will allow therapists and Teachers of the Deaf to intervene even earlier, working with families before their babies would normally receive a formal speech, language and communication assessment.

We welcomed three new early childhood teachers as vision consultants in the role of 'key worker'

to co-ordinate and deliver support to clients receiving early intervention vision services. We are also supporting these new team members to complete their Master of Disability Studies through the NextSense Institute.

Our therapists and audiologists developed a new mentoring package

to support audiologists new to NextSense develop their skills and knowledge around cochlear implant services.

We were recognised by our industry peers

for our work on supporting new graduate and early career speech pathologists in an area of advanced practice at the 2024 Speech Pathology Australia Conference.

We expanded the number of Auslan Language Model roles to enhance the bilingual-bicultural services

we are offering to families who choose them. The Auslan Language Models work with our therapy and teaching staff to give children early access to language and role model Deaf culture. They now work across our sites in Macquarie Park, Werrington, Broadmeadow, and Gosford, as well as via telepractice.

We supported our people to build their skills and stay at the forefront of knowledge

through numerous professional development activities across every discipline.



Big school no barrier for Hannah

When five-year-old Hannah first walked through the gates of St Clair Public School she was already a seasoned learner.

After she was born with hearing loss in both ears, Hannah's parents Tammy and Peter swung into action. Hannah was fitted with hearing aids at three months old and soon after, she began intensive early intervention support with NextSense.

Years of hard work followed. Weekly sessions helped Hannah develop her speech, language and other important skills. She also attended an early learning playgroup run by our specialist staff, to promote speaking and active listening. Group sessions helped her family too, giving mum Tammy the opportunity to meet other parents of children with hearing loss.

'It was all very new and very scary at the time but everyone we spoke to helped us understand the next steps,' Tammy says.

'We really worked together as a team with NextSense to have Hannah as ready as she could be for school, with her speech and language on par with her peers.'

The results are there for all to see. Hannah is thriving in a mainstream education environment.

'I've really enjoyed seeing her excitement at what she has been learning,' Tammy says. She is keen to learn and participate in class activities and she enjoys learning her tricky words.'

Professor Greg Leigh, Director of NextSense Institute, says early diagnosis and intervention for hearing loss is crucial in creating foundations for learning and life skills.

'There is clear evidence that intervening at the earliest possible time leads to better language and developmental outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing,' he says.

'Children who get the right early support can reach the same milestones as their hearing peers.'

'It's also critical that they get continued help along the way and part of that is having a team of people around them who can support their educational and developmental needs.'





Annabeth's success is a team sport

Not many 10-year-olds have a gold medal under their belt. But that's just the beginning for champion goalball player Annabeth, who has plenty more to achieve.

Annabeth has low vision due to Marfan syndrome, a genetic disorder that can also affect the heart and lungs, and cause weakness in the limbs. This means that building muscle strength and coordination, and learning to maximise the vision she does have, is critical to Annabeth's independence.

And for that, she has two teams in her corner.

There's her goalball family—who took gold at the NSW state championships and silver at the Australian Goalball Championships in 2024. Goalball is a sport designed for athletes who are blind or have low vision. Players throw bell-embedded balls within a court with tactile markings and wear blackout eyeshades to ensure a level playing field. Annabeth's goalball community is particularly supportive, and she's made many new friends since first trying out the sport only three years ago.

And then there's her NextSense team. Annabeth has been working with orthoptist Alison and physiotherapist Christie since she was just six years old to develop her mobility and physical strength and manage her functional vision.

Christie has incorporated goalball skills into her sessions with Annabeth. They practice moving safely

and focusing on different parts of Annabeth's body to ensure she works on all her muscle groups and motor skills. Christie incorporates obstacle courses and goalball-based games that include throwing, blocking and getting on and off the ground.

She has also tailored her therapy after watching Annabeth in action on the court. And she's noticed a big improvement in Annabeth's strength, confidence and throwing skills as a result of their hard work together.

Annabeth's mum Meredith says she loves how Christie understands the vision side of physiotherapy. And she sees how early intervention therapy and goalball are helping Annabeth rewrite her own story.

'Before this, she could never play team sports, they were too dangerous because of her vision difficulties, running speed and reflexes,' Meredith says.

Now, both Annabeth and her mum are hooked.

'I love how much the goalball community rally around the younger players, and the older players really take them under their wing,' Meredith says

With the 2025 Australian Goalball Championships on the horizon, Annabeth can be sure that her NextSense team will be cheering her on with just as much enthusiasm.





Cochlear implant program

We now have four decades of experience in cochlear implant program innovation. Our whole-of-life approach supports people of all ages—from newborns to those in their 90s and beyond. We're passionate about access to quality hearing services.



In 2024

We marked 40 years of providing cochlear implant services to Australians and approaching 8,000 surgeries since our program began.

We gained momentum, with implant numbers returning to pre-COVID levels and more than 400 surgeries performed through our program during the year. More than 5,600 people are currently part of our program and during the year, we assessed more than 1,100 children and adults for implant suitability.

We expanded our reach to people in regional NSW establishing a more comprehensive cochlear implant service in Orange and partnering with local ENT surgeon Dr Aydin Mohammadi.

We strengthened our historic partnerships with leading companies such as Cochlear Ltd. Over the year, we explored how we could work together to deliver more streamlined models of care and remove barriers to access for cochlear implant candidates.

We worked with other partners including Macquarie University on exciting research studies to advance the field of hearing healthcare and cochlear implantation and influence how services are developed and delivered.

We held our first virtual Discover Hearing Implant event designed to demystify the cochlear implant journey for adults with hearing loss. We also began planning new service models to expand our reach, and new methods of connecting people with their peers so they can share experiences and better understand their options.



Ruth's action on hearing loss stopped isolation in its tracks

Ruth didn't realise hearing loss had crept up on her—until her partner brought home an electric toothbrush.

'I listened to it with my good ear, and I could hear it,' she says. 'But when I listened with my other ear, I couldn't hear a thing.'

For Ruth, then in her forties, hearing in her left ear had become increasingly difficult.

'I was straining to hear in meetings at work. I would try to sit in places which favoured my good side, but it became harder. I would find that at the end of the day, I would have headaches from all the strain.'

A Professor of Veterinary Science at Sydney University, Ruth has a demanding and busy work life. While she first began to lose her hearing in one ear about 10 years ago, it took some time to realise that she needed to act. She's not alone. Most people take around nine years to do something about their hearing loss once they realise it is a problem.

Ruth now has a cochlear implant. But she knows only too well how a journey towards hearing again can take some time and thought.

At first, she tried a hearing aid, but her audiologist realised that this was delivering no benefit. So, she began a new journey through our cochlear implant program.

'It's not like putting a pair of glasses on and suddenly being able to read,' she says. 'You first hear garbled noises and then you begin to learn how to hear again. NextSense did explain this to me—they said it will be like learning a new language with that ear and it might take some time to become fluent.'

Now, she can enjoy a dinner party and engage at work without having to worry about where to sit or strain to hear. She no longer has an increasing sense of isolation.

'It has made a massive difference to me as well as to my partner,' she says. 'We are not living in involuntary silence.'



Ruth joined NextSense Institute Director Professor Greg Leigh AO on the ABC Weekends program to discuss cochlear implants for adults





Hearing loss: the public conversation we have to have

In February and March each year, there are two key dates on the hearing sector calendar. World Hearing Day, run by the World Health Organization (WHO), and International Cochlear Implant Day, are opportunities to put hearing loss on the map.

Advocacy around hearing loss is critical. Around 3.6 million Australians live with some level of hearing loss—and that number is expected to double by 2060. The WHO says more than a third of all adult hearing loss is preventable and 80 percent of hearing needs go unmet. In Australia, hearing loss costs \$40 billion in financial costs and lost wellbeing.¹ It is linked to social isolation, falls, and an increased risk of dementia. Despite its impact, awareness about hearing loss options is low. And deeply ingrained societal misperceptions and stigma still limit our efforts to prevent and address it.

As a result, not enough people access the hearing support they need—only 10 percent of adults who could benefit from a cochlear implant currently use one. In 2024, the theme for World Hearing Day was

‘Changing mindsets’, so we worked together with our clients to speak to their communities about the need for change.

We shared messages about the importance of talking about hearing loss, and that acting early is always best but it’s never too late to make a difference. We also highlighted that hearing loss can be managed with the right support.

Our wonderful clients jumped at the chance to help, sharing their stories on a range of media platforms. NextSense Chief Executive Chris Rehn reflected on how privileged he has felt to share the cochlear implant journeys of some incredible people. And he made the case for why we should all care about unaddressed hearing loss in the industry publication Third Sector.

1. Hearing Care Industry Association. Hearing for Life - The value of hearing services for vulnerable Australians. March 2020.

Denise Clayton, 75:

“Now I can participate [in dragon boating and yoga retreats]. It’s really great. It gives you more confidence.”

— Newcastle Herald

Jessica Leyshon, mum of Bradley, 12:

“Today he is a very artistic young person but one that is less anxious and ready to try new things. His family is so proud of him.”

— The Singleton Argus

Kelly and Stephen Krimmer and daughters
Emily, 13 and Sarah, 15:

“I wish I had known back then that while [our girls] will always have hearing loss and wear hearing aids, there isn’t much that is different about our lives than a typically hearing family.”

— CHILD magazine

Colin Trinder, 64:

“There’s no doubt I would have had to quit my career; work would have been impossible. Today, most people would have no idea I wear a cochlear implant.”

— Canberra CityNews

Gordon Robertson, 88:

“It’s the little things you always take for granted. It’s great to have that back again.”

— Newcastle Weekly





Working side by side gets great results

Sometimes, the best innovation has simplicity at its core. Just ask any of our NextSense cochlear implant teams who get to work alongside leading Australian ear nose and throat (ENT) surgeons every day.

Like Nick Baulderstone, clinical audiologist and Cochlear Implant Services Lead in Newcastle, NSW, who sees firsthand how clients benefit when their healthcare providers pull together.

‘There’s a real sense of community,’ he says.

‘It really improves access to great care. We are constantly connecting with each other—not only with the surgeons but with their nurses, GPs and admin teams too.’

Newcastle is one of five NextSense centres where our allied health team shares premises with doctors who are part of our surgeon network.

We also operate ‘co-location models’ at Blackburn in Victoria, Alstonville in northern NSW, Gladesville in Sydney, and Canberra, with a visiting surgeon at our Liverpool site.

When multiple people are involved in a person’s care, there is a risk of them falling through the cracks, delaying surgery unnecessarily. But constant communication and co-operation—which is easier to do when health teams share premises—can make all the difference.

‘Being seen more quickly leads to better health outcomes,’ Nick says. ‘For an 80-year-old with hearing loss, preventing a year-long delay in treatment can make a huge difference to their quality of life.’

In 2024 the Hunter ENT surgical team completed their 1000th cochlear implant surgery. This impressive milestone for Associate Professor Rob Eisenberg, Professor Kelvin Kong, Dr Johnson Huang, Dr Toby Corlette, and Dr Daron Cope, gives the NextSense team great depth of experience to draw from.

‘There are such diverse skills here, among our surgeon colleagues, their teams and our own people,’ Nick says. ‘There is always someone to offer advice.’

For clinical audiologist and Cochlear Implant Services Lead in Canberra, Rachel Middleton, the benefits of co-location lie in making the client’s journey easier.

‘The whole process pre- and post-surgery can be quite overwhelming for clients, and we want that process to be as accessible and as efficient as possible,’ she says.

‘It means they are getting as much of their care as possible in the one familiar place and I know our clients feel a lot more comfortable knowing that we’ve got an ongoing relationship with the surgeon.’



Canberra Cochlear Implant Services Lead Rachel Middleton with surgeon Dr Timothy Makeham

At our Canberra site, which marked its 10-year anniversary in 2024, that surgeon is Dr Timothy Makeham, who sees patients from as far as Wagga Wagga and the South Coast.

For those who travel for their cochlear implant care, having NextSense assessments and pre- and post-surgery consultations coordinated for the same day really helps.

‘As a client you’re going through this incredibly emotional time and anything we can do to make people’s lives a bit more streamlined is really

important,’ Rachel says. ‘You might be making a six-hour round trip to come to the appointment.

‘This way of practising really adds to the richness of the knowledge and the discussions we have with each other. And for the client, we hope they are left feeling like we see them as a whole person rather than just a bunch of audiological assessments and a surgery.’



Dr Johnson Huang, Associate Professor Robert Eisenberg, and Dr Toby Corlette are part of the Hunter ENT surgical team, which reached a milestone of 1,000 surgeries in 2024.

Consulting otologists

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

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)

Professor Bill Gibson
MBBS, MD (London), FRCS, FRACS

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, MS (Syd),
MBBS (Syd), AMusA

Professor Kelvin Kong
BSc, MBBS (UNSW), FRACS (OHNS),
MD (UoN), MD (UNSW)

Dr Jennifer Lee
BSc (Med), MBBS (Hons), MS (ORL), FRACS

Dr Timothy Makeham
BE, BEc, BM, BS, FRACS

Dr Aydin Mohammadi
FRACS ORL-HNS, BMed, MSurg

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



Diagnostic audiology

Every year, thousands of families seek help from our expert audiologists to have their child's hearing assessed. Often, families are looking for answers to what can be a complex puzzle.

Their child's speech and language might not be progressing, and they might not know why. Ruling out hearing loss as a cause can be important in their journey to receiving the right diagnosis.

Sometimes, hearing loss may well be an issue, either on its own or accompanied by other disabilities. It's an emotional and stressful time, and families tell us they value our high-level skills in conducting hearing assessments in children with significant developmental concerns.

This expertise can't always be found in mainstream audiology clinics, but it's critical to getting accurate results that answer the questions that families and their medical professionals have. Twenty years of specialist experience in running diagnostic audiology clinics and many more years of experience in sensory disability mean we are ideally placed to do this important work.



In 2024

We conducted hearing assessments for more than 3,600 children across our Blackburn, Liverpool and Macquarie Park sites. We tailored our testing approach to fit the unique needs and abilities of every child, rather than requiring children to adapt to inflexible testing environments.

We helped the Victorian Infant Hearing Screening Program exceed its screening targets. As the largest provider of newborn audiology assessments in that state we met all of our benchmarks in servicing Victorian families.

We relocated our North Rocks clinic to our new centre for innovation on the Macquarie University campus. The custom-designed centre, complete with expanded audiology facilities, a multisensory wall and best-in-class sensory room, has won praise from our clients. We have received feedback that they greatly appreciate the warm and welcoming physical space designed to reduce stress and create a different feel from the typical sterile medical clinic environment.

We continued our commitment to running outreach clinics in Indigenous communities in Tennant Creek, Nambucca Heads/ Macksville and Dubbo. This outreach, so generously funded by valued, long-term supporters the JLDJS Foundation, the James N. Kirby Foundation, and Ian Sharp, is run in local schools and is instrumental in detecting hearing loss early. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children currently experience the highest levels of chronic otitis media (middle ear disease) in the world, with up to 70 percent of children in remote communities affected. The impacts of this are significant and lifelong, reaching well into adulthood. Acting early is therefore crucial to long-term health and can prevent permanent hearing loss. In future, we hope to reach more children in remote communities, and meet a pressing national need.

We supported our colleagues in the NextSense Cochlear Implant Program, conducting objective hearing tests for adults and older children who are currently clients in that program.



Education Services

We have been education innovators since 1860 and we're still building new, inclusive approaches to education. That's because we believe every child deserves a high-quality education to help them reach their potential.



In 2024

We enhanced the outdoor learning environment at our Kindergarten in Blackburn,

with a new cubby house supported by our Parents and Friends group. Combined with our play barbeque setting and our outdoor garden, this has created endless opportunities for creative play and language development.

We introduced a new Leader of Diverse Learning role at NextSense School

to help us identify and develop strategies for students needing extra support or extension so they can grow as learners. This role works closely with our teaching staff and school leaders including the leaders of pedagogy and research and is already driving innovation. We have changed the way we teach literacy as a result, and this is already leading to student growth and improved reading outcomes.

In the early years setting, two new Leader of Education roles are raising the bar

at our Preschool in Sydney and our Kindergarten in Melbourne. These roles are helping us create a shared vision for children's early learning and mentoring our teachers to promote best practice. At NextSense Preschool, story time now uses a bicultural-bilingual approach, with stories told simultaneously in spoken English and Auslan.

We supported 185 children across our onsite Preschool, Kindergarten, and School,

and in mainstream primary and high school environments through our School Support Service, a 25 percent increase from 2023.

We assisted more than 70 students to access the primary and secondary curriculum

through our respected School Support Service and began providing new in-person and online services across ACT, Queensland, Victoria and regional NSW. We now work with teachers and principals in four independent education systems and 65 independent schools to deliver this important service.

We entered the seventh year of our partnership with the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting

Authority to produce large print and braille NAPLAN resources and transcription services for students who are blind or have low vision.

Our Accessibility and Inclusion and School Support teams joined forces to develop braille resources

for children aged 3–7. The resources will support early literacy development, will enable preschools and schools to offer inclusive classroom strategies and expand opportunities for reading at home.



School's in—and it's more exciting than ever

In 2024 we opened the doors to our state-of-the art School and Preschool at Macquarie Park. After many months of preparation, our education community was ready for the move.

Staff and students alike have embraced their incredible new space, which has been custom designed especially for them and has a seamless flow between indoor and outdoor learning.

Our learning areas include sensory and retreat play areas to cater for different student needs. And our bush tucker sensory garden is a popular part of our Preschool, full of edible and scented plants such as parsley, chives and rosemary.

Another popular feature is our multisensory room, used by therapists to help both School and Preschool children develop fine and gross motor skills and to help the children burn physical energy to aid concentration when back in the classroom.

Our school playground is a fun and inclusive space that supports students to develop their gross motor skills in a safe environment, with rubber soft fall and equipment that offers different sound and tactile experiences. In our classrooms, lighting and acoustics have been customised to allow a better experience for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision.

The best bits

Just as important as our new space were all the things we used it for. During the year we held our first sports carnival, ran Auslan STEM workshops and holiday camps, and began a new swim program.

Our students entered, and won first place, in the Deaf Australia Auslan Day video competition. And we all remembered our important history, by celebrating both Thomas Pattison Day and Alice Betteridge Day.

We also welcomed Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Member for Bennelong Jerome Laxale into our beautiful space to meet and spend time with our students and teachers. During their tour of our new centre for innovation, the PM and his team wasted no time in joining some craft activities. They were even brave enough to join us in our school hall to field tricky questions to the many curious young minds in the room.

What we love about our School and Preschool



“Handball!!”

—Leon



“The Prime Minister coming to visit.”

—Serem



“Our beautiful learning environment.” —Ujala, Teacher



“The slide!”

—Axel





Professional education, research and collaboration

We've always believed that complex issues need the best minds at the table, so collaboration is a hallmark of our work. We're advancing the field of sensory disability through leading research and sharing what we know through our growing professional education program.



In 2024

There were 196 students completing our Master of Disability Studies qualification

that we run in affiliation with Macquarie University. Forty-two students graduated during the year, with 19 having studied under a scholarship. This included our first graduate under a newly created NextSense Scholarship, Jessie Jin, who specialised in blindness and low vision.

We published more than 20 articles in respected international academic journals

and made more than 25 presentations to national and international conferences, including invited addresses to conferences in Australia, Austria, China, the UAE, and the USA. Topics addressed ranged from the challenges around creating inclusive playgrounds for children who are blind or have low vision, to the evolution of systems for early hearing loss detection and intervention.

We published and presented on the major topic of developing and delivering family-centred early intervention

for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. We will continue to conduct research in this important area and have already begun to use the principles on family-centred early intervention published in 2024 to guide our practice across NextSense early intervention programs.

We hosted 63 continuing education events, including the 31st Australian and New Zealand Conference for Educators of the Deaf (ANZCED)

which attracted 250 Teachers of the Deaf from across Australia and New Zealand, who were convening for the first time since 2018.

We grew the number of certificate courses on offer

to educators, allied health professionals, administrators, and parents or caregivers. The courses are designed to extend skills and knowledge to enhance the support provided to children who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision. They have been well received, and our introduction to early intervention for children who are blind or have low vision will soon be rolled out to every specialist vision teacher working for the West Australian Department of Education.

We partnered with the Macquarie University School of Education to develop a suite of inclusive education online modules for classroom teachers in the ACT.

This education package was designed to introduce teachers to the needs of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision.



Master's degree a dream come true for Kimberley

Kimberley's passion for the Deaf community and learning sign language was ignited some 20 years ago when she embarked on a Certificate II in Auslan, with a view to eventually becoming a Teacher of the Deaf.

Her career has been rich and diverse. She has held a variety of roles in both the education and disability sectors, and her thirst for knowledge has seen her study childcare, disability and teaching. She has also trained in areas such as assistive and alternative communication and Key Word Sign.

So, for Kimberley, our Master of Disability Studies qualification, which we deliver in affiliation with Macquarie University, was a natural next step in her ongoing search for knowledge.

'I chose NextSense at Macquarie University because the assessments were very relatable to the field I was working in and it offered the most in-depth content,' she says.

'It felt like a way I could contribute to the Deaf and hard of hearing community but also connect in a different way with my existing skillsets.'

Kimberley completed her degree over 18 months, juggling full-time work and further Auslan studies, as well as caring for her children. It was challenging, but she found it manageable and relatable, with case study assessment tasks that closely aligned with her role as an itinerant support teacher.

She learned about anatomy and physiology in relation to speech, and how this can be applied in the classroom for children who are deaf or hard of hearing—something she discovered she had an unexpected passion for.

She has gained a more holistic understanding of hearing loss that's improved her practice. And she is keen to broaden her horizons beyond teaching in future—maybe even furthering her studies in speech therapy.

'I am so excited to have graduated,' she says.

'I want to use my diverse knowledge and skills to advocate and empower the students and people I work with so they can be who they aspire to be. It was lots of hours of study and important knowledge I'm glad I've learned. I'm looking forward to using it.'



Kimberley, centre, shares success with her peers on graduation day



People and operations

Being a successful service delivery organisation means prioritising people—both those who receive our services and those who deliver them. Attracting and retaining the best people is a core priority. In a year packed with major operational projects our people achieved extraordinary things.



In 2024

We completed a six-year project to conceptualise and construct our new centre for innovation at Macquarie University,

working with 25 consultants, conducting 80 site inspections with our builder, and running more than 100 tours for key stakeholders and partners, including Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles and NSW Premier Chris Minns.

Our relocation project from North Rocks to Macquarie included moving 12,500 lineal metres of items between sites,

and recycling more than 12,000 items of e-waste and 350 items of furniture and other goods. We ran a major IT and logistics operation to get our new site work-ready for close to 200 staff.

We announced new leadership roles as part of our ongoing approach to building a network model of operations.

Our new structures created under this model will lead to new, more streamlined ways of working and a more seamless experience for our clients. They will also create more defined career pathways for our people.

We celebrated longstanding staff service to our organisation,

awarding 23 staff with service acknowledgements for 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years.

Our people continued to be recognised in international forums.

Manager of Accessibility and Inclusion Sonali Marathe, who is also President of the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc accepted the 2024 ABC International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing on behalf of the Round Table in Guadalajara, Mexico.

We enhanced our organisational maturity around governance, risk and compliance

through projects such as enhancing our safeguarding framework and ensuring consistency in best practices across services and education.

We successfully achieved NDIS reaccreditation,

with auditors commenting on the strength of our commitment to clients and their experience with us.

Our finance and services teams worked closely together to run seven NDIS masterclasses

and roll out a new cochlear implant services billing model.

We launched our Incredible Colleagues program,

bringing 350 staff from across our many sites together to reflect on the behaviours that we all value and what we will celebrate moving forward to reflect our common understanding of 'the NextSense way'.



Celebrating our incredible colleagues

Lifelong learner, change supporter, respectful relationships builder, keen contributor, Team NextSense advocate and client experience champion.

These are the shared behaviours we all agree should be hallmarks of working at NextSense. They emerged from a crowdsourcing exercise, where we asked our people what they valued in each other and what they aspired to in every work relationship they held.

We all agreed that an incredible colleague is that incredible person you love working with who supports Team NextSense and is led by our values. They develop real and respectful relationships with their colleagues and deliver to a consistently high standard.

They support change, grow their skillset and contribute to our success. They love making a difference and delivering a better client experience.

In 2024, this shared understanding culminated in the Incredible Colleagues program—which we launched across several inspirational and enjoyable sessions—and which we will continue to roll out in coming years.

More than 300 staff from all of our sites came together for the program, hosted at our incredible new centre for innovation on the Macquarie University campus.

We heard from Rezilium Co-founder Kamal Sarma about how to bring an incredible colleague mindset to work, how to adapt to change and build resilience, and where we give our best energy.

We shared insights with each other around the challenges and opportunities we face in our many and diverse roles. And most importantly, we celebrated each other, and all of the incredible ways we contribute to NextSense.

Our people had wonderful feedback to share about this uniting experience, which was so important after the challenge of COVID and its impacts on our ability to come together.

As we move forward, we will embed this program in our day-to-day. It will help us build a stronger community within NextSense and is an important roadmap to guide us in creating a community with a shared identity, purpose, values, and a culture we are proud of.

What our people said

‘It was wonderful to be with so many valued colleagues.’

‘A face to face meet with colleagues was excellent, it was a fun day, it was great to engage in a task that fosters connection, celebration and recognition.’

‘Very engaging, informative, interesting, enjoyable. Great to see so many faces and meet different people from across the organisation. Thank you for the opportunity to participate and feel included.’



credible
colleagues



Our supporters



We're fortunate to have around us a donor community that is just as passionate about making a difference as we are. Their incredible support and loyalty means we can continue to go above and beyond for our clients and their families.

6,983

donors gave one or more gifts in 2024

19,970

donations were received in 2024 (including bequests)

\$11,737,435

worth of donations was received in 2024 (including bequests)



Gifts and grants

In 2024 we received some significant gifts towards our wide range of programs and services. This included significant and ongoing support from UBS Optimus Foundation Australia for a five-year project to develop a protocol for assessing development in children with vision loss. St Marys Rugby League Club in Western Sydney awarded a very generous grant of \$30,000 towards the music therapy program we run for children receiving early intervention hearing services at our Werrington centre. We are grateful to Mr Ian Sharp for extending his existing support for the braille music notation project we are developing for our online braille learning platform UEB Online. And Manildra Group Pty Ltd sent some extra Christmas cheer our way by topping up their regular annual support with a donation to fund Christmas parties for our young early intervention clients and students at our School and Preschool.

Our second annual Giving Day—a roaring success

Our 2024 Giving Day exceeded expectations thanks to the incredible generosity of our supporters, with the original fundraising target of \$260,000 surpassed within hours. By the end of the day we raised a total of \$334,000, to go towards providing vital education services at NextSense School.

For every donation received over a 24-hour period, matching contributions from individual and corporate donors doubled supporters' impact, ensuring that every dollar went twice as far. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our matching partners: Australasian College of Optical Dispensing; John & Lynne Church; Corporate Match 2.0; Anton and Jenny Gaudry; The Henson Foundation; Lantern Clubs; Dr Andrew Pethebridge; Qantas Pathfinders; and VivCourt Trading.

A big thank you to our corporate volunteers from Macquarie University, Optus, and Pfizer for their support on the phones, engaging with our generous donors and helping to process donations. A special highlight of the day was the visit from students at NextSense School, who joined in the fun and personally thanked our volunteers.



Qantas Pathfinders: over half a century of support

The special relationship between NextSense and Qantas Pathfinders is a gift worth celebrating. This dedicated volunteer group of current and former Qantas cabin crew, pilots, and ground staff has been passionate about raising funds for NextSense for an impressive 57 years. This has involved a variety of fundraising events, including the signature annual charity flight.

Each year, a group of guests joins a chartered Qantas flight to a new destination for a day of sightseeing, culinary delights, and fantastic hospitality from the Qantas crew. The 2024 flight took passengers to beautiful Norfolk Island, where they enjoyed perfect weather, the island's natural beauty, and, according to several reliable sources, 'the best fish and chips ever'.

Another Pathfinders standout event with a long and proud history is the annual Revue. This event, which has been running for 49 years, showcases the hidden talents of Qantas staff and is known for its glitz, glamour, and irreverent humour, captivating audiences over multiple shows. The 2024 Revue had record attendance, and its six spectacular shows resulted in a record \$195,000 being raised. The 50th anniversary of the Revue in 2025 will be a wonderful milestone celebration of this longstanding partnership.

Special bequest will further some special careers

The immense generosity of the late Robin June Parsons in 2024 will pave the way for enhanced careers in sensory disability education and therapy.

Robin's bequest of \$300,000 has established the Holly Lorraine Parsons Memorial Scholarship Foundation in memory of her niece who was a dedicated and highly regarded teacher of children with disability in Toowoomba, Queensland.

The Foundation will fund two annual scholarships to complete the NextSense Master of Disability Studies degree. The degree is conferred on teachers and others working with children who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision and is delivered by the NextSense Institute in affiliation with Macquarie University. Applications for the inaugural scholarships opened in 2024 and the first recipients will be announced in 2025.



Horizon and Lantern Clubs hit major fundraising milestones

In 2024, Lantern Clubs reached a very significant milestone: 60 years of tireless effort for our organisation, and more than \$18 million raised. When they were first formed back in 1964, clubs were formed in Grafton, Mosman, Ashfield, Randwick, and Parramatta. The clubs soon spread throughout NSW to more than 50, with hundreds of members. Dedicated club members are still active today, hosting luncheons, open gardens, morning teas, stalls and raffles, fashion shows, and more. We thank our Lantern Clubs for their dedication to fundraising efforts and sharing the impact of our work with their local communities.

The dedicated members of the Horizon Committee celebrated their 40-year anniversary of support for NextSense in 2024. To mark the occasion, 120 long-term Committee members and supporters attended a wonderful cocktail function. Since its inception in 1984, the Committee has hosted everything from black-tie galas, Oaks Day events, and cocktail parties hosted by Lady Mary Fairfax—raising approximately \$800,000 in the process. Today, its flagship event is the annual Authors' Luncheon held at NSW Parliament House. In 2024 the event was as successful as ever. About 180 people attended to hear from authors Robbi Neal and Kim Kelly, and host NSW Premier Chris Minns.

Accessible Easter egg hunt gets the tick of approval

We were thrilled to host the team from Cadbury at the organisation's first accessible Easter egg hunt in Sydney, designed to level the playing field for children who are blind or have low vision. Our clients and families had the chance to experience the thrill of the hunt on their own terms and enjoy an early visit from the Easter Bunny.

With the help of creative technology studio FutureLabs, Cadbury's accessible Easter egg used sound, Bluetooth, and proximity sensor technologies to enable children who are blind or have low vision and their families to participate in the hunt, which took place on the grounds of our North Rocks site in Sydney.

"It's important we continue talking about how to make Australia a more inclusive society and events like this help to keep that very important conversation going," says NextSense Chief Executive Chris Rehn.

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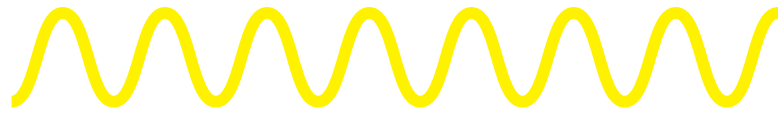
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 Vera Rado Fund
 William & Gladys Judd Memorial Fund
 William Boydell Fund

Our Board



From left to right: Rod Jackson, Clinical Professor Catherine Birman OAM, The Hon Robyn Parker, David Dinte, Matt Pearce, Charles M Cowper, Jane Simmons PSM

David Dinte

President
BEC, LLB, MAICD

David is a property developer with extensive experience in commercial, retail, industrial and residential development, acquisition and management in both Australia and the United States of America. David is a Director of Souths Cares and a member of the International Council of Shopping Centres. David joined the Board in 2000 and was appointed a Vice President in 2009. In December 2019 David was appointed President and Chairman of the Board. He is a Life Member of NextSense.

Barbara Stone AM

Vice President
BA, DipEd, MEd, MAICD, FACE, FACEL

Barbara is a former National Chair of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA), past State Chair AHISA NSW/ACT, former President, Alliance of Girls' Schools of Australasia. Barbara retired as Principal of MLC School in 2011. Current other Board directorships include Association of Independent Schools, NSW. Mrs Stone joined the Board in 2002, was appointed Vice President in 2012, is a Life Member of NextSense and retired from the Board in 2024.

Matt Pearce

Vice President

Matt Pearce has an extensive career in media and events. He has worked in newspapers and magazines and, for the past 20 years, events. He has strong mergers and acquisition experience and sits on a number of industry boards. He has been involved in hearing services in Victoria for the past 25 years, previously serving as Chairman and Board Director for Taralye and Taralye Foundation. Matt joined the Board in 2018 and was appointed a Vice President in 2021.

The Hon Robyn Parker

Vice President

DipEd, DipTeach, GAICD

Robyn Parker has more than 30 years of public sector experience. Beginning with roles in child and family services across a number of disadvantaged communities, Robyn spent 14 years as a TAFE teacher of child studies and as a CEO of an ageing and disability organisation. She also spent 12 years as an MLC, MP and Cabinet Minister in the NSW Government. Currently, Robyn serves as a non-executive director of several not-for-profit and government Boards such as Hume Housing and Hunter Local Land Services. She is the Deputy Chair of the NSW Heritage Council. She joined the Board in 2019 and was appointed a Vice President in 2024.

Clinical Professor Catherine Birman OAM

Director

MBBS, PhD, FRACS, GAICD

Clinical Professor Birman is one of the world's most experienced cochlear implant surgeons, having performed more than 2,000 such procedures for children and adults. She is a Clinical Professor and Head of Department of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery at Sydney University, and Honorary Clinical Professor at Macquarie University. In 2017 she was announced NSW Premier's Woman of the Year and in 2018 received the Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery Society Medal for Distinguished Contribution to the Art and Science of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery. In 2022 she was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for services to Medicine in Otolaryngology, has participated in numerous grants and clinical trials, presented and published extensively, and is Medical Director of the NextSense Cochlear Implant Program. She joined the Board in 2011.

Charles M Cowper

Director

BA, LLB, FAICD

Charles Cowper is a solicitor and former partner of national commercial law firms, Corrs Chambers Westgarth and Gadens Lawyers. He is currently a consultant to global law firm Dentons. He is an acknowledged expert in mergers and acquisitions, corporate law and governance. He has held board positions in a range of for-profit and for-purpose organisations including in education, on the Council of Shore School, and in disability, as a director of Royal Blind Society of New South Wales. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Charles joined the Board in May 2017.

Rod Jackson

Director

MBA, BEc, GAICD, FCPA, FFIN

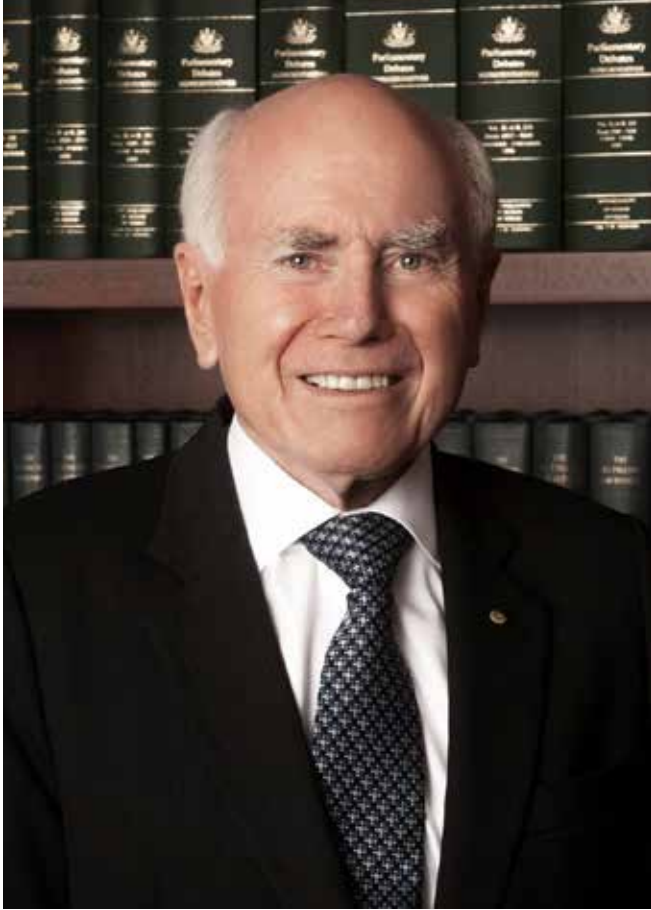
Rod is a non-executive director for a range of businesses. Domestically, Rod is a Director of NGM Group, NextSense, FINSIA, and Searson Buck Group. Internationally, he has been Chair of Westpac Europe Ltd and is Adviser to Executive Global Network in Singapore. In financial services, Rod worked as an executive at Westpac Banking Corporation for over 40 years, 11 of which were in Asia and Europe. Rod was a CFO or COO for the past 20 years and retired from the role of CFO at Westpac Institutional Bank in January 2021. He joined the Board in 2023.

Jane Simmons PSM

Director

BMus, MEd (Admin)

Jane Simmons PSM has more than 35 years' experience in public education leadership positions, with significant expertise in leading others through change. Jane recently retired as Deputy Director-General of the ACT Government's Education Directorate and has held executive leadership positions within the NSW Department of Education. Ms Simmons is a member of several jurisdictional and national boards and committees, including the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) Board, and is an Adjunct Professor at Macquarie University and the University of Canberra. In 2020, she was awarded a Public Service Medal for services to education. She joined the Board in 2024.



Our Vice Patrons

In 2024 we were delighted to welcome the Hon John Howard OM AC and Mr Michael Easson AM as NextSense Vice Patrons. We look forward to the valuable contribution we know they will make as a result of their deep expertise.

Mr Howard served as Australia's 25th Prime Minister between March 1996 and November 2007. He is the nation's second-longest serving Prime Minister, was a Member of Parliament for 33 years, and was Treasurer in an earlier government. He is a Companion of the Order of Australia and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the highest civilian award in the United States—by President George W Bush. In January 2012, Queen Elizabeth II appointed him to the Order of Merit. In 2013, he received the Japanese Award, the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun.

Mr Easson graduated with a BA (Hons) in Politics from the University of NSW and has a PhD in history from the Australian Defence Force Academy, an MSc in urban development from Campion Hall at the University of Oxford, and a PhD in transport planning from the University of Melbourne. He co-founded EG Funds Management in 2000 and has served on boards in insurance, water, energy, property management, and transport infrastructure. He is currently serving on the board of the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation and was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1997.



Thank you, Barbara Stone

Longstanding Board member and Life Member of NextSense Barbara Stone announced her retirement from the Board in 2024 after 22 years in the role.

Barbara joined the Board in 2002 and has made an immense contribution to our organisation. During her tenure, including 12 years as Vice President, she provided balanced, thoughtful, well-considered advice that was incredibly valuable.

She was a progressive voice for change, wholeheartedly supporting many key innovations, such as mergers, our name change, and rebrand, and presiding over the opening of our Darwin Centre in Fannie Bay in 2019.

Barbara's career and deep experience in education was an important hallmark of her contribution. She was particularly focused on educational outcomes for children with disability. We wish Barbara the very best and offer our immense thanks for her superb guidance and support.



Our senior leaders



From left to right: Nicole Smith, David Eljiz, Professor Greg Leigh AO, Chris Rehn, Amal Maait, Shy Bastianpillai, Hockman Chang, and Neha Sharma

Senior leadership team as at 31 December 2024





Chris Rehn

Chief Executive
JP, BBus, DipAppSc

Chris brings a wealth of health management experience and expertise to NextSense, having held senior roles within a range of public and private sector healthcare organisations. He was appointed Chief Executive in 2010.

David Eljiz

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer
BCom, LLB, GDLP

David Eljiz is an accomplished executive leader with significant experience in service delivery, change management, organisational strategy and operations management. He has held senior leadership roles in the education and legal sectors.

Shy Bastianpillai

Chief Financial Officer
FCPA, FCMA (UK), CGMA

Shy has extensive experience and a proven track record in financial management and business transformation, and is a people-focused leader, with a passion for coaching others. She joined NextSense in 2016 after a series of senior roles in business.

Hockman Chang

Director, Technology, Operations and Property
B Const Mgt, MRE, Dip App Sc, Cert Risk Mgt

Director, Technology, Operations and Property
Hockman has extensive experience and expertise in project and program management. Prior to joining NextSense in 2013, he held senior management roles in several ASX Top 50 multinationals across a range of industries.

Professor Greg Leigh AO

Director, NextSense Institute
DipTeach, BEd, MSc, PhD, FACE

Professor Leigh has built an impressive career specialising in education for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. He is well known and respected within the sector and internationally, through his many sector leadership roles and research.

Amal Maait

Director, Fundraising and Development

Amal is a strategic and people-focused fundraising leader with over a decade of experience in not-for-profit organisations. She builds strong donor relationships, fosters sustainable growth, and plays a key role in advancing our mission and strengthening our philanthropic community.

Neha Sharma

Director, People and Governance
BScience (Psychology), LLB, GDLP

Neha has held leadership roles in the not-for-profit, government and legal sectors and has extensive experience in change management, workplace relations, human resources, employment law, organisational governance and compliance.

Nicole Smith

Director, Marketing and Communications
BHSHM, MBus

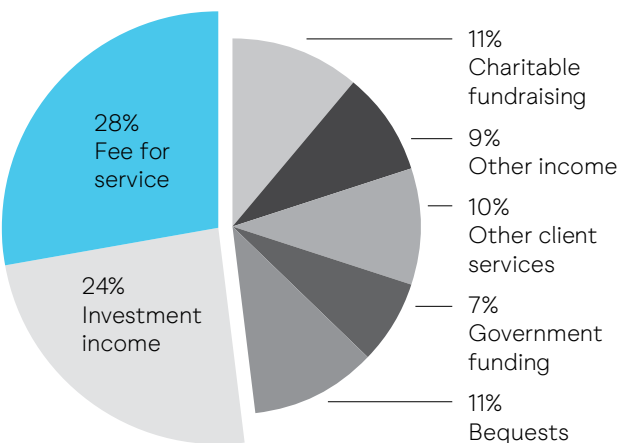
Nicole is a senior marketing and communications executive with over 20 years' experience. She has successfully led major organisational change responses, built brand campaigns and marketing initiatives. She joined NextSense in 2015.

Company Secretary

In 2024 we appointed Anjalee Javeri to the role of Company Secretary. This role is accountable to the Board of Directors in supporting the organisation.

Financial summary

2024 income



The new centre for innovation at the Macquarie University precinct was completed during the year and we transitioned all services and support functions to the new premises, having concluded the clearing up of the North Rocks site, which was our home for over 60 years. The Federal Government contributed \$12.5M (approximately 16% of the total) towards this significant strategic investment in the form of a Commonwealth Development Grant (CDG).

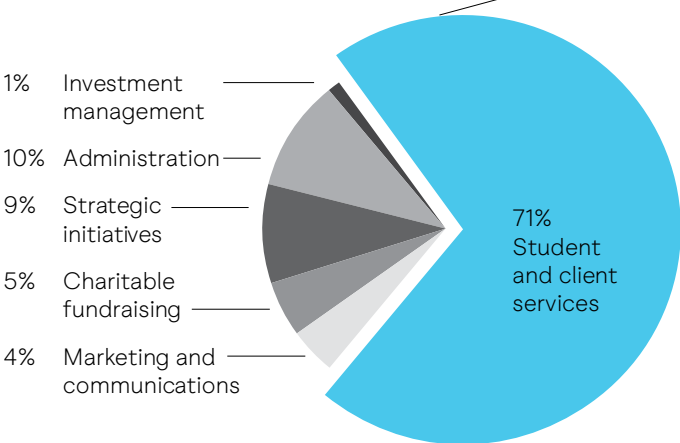
We continued to keep a close eye on both revenue and expenditure streams as sustainability into the future is a key priority, together with quality outcomes for our clients, for the next 164 years.

Total Revenue was \$52.7M, a decrease of \$8.6M or 14.0% from 2023 which can be predominantly attributed to the CDG funding in excess of \$12M recognised in the prior year and classified under ‘Not for profit income’.

Our generous donors and bequestors contributed 22% of our revenue in 2024, compared to 43%* the previous year. We are enormously grateful for their foresight and generosity, amidst a challenging fundraising environment and cost of living pressures.

*Includes \$12.125M of CDG funding

2024 expenditure



Fee for service (NDIS and Medicare revenue generated from client activity) contributed 28% of revenue.

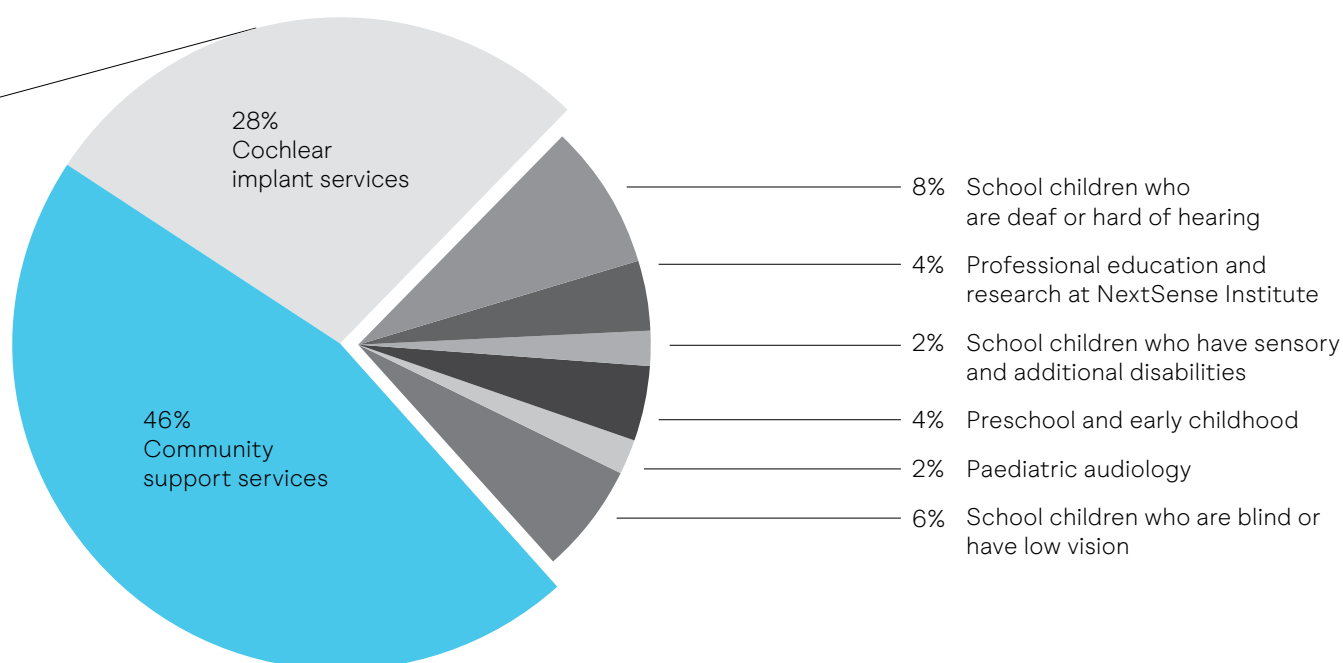
Commonwealth and state governments contributed 7% of our revenue in 2024 to support the Education programs for the Preschool and School programs.

Total Expenditure on operational activities increased by \$5.5M or 10.6% to \$57.2M, the increase being mainly attributed to student and client services expenditure increasing by \$3.4M and the balance being mainly attributed to the move to the new premises. 71% of our outgoings are directed towards delivering student and client services, including our cochlear implant services.

General and Administration costs were 10.1% of operational expenditure which is similar to prior years.

In 2024, we reviewed the treatment in 2023 of the CDG funds received. It was previously recognised across the build phase as well as service delivery phase over the five years post construction period, which was a very conservative approach. As a result of reviewing the approach we have applied a more pragmatic approach to revenue recognition that is consistent with the accounting standard AASB 1058.

2024 expenditure: student and client services



As a result of this, the 2023 comparative financial statements were restated.

In 2024 we reported a net surplus of \$13.8M compared to a restated surplus of \$112.4M in 2023 (previously \$104M). 2024 included a fair value gain of \$18.1M on the revaluation of our investment funds compared to a gain of \$7.8M in 2023. The prior year also included a realised gain of \$95.1M on the sale of the North Rocks property.

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.

Auditor

Ernst & Young

Banker

St George Bank

Investment adviser

JANA Investment Advisers

Solicitors 2024

Bartier Perry

Corrs Chambers Westgarth

Meyer Vandenberg

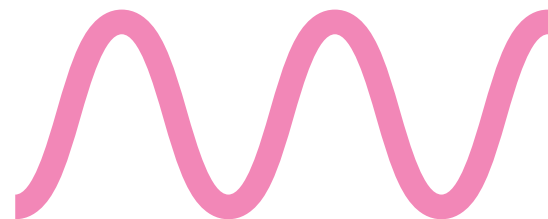
Turks Legal

2024 income and expenditure summary

	2024 (\$'000)	Restated 2023 (\$'000)	% Change
Total revenue	52,708	61,298	-14.0%
Total expenditure	57,232	51,746	10.6%
Net operating (loss)/income	(4,524)	9,552	
Unrealised/realised gains on financial and property assets	18,340	102,854	
Net surplus for the year	13,816	112,406	

Let's redefine what's possible.

Together



NextSense is a registered charity driven by a simple belief: everyone deserves the opportunity to reach their potential.

For more than 160 years, we've worked alongside our generous donors and supporters to empower people with hearing or vision loss across Australia. Continued support is vital to ensure ongoing access to life-changing therapy and education services, and to help us lead advancements in the fields of hearing and vision through cutting-edge research, professional training, and education. There are many ways to get involved and make a difference:

Make a donation

Every gift helps no matter how big or small. If you're considering a donation, we'd love to hear from you.

Shape the future with us

In 2024, we established a new, best-practice centre for innovation at Macquarie University—a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform service delivery for Australians with hearing or vision loss. Let's talk about how we can align your philanthropic goals with a lasting legacy of impact.

Get your workplace involved

Engage your team and demonstrate your organisation's values by getting involved with NextSense. It's a powerful way to build purpose and community at work. Explore how your business can support our mission through partnership, while strengthening employee engagement and customer loyalty.

Fundraise in your community

Organising a community fundraising event? We're here to support your efforts and help you raise awareness while making a real impact.

Become a volunteer

Our volunteers are the heart of what we do. By giving your time, you help enrich the lives of children and adults accessing our services.

Share your story

For our clients, your personal experience and how NextSense has supported you can inspire others and help us raise vital funds to continue our work well into the future.

Leave a lasting legacy

Leave a legacy that transforms lives—helping people with hearing or vision loss thrive for generations.

Please get in touch with our Supporter Care team to find out more



1800 043 411



supportercare@nextsense.org.au



nextsense.org.au/get-involved



Scan the QR code
to donate online



