

# 2020: Our year in review



**In 2020, we successfully moved our services online to help families prepare for the NDIS and continue to thrive during the COVID pandemic.**



# Supporting families online

**The pandemic changed the way we work, but what we do hasn't changed: delivering the best outcomes for children and families.**

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**In 2019–2020 our staff and the families we work with learned to do things differently through videoconferencing for services, support and inspiration.**

## **Connecting to the NDIS**

The NDIS is a new start in disability support and has completely rolled out across Australia. Plumtree's NDIS workshops educated parents on getting prepared and joining the scheme. Topics included using an e-book developed in-house to gather information for the first planning meeting. Activating a plan, choosing service providers and strategies to get a great plan were explored. Making a child's funds go further via self-management, and discovering what's possible with the different management types were also covered.

*"The facilitator was great at explaining things and sharing her experiences, which was very helpful."*

## **Learning and playing**

Plumtree's free workshops included coaching for parents, toilet training, transition to school and empowering talks for parents of children with disability. Workshops were also held in other languages to inform and connect families.

Our Music Together Online Playgroup launched successfully during the pandemic. Run by early childhood music specialist Dr Amanda Niland, the free sessions gave children opportunities to communicate, get creative and explore musical instruments, dance and song.

More free online playgroups for babies to preschool-aged children are being planned for 2020–2021.

70

FAMILIES ATTENDED  
NDIS WORKSHOPS

12

NDIS WORKSHOPS  
HELD FOR FAMILIES

93

CHILDREN ATTENDED  
ONLINE PLAYGROUP





### A practical start

Every family begins at a different place, but they need a vision for the future. When families start at Plumtree, a welcome visit connected them with a peer worker with lived experience. Together, they used **Pictability**, a fun visioning tool developed in-house, to immediately create goals for the entire family and plan practical steps to achieve them.

*"When we were first asked to think of a vision for our child, we didn't know what it meant or where to start. Pictability was ingenious and helped us with visioning and setting goals in a very natural way."*

### Our Board

Plumtree is supported by a dedicated board with diverse experience, united by their commitment to children and families.

*The Plumtree board is very proud that the team has transitioned to online services so quickly and efficiently to give families great outcomes during these unpredictable times.*

Nick Walter,  
Chair of Board

See our **calendar** to find out about and register for workshops, playgroups and events.

### Your family at the centre

We know that each family is unique, and parents know their child's needs and abilities best. Plumtree works in partnership with families to provide the right supports and positive outcomes. Family-centred practice is the gold standard in early childhood intervention services.

### Planning plays a part

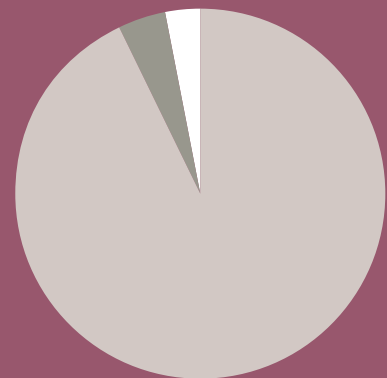
You decide the goals that reflect your family's concerns and priorities. Pictability is a new approach that helps parents set goals and a positive vision for their child and family. Visually based, it identifies new possibilities through a fun, creative experience.

*"Not having a set of goals is like going for a drive but not knowing your destination – you want to know where you are going."*

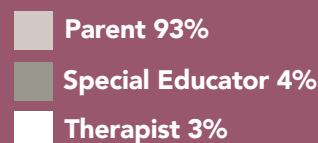
Sylvana Mahmic CEO Plumtree

### You make the difference

Families spend the most time with their child and can make a big difference during everyday activities and routines. Children also thrive in natural learning environments, such as the home and childcare, where they are a part of the community.



### TIME WITH YOUR CHILD (Mahoney 2011)



*"Professionals are a resource. Most of a child's learning happens with their family and carers between therapy sessions."*

259  
PICTABILITY SESSIONS  
DELIVERED

51  
PARENTS COMPLETED  
NOW & NEXT ONLINE

# Now & Next: growth and impact

**Our services are just the start. Plumtree's innovative program is transforming the lives of children with disability and their families in Australia and overseas.**



**A first of its kind in Australia and evidence-based, Now & Next helps parents achieve positive outcomes for the whole family. It won the 2017 ECIA NSW/ACT Excellence Award and was a finalist in the NSW Disability Innovation Awards.**

Run by parents with training and lived experience in disability, [Now & Next](#) shows that peer networks and peer workers are a new resource for the future.

Our program is thriving. Starting with three groups in 2016 at Plumtree's Sydney centre, a total of 50 group programs have been hosted in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Finland for 493 participants. Nine online groups held from late 2018 were completed by 46 families.

## **Positive outcomes**

Participants learned to develop a vision for their family using Pictability—a completely different experience to the NDIS planning process. Short and long-term goals were created

in three categories: for the child, the family, and themselves.

The results are encouraging. Questionnaire responses and an [external evaluation](#) showed an increased sense of empowerment, knowledge, agency and hope at the program's end; increasing satisfaction across the eight sessions; and a better sense of wellbeing among participants. Over 90% of their goals were achieved across the three categories in the face-to-face sessions and over 85% in the online sessions.

**Read our [blog](#) to find out more and download the 2019 Global Benchmark Analysis presentation by peer worker Mogi Bayasgalan.**

26%

PARTICIPANTS  
WERE FATHERS

54%

PARTICIPANTS FROM  
DIVERSE BACKGROUND

82

FAMILIES COMPLETED  
N&N 2019-2020





# Sharing expertise with communities

**Plumtree is collaborating with professionals to deliver better services and outcomes.**



## Transforming learning

A Student Voice Project developed by Plumtree launched at three Sydney schools, enabling students with disabilities to shape their educational experience.

Plumtree peer workers facilitated ten programs on identifying student strengths and well-being indicators for meaningful learning outcomes. Pictability was used for developing learning and support plans.

The pilot project used a [Child Voice Model](#) developed by Plumtree CEO Sylvana Mahmic and Learning Research Director Dr Annick Janson, a world first in charting a pathway for amplifying children with disabilities' opinions to become independent young adults.

## Promoting library inclusion

Communities are vital for learning and development. Funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency, Plumtree is collaborating with libraries to enhance the visitor experience for children with disability and their families. Library workers are being mentored by our peer workers and professional staff to promote meaningful library access, engagement, and community education on disability.

Resources will be co-designed with families of children with disabilities for national distribution. They include the principles of meaningful inclusion, librarian support, and successful strategies from libraries involved in [the two-year pilot project](#).

## International collaboration

Our innovations are attracting interest from universities and organisations.

Australian and international academics, researchers, parents of children with a disability, and professionals attended a [Melbourne symposium](#) to foster collaboration. La Trobe University and the University of Melbourne are examining Now & Next's processes to inform the program's future development.

Our impact is becoming globally acknowledged. Plumtree was invited to present a webinar Building Capacity Using Family-Centred Approaches for [NCAPPS](#). The US-based organisation provides support and resources that empower people with disability to pursue their vision of a good life.

154

PARENT, STUDENT &  
EDUCATOR PARTICIPANTS

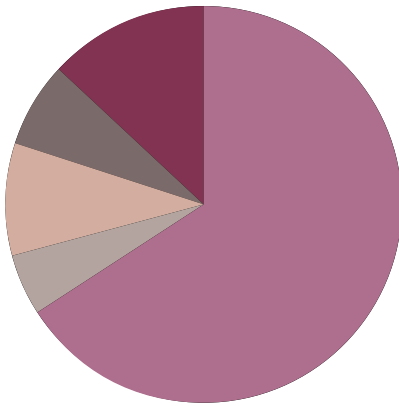
10

LIBRARIES COLLABORATING  
WITH PLUMTREE

25

ORGANISATIONS INTERESTED  
IN OUR INNOVATIONS

# Our year at a glance

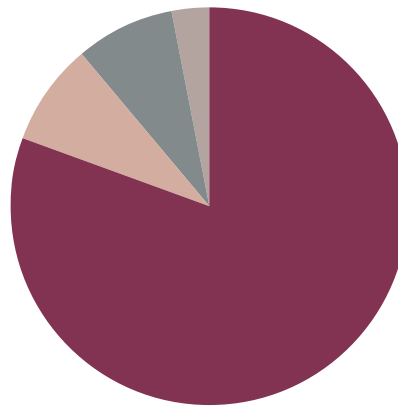


**Income**

**In 2019–20 our income was a total of \$4,682,333 comprising:**

- NDIS income – 66%
- Community services – 5%
- DEC ECEC preschool – 9%
- Other grants & revenue – 7%
- JobKeeper & cash flow boost payments – 13%

Plumtree is a non-government, registered charity. This was our second full year of operation under the NDIS.



**Expenditure**

**In 2019–20 our expenditure was \$4,054,441 comprising:**

- Employee costs – 80%
- Service delivery costs – 8%
- Admin costs – 8%
- Project expenses – 3%

Financial records for the 2019-20 period were audited by Chartered Accountants Meoli and Co and are available by request from Plumtree.



**Staff**

- 79** total staff
- 20** speech pathologists
- 13** occupational therapists
- 6** teachers
- 1** family worker
- 3** physiotherapists
- 8** teacher assistants
- 3** behaviour specialists
- 11** peer workers
- 6** therapy aides
- 5** office support staff
- 3** managers

Our passionate and culturally diverse team share a commitment to helping families achieve their goals. Plumtree staff speak 14 languages.

**Plumtree would like to thank all our volunteers, supporters, champions and donors, who help us be the best we can be, every day.**



## **Children**

**491** children and their families supported by Plumtree

**316** NDIS

**55** playgroups

**63** Plumtree Preschool

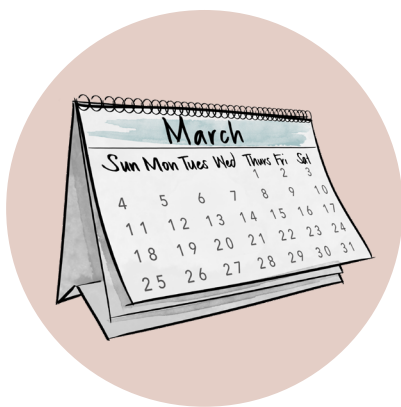
**43** The Nest

**14** other

All staff members keep the needs of the whole family at the centre of their practice and siblings are welcome in our program.

### **Telepractice resource**

We're here to help each other. Our community of professionals, peer workers and families created a resource for doing things differently during these times. Download our [Telepractice ebook](#) for insights on enhancing communication, literacy, and other strategies.



## **Events**

**489** families attended an event

Our annual family activities include: Naidoc Week celebration, End of Year Party, The Shack weekends and Sibs Fun Days.



## **Workshops**

**64** free workshops and courses provided

**693** participants attended a workshop or course

Families are the key decision makers for their child throughout the early years and schooling. We create opportunities to share knowledge and skill amongst all families and staff.

During the past year, workshops were held face-to-face and online.

### **Building new networks**

Plumtree is proud to support the launch of two peer-led organisations, [Reframing Autism](#) and [Reframing Disability](#) during 2019-2020. Dedicated to the autistic community, and families raising children with a delay or disability, respectively, both have since become independent organisations.

They are a part of our vision of [building a bridge to a good life for children with disability](#).



Plumtree is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support for children aged birth to 8 years old with a developmental delay or disability. Our vision is a society where children and their families are supported to have a full life in the community.

Every child has a right to participate in a meaningful family and community life. We empower families to make this happen.

Our passionate, culturally diverse team of specialists work from the heart in a caring environment where families feel respected and informed.

We offer a range of tailored, family and community-focussed services including education, therapy, information and training.

We also develop innovative, evidence-based programs and resources that help families to take control of their own learning and achieve positive outcomes.

Visit our website and join the Plumtree mailing list or Facebook page to find out about our services, workshops and events.

[www.plumtree.org.au](http://www.plumtree.org.au)



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