



**ConnectGroups**  
helping support groups & individuals

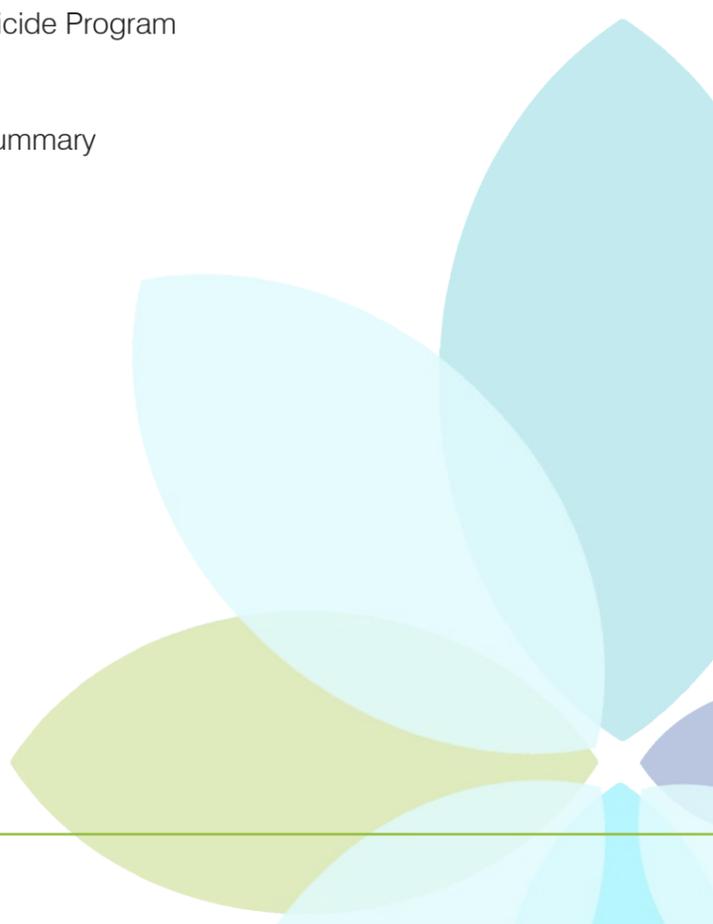


# 2022 Annual Report

ConnectGroups acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of country throughout Western Australia, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

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**Prof. Lyn Beazley**  
AO FAA FTSE  
ConnectGroups Patron

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To say I am proud of ConnectGroups and how they have responded under such challenging conditions through the Covid-19 pandemic is an understatement. Recognising the imminent and growing need for peer-to-peer support because of widespread social isolation and rising costs of living, the Board and team have not wavered in their efforts to lead, advocate for and support our members when they needed it the most. Their collective commitment to the vision, purpose, and strategic objectives amidst such challenges is inspiring and I wholeheartedly thank you all.

With diversity and inclusion at the core, building new and strengthening existing regional relationships was a key focus throughout the 2021-22 year to ensure our efforts reach those in the farthest corners of our large State including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

An increasing number of grant submissions from Support Groups in the Kimberley and Pilbara region is evidence of our increased regional engagement.

In the past year we have supported, educated and funded our membership and engaged with new and emerging groups. A focus on innovative thinking and a commitment to positive and lasting impact through our programs has produced some exceptional outcomes. These included funding a 'collective impact' initiative that brought several member groups together with shared objectives to ensure greater reach and funding effectiveness. 'Mums and Bubs' Support Groups were established in the South West and funded through our Pay it Forward Grant Program. These groups have now progressed to achieve Mental Health Commission funding in support of their work.

To all our member groups, our community as a whole benefits from your collective enthusiasm and efforts, and I thank you wholeheartedly. ConnectGroups exists for and in support of you.

Such effort and endeavour deserve both recognition and continued support and I am delighted to continue as Patron of this highly impactful Western Australian organisation. With a focus on sustainability and innovation, I am confident ConnectGroups is well placed to thrive.



**Peta Wootton**  
ConnectGroups Chair

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Despite the ongoing challenges Covid-19 presented for all organisations and their hardworking boards and teams throughout the 2021-22 financial year, I am conscious that it is our membership that has arguably faced the most challenges. Under-resourced and almost all volunteer led, the need for peer to peer support throughout the greatest health challenge our generation has faced has never been greater.

Knowing and motivated by this, as the peak body for peer support in Western Australia, the ConnectGroups Board, team, and volunteers maintained a steadfast focus on our Vision, Purpose, and Strategic Objectives to ensure we delivered on our commitments to our members.

Our Vision of 'Connected thriving communities' took on new relevance for the twelve-month period covered in this Annual Report, as many of our services and support offerings were delivered remotely using technology. Our purpose of building Support Groups that aim to combat isolation and give hope for the future resonated as Covid-19 took off in WA and face to face interaction was severely limited. Yet ConnectGroups was able to continue to provide support and upskilling through our range of grant funding, education offerings and 1:1 support of members.

In April this year, long-standing Chief Executive Officer, Antonella Segre, was able to take a well-deserved 10 weeks of long-service leave, having worked hard to be agile and responsive in leading the ConnectGroups team safely through this turbulent time. The Board was grateful to Jocelyn Young, who stepped into the Acting CEO role to ensure direction and stability were maintained while also delivering a fresh perspective and opportunities for growth and organisational sustainability.

Thanks also go to our current Board members and our stalwart Patron, Professor Lyn Beazley AO. In particular, the Board recognises and is grateful for the fantastic ConnectGroups team whose commitment to their roles is unparalleled.

In this time of global uncertainty, our membership deserves innovation driven, efficient and effective operations and service delivery to ensure ConnectGroups continues to thrive in a time of rising costs. In 2023, a new Strategic Plan will set direction for a thriving ConnectGroups future with membership in the foreground.



## Jocelyn Young ConnectGroups CEO

I write this report having acted in an interim capacity during our long-term Chief Executive Officer Antonella Segre's long service leave in March-June 2022.

Despite our wishful thinking, Covid-19 did not disappear as we had hoped it might over the 2021-22 year. Moreover, Western Australians, despite being spared the worst of the pandemic in relative terms for so long were now confronted with what everyone had feared, rapidly spreading disease. While our closed borders spared us the most severe variants of Covid-19 its impact was still very much felt in the first half of 2022. Illness and social isolation increased requiring a continued commitment to our membership to provide support when you needed it most.

Our small grants programs Give it Forward, Pay it Forward and Dream it Forward saw increasing demand across all programs, evidence of the growing need for funding to enable continued Support Group connection at a time of great community need.

Give it Forward delivered 4 collective impact programs, which saw groups with similar objectives come together to achieve their goals. 32 Support Groups benefited from this innovative model of funding.

The continuation of our regional strategy to promote capacity and capability building, while not without challenges, reinforced relationships with government, community group leaders, and other service providers, resulting in new and strengthened relationships. As a result, our Pay it Forward and Dream it Forward grant programs reached even further into the far corners of our great state.

We were awarded the contract to deliver capacity and capability building for the Rare, Genetic and Undiagnosed community sector in WA during the reporting period. This program kicked off in earnest in July 2022.

The launch of our 2022-2024 Support Group Sector Plan in November 2021 informed and directed our service delivery and advocacy activities, ensuring the needs and priorities of WA Support Groups are heard and addressed. Our commitment to sector development through our education programs continued, guided by our new Sector Advocacy Network - your input provided important focus for our efforts.

Our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was implemented during this year and allowed ConnectGroups to spend time scoping and developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, considering its vision for reconciliation and exploring the organisation's sphere of influence. The RAP was ably guided by a Working Group including two local Aboriginal Elders.

It was my privilege to have acted as Interim CEO. I witnessed the indefatigable ConnectGroups team and volunteers in action. Their energy and commitment to our membership, to our vision, mission and purpose is a credit to them. Importantly it is a testament to our membership. You are the reason we exist. You are brave in sharing your lived experience, you are inspiring in your efforts to help and support others and your positive impact on the community of Western Australia should be sung from the rooftops. Thank you to each and every one of you, know you are appreciated.

I am excited for the future of ConnectGroups. Knowing we can survive and thrive through a pandemic, we are well placed to deliver positive impact for our membership and the WA community at large well into the future.

## THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

### Membership



**724** Members Groups across WA

- 369** Affiliate Members
- 319** Associate Members
- 36** Allied Members
- 166** Regional and Rural
- 52** New Memberships

### Sector Development



**27** Sector Development Activities

- 341** Individuals Attended
- 18** Workshops Delivered
- 8** Forums and Events
- 6** Podcasts Recorded
- 10** Info Sheets Produced

### Volunteers



- 19** Volunteers
- 891** Volunteer Hours

### Website



- 101,951** Website Hits
- 49,616** Directory Visits
- 14,251** Resources Downloaded

### Social Media



- 2,045** Facebook Followers
- 1,049** Instagram Followers
- 525** Twitter Followers
- 249** LinkedIn Followers

### Newsletter



- 987** Subscribers
- 12** e-Newsletters Distributed

# MEMBERS' SATISFACTION SURVEY

Each year, ConnectGroups invites peer Support Groups which engaged with the organisation during the financial year to complete an Annual Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of the survey is for ConnectGroups to gain insight and feedback from its members, to help improve service delivery and ensure continued responsiveness to the Support Group Sector's needs.

The survey evaluates members' satisfaction with ConnectGroups' services and measures the organisation's success in meeting the below service level outcomes aligned to its contractual agreement.

- Sector capability improvement
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Knowledge and responsiveness to issues and trends
- Knowledge and responsiveness to Government policy and priorities
- Ability to represent and advocate for Sector needs

The results presented valuable insight into ConnectGroups' work, what it is doing well, and areas for improvement.

## MEMBERS' SATISFACTION



## KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT INCLUDED:

- More workshops tailored at well-established Support Groups
- More networking opportunities
- More opportunities for sector consultation
- Transition back to more face-to-face workshops and networking
- More regional visits and in-person sector development opportunities for regional members

## TESTIMONIALS

*"What ConnectGroups have offered in the past and continue to do in providing various training workshops has been very beneficial."*

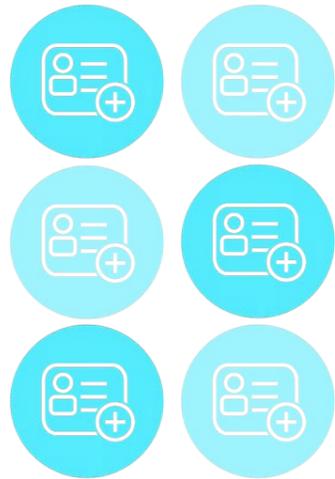
*"We are so very grateful for the wonderful work ConnectGroups do and for the generous and marvellous community service ConnectGroups perform."*

*"ConnectGroups provide an excellent service and are the reason why groups like ours exist and continue to grow."*

*"ConnectGroups provide services to our Support Group that improves what we can offer our members and supports our ability to maintain our service to our members. Without the support we receive, we could not maintain our sustainability and level of service."*

*"Our organisation remains because of past help from ConnectGroups. Although we have not needed support this year that is because we were able to lay a strong foundation once we did have assistance from ConnectGroups."*

# MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

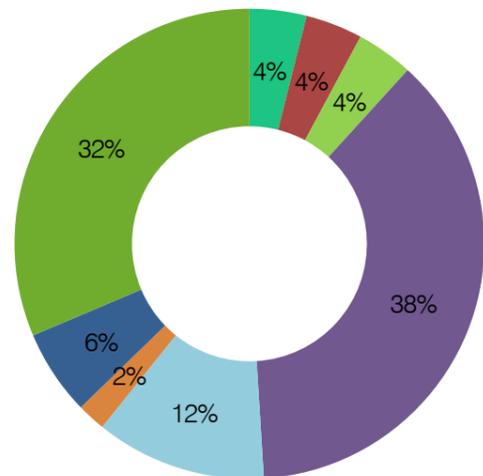


**724**  
Member Groups



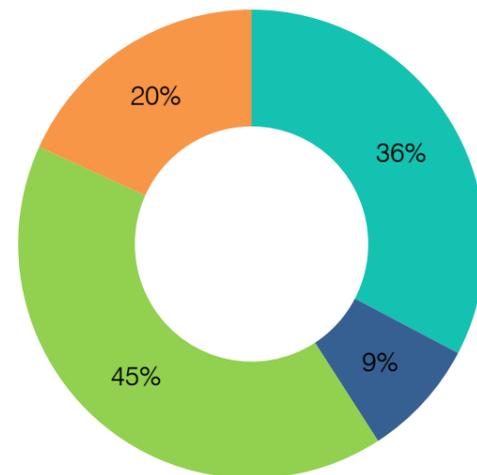
Supporting over  
**156,335** individuals  
across **WA**

## GROUPS BY CATEGORY



- Aboriginal/TSI
- Chronic/Genetic/Rare
- Life Adversity
- CaLD
- Addiction
- Disability
- Mental Health
- LGBTQI

## GROUP MEETING FREQUENCY



- Weekly
- Monthly
- Fortnightly
- Other

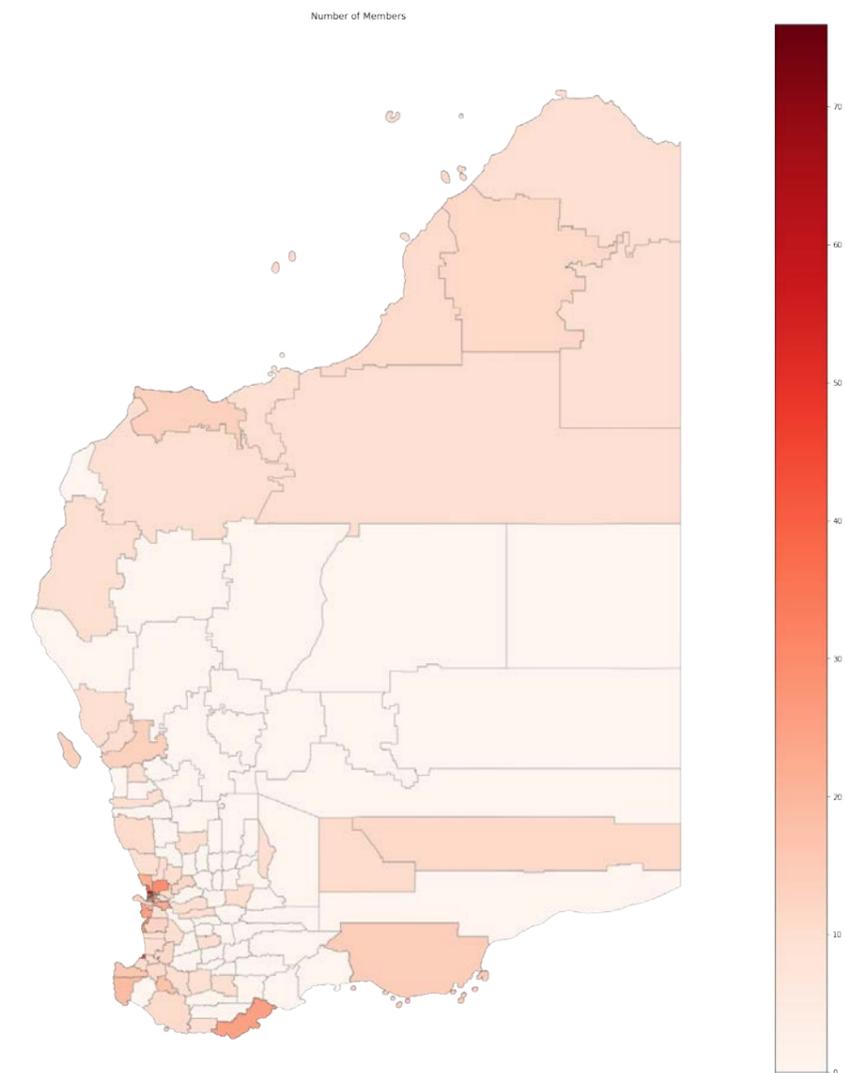
## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

In 2022, ConnectGroups developed a metrocentric two-year Local Government Area (LGA) Engagement Strategy to inform and lead its engagement with LGAs in the metropolitan area. LGAs have strong place-based knowledge and access to key resources, which position them as ideal partners for ConnectGroups in growing and supporting the peer Support Group Sector and, in turn, supporting the needs of local community members.

Together with ConnectGroups' Regional Strategy which informs engagement with regional LGAs, the LGA Engagement Strategy aims to address the below Sector priorities:

- Foster new referral pathways for peer Support Groups
- Identify and secure free or low-cost venues for meeting spaces
- Build knowledge of place-based issues and trends
- Identify new partnership opportunities
- Build capacity and leadership of existing groups within LGAs
- Support the establishment of new peer Support Groups

ConnectGroups supports over 700 peer Support Groups in Western Australia across 69 Local Government Areas, which are represented in the below heatmap.



# SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

## PAY IT FORWARD



### Pay it Forward summary from 1 July 2021-30 June 2022

**2** rounds  
**40** submissions  
**\$261,799.94** requested from 40 submissions  
**29** grants  
**\$112,017.00** awarded

## DREAM IT FORWARD

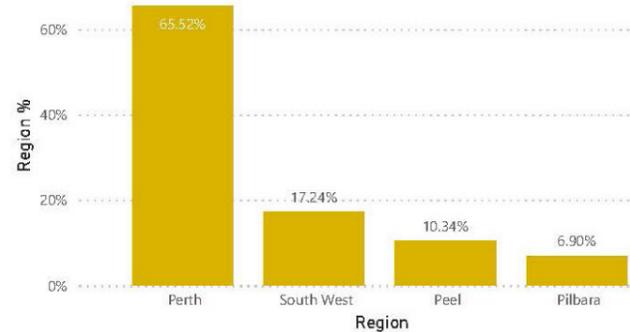
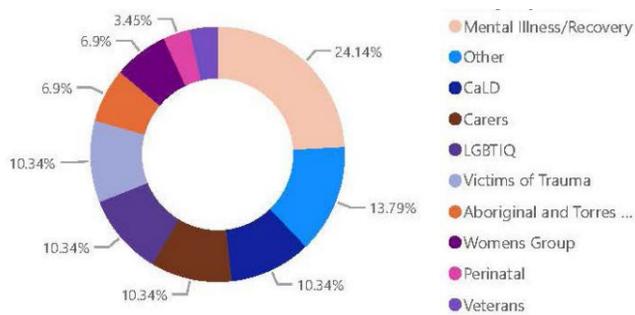


### Dream it Forward summary from 1 July 2021-30 June 2022

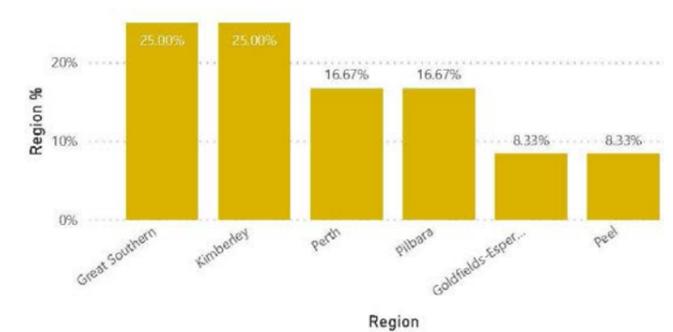
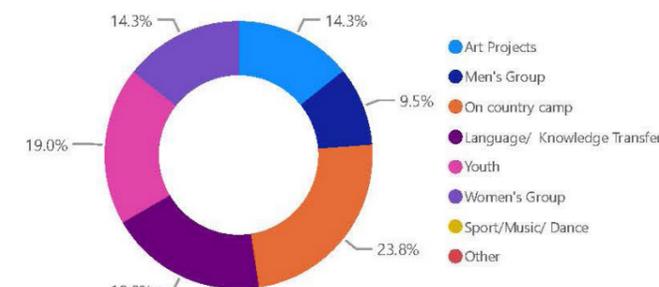
**1** round  
**24** submissions  
**\$152,008.87** requested from 24 submissions  
**12** grants  
**\$60,974.00** awarded



### Priority Population



### Project Type Distribution



# SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

## GIVE IT FORWARD



### Give it Forward summary from 1 July 2021-30 June 2022

**2** rounds  
**56** submissions  
**\$250,584.63** requested  
**42** grants  
**\$169,408.26** awarded  
**46** collective impact projects approved for a total of **\$43,187**, benefitting **32** Support Groups  
**34** Support Groups received intensive support; **29/34** Support Groups approved for funding



# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## CERTIFICATE IV IN COMMUNITY SERVICES

### CERT IV 2021

**8** students completed the full qualification  
**1** student completed units of attainment

### CERT IV 2022

**8** scholarships awarded

In 2022, ConnectGroups has introduced new units to be delivered as part of the Certificate IV scholarship program including a unit which addresses working within an Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) context and a unit which introduces using a strengths-based approach when working with people with a disability. ConnectGroups also delivers non-accredited training to this group on the use of Social Media for Support Groups and Mental Health Capability training for non-mental health focused Support Groups.

Also in 2022, ConnectGroups moved towards streamlining and better automating data collection for the Cert IV program as part of its effort to continuously improve processes. Data capture, management and storage is now automated minimising data handling risk and error. As part of the process, the data being collected was adapted to align with the Community Services sector Outcomes Framework reflecting outcomes in the domains of "Connected" and "Equipped".



# 2022-2024 PEER SUPPORT GROUP SECTOR PLAN

In November 2021, ConnectGroups launched its 2022-24 Peer Support Group Sector Plan (the Plan). The Plan articulates key priority areas, activities, and recommendations over a two-year period to address the needs of the Sector. It aims to contribute to and inform government decision-making by ensuring that the voice of the peer Support Group Sector is represented, encouraging a strong Sector and, in turn, connected, thriving communities.

The Plan was informed by a series of Sector consultations that explored the challenges faced by peer Support Groups, their immediate and long-term priorities, and resourcing requirements to ensure a sustainable peer Support Group Sector.

## What the Support Group Sector Asked For



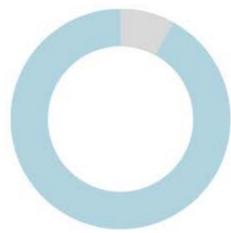
The Plan outlines five key priority areas:

1. Recognition
2. Workforce Development
3. Professional Development
4. Operational Resources
5. Expansion in the Regions

It outlines a series of recommendations for each priority area, along with a timeline of activities to be conducted by ConnectGroups in addressing these priorities.

The Plan has informed and directed ConnectGroups' advocacy activities and service delivery, ensuring the organisation's work continues to align to the needs and priorities of the Sector.

## CURRENT STATE OF THE SUPPORT GROUP SECTOR



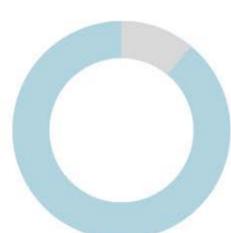
**92%**

would like to offer more services and support



**34%**

are unable to increase the number of people they support with current funding, training, and resources



**89%**

are unable to increase their frequency of support for members with current funding, training, and resources



Groups are operating at an average membership capacity of

**68%**



Groups are operating at an average contact frequency capacity of

**93%**



# RURAL AND REGIONAL STRATEGY

During the last year, ConnectGroups continued to prioritise and action its organisational Regional Strategy. The strategy is intended to broaden the reach and influence of core business into the regions, identify existing and emerging peer Support Groups or local groups addressing unmet identified community need, and to build awareness and access to the small grants programs.

## SOUTH WEST

ConnectGroups conducted two visits to the South West, conducting community engagement in Bunbury and Busselton to strengthen existing relationships, build new relationships, learn about place-based challenges, and raise awareness of ConnectGroups' small grants programs. The September visit saw ConnectGroups partner with the City of Bunbury in delivering sector development activities to build the capability of local peer Support Groups, and networking opportunities for Groups to share information and identify opportunities for collaboration.

## GREAT SOUTHERN

ConnectGroups returned to the Great Southern for the first time since 2019. The two-day trip was spent in Albany with a focus on delivering a regional consultation to learn about place-based challenges, and building connections with ConnectGroups members, organisations, and Local Government. The trip broadened ConnectGroups' understanding of the region and community needs and enabled the organisation to re-establish a regional presence amongst members and the local community.

## PILBARA

ConnectGroups returned to the Pilbara's northern corridor conducting community engagement in Karratha, Roebourne, and Port Hedland to continue strengthening relationships with local government and community leadership groups, to build new relationships with community leaders and champions, and to raise awareness and access to the small grants in order to increase regional and rural grant submissions and by extension meet the principle of state-wide representation.

## WHEATBELT

ConnectGroups launched engagement in the Wheatbelt for this first time. The trip covered six Local Government Areas (LGAs) - Northam, Merredin, Corrigin, Westonia, Narrogin, and Pingelly - which were prioritised based on systems mapping of ConnectGroups members, existing relationships, population size, local assets, and identified needs in each location. The trip supported ConnectGroups to broaden its understanding of place-based challenges in the region and to stage a 2-year engagement plan.



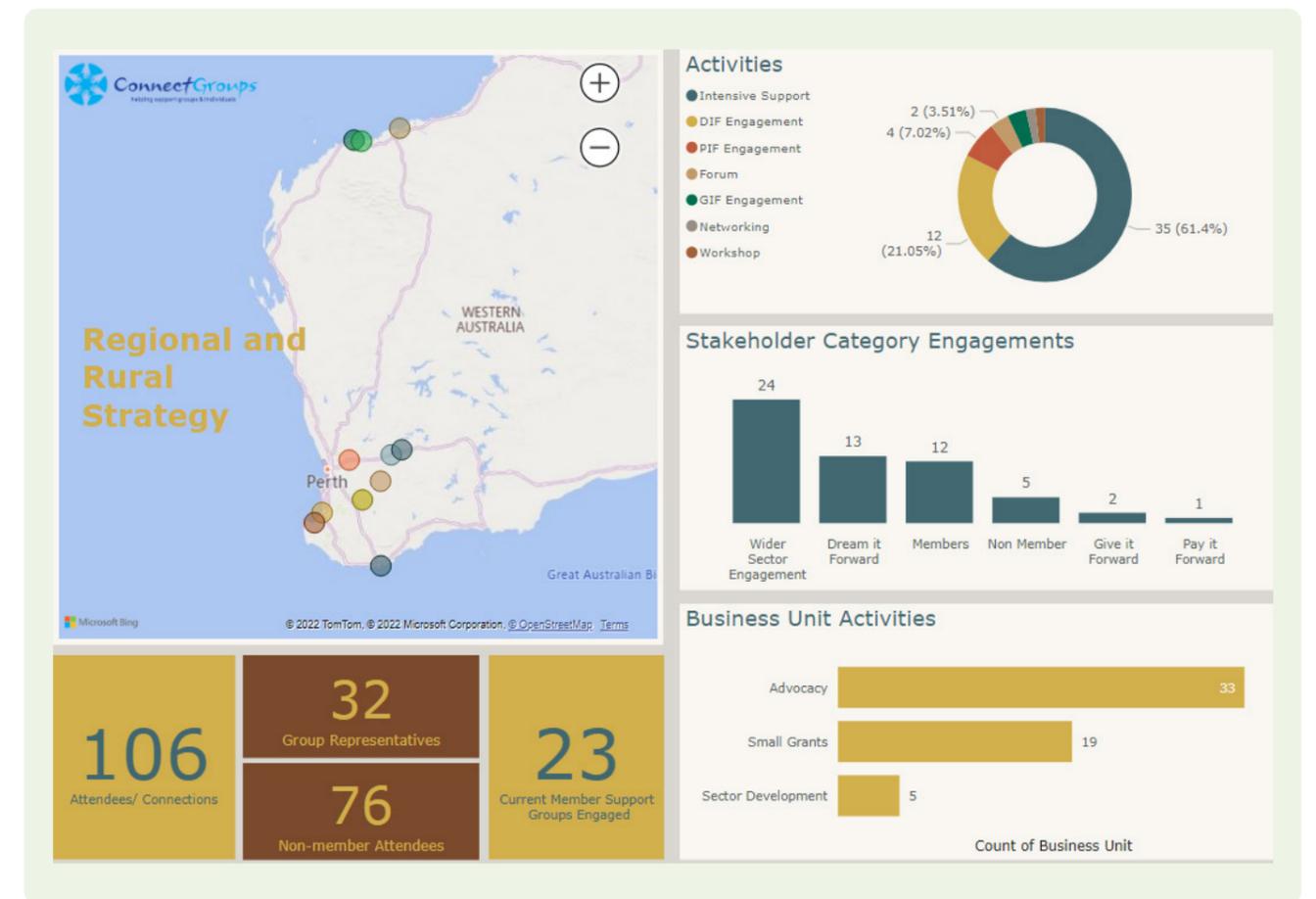
### REGIONAL TRAVEL

South West: Bunbury-Busselton

Great Southern: Albany

Pilbara: Karratha-Roebourne-Port Hedland

Wheatbelt: Northam-Merredin-Corrigin-Westonia-Narrogin-Pingelly



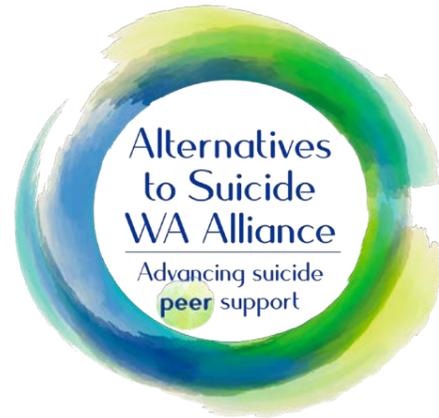
# ALTERNATIVES TO SUICIDE

ConnectGroups, in collaboration with The Recovery Collective and Perth Inner City Youth Services (PICYS), has been successfully delivering three Alternatives to Suicide (ATS) Peer Support Groups to support anyone 18+ with lived experiences of suicidal ideation, depression, or simply having a rough time.

The ATS approach is different from traditional mental health services and suicide prevention through its practice of mutual support that provides a safe space for voicing, sitting with understanding, and moving through suicidal thoughts. While the ideal outcome is suicide prevention, the parameters of ATS Support Groups are clearly different from actual suicide prevention efforts.

The most evident difference in the ATS model is emphasised by a responsibility to – and not for or over. People are responsible to be honest, transparent, and present with one another, but cannot be responsible for one another’s choices or actions. Facilitators openly identify with the experience of suicidal thoughts; value is placed on people sharing their own personal experiences, and each person is honoured as an expert.

The core values of the ATS Support Groups sit in the culture of mutual respect, support, and empathy. The groups focus on self-help, emphasising relationships based on respectful curiosity and accepting people as they are with their unique histories and lived experiences.



# RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

During the last year, ConnectGroups was dedicated to authentically implementing its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The Reflect RAP clearly sets out the steps to prepare the organisation for reconciliation initiatives in successive RAPs and supported ConnectGroups to build cultural competency and cultural safety, encouraged adherence to social justice principles, and supported implementation of evidence-based practice across all service provision.

ConnectGroups was guided in its reconciliation journey by a Working Group which included two Aboriginal Elders:

Cindy Ballard - the Chairperson of Ngalla Yorga Waangkan Aboriginal Corporation which promotes culture, social and emotional wellbeing, and activities to overcome social isolation for women in the City of Kwinana.

Gloria Miller - the founder of Harmoni House, an Aboriginal community hub in the City of Armadale which supports, assists and engages the community through a variety of activities and programs and where people can feel a sense of belonging in a culturally safe and supportive environment.



Cindy and Gloria were essential in ensuring ConnectGroups stayed the course and met its outcomes.

As an organisation operating within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural space, it is paramount that services are delivered in a way that improve outcomes, while also ensuring stakeholder satisfaction and trust in the process. “Cultural competence is more than cultural awareness – it is the set of behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together to enable a system, agency, or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.” This recognition has been driving ConnectGroups’ reconciliation journey, providing a framework for the organisation to support the national reconciliation movement.

The *Reflect* RAP was successfully concluded in May 2022.



Reconciliation Action Plan  
May 2021 - May 2022

## TREASURER'S REPORT



In my role as Treasurer and a member of the Board of Management of ConnectGroups, I am pleased to report that the organisation has continued with its focus on strong and effective financial and risk management.

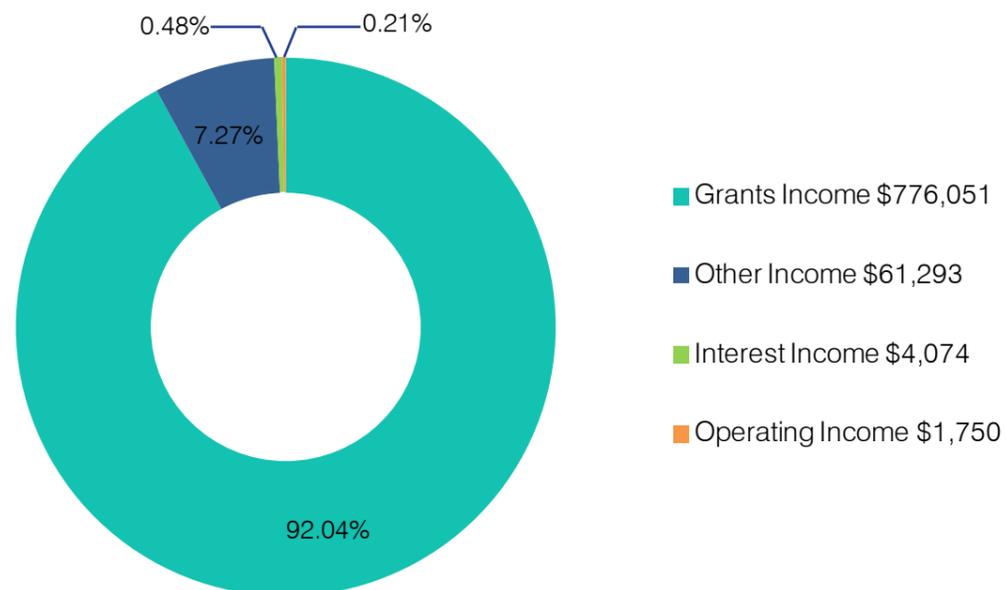
ConnectGroups remains well placed financially through these challenging times to support the operational and strategic objectives of the organisation.

**Brian O'Keefe**  
ConnectGroups Treasurer

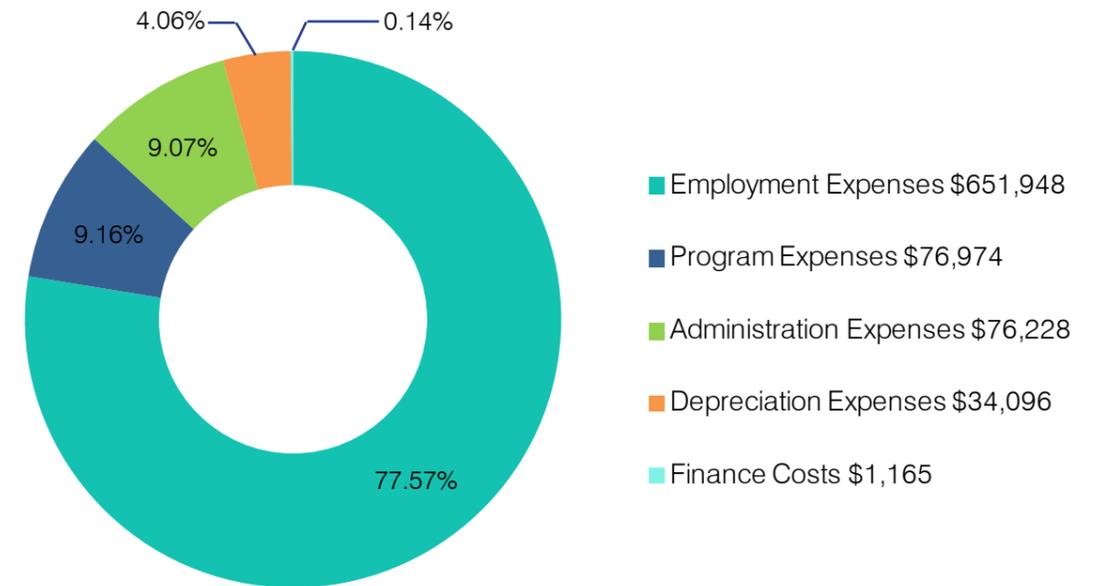
## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The financial position of ConnectGroups remains stable with net assets of \$566,196, an increase of \$2,761 on the previous financial year. At balance date, 98% of total assets were held in cash or receivables, with current assets coverage of current liabilities at 2.12.

### OPERATIONAL INCOME



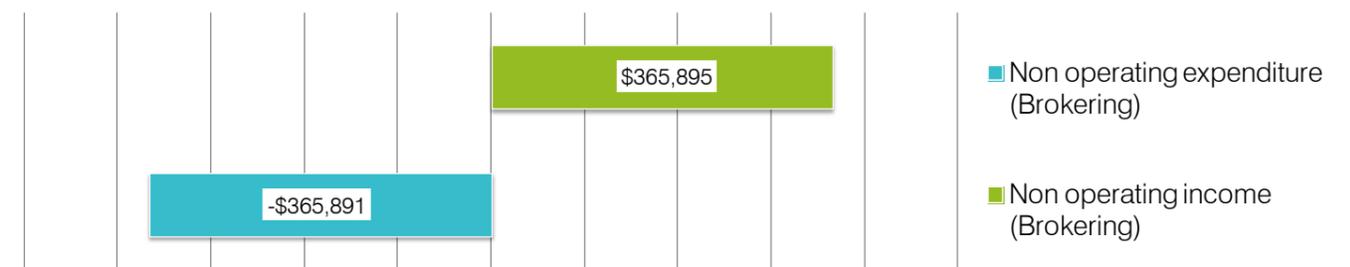
### OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE



Total operational income for the financial year was \$843,168. Grants income (92%) remains the primary source of revenue followed by Other Income (8%).

Total expenditure for the financial year was \$840,411. Employment expenses (77%) remained the largest expenditure type, together with Program expenses (9%) and Administration expenses (9%).

### NON OPERATING ACTIVITIES



Non operating activities are represented in our Brokering Programs Pay it Forward (PIF), Dream it Forward (DIF) and Give it Forward (GIF).

## OUR BOARD AND STAFF

### BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Peta Wootton - Chair  
Melissa Grove - Deputy Chair  
Brian O'Keefe - Treasurer  
Eimear Quigley - Support Group Representative and Secretary  
Kiera Collier - Support Group Representative  
Jonine Collins  
Conrad Pires  
David Cox  
Faye Baxter  
Fern Dyball (until March 2022)

### STAFF

Antonella Segre - Chief Executive Officer  
Jocelyn Young - Acting Chief Executive Officer (from April 2022 – June 2022)  
Christine Hendricks - Program Manager  
Amanda Muir - Advocacy and Communications Coordinator  
Karen Silverthorne - Community Engagement Officer  
Nadia Suwignjo - Small Grants Community Officer  
Dayana Carolina Hernandez - Volunteer and ATS Officer  
Affi Malek (from December 2021) - Junior Data Analyst  
Abbey Grosse (from January 2022) - Sector and Community Development Officer  
Reena D'Souza (until December 2021) - Program Coordinator  
Ivi Sanchez (until December 2021) - Finance and Business Systems Manager  
Steve Hooper (until December 2021) - Sector and Community Development Officer  
Peter Paul Bruno (from December 2021 - February 2022)



## OUR VOLUNTEERS

Liam Coombs  
Danna Delleva  
Suvdaa Gansukh  
Carolina Hernandez  
Kim Maria Branco  
Kaye Mattfield  
Thilini Meemanage  
David Redbond  
Tara Ross  
Hoiley Sham  
Div Siwach  
Ann Smith  
Falguni (Fiona) Solanki  
Naomi Taylor  
Jessica Van Heerden  
Dawn Watson-North  
Anita Williams  
Yin (Julie) Zhen  
Lai Zieng Hui



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ConnectGroups Board and staff thank and acknowledge the Department of Communities, its Minister the Hon. Simone McGurk MLA; Minister for Health, Mental Health the Hon. Amber-Jade Sanderson BA MLA. The Director General of the Department of Communities Mike Rowe and Grant Manager Kay Channer. The Mental Health Commissioner Jen McGrath and Contract Managers Sarah Green and Elena Cope. Lotterywest's General Manager Grants and Community Development Lorna Pritchard.

ConnectGroups extends its thanks and gratitude to all of the organisations whose support has been key to its growth and development. A special mention to:

## Department of Health

- Caron Molster
- Klair Bayley

## Lotterywest

- Pauline Logan
- Elaine Walsh

## Pilbara for Purpose

- Karen Armstrong

## UWA McCusker Centre for Citizenship

- Michelle Scott

## WACOSS

- Louise Giolitto
- Jennie Gray
- Celeste Stephens

## Health Consumers' Council WA

- Pip Brennan

## Linkwest

- Jane Chilcott

## YACWA

- Sandy McKiernan

## HelpingMinds

- Debbie Childs

## VolunteeringWA

- Tina Williams

## CoMHWA

- Shauna Gaebler

## City of Melville

- Christine Young
- Kayleigh Ellis
- Deena Lazzari

## Shire of Augusta Margaret River

- Jason Cleary
- Kim Rosenfeld

## City of Karratha

- Liam Sorrell

## City of Bunbury

- Steve De Meillon

## ConnectGroups Sector Advocacy Network

- Ken Bezant
- Jo Brown
- Sandra Button
- Ron Deng
- Jo Drayton
- Melissa Dumitru
- Michelle Greenwood
- Paul Rogers
- Jillian Sterle

## Partners and Friends

- Act Belong Commit
- Dianne Bianchini
- Joe Calleja
- Sera Davidow
- David Hodgson
- Lyn Millet
- Lyn Mahboub
- Perth Inner City Youth Services
- Social Reinvestment WA
- Suicide Prevention Australia
- WAAMH





**ConnectGroups**  
helping support groups & individuals

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