

# YMCA NSW COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2014





## A message from our Chair

YMCA NSW provides pathways for healthy living and wellbeing, empowering young people, helping children reach their full potential and acceptance and participation. Over the last 12 months I'm pleased to say we have made good progress in the following areas:

- Increasing the reach of our services through an additional two recreation centres and eight Outside School Hours Care services. Highlights include the Ku-ring-gai Fitness and Aquatic Centre and the Gungahlin Leisure Centre
- Ongoing development of programs to support the needs of the community
- Working closely with the YMCA Australia network to improve group learning and innovation.

We are working with renewed vigour to strengthen and sustain the business to ensure that our services align to community expectations now and in the years to come. As part of this effort we welcomed a new CEO, Leisa Hart and new executive team members who bring with them exceptional experience and passion for our organisation and its future.

Every year, our people do wonderful work to change the lives of children, young people and our community as a whole.

We continually lift the bar and refresh our skills as evidenced by the recent completion by all staff of the comprehensive external child protection training and the addition of resources to support risk management, work health and safety and compliance.

One of our top priorities is to create safer environments and programs for children.

I would like to thank all those who have helped us over the past year, especially acting CEO Stephen Bendle, our staff and volunteers. I look forward to the YMCA enhancing its role to create healthier, happier communities and helping young Australians to reach their full potential.

Marg Lennon,  
Chair, YMCA NSW



## A word from our CEO

Commencing work here at YMCA NSW is a bit like coming home – my first 'job' aged 16 was as a competitive swimmer so I have a long standing and personal involvement with the YMCA.

It is my belief that Australia as a whole benefits when there is active participation from people of all ages and, of course, it is our youth who will be pivotal in shaping the future. At the YMCA, we are committed to supporting young people to reach their full potential.

Over the coming months and years I will be working with our people to extend the YMCA's influence and add considerable value within the communities we serve.

We will seek to do this in three main ways.

1. Get the basics right and create a strong foundation of information, systems and processes;
2. Develop our people, renew our organisational structure and set up our people for success; and
3. Build diverse revenue streams to sustainably support future operations.

Together, we will be clearly articulating our purpose so that our culture drives an increased bias for action and an obsession with the people we serve. Vision and values are not just words on paper, they live through our people every single day and the executive team needs to demonstrate by example.

I am humbled by the trust you have placed in me and excited about the future as we create a strong, vibrant YMCA NSW for everyone.

Leisa Hart,  
CEO, YMCA NSW



# LOOKING BACK ON 2014

In 2014 we set out to achieve our vision of ensuring that everyone can be healthier, happier and connected to their community. We have continued to build a strong and sustainable YMCA through governance, improving our safety culture, investing in our employees and volunteers, and developing a workplace that embraces diversity.

During the year we embraced the new YMCA national brand and introduced the three areas of focus; Empowering Young People, Healthy Living and Social Impact. This move has helped to strengthen our foundations and concentrate on what we have been about for the past 160 years – young people!

We increased our rigour around child protection and safety and introduced our Statement of Commitment to Child Protection. To support this commitment, we have undertaken a range of measures to support us in providing environments where children and young people can learn and grow, are respected and valued, and feel happy and safe. These include engaging new and innovative processes to support continuous training and development, creating robust reporting structures and working with external peak bodies, to name a few.

We increased our reach, with two new recreational contract partners – Ku-ring-gai Council in the management of Ku-ring-gai Fitness and Aquatic Centre, and the ACT Government through the management of the Gungahlin Leisure Centre, as well as eight new children's services locations.

However, it's our 2,400 employees and 300 volunteers that are our greatest strength and make it possible to deliver the right local solution based on local community needs every single day.



**3.3m+**  
visits to a YMCA centres in NSW



**2,400+**  
people work for YMCA NSW





# EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

Our commitment to young people is in our DNA! We value the uniqueness and diversity of young people, and seek to support and empower them to reach their full potential and develop resilience. Today's young people are not just leaders of tomorrow — they are leaders of today.

 [Click here to watch](#)

## Encouraging young leaders

Dylan's experiences at the YMCA have come around full circle.

His journey began when he attended a YMCA Siblings Reconnect camp as a seven-year-old. The camp brings together siblings separated in foster care. He enjoyed the camps so much that he went on to volunteer with us and is now a camp instructor.

From his first camp Dylan loved camping, and in the years that followed he found a 'second home' at YMCA Camp Yarramundi that gave him the stability and support to grow in confidence and leadership.

"I loved going to camp every school holidays because I made so many friends and learnt so much," he says.

With these skills, Dylan has managed to overcome the challenges of a life tougher than most to finish an apprenticeship and become a leader for the next generation of kids who attend our camps, including kids who have come from foster care. Dylan also works hard to support his grandmother who raised him and his two younger brothers.

"I don't know where I would be without the YMCA, but I would probably not be as capable or have such an exciting future to look forward to," Dylan says. "Now I have the confidence that I can accomplish anything."

## Enabling young people to be heard

For the past 13 years, YMCA Youth Parliament (YP) has offered a platform for young people to develop in youth-led advocacy and active community leadership.

Part of the wider Youth & Government suite of programs, Youth Parliament is just one example of the opportunities the YMCA supports to empower young people.

Results say...

My time in YP changed my opinion of my community and made me realise that I can do something to affect change within it.

I'm not afraid to state my opinion now.

The communication development sessions at the Y have dramatically changed the way I communicate in all aspects of life especially in the leadership positions I hold.

## Measuring our impact

During 2014 we launched a two-part survey to help us create a holistic picture of the impact of the YMCA Youth Parliament program around Australia.

The aim of the survey was to measure how and to what extent our programs have an impact on the lives of our participants.

We collected stories as well as data on the program's impact. Results indicated that we are making a huge impact in helping young people to be more comfortable with having a say in their communities (95.8% through first round survey).

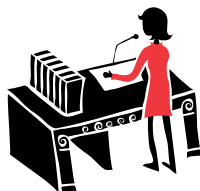
It also helps us to know which areas we can work on increasing our impact, such as in helping young people to explore different leadership styles.

141



people stood up for their views in YMCA Youth Parliament

99



Teens assembled for YMCA Junior Parliament

55



Children built confidence in YMCA Parliament Primary School



## "I'd finally found a home for my views and concerns"

Ruby is one of our volunteer 'Taskies' who help with the running of programs such as YMCA NSW Youth Parliament. Thanks to Ruby and the 40 Taskies who help to make our Youth and Government programs possible, more than 1000 young people have had the chance to have their voices heard in NSW Parliament over the past 13 years!

"I started my journey with YMCA NSW Youth Parliament as a participant in 2009, which seems like a lifetime ago. I couldn't possibly imagine my life's journey without it.

I can still remember my turning point as clear as day; I was about to give my speech on youth empowerment and I looked around and saw my brother Joel standing in the audience, phone in hand, ready to record my speech with a huge smile on his face. Surrounding him were other Taskies cheering me on with smiles and thumbs up, giving me the support to know that I could do this.

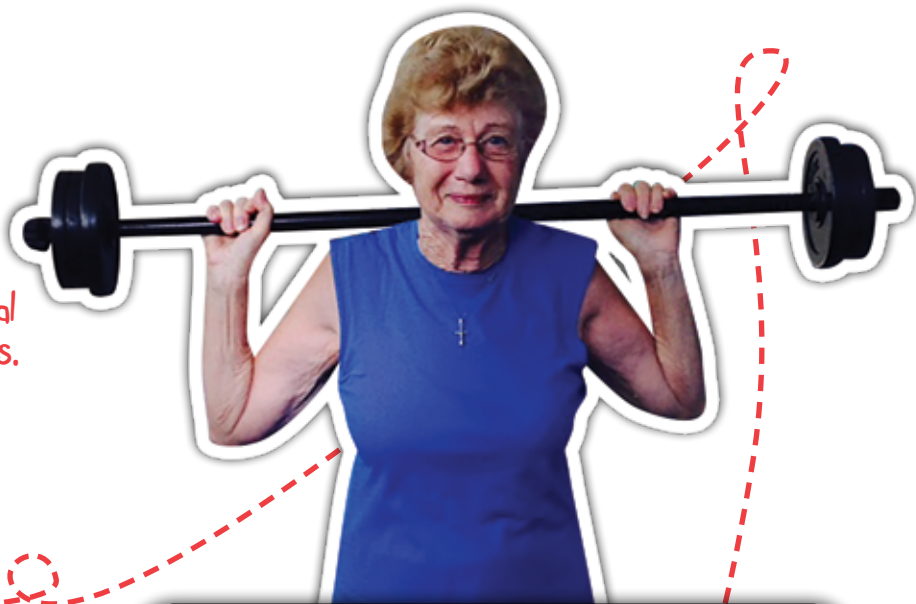
It definitely was far from the best speech I have given but I walked away from that lectern feeling proud and empowered. At that moment I realised why I was there. I was there because I was full of passion about issues that were close to home and close to my heart and I'd finally found a home for my views and concerns. That place was Youth Parliament.

Every time someone asks me 'what is Youth Parliament?' I can still never find an adequate answer. How do you describe a program that has completely shaped who you are? I find it easiest to describe it as this: Youth Parliament is a program that has created a better version of me. It has given me hope, it has believed in me when I hadn't believed in myself, it has given me a second family, and has created the most rewarding and inspiring path that I have ever journeyed on."

# HEALTHY LIVING

We believe everyone should have equal access to health and fitness activities.

We seek to cultivate the happiness that arises from being positive and valued members of a community, and taking part in physical activity.



**80,000+**

People got their hearts pumping with health and fitness memberships

**6,000+**



People made a splash with aquatic memberships



**600,000+**

Swimming Lessons were taught

**87,000+**



Gymnastics Lessons were taught

## Supporting active mature adults

Ruth Wynter, 72, is a long-time patron of the YMCA-managed Manning Aquatic Leisure Centre and a valued member of the YMCA family.

"I started exercising in my thirties. To this day I still do step classes, gentle exercise and Les Mills BodyPump three times a week. I do it for my wellbeing as it gives me energy, keeps me fit and active, and keeps my weight under control. I am grateful for that. Just because we get older doesn't mean you can't have a happy, healthy and fulfilling life.

The instructors at the YMCA are great and that makes a difference. It's a great way to socialise with all ages. I have made many friends and we make it fun while working hard. I have had many young people come up and say that I have inspired them. The fact that I can encourage others to be fit and healthy is rewarding.

Dedication is very important. You look after your car so why not look after your body and have a much longer and happier life."



## Empowering people with mental illness

Almost half of all Australians will experience a mental illness at some point in their lifetime.

Our YMCA Brightside Mental Health and Wellbeing program supports people with mental illness to improve their physical, social and mental health. The program offers free and unlimited access to our facilities for 60 days, as well as a customised exercise program and one-on-one support.

Phillip, 19, recently completed the program at YMCA-managed Manning Aquatic Fitness Centre. He is being supported to attend TAFE, where he will complete his foundation studies. He intends to complete a Certificate III in Fitness and aspires to one day become a YMCA Brightside mentor. This is his story...

"I have recently finished the 60 day Brightside Program at the YMCA. Before commencing the program I was reclusive and didn't really like being around people all that much. I had a lot of angst and the thought of coming into town caused a great deal of anxiety for me. Being a part of the Brightside program has helped me to reconnect to my pathway – the journey I wanted to be on.

I feel now that my life is great and going where I want it to go. During the program, I found it helpful that while at the YMCA I could talk to others about good things that were going on in my life instead of being stuck in my former depressed state. It really helped me on my recovery journey.

When I leave the YMCA after a workout I feel worn out but proud; proud of myself and more focused on what I want and need to do to keep my life moving forward. I feel that being part of the YMCA's Brightside Program has 'opened the gate to the community'."

# ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

We believe everyone has the right to a healthier, happier life. That's why our programs are designed so everyone has the chance to participate.

It's our hope to support people with disabilities to exercise their independence and choices in an inclusive environment.

We pride ourselves on being the only fitness and leisure organisation in NSW to provide a full suite of health, fitness, sport and recreation activities for people with disabilities.



## Working with Jobsupport to provide rewarding employment opportunities

We have partnered with Jobsupport since 2010 to place clients in jobs throughout our organisation.

Jobsupport works to place people with an intellectual disability into jobs that are mutually beneficial for the employer and employee. It is important to us that our staff have rewarding experiences in their work, as well as contribute to our communities in a meaningful way. We currently have eight clients placed in roles of program delivery, cleaning, administration and food preparation.

Jake works at YMCA-managed UNSW Fitness and Aquatic Centre. This is his story...

"Hello, my name is Jake. I have started a new job cleaning the cardio and strength machines at UNSW Fitness & Aquatic Centre. It is a busy gym so they get very dirty. I really like my job. I like my uniform and the people I work with have been really friendly and are absolutely outstanding! I have started coming into work early because I can use the gym equipment and have been doing workouts before I start work. I really enjoy working out and hopefully I will get fit and strong."



8 of our staff found us through Jobsupport

# 701

People tumbled, jumped and spun into YMCA GymAbility





## Encouraging participation and independence

Students from the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) were among the first to tumble, jump and spin into YMCA Epping's new GymAbility program this year.

The YMCA's GymAbility program offers lessons suitable for children or adults with physical and intellectual disabilities.

We believe programs such as GymAbility are important because they support people with disabilities to be aware of choices available to them, and that they can participate in the community just like anybody else.

During 2014 we expanded the program to include six more YMCA sites across the state thanks to a \$50,000 Mazda Foundation grant awarded to YMCA NSW. YMCA Raymond Terrace, YMCA Cooma Gymnastics Centre, YMCA Epping, Singleton Gym & Swim, Great Lakes Aquatic and Leisure Centre and Lake Haven Recreation Centre.

There's a beginner's stage focused on active movement and participation, through to a more competitive stage where participants can try their hand at trampoline jumps, tumbling and more in a fun, safe and supportive environment.

Nerida van Woerkom, teacher from RIDBC Alice Betteridge School, attended the first session with 11-year-old student Ali and said she was impressed with the program.

"This was the first time I have seen Ali laugh during sport, he really had fun," she said.

"It was challenging but not too hard or easy. The program is a good vehicle for building kids confidence and skills. It's always a challenge to find programs suitable and empathetic to their needs. As far as programs go there are not a lot like this out there so it's good to see something."



## Providing respite to families

YMCA Flexible Respite at Bankstown City YMCA provides after school and vacation care for children with disabilities. Program Coordinator Zoe Bell says she enjoys working with the children and watching them develop.

“At YMCA Flexible Respite we refer to the group of us as the ‘Flex Family’, as we have developed a bond and connection with the children on a level that cannot usually be achieved in a mainstream setting. Every day we experience many joyous moments, whether it be when a child says a word for the first time, when they try new foods, when they become toilet trained or when they overcome fears or phobias, just to name a few.

One of the most important benefits of our program is the social interactions that the children are able to have in a safe and secure environment. Sometimes children with autism can get lost in their own world, so when they can open up to you and invite you into their world, it is one of the most humbling and beautiful things a person can experience.

It is an amazing job. You see children grow and develop into much more confident and socially active people. One example of a beautiful story is Julian. When he started with us he would be ill and cry for his parents long after they had left. Now Julian walks into the building with such confidence and self-assurance that this is a safe place where he belongs and is cared for greatly. Or Jayden, who on enrolment his mum asked for his goal to be that he sits at the table, even for just a few minutes; we achieved this on his first day! These achievements are so important for the children, but are also lovely for the parents to know that their children are developing new skills.

Despite the challenges that these children and their families face lots of laughs are often heard from our program room. The children in Flexible Respite know that this is a space where they are safe, supported and loved.”

**20**  
Families participated in  
YMCA Flexible Respite

**1,768**  
people learned life-saving water  
safety skills at YMCA SwimAbility

# Splashing out for a great cause

Over 700 people splashed out in NSW for the YMCA Swimathon on Sunday 2 March, raising more than \$336,000 across Australia to support people with disabilities to learn to swim and enjoy the water safely.

These funds will be used to support various local initiatives, including:

- Enrolling thousands of people into swimming lessons
- Installing disability-access equipment
- Up-skilling swim instructors
- And so much more!



Click here to watch

## "Her ability to swim leaves her disability poolside"

When Matilda jumps into the pool at YMCA-managed Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre the 12-year-old is happy, energetic and playful and her mood lifts.

Two years ago Matilda, who has Downs Syndrome, started swimming lessons. Her mother Mary says the swimming pool and her ability to swim leaves her disability poolside.

"When Matilda is in the water she interacts with her peers, makes new friends, dives, does handstands and generally mucks up. Unlike dancing or sport, I think her ability in the pool is really good for her confidence and self-esteem," Mary says.

"Too often people judge Matilda based on her disability, so it's nice to get a break from that at the pool. Knowing that she can swim also eliminates the stress of being hyper-vigilant."

# SOCIAL IMPACT

*We seek to have a measurable positive impact on the social fabric of the communities where we work, to ensure everyone has the chance to participate.*

## Our volunteers

Volunteers are a wonderful part of our family. In fact, they have been the backbone of the YMCA throughout our history. We wouldn't be here without the work our volunteers have done over the last 160 years!

Our volunteer program exists to involve volunteers in the YMCA for the benefit of the community and the volunteer, as part of our mission to connect people to their communities to live happier, healthier lives.

**300**

people volunteered  
for YMCA NSW  
in 2014



## Giving kids a healthy start

Breakfast is often referred to as the most important meal of the day. But sadly, one in 10 Aussie kids are said to skip breakfast regularly, which is found to have significant impacts on a child's development and ability to concentrate at school.

Thanks to the YMCA's Breakfast Club at Lake Haven Recreation Centre, and the generous support of Lake Haven Shopping Centre, local school children won't have to go to school on an empty stomach.

The YMCA's Breakfast Club is a free program that ensures children have access to the most important meal of the day, while also being a great place to make new friends and is currently available three days a week.

During 2014 Leonie and her team of seven volunteers served 2984 meals.

The volunteer team was also awarded the Central Coast 2014 Volunteer Team of the Year Award in recognition of the valuable work they do for the community.

"We regularly serve between 55 and 70 children per day, mainly from nearby Gorokan High School. A lot of kids come because they miss out on breakfast at home, but many come in to be social in the morning, or just for the hot chocolate," Leonie said.

Through generous donations from businesses, the service offers free toast, cereals, breakfast muffins and juices.

Like many of the volunteers, Leonie says she got involved in YMCA Breakfast Club because she wanted to do something for her community.

"I wanted to help out and I enjoy spending time with the kids. It's really rewarding to be part of it," she said.

"Breakfast Club is such a wonderful program and it is truly rewarding to have such a positive and immediate impact on the lives of local children."

## Meet Abe!

At 92 his age and life circumstances have never deterred Abe, he just keeps smiling! Abe is one of our valued Breakfast Club volunteers at Lake Haven Recreation Centre.

We are grateful for Abe who over the last three years has:

- volunteered 360 days;
- donated over 720 hours; and
- served approximately 18,000 breakfasts to local students.



## Charity Golf Day 2014

Sixty-eight golfers took to Macquarie Links International Golf Course on Monday 13 October for the fifth annual YMCA NSW Charity Golf Day, raising more than \$60,000 to support YMCA Siblings Reconnect camps. Seventeen teams took part in the event, with Team Westpac taking out top honours.



### Shane and Ben's story

Removed from a neglectful family as toddlers, Shane and Ben were later abused in out-of-home care. After being moved through several placements, they are now both in foster care in separate sides of the state.

While time and distance may keep them apart, they both look forward to the regular opportunity to feel like a family again at our Siblings Reconnect Camps.

### Reconnecting siblings

Imagine for a moment what it would be like to grow up separated from your brothers and sisters...

For the 24,000 children across NSW who grow up in out-of-home or foster care and are separated from their siblings, the chance to experience the wonderful things that come with living with your brothers and sisters are simply not a reality.

YMCA Siblings Reconnect Camps are unique, fun and regular opportunities for siblings in out-of-home care to spend quality time together.

Each school holidays the camps let the children reconnect, share new experiences, overcome challenges, support each other, create life-long memories and best of all, have fun!

Belinda-Jayne Davis, General Manager of Camping, said the program offers a relatively small but incredibly important and meaningful opportunity to reconnect, and create shared experiences and memories that will build resilience, and nurture their bond into adulthood.

"Often for kids in care, visitation is conducted in public places and supervised by one or more contact workers. We recently had a group of siblings at camp who had not seen each other since last Christmas," she said.

"At camp they do normal things that siblings do; they read each other stories, brush each other's hair, they're competitive, they fight, and they make gifts for each other to take home.

"No matter how tough the week though there are always three constants; they're tired, they're happy, and the goodbye on Friday is absolutely gut-wrenchingly painful."

# THANK YOU!



## Local Program Delivery Partners

Active After School Communities -  
Australian Sports Commission Child Wise  
Active Broken Hill  
Aspect Schools  
ASPIRE (UNSW)  
Australian Childhood Foundation  
Autism Community Network  
Bankstown Mental Health  
Bankstown Women's Health  
Biripi Aboriginal Medical Services  
Broken Hill PCYC  
Bushland Outreach/Manning  
Neighbourhood Services  
Cancer Council  
Cerebral Palsy Alliance  
Cobham Juvenile Justice Centre  
Communities @ Work  
Disability Services Australia (DSA)  
Department of Veterans' Affairs -  
Heart Health Programme  
Family Case Management  
Family Support  
Father Chris Riley's Youth Off  
The Streets - Kurri Kurri  
Greater Toukley Vision  
Greenacre Community Centre  
Hawkesbury Access & Inclusion  
Advisory Committee  
Hawkesbury Schools Partnership Group  
Hawkesbury Youth Interagency

Hunter Academy of Sport  
Hunter New England Health -  
Community & Mental Health  
Inland Employment Services  
IPROWD - TAFE NSW (Indigenous Policing)  
Jobsupport  
Keep Them Safe  
Koori After School Homework Group  
KU Inclusion Support Agency  
Ku-ring-gai Youth Development Service  
Kurri Kurri Business Enterprise Centre  
Kurri Kurri High School  
Kurri Kurri Stingrays Swim Club  
Manning Valley Interagency  
MAX Employment - Liverpool  
Max Potential Program  
Medicare Local Western Sydney  
Monaro Crisis Accommodation Service  
Monaro Domestic Violence Committee  
Monaro Family Support  
Monaro High School  
Monaro Koori Interagency  
Monaro Regional Interagency  
Monaro Rural Housing Forum  
Monaro Youth Interagency  
Mums and Dads Playgroup (MAD)  
Network of Community Activities  
New South Wales Far West Local  
Health District  
Noffs Foundation

Northcott  
Northern Sydney Medicare Local  
NSW Family & Community Services  
NSW Government Family and  
Community Services  
Parliament of NSW  
PAYCE Communities  
Richmond PRA - Recovery in Action  
Riverwood Community Centre  
Royal Life Saving Society Australia  
Salvation Army  
SDN Children's Services  
Singleton Community Support Centre  
SNSW Medicare Local  
South West Regional Organisation of  
Councils  
Special Olympics Hunter Valley  
St Patrick's Parish School Secondary  
Campus Cooma  
St Vincent de Paul Society  
Sutherland Hospital  
TAFE - South Western Sydney  
Institute, Liverpool Campus  
Toukley High School  
Toukley Neighbourhood Centre  
Villawood Detention Centre  
Workways  
Y Valley Aquatic Swim Club  
Youth Homelessness Working Group  
Hawkesbury

## Our Contract Partners

Australian Capital Territory Government  
Bankstown City Council  
Bellingen Shire Council  
Broken Hill City Council  
Camden Council  
Catholic Education Office  
Central Coast Mariners Centre  
of Excellence  
Cessnock City Council  
City of Canterbury  
City of Ryde  
City of Sydney  
Cooma-Monaro Shire Council  
Department of Education  
and Communities  
Eurobodalla Shire Council  
Goulburn Mulwaree Council

Great Lakes Council  
Greater Taree Council  
Hawkesbury City Council  
Hornsby Shire Council  
Ku-ring-gai Council  
Liverpool City Council  
Liverpool Plains Shire Council  
Nambucca Shire Council  
Port Stephens Council  
Rockdale City Council  
Singleton Council  
Sutherland Shire Council  
Sydney Olympic Park Authority  
The International French School  
of Sydney - Lycee Condorcet  
University of New South Wales  
Wyong Shire Council

## Grants

Aquatic & Recreation Institute (ARI)  
Camden Council  
Commonwealth Bank Staff Community Fund  
Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)  
Essential Energy  
Greater Taree City Council  
Matana Foundation for Young People  
Mazda Foundation  
NSW Government - Community Building Partnerships  
NSW Government - Children in Residential Care  
Component (CIRC)  
Stockland  
TransGrid  
Wyong Shire Council  
Wyong Shire Councillors

# OUR BOARD



Richard Hughes



Marg Lennon  
Chair



Warwick Jones



Joel Clark

Leading and overseeing our organisation is a board of eight talented and committed Directors. These individuals are extraordinarily generous with their time, wisdom and strategic insight.



Janine Modaro



Annalisa Haskell



Janise Mitchell



Jonathon Rea

We would like to acknowledge and thank our retired Directors:  
Grahame Wheeler AM, Bob Parcel, David Mayes, Jock Kelso, Renee Saibi and Sarah Hawthorn.



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