



STaR
access, opportunity
and acceptance

Annual Snapshot 2022



Comments from the Board



Valentina Borbone – Chairperson

At STaR's heart is facilitating access to special education, opportunity to learn meaningfully and acceptance of difference, for people with disability. We believe lifelong learning is a human right regardless of assumed capacity.

As we near the conclusion of our 20th year of operation, we gathered to celebrate this significant milestone at our recent 20 Years of STaR celebration. It was a special reunion of those who have walked the STaR path, demonstrating what can be achieved by community. Proudly, STaR has never wavered from its vision and continues to grow as an important, impactful, and very human organisation.

A key focus this year has been to establish STaR Education as a quality national training division in special education. The significant increase in course delivery is very encouraging with over 3000 early childhood educators registering for our webinar series. Our work in STaR Lighthouse centres remains steadfast and we are pleased to be back providing consistent coaching and mentoring on the ground to educators as well as supporting STaR families post covid restrictions.

The Board remains vigilant in managing all aspects of STaR's finances. A secure capital base, delivery of a balanced budget and comfortable surplus is assuring as we work towards establishing the STaR College for post-learning in 2004 and continue to grow STaR Education nationally. Continued support from The Australian Stockbrokers Foundation, MonSTaR Foundation, AXI, and an anonymous philanthropist validates our work and is deeply appreciated.



Margaret Meaker – CEO

When STaR commenced working in a community childcare center 20 years ago the inclusion of children with disabilities was unique and the families of these children experienced discrimination and rejection. There was a profound sense of urgency to change this and pleasingly 20 years later inclusion of children with disability in early years settings has become commonplace for many. That sense of urgency has now shifted for those STaR children and their peers, now young adults experiencing a significant gap in accessing quality learning in post-school settings. There is no quality tertiary education being offered to people with moderate to severe intellectual disability. The establishment of a STaR College in 2024 is a key focus.

We are a team-based organisation and working remotely during covid had become very arduous. Returning to work at the office and in our community settings it quickly became evident that we work better together, face to face and we have a renewed appreciation of our collegial work culture. The long-term impact of covid continues in many forms and is yet to be measured. We are working closely with STaR families to prepare them and their child for school.

As STaR continues to expand its services and reach it became evident that we needed to invest in management of operations and relationships. In March 2022 we were pleased to welcome Melissa North to the team in the newly developed role of Operations and Relationships manager. A priority this year has been to ensure we have the capacity, resources, and systems to support the expeditious growth in demand for STaRs online training being offered nationally.

STaR is now well positioned to confidently implement a 5-year strategy that is realistic and achievable. The strategy speaks to our aspirations and elevates our values of Respect, Integrity, Social Justice and Empathy. It defines the goals of STaR for the immediate future and the strategy by which these goals will be achieved and resourced through collaborating, delivering, connecting, and educating.

We are about closing the inequity gap for people with disabilities to access learning through evidence-based practices. A highly skilled Board and an extraordinary team of talented, strong, and passionate women are committed to continuing our important work. I am confident that our best years are yet to come.



About STaR

OUR MISSION

To achieve **ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY** and **ACCEPTANCE** for all people with disability

OUR VISION

With the right support, all people can learn together

OUR VALUES

Respect

Integrity

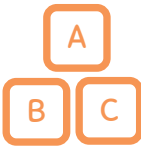
Social Justice

Empathy

STaR by the numbers in FY 2021–2022

 **10**
Employees



Income
\$1,273,328


19
preschools


1
supported living
home for adults


83%
Program delivery
and support


70 STaR
families

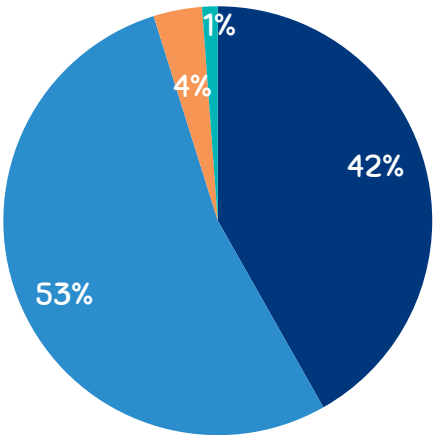

17%
Operation costs
(8% admin)


8
Early Childcare
centres

2,154  professional
development
participants

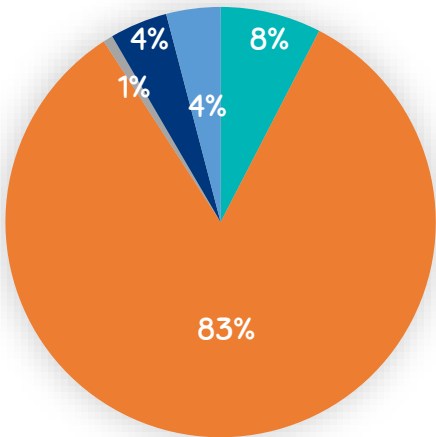

Expenses
\$1,114,579

Where the funds came from
STaR Income for FY2021–2022



- Donations & Sponsorship
- Government Funding
- COVID-19 Government Stimulus Funding
- Other

Where the funds go
STaR Expenses for FY2021–2022



- Administration
- Salaries & Wages
- PD, Research & Marketing
- Rental and Utilities
- STaR Education



Outcomes Achieved 2021-22

1. EDUCATING EDUCATORS

Quality, research-based professional development and mentoring

1.1 Activate STaR Research

- Dr Sarah Carlon invited to sit on the InSpEd Research Committee and acknowledged as an Honorary Affiliate of InSpEd.
- Through InSpEd, the STaR research team established collaborative relationships with researchers from The University of Sydney and RMIT University.
- An abstract was accepted and presented by Dr Sarah Carlon in Chicago at the 2022 International Society on Early Intervention and Division for Early Childhood joint conference 'Integrating Research and Practice in Early Childhood Intervention'.
- Data collection in a project focusing on post-school experiences of young adults with disability completed.

1.2 Course Development

- Developed a series of 5 webinars on inclusive early childhood education, funded through the NSW DoE's Sector Development Program.
- All five webinars approved by the NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA) to be delivered as NESA Accredited Professional Development.

1.3 Course Delivery

- Over 3000 early childhood educators registered for our inclusive early childhood education webinars in collaboration with the NSW Department of Education (DoE).
- The NSW DoE extended the contract with STaR to continue to deliver our webinars under their Sector Development Program for an additional 12 months.

1.4 Coaching and Mentoring

- Provided ongoing coaching to early childhood educators across 19 community-based preschools in Western Sydney as providers of Sector Capacity Building supports under the NSW DoE's Disability and Inclusion Program.

2. LIFELONG SPECIAL EDUCATION

Implementing best practice across lifelong learning, delivering evidenced-based programs and support for people living with disability

2.1 Early Years Programs

- STaR Lighthouse program in 8 centres: Tregear, Doonside North, Bidwill, Quakers Hill (2), Epping, Willmot, and Rooty Hill.
- Established Lighthouse partnership at Noah's Ark (Quakers Hill) with 10 children with disability already enrolled.
- Professional Development for all Lighthouse centre staff delivered via face-to-face, online training and practical workshops. Subjects including writing an individual learning plan, assessment and strategies to support learning and transition to school.
- Continued weekly coaching and mentoring on-site and during daily activities and routines by providing a release educator to Lighthouse centres.

2.2 Lifelong Learning Programs

- Continued to mentor support workers and develop training for post-school work and accommodation settings for young people with disability. These pilot projects are assisting with the development of the STaR College model.

2.3 Family Support

- Increased family contact by allocating a STaR Educator to ensure consistency in contact and follow-up with families.
- Provided referrals to supporting specialist agencies such as domestic violence and mental health family services in the area.
- Ongoing support to families to navigate NDIS meetings and reviews.

3. INFORMING COMMUNITIES

Advocating for special education to a range of audiences

3.1 Consultancy and Advocacy

- Dr Sarah Carlon and Megan Cooper invited to speak at the NSW Department of Education Inclusion Forum 2022.
- Margaret Meaker selected as a nominee for Pro Bono Australia's Impact 25 Awards
- Dr Sarah Carlon and Megan Cooper presented STaR Model to the Hive Early Childhood Educator's Network for 2770
- Margaret Meaker invited to participate in North Shore Local Health District Strategic plan workshop and Intellectual Disability Mental Health (IDMH) Strategy interview with Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney.

3.2 Communication

- Maintained consistent focus on the importance of Special Education in STaR social media posts, online learning courses and face-to-face workshops.
- STaR team contributed to InSpEd Insights newsletters
- Continued weekly communications delivered via Facebook/Instagram with increases in followers on both platforms.
- Facebook groups – Families of STaR, DOE Educators and Australian Inclusive Early Childhood Educator Community of Practice.
- STaR's website content, layout and design updated.



NOW

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS



THEN



We acknowledge

Our Board members and Staff

For their ongoing commitment to the Vision and Mission of STaR.



Dr Coral Kemp
Founding Director



Valentina Borbone
Chairperson



Margaret Meaker
CEO



Kristy Michael
Director



Stephen Fox
Treasurer



Dr Rebekah Grace
Secretary



Margaret Meaker
CEO



Melissa North
**Manager, Operations
& Relationships**



Megan Cooper
**Manager, Families
& Education**



Sarah Carlon
**Manager, Research
& Education**



Christie Kedward
**Operations
Coordinator**



Elise deJong
Special Educator



Philippa Wong
Special Educator



Lisa Mifsud
Special Educator



Sarah Roberts
Educator



Jodie Toohey
Educator

We acknowledge

Our partners and sponsors

The Australian Government Department of Social Services, the NSW Department of Education, MonSTaR Foundation, Australian Stockbrokers Foundation, Institute of Special Educators (InSpEd), Banter Group, Axi and Netcare.



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



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