

STRIDE For better
mental health

Annual Report 2020



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FROM THE CHAIR:

The year in review

The 2019-20 year was one of the most significant in the organisation's 113-year history.

We began the year as Aftercare, the name we have carried since our establishment in 1907. But our name reflected a context that is outdated, and after an extensive consultation process we re-branded as Stride Mental Health in May. Our new identity reflects our bold, innovative approach to our future while retaining the essence of our long history of dedicated work side-by-side with our service users.

2019-20 was also the first full year of implementation of our new strategic plan, and we are proud of the many achievements in this annual report. Our transition from legacy grant programs to NDIS funding is now largely complete. Our financial performance is ahead of our strategy targets. Development, support and retention of our talented workforce is a key focus and has been reflected in strongly improving staff engagement results. There remain many challenges in Stride's future – the list of challenges of course lengthened with the advent of COVID-19 in the second half of the financial year. The safety and wellbeing of our staff and service users is paramount.

The Board and I are both proud and extremely grateful for the flexibility and commitment shown by our people as we moved the majority of our services online within a two week period, and for the dedication they have shown and continue to show in providing outstanding support for our service users through this ongoing pandemic. There are also many opportunities on the horizon, perhaps none greater than the increasing awareness in the community about the importance of mental health and wellbeing. I will leave it to Andrew to reflect more on the opportunities that we hope will arise in the years ahead.



John (JT) Thomas, Chair Stride Mental Health Board



Chair John (JT) Thomas



FROM THE CEO:

Looking forward

As the Chair commented, the 2019-20 year was an amazing one full of challenges and change. I'd like to strongly echo JT's thanks to our people for an effort that has been truly above-and-beyond in dealing with the multiple challenges we have faced.

As we look forward, Stride's focus is firmly on two strategic priorities. The first is to provide outstanding support for people with persistent mental illness and complex needs in the community. Our challenge and opportunity is to capitalise on the increasing awareness of the prevalence of mental ill-health in Australia. The community mental health sector has a critical role to play.

With the imminent completion of a range of landmark reviews like the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health, a key opportunity for our sector is to more clearly articulate the role we play in improving mental health outcomes, and our significant cost-effectiveness in doing so. A significant development in the last year was the formation of an alliance of the CEOs of Australia's largest mental health charities now working together to articulate this vision for the community mental health sector.

In the years ahead we see significant opportunities for growth in support for adults with complex needs in the community, including in residential support for which there remains significant demand. We also look forward to future State and Federal policy responses to the mental health challenges Australia faces.

Our second strategic priority is to grow and develop the support we provide for at-risk children, young people and families to reduce the lifelong impact of mental ill-health for the next generation. This is the area of greatest need, with more than half of all adult mental ill-health having its origins in childhood. The importance of early intervention cannot be overstated, but childhood mental health support remains an enormous policy and funding gap.

In the years ahead we will look for opportunities to partner with leaders and innovators in the childhood mental health field, and we will advocate with governments to educate them about the social and economic value of investment in early intervention in mental health. 2019-20 was a year of growth, change and innovation in response to the challenges like COVID. Going forward we will continue to see our challenges as opportunities and respond with the same dedication and innovation we have shown for all our 113 years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Young', written over a white background.

Dr Andrew Young, CEO, Stride Mental Health

We're here for kids, young people, adults, families and carers

Stride is a specialist mental health organisation, 100% dedicated to providing recovery-oriented services which improve lifelong mental health and help people with complex needs live better.

We support you to find your motivation, resilience, and ultimately, your strength.

What happens after hospital care ends?

In 1907, our founder, Emily Paterson, decided to answer this question. Aftercare was an association born to help people find “a safe place to live, a place to work, and friendship.”

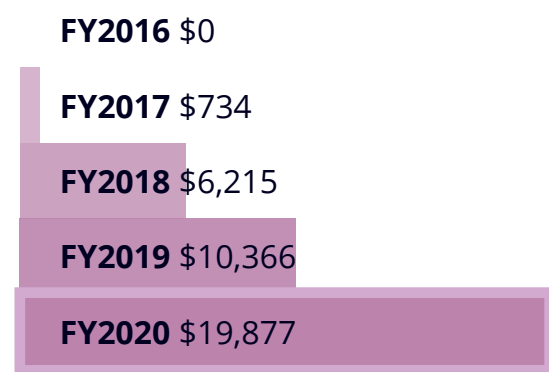
More than a century later, Aftercare, now known as Stride, provides more than 50 services across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Last year, we helped over 17,000 people access the support they needed for their mental wellbeing.

Our mission is simple - we provide services to support people at all stages of their mental health journey, from early intervention supports for children, young people and adults, to services for people with ongoing and complex needs.

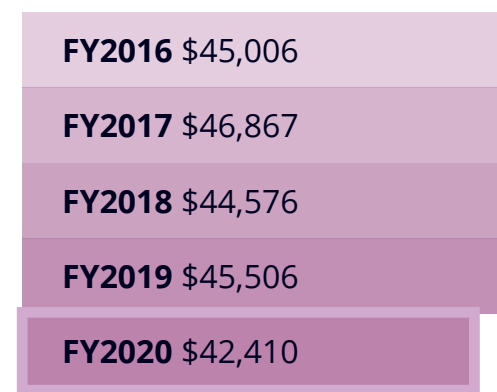
Like our founder Emily, we work to make every today a little easier, and every tomorrow a little brighter.

A vision for the future

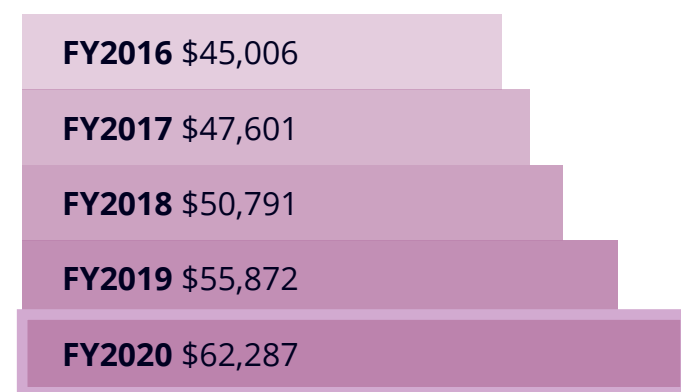
NDIS revenue



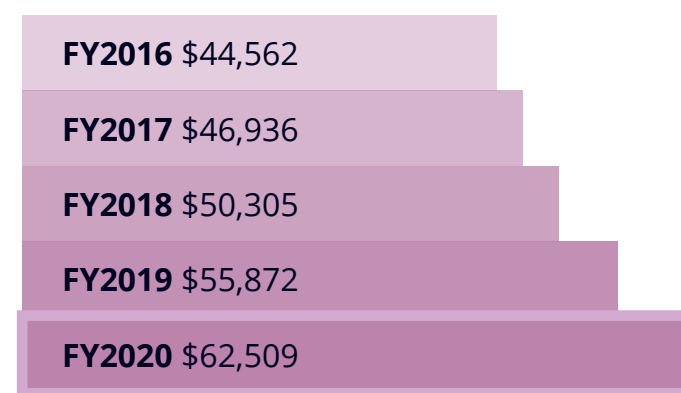
Grant and other revenue



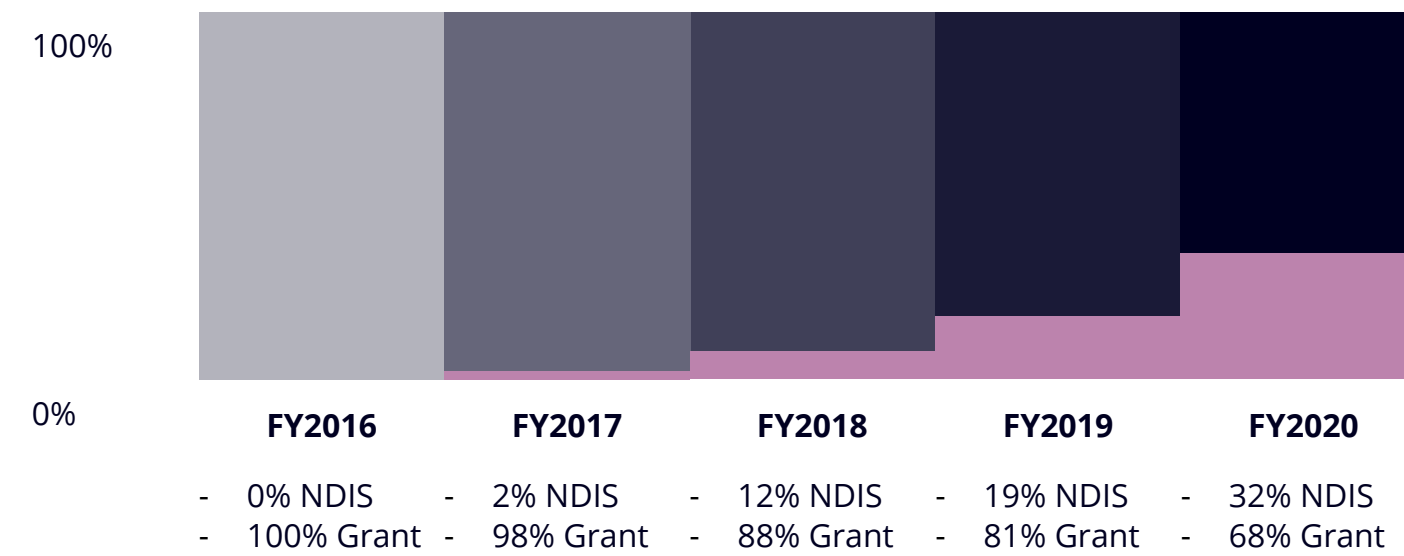
Total revenue



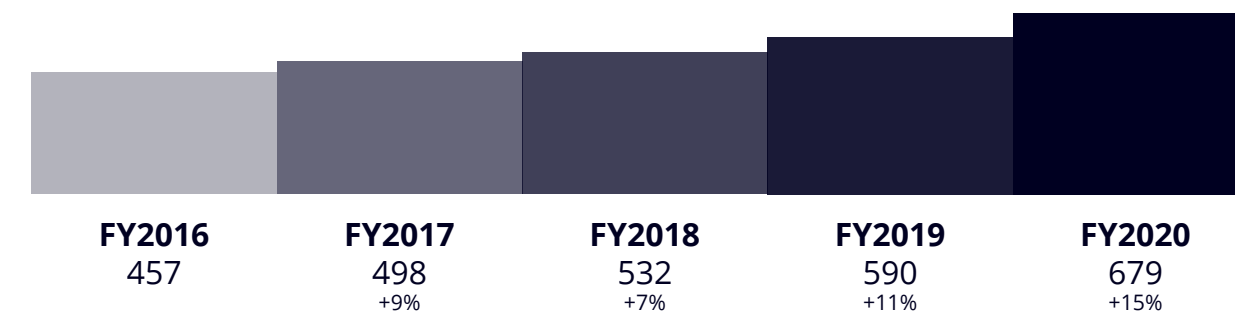
Operating expense



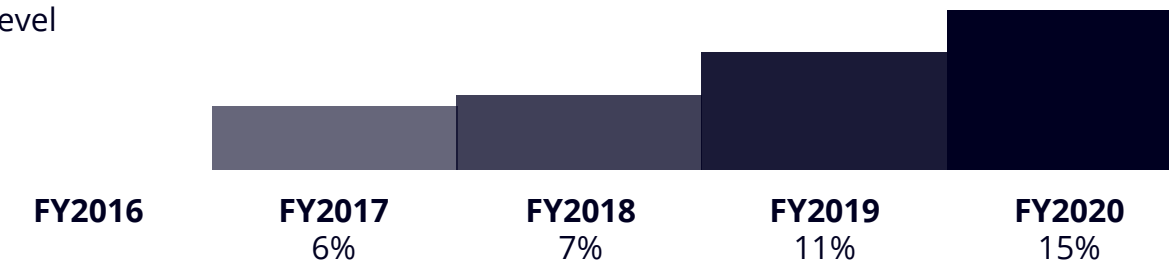
NDIS is becoming a larger part of our business
Change in revenue stream - NDIS vs Grant revenue



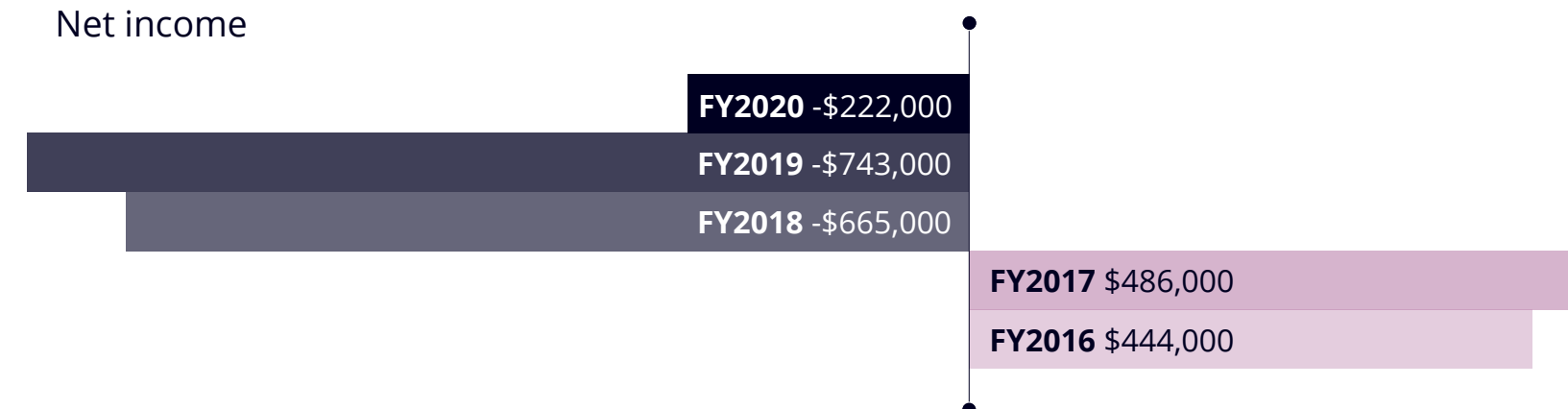
Growth in staff numbers + % YOY
Incredible growth for any business



Growth of organisation % change YOY
High growth level



Net income



Growing in 2019-2020

In 2018 we set out our growth strategy and we're now trending to outgrow this goal.

We have performed beyond budget expectations in the past 2 years and in FY20 we exceeded our budget by \$1.9M.

This is attributed to a focused leadership group, steering the organisation through challenges like the summer bush fires & COVID19.

Our investments in the business allowed us to act with agility when COVID-19 began to impact our operations, allowing us to minimise the financial impact by changing the way we operate.

NDIS continues to be a major growth area, doubling in size from 2019 to 2020.

[Click here to view our financials](#)

Our strategy

The rapidly evolving nature of the mental health sector along with increasing demand for a greater breadth of innovative services in the community has meant Stride has had to carefully consider the role we play.

Two years ago we launched our strategy that articulated two major decisions about our role in mental health.

The first is that we are a specialist mental health organisation – since we were established in 1907, we have focused on supporting people with mental health concerns. We are dedicated to continuing this work.

The second is to build high quality recovery-oriented services for two primary cohorts:

People with persistent mental illness and complex needs

To help them lead fulfilling lives each day

At-risk children, young people and families

to reduce the lifelong impact of mental illness for the next generation

In this, we remain true to our founding principles and aligned to meeting Australia's growing mental health needs.

Our strategy [click to view](#)



Our priorities, the next 3 years

Intervene early: We will innovate and expand our work with children, young people and families to become a leading provider for this cohort

Support wellbeing: We ensure our support for people with persistent mental illness & complex needs is best practice, locally seamless and utilises the right mix of capabilities

Best people: We attract, build and support our sector-leading specialist mental health workforce and become an employer of choice

Learn and influence: We continue to build our evidence base, learning systems and influence so that we can improve our services, prove our impact and share it

Need is endless, resources are finite. Stride has carefully selected a role to be present where we can have the most positive impact on our clients and their communities. We explore community need, sustainable resourcing, what we do best and what we want to do better.

NEW SERVICE:

Safe Spaces

Safe Spaces provide warm, welcoming environments for adults to walk in and talk with specialist mental health staff about safety, distress and thoughts of suicide. Counselling and emotional support is offered together with various sensory activities to assist individuals to develop distress tolerance skills.

A Safe Spaces pilot ran in Redcliffe Queensland in partnership with Metro North Hospital and Health Service, Wesley Mission, Recovered Futures Queensland and Encircle.

Safe Spaces allows people experiencing psychological distress to identify alternatives to hospital emergency department admissions.

The model has evolved a new way of approaching the issue of crisis response for people experiencing psychological distress and suicidality. This is a person-centred environment, listening to the needs and wants of the consumer and helping them live safely in their communities.

The pilot was successful in demonstrating the benefits offered by the Safe Spaces model to people in distress and to communities they live in.



“I just love it here”

MB, Northmead

MB came to Stride with minimal independent living skills. She had expressed this was a concern for her and wanted to learn to be as independent as possible.

She developed living skills such as using house keys and unlocking the front door, using the washing machine and dryer and preparing basic meals. Becoming familiar with the local area has been another goal she expressed before her transition from Cumberland Hospital and this was achieved within the first few days. MB has become familiar with a walking route up to the local shops. She now walks to the shops daily and prefers to do this without staff accompanying her.

The past two and a half months has been the longest period living in the community without a hospital admission. She is excited to expand her friendship circle from the residents at Northmead to other residents at Stride service.

MB would like to express her gratitude and appreciation to Stride and the Residential Support Workers at Northmead for supporting her transition from Cumberland Hospital and by allowing her the opportunity to develop her independent living skills.



NEW SERVICE:

Youth Step Up Step Down

Youth Step Up Step Down was established in June 2019 in Cairns, to provide clinical treatment and psychosocial support in a residential setting for young people between the ages of 16 and 21 years.

The service is suitable for young people who require a higher intensity treatment and care that cannot be adequately provided for in the community: SUSD helps prevent the risk of further deterioration or relapses that may lead to admission into an acute mental health inpatient unit (Step Up) and, provides young people no longer requiring acute inpatient clinical intervention the benefit of short-term intensive treatment in a rehabilitative residential setting post-discharge from an acute mental health inpatient unit (Step Down).

During this financial year, 105 young people were accepted into the program and the average length of stay was 23 days.



To whom it may concern...

Earlier this year our 17-year old daughter spent around 10 days in Cairns hospital after taking an overdose. The options after hospital were extremely limited; a mental health ward 300kms away in Townsville, or to return home. We were still worried about her safety at home but we couldn't bare the thought of our young, vulnerable daughter staying so far away, and in another hospital. We were incredibly fortunate that the Cairns SUSD had just opened and they were able to accept our daughter.

The Cairns SUSD has a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere, every member of staff we met was kind and professional. Our daughter settled in well. It was a huge relief for my wife and I to know our precious baby was safe and being cared for. Hard as it is to admit as a parent, but she was safer at SUSD than she would have been at home.

Over the following few weeks some other benefits of SUSD soon became apparent to us; our daughter had professional counselling every day, we could drop in as often as we liked, and we also spent time with the staff to help us understand what our daughter was going through. As a tight-knit team of professionals, you deserve great credit for what was achieved in such a short time.

Thank you, *Russell*

SERVICES:

Residential

Stride **Residential Services** provide 24/7 supported accommodation for adults and young people.

For 113 years, residential services have been our cornerstone. We provide adults with a diagnosed mental health condition a safe space to live. These services have evolved to cater for the various needs of adults and young people requiring both short and long-term stays.

Residential Services include supported group accommodation, day to day living skills, NDIS supported independent living (SIL) and specialist disability accommodation (SDA).

Recognising the importance of high-quality residential services, Stride has expanded its network of NDIS Supported Independent Living (SIL) properties with eight new homes.

Locations include Casula, Ingleburn, Dulwich Hill, Sadlier, Northmead, Marrickville, Hornsby, Marayong, Bardwell Park, Prestons, Newcastle and Orange in New South Wales, and Cleveland, Fitzgibbon and Kallangur in Queensland.

We support over 100 people in our residential services and our goal is to continue to grow this footprint in 2020/21



“It was wonderful, exciting and emotional to meet my older brother again after being apart for 17 years”

MS, Edmonston Park

MS moved to our Stride Edmonston Park location when it launched in 2020. We were advised MS had no contact with his family and efforts made to locate them had little to no success. Meanwhile, his brother, PS had been a Stride client and resident at Ingleburn since 2010.

It was staff that made the incredible connection between the two gentlemen and alerted us they may be brothers. After further investigation and confirming details, a reunion between the brothers was scheduled.

The brothers lost contact 18 years ago. It was astonishing that both men would end up in our SIL services only minutes apart from each other.

Both were over the moon to reconnect and have since had regular contact with each other. This was truly an amazing outcome for both and a story that can only be described as a touch of fate.



SERVICES:

Stride Kids

Not many are aware that half of all lifelong, serious mental health conditions start before the age of 14 and there is strong evidence that the early years, in particular, are vital.

We know that effective early interventions can materially improve long-term outcomes for children that have experienced adverse childhood experiences and so Stride has a strong commitment to advancing the provision of service in early intervention for childhood mental health.

We helped set the pace through our **Stride Kids** Hub in Ipswich (formerly known as the Poppy Centre) supporting children aged 0 to 11 years and their families.

In the past year, Stride Kids, through a critical partnership with the QLD Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health, developed and launched the Early Social and Economic Wellbeing evaluation framework for children aged 0 to 4 years.

Stride Kids also collaborated with the local Child and Youth Mental Health Services to ensure appropriate and timely step up and step down support for children with complex mental health needs.

Stride is committed to pursuing its vital strategy in childhood mental health with new services in development for launch in the new financial year.



SERVICES:

NDIS

The NDIS provides long-term funding to people with mental health concerns – helping individuals work towards their recovery goals and live with hope and optimism.

Stride provides a suite of NDIS services significantly growing our support across New South Wales, Queensland and regional Victoria throughout the year. We are committed to continuing this growth and the support of NDIS participants.

Our approach focuses on psychosocial activities to foster social connections. Studies show that people who feel more connected to others have lower rates of anxiety and depression and have higher self-esteem, are more empathic to others, more trusting and cooperative – generating a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical wellbeing. These are vital elements in a person's recovery journey.

Many of our consumers are socially isolated with little disposable income to spend on activities that lead to making friendships and being social. Group activities offer people a chance to develop friendships and social interactions while building their capacity to use these skills in more unfamiliar environments.

NDIS support coordination

Helping you get to grips with your NDIS plan – working with you to help you better understand and implement your plan.

Residential services

Supported independent living to improve daily living skills within the home.

Therapeutic services

Services from a range of professionals including psychologists and social workers offering supports in the community or via telehealth, to suit consumers' needs.

Core support services

Practical activities that you live your everyday life. Whether it be cooking a meal, going to a social activity or purchasing everyday support consumables.

Integrated Services

Integrated services are a holistic approach to mental health that support an individual's mental, physical and social needs. Through one-stop-shop Hubs we work with individuals and their families and carers to support them to access a range of community mental health support.

Through **Stride Hubs**, we work with our clients in the home and in the community, through group support, mutual and personalised support, to provide tailored and holistic programs to enable them to lead functional and fulfilling lives.

Stride Hubs support adults, young people and children. Adults are supported through our Stride Hubs (formerly known as Floresco) and LikeMind centres in Orange and Wagga Wagga, NSW.

This year we expanded our coverage opening new Hubs in Caboolture and Springwood in Brisbane, adding to our Hub in Ipswich.

As one of the largest operators of headspace centres in Australia, Stride works closely with young people meeting their unique and evolving needs. This year we supported more than 6600 young people across our six centres in QLD and NSW.

Each headspace centre is designed together with young people to ensure they are relevant, accessible and highly effective. As a result each headspace centre reflects the needs of its local community. We're an active part of the community we support.

In Ipswich QLD, we have been proud to continue supporting children and their families through our **Stride Kids Hub** (formerly known as The Poppy Centre). This is a vital service to the community and we have plans to expand our children's services in the near future.

Headspace Meadowbrook 'Left on read' music video



From Aftercare to Stride. Modernising our brand

Why did we change our name?

Aftercare began its life as a pioneer in mental health, filling the gap to care for people after they left hospital.

Today's mental health environment is very different. During the last century, progress on health has contributed to a life expectancy increase of approximately 20 years (33%), however, as the World Health Organisation notes, mental illness "suddenly bulks very large indeed".

Today there's a baffling array of service providers. And, while people now have more control over the care they choose, thanks to the NDIS, all the clutter can be stressful for clients and carers.

How do you navigate the modern mental healthcare system?

Aftercare management, staff and clients collaborated to help provide clarity of purpose, messaging, positioning for our clients, donors, partners and stakeholders. We replaced a name that had become misleading with a name that clearly states future intent.

Stride is a vibrant new identity. Stride is a beacon to new clients and a clarion call to staff, who express it with pride.

Stride is a name that recognises all big achievements start small. And that wherever our clients are on their recovery journey, we'll be by their side, like we've always been.

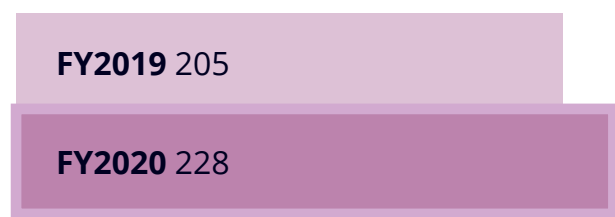
Our new brand click to view



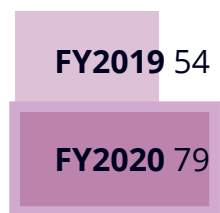
Full time staff



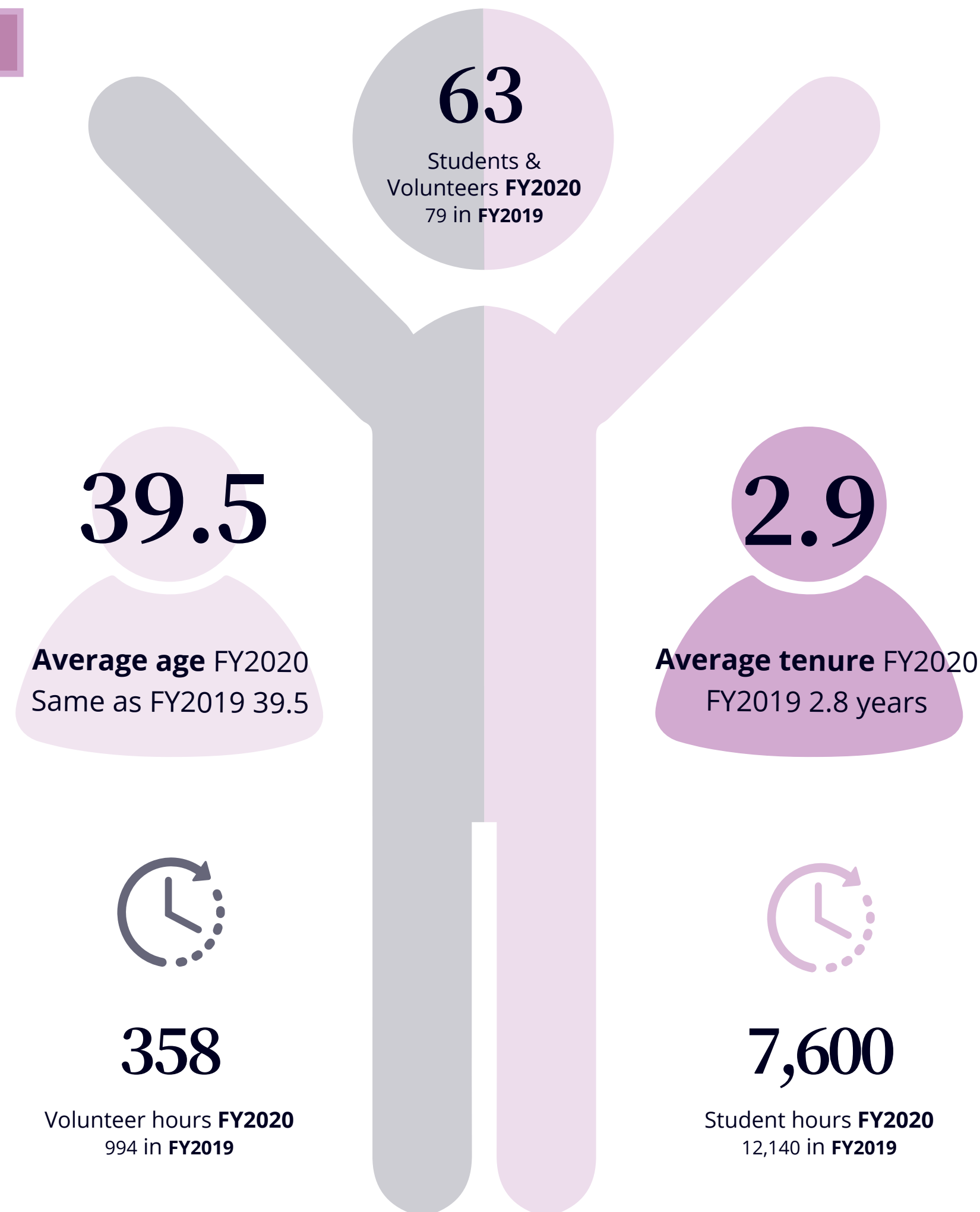
Part time staff



Casual staff



Students and volunteers
By the numbers



Stride with the best people

At Stride we have experienced, specialist mental-health staff who work with clients to help them find their motivation, resilience and strength, and guide them to a future of their own making.

Our people are at the heart of every service we deliver, so their wellbeing contributes positively to delivering great outcomes for clients.

Stride employs more than 650 staff, in over 50 sites across the eastern seaboard of Australia. The average age is just over 39 years, average tenure is about three years and approximately 35% of our people work part time.

We also partner with primary health networks, local health districts, hospitals and health services.

Students and volunteers complement our professional staff, make a significant difference to the lives of our clients and often improve their own mental health in the process.

Stride professional development

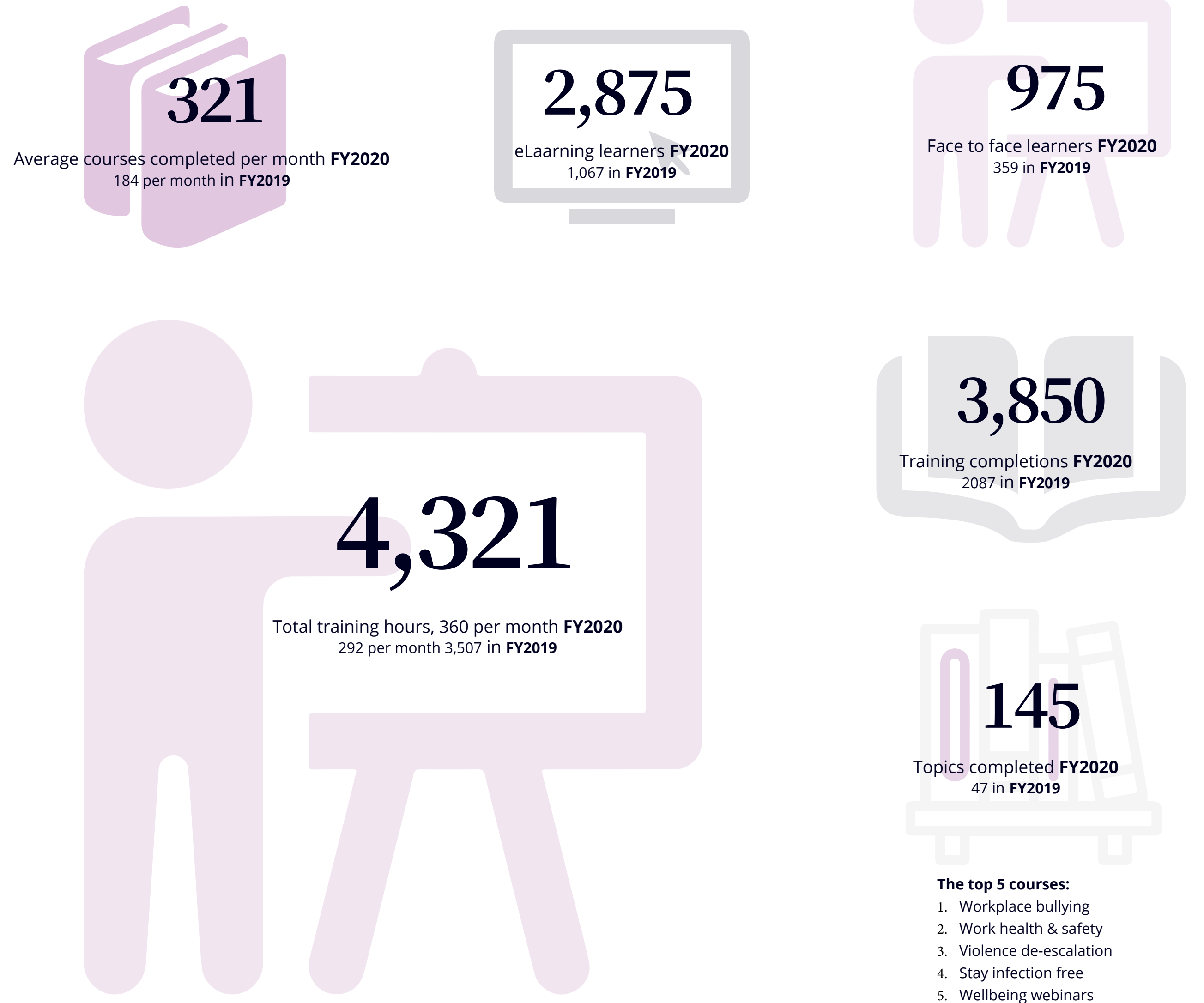
Our key focus has been to prioritise **professional development** through face-to-face training, e-learning, on-the-job learning and peer to peer mentoring.

In 2019/20 staff participated in 4,321 training hours in total, an increase of 23% on the 3,507 training hours in 2018/19. Our renewed focus on leadership development resulted in 78% of staff responding favourably to their immediate manager as measured by our staff survey.

The new leadership capability framework provides an outline of the strategic and functional requirements of roles and structures the link between performance and remuneration for leadership positions. Revised systems and processes streamline administration and improve employee experience.

We are committed to providing a safe, healthy and engaging work environment for our people. Staff reported a 91% favourable response to being encouraged to report incidents and feeling confident Stride takes the necessary decisions on corrective actions and controls.

Our new brand has also contributed to staff wellbeing with 76% engaging positively with the new brand traits. Over the past 2 years, staff engagement has increase to 72% even in the face of the significant challenges posed by Covid19.



Digital acceleration

COVID-19 has sped up technology transformation in organisations worldwide. In support of our goal to deliver the best service, improve our operations and enable better interactions between staff and our clients and partners, we embarked on a digital transformation of our systems and processes in 2019/20. This meant implementing platforms from which to best manage our clients and staff.

Riskman: Provides best practice controls for managing incidents with our clients and staff.

My Stride: Brings all staff related needs into a single point of information, including easy access to manage personal information, employment related documents and access online learning.

Financial systems: First phase updates have delivered easy management of expenses for staff while they're on the go.

Mobility and cloud-based services: Implemented to support remote working and keep our people and clients connected during COVID-19 lockdowns. Enabling client services from virtually anywhere.

Customer relationship management: All old client systems will be replaced with a single, purpose-built solution that will improve our decision making and deliver better service to our clients, partners and donors.



Need help?

Let's talk

Get in touch with the team at
1300 00 1907 or hello@stride.com.au

Contact us

Stride with us...

Find out more about us and the ways you can help support people experiencing a mental health concern.

Explore