WE ARE TENACIOUS AND RESILIENT
The year was marked by the energy and enthusiasm of a number of people, which resulted in a better financial outcome for the organisation. The shortfall was due mainly to the closure of a number of sites which in turn significantly reduces our future costs. We continue to provide services in these areas through our partners.

Continuing to learn from the challenges of previous years, the Board worked with the CEO to take the actions necessary to address the future and to set us on a positive course for that future. We have provided education and training, placed a considerable number of people with disabilities into work, worked with young people who are not engaged with our education system, employment, or on a pathway into employment, to give them a focus and a pathway into the world of work, and created employment opportunities for people who experience a mental illness.

Our vision ‘Workforce participation for all’ speaks of WCIG’s work at all levels of the organisation with people who experience disadvantage, to overcome barriers and to increase their prospects for economic participation in society. Through the changes we have experienced and those we will face in an ever changing landscape, our focus continues to be on creating future possibilities through education and employment, for those who access our services on a daily basis. The annual Board Scholarships, for people who have participated in our services and who need assistance to progress further in employment, education or training, continue to be a valuable organisational contribution to the future of those participants. This year’s scholarship event was a time of recognition of the achievements of many of our participants and appreciated by all who attended.

I would like to thank my fellow board members Frank Jackson (Secretary), David Cragg (Treasurer), Natalie Thomas and Pam Mutton, and our CEO Ron Miers for their work and support during the year.

Natalie Lupton - Chair
CEO’s Report

The past year in the life of WCIG has been one of consolidation and development. This has, in part, been in response to the previous years’ deficits but importantly to build and prepare for an ever-changing future. The ‘reform’ of the community sector in Victoria, and also Australia wide, means we must be continually refreshing who we are and how we do things.

The 5 year strategic directions set by the WCIG Board early in 2013 have guided and informed the way we do the work of creating futures through workforce participation for people who experience disadvantage in the communities we serve.

We have a renewed emphasis on getting the right people and providing the right development they need to do the work to a high standard. To be most effective in this current competitive and rapidly changing environment we began work on developing the tools and systems we need so that staff can focus on creating change in the lives of the people who use our services. The Working Communities Network, established to provide employment services to people with disability was consolidated during the year. The first manager, Andrew Hills, moved on to a national role with another organisation having given us a firm base on which to build.

Partnerships and collaboration with people and organisations are a strong strategic focus in the long-term. The year has seen us firm up our work with existing partners and explore new possibilities. It is my firm belief that small to medium sized not-for-profit community organisations must find ways to work together in order to have lasting, effective impact on our communities. Existing partnerships in the WCN with JobCo and eFocus, Job Futures and particularly partnerships with other Job Futures members continue to be a rich source of influence on ideas and motivation for WCIG. Also, our collaboration with the Melbourne University’s School of Social and Political Sciences employment services research projects expands our horizons beyond Melbourne’s west. Melbourne and Australia consider our place as change makers. These partnerships exist at all levels of WCIG and we find staff working with a variety of networks to produce the best result for participants. One such partnership is our long term relationship with Headspace, first in Sunshine and during the past year established in Werribee. Our youth and disability employment service teams have explored ways to co-locate and work with the Headspace teams.

The Australian Government 2014 budget included the announcement, widely published on news and current affairs that the Youth Connections program would cease from December 2014. The team assists young people who have not completed, or are at risk of not completing Year 12 or an equivalent qualification and have barriers that make it difficult to participate in education, training or employment. Youth Connections staff work with young people to help make a successful transition to further education, training, or employment. We have been working with disengaged young people in various ways since 1997 in the various iterations that preceded Youth Connections. It is with regret that we will close this important program and will seek new ways to create education and employment futures for young people who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

I would like to thank the Board and leadership team for their commitment and hard work throughout the year and especially the staff who day-to-day strive to achieve the possibility of workforce participation for all.

Ron Miers - CEO

Partnerships and Collaboration with People and Organisations are a Strong Strategic Focus in the Long-Term
**WORKING COMMUNITIES NETWORK (WCN)**

The Working Communities Network (WCN) consortium partnership has grown stronger than ever in 2014. WCIG, JobCo, and E-Focus have galvanised and continuously worked to improve the service provided to people living with disability in the communities we serve.

The partnership enables each consortium member to draw on best practice, innovations and collaborations, compliance models and business systems to support the effective implementation of services that aim to enhance economic outcomes and reduce disadvantage for people facing barriers to sustainable employment, including people living with disability.

The WCN partnership between these three providers is currently delivering two distinct types of Disability Employment Services in eight regions (31 locations) across Greater Metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong. Over the past 12 months WCN has consolidated itself as a strong provider of both of its DES programs. The June results of formal service ratings have most sites performing very well, with Geelong also showing encouraging improvement over the course of the 2013-2014 financial year, whilst establishing itself in the region. At the end of June 2014 WCN’s number of active participants had increased to 2,008. Throughout 2013/14 WCN assisted 711 people with disability into employment, and importantly are also currently providing support to over 450 people and their employers to ensure that they sustain their employment.

In total WCN achieved 313 full 12 week employment outcomes and 266 full 24 week outcomes. This year, WCN has engaged 689 employers to generate job placements for participants, including major metropolitan, state-wide and national employers and franchisors. These include Jim’s, Australia Post, Burnings, Bakers Delight, The Laminex Group, JayCo, 155 Facility Services, Patrick Jimdoring, Toll and Linfax. The WCN is now well established with partnership systems and processes in place to expand its programs and service offering throughout the next year.

**CASE STUDY: HOW WCN’S EFOCUS ASSISTED A START-UP BUSINESS**

V presented to E-Focus with mental illness as well as musculoskeletal disabilities. At assessment V decided to pursue work in horticulture. The DES staff member assisting V introduced him to the Darebin Enterprise Centre and submitted his résumé to the Manager of Metro Trees. V decided to participate in the National Enterprise Incentive Scheme after discussions with his DES staff member, the Enterprise Centre and Metro Trees; setting up a landscaping business. WCN’s E-Focus supported the establishment of the business by advertising in the local newspaper, which assisted in the business gaining a major landscaping contract. E-Focus also assisted V in completing his Tax and Centrelink paperwork. During the course of running his business V sustained a minor back injury. The DES staff member assisted him to source labourers who could work with him whilst he recovered from this injury. Throughout the support period after his business was up and running, the DES staff member visited V on location and V attended appointments at E-Focus. V has now exited the DES program as an independent worker, successfully running his business for 60 weeks. Recently, V employed another DES participant who has a Bi Polar disorder.

**KEY STATS**

- **313:13 WEEKS**
- **246:26 WEEKS**
- **689 EMPLOYERS IN 2014**

**DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (DES)**

WCIG’s Disability Employment Services maintained a solid base of new innovations and improvements in assisting job seekers living with disability locate, engage with and remain in sustainable employment and/or educational opportunities in 2014.

This year, all WCN consortium members have developed and implemented a tailor-made service delivery model across all sites. This structure is dedicated to providing a flexible and supportive approach for job seekers to strive for independence. In addition to securing these sustainable outcomes, this approach is also designed to assist job seekers with disability to further participate and advocate within their local communities.

WCIG DES believes that by providing the tools and support participants to make their own life choices will enhance employment opportunities.

WCIG DES achieved a solid financial base during 2013-14, and in partnership with WCIG Training Services and Youth Services, WCIG DES is making good progress in ensuring collaboration between WCIG programs to create opportunities that best suit individual participant needs.

**CASE STUDY: ASYLUM SEEKER TURNED FULL TIME WORKER**

H is an 18 year old who arrived in Australia in 2011 as an Asylum Seeker from Pakistan. H heard of WCIG WCN through another participant being assisted. WCIG WCN put H in contact with other services to help him settle in Australia. H was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from things he had witnessed growing up in Pakistan. WCIG WCN arranged a meeting with his case worker from Foundation House to discuss how to best assist H to address his mental health.

H met with his EC daily, working on self-esteem and interview skills. Within 3 weeks of intense job searching H gained full time employment in a warehouse. WCIG WCN financially supported H with purchasing clothing, a driver’s license and petrol cards. H’s EC also supported him daily for the first week of his employment, working alongside H on the production line. WCIG WCN supplied H with lunch for the first week to ensure that he had the energy to get through the day. Soon after his commencement, H had his hours cut back due to the downturn in the business, but through reverse marketing, H’s EC found him a position in a steel fabricating company. H loves his job, and has since been exited as an independent worker, and is still working full time.

**KEY STATS**

- **430+ JOB SEEKERS PLACED INTO WORK**
- **150+ OF THESE ACHIEVED 26 WEEK EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES**

**SINCE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW DES CONTRACT IN MARCH 2013, OVER 1,900 PARTICIPANTS HAVE BEEN REFERRED FOR ASSISTANCE FROM WCIG DES**

**LINKING GEELONG PROJECT: ENGAGING PARTNERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

WCN is currently working with a firm called Fundamentals to work alongside the DES Manager and Geelong team to assist the development of strong collaborative relationships with Barwon Youth, Diversitat, Encompass, Barwon Health, Pathways Rehabilitation; Geelong Regional LLEN, Bellarine Living and Learning Whittington and Ocean Grove, ERMHA MadCap Café, Rosewall Community Centre and Joblink 3220 Project.

As a result of this project WCN is in the process of negotiating partnerships with Barwon Youth and ERMHA MadCap Café.
For Cleanable, 2014 paved the way for a substantial amount of structural and procedural consolidation. As an eco-friendly commercial cleaning and property maintenance Social Firm that provides supported workers training and employment in asset maintenance and cleaning operations, Cleanable held firm its commitment to both maintaining ISO 9001 Quality Accreditation and ensuring that Cleanable remains a strong component of WCIG’s Social Enterprise Group for many years to come.

Although the dedication to the central tenets as WCIG’s first Social Firm remains the same as it was back in 2005, the resounding effort this year has been concentrated in ensuring that the Business Development Strategy, Operational Plans and the Management Team bolster 2014’s performance and goes on to serve 2015 just as strongly.

Cleanable has made massive inroads to building some exciting and dynamic partnerships, ranging from new supplier partnerships with Agar Chemicals, Oates and Central Cleaning Supplies to ensure competitive pricing and eco-friendly chemicals, to business development opportunities with Cameron Industrial and Orygen Youth Health.

**KEY STATS**

- 20 SUPPORTED WORKERS
- 13 NON-SUPPORTED WORKERS
- $967,100 TOTAL REVENUE FOR THE YEAR
- $18,598 AVE WEEKLY REVENUE
LoveLuvo has enjoyed a year of self-rediscovery and exploration over the 2013 – 2014 financial year. First and foremost, LoveLuvo remains a Social Firm that provides a unique retail experience, offering eco-friendly, locally sourced, ethical trade products for the home and body.

LoveLuvo highly values its Social Firm roots and assisting its supported workers living with mental illness to receive training and employment in the retail sector. This year saw LoveLuvo realign with its original value proposition, undergo a minor renovation and ‘facelift’ in line with the original LoveLuvo concept and welcome some fantastic new brands onto its shelves. The re-launch of LoveLuvo’s cleaning product ‘Swap’n’Go’ feature coincided with the formulation of a new brands launch strategy on social media that we aim to implement in late 2014.

LoveLuvo has also been anticipating the launch of a new webstore. The webstore has been built and is scheduled for a grand opening in late 2014.

CASE STUDY: A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR A LOVELUVO EMPLOYEE

C is a single mum who has worked in a number of jobs in her life, but since being diagnosed with bipolar disorder she has struggled to maintain regular employment. When C first started with WCIG’s Social Enterprise Group as a cleaner for Cleanable she was very shy and had difficulty learning complex tasks. After around 7 months C became unwell again and took time out to recover.

4 months later she returned to work as a cleaner, having recovered her mental health and she was able to settle down to her routine of three evening shifts per week for the next 6 months.

Just over a year ago C was offered a job working at LoveLuvo, she jumped at the chance and made the transition from cleaner to retail assistant quite smoothly. She was provided training in customer service and cash handling. Her confidence was not strong to start with but as she gained experience in the shop she found that she picked up these skills more readily.

C was quite proud of her progress in LoveLuvo; she naturally has a bright disposition which is very warm and engaging when she serves customers. They leave the shop feeling quite charmed. But in her private life, things were quite difficult.

After a family issue, C became unwell and was hospitalised and took over 4 months off work. Not long after becoming unwell C stated that she didn’t think she could do the job anymore and she felt that she should quit. Her confidence had hit rock bottom. C was persuaded by her Support Worker to hold off that decision and to just concentrate on getting better.

C kept in frequent contact with her Support Worker during her recovery and on each occasion she was clearly more positive about her situation. In early July 2014, C stated quite simply that she wanted to return to work, and was in fact looking forward to it. She came in to the shop to discuss her return to work and was almost back to her bright and bubbly best. C returned to LoveLuvo, working a few hours a week to start with, and built her hours up over the following 6 weeks.
Outside Branch is busily establishing itself as the third member of WCIG’s Social Enterprise Group and as a viable business that provides training and employment opportunities in asset maintenance for disengaged individuals who live with mental illness.

This year brought about a revitalising organisational restructure, which will see Outside Branch merge with Cleanable in late 2014. Outside Branch’s main operations also relocated to Footscray in August 2014, to provide a more centralised location to nurture business growth and brand recognition.

With a growing client base consisting of Hume City Council, Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, Mercy Health, Melbourne Health and Lend Lease, Outside Branch is looking toward future prospects with Orygen Youth Health and an extended engagement with Lend Lease in late 2014 and into 2015.

**KEY STATS**

**IN 2014**

- **TOTAL SUPPORTED WORKERS**: 6
- **TOTAL NON-SUPPORTED WORKERS**: 2
- **AVERAGE WEEKLY REVENUE**: $5,148
- **TOTAL REVENUE FOR THE YEAR**: $267,700
WCIG Training Services continues to deliver relevant and innovative training from a Certificate I through to Certificate IV in 2014.

Our Training Services aim to re-skill individuals with a view to improving their ability to re-enter the workforce, and thus improving their career and employment prospects.

Throughout 2013/2014 WCIG Training Services delivered 68 accredited courses to 391 students across 20 different qualifications, ranging from a Certificate I in English as a Second Language through to a Certificate IV in Training & Assessment.

In late 2014, WCIG Training Services will aim to increase its delivery scope by adding the following qualifications: Certificate III & IV in Customer Contact, Certificate III in Early Childhood Education & Care and 6 levels of Certificates in General Education for Adults. These General Education for Adults Certificates include: Course in Initial General Education for Adults, Certificate I in Initial General Education for Adults – Introductory, Certificate I in General Education for Adults and Certificate II in General Education for Adults.

Throughout 2013/2014 WCIG Training Services delivered 48 accredited courses to 391 students. WCIG is a partner of the Learning for Employment (SEE) Program, formerly known as LLNP, seeks to assist eligible job seekers to improve their language, literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to participate more effectively in training or employment, leading to greater gains for them as individuals and society in the longer term.

WCIG is a partner of the Learning for Employment consortium funded by the Department of Education. The consortium includes the following organisations: Djerriwarrh Community and Education Services, Community West, Laverton Community Centre, Williamstown Education Services, Wyndham Community and Education Centre, and Yarraville Community Centre.

WCIG plans to run a number of classes through the rest of 2014 and through 2015, including a SEE Youth Pilot Program from Ascot Vale, and two classes from Dallas and Ascot Vale as part of the SEE Youth Pilot Program from Ascot Vale, and two classes from Dallas and Ascot Vale as part of the SEE Youth Pilot Program from Ascot Vale, and two classes from Dallas and Ascot Vale as part of the SEE Youth Pilot Program from Ascot Vale, and two classes from Dallas and Ascot Vale as part of the SEE Youth Pilot Program.
This year was a big year for WCIG’s Youth Connections, with the team’s hard work and dedication seeing the program well and truly exceed expectations across the Wynbay (Wyndham and Hobsons Bay) and MMV (Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley) areas, as well as being part of some inspiring new programs and partnerships.

Youth Connections’ tailored case management and outreach services place an emphasis on assisting young people who are disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education and are aged 13 – 19.

- Wynbay registrations as of August 2014, were numbered at 286, exceeding expectations by 184%, while MMV registrations were 182, which exceed expectations by 185%.
- Wynbay outcomes gained in the 2013 - 2014 financial year stood at 229, exceeding expectations by 147%. MMV outcomes gained in the 2013 - 2014 financial year were 151, exceeding expectations by 154%.

WCIG Youth Connections, in collaboration with Wyndham Council, Headspace and other young service agencies will be trialling ‘Patchwork’ in the 2014 – 2015 financial year. Patchwork is an online tool that will assist professionals to coordinate with each other, so that an even better service can be provided to participants.

The Rotary Club of Hoppers Crossing engaged with WCIG this year to fund the Get Your Learner’s On program, a Targeted Engagement Service (TES) which assisted many young people to obtain their Learner’s Permit, and assisted in the continuation and expansion of the program to engage even more participants.

The Youth Connections program will finish at the end of 2014. WCIG’s Youth Connections team are still working as hard as ever and ensuring that all young people engaged in our Youth Connections program are appropriately transitioned onto the next step of their journey.

CASE STUDY: A RETURN TO SCHOOL WITH ASPIRATIONS TO COMPLETE VCE

C was a 16 year old Indigenous female student who was referred to Youth Connections by the Student Wellbeing Coordinator at her school. Her attendance had decreased dramatically in a few short months, and by the time she was engaged with Youth Connections she had stopped attending school altogether. C would become highly anxious when discussing returning to education as she believed she could not live up to the expectations placed upon her at her old school (a private school). Though there had been numerous conversations about changing schools, her family had not been proactive in supporting her return to education. C reported self-harming as a way of coping with stress and unrealistic expectations, as well as a lack of motivation. She would spend most of her time at home sleeping and was adamant that if she returned to education, it would have to be the school of her choice. This proved to be a challenge as C lived out of her chosen school’s catchment area.

Some time passed, and C refused to enrol into her local government school because of what she knew about its negative reputation. C became disconnected with her friends, her self-esteem dropped further, and she began to develop anxieties around developing new friends at a new school.

Through maintaining contact with Youth Connections, C was able to work through her anxiety and her self-esteem improved. C soon recognised her thirst for knowledge, identified what her long-term goals were, and began setting short-term goals to help her achieve them. After being out of education for four months, and despite its reputation and her preconceived ideas, C enrolled herself into her local school. She received ongoing support from Youth Connections and was linked in with the student wellbeing staff, as well as the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME). AIME is an educational program that connects volunteer university students, in a structured mentoring relationship, with Indigenous high school students. The objective is to encourage Indigenous young people to complete high school, and connect them with opportunities for further education and employment.

8 months later, C is still engaged in education, as well as being heavily involved in the AIME program. She is set to complete year 10 and is looking forward to moving into VCE.
Blueprint will assist young people develop life skills to assist them in adulthood

WYNBAY & MMV REGISTRATIONS EXCEEDED BY 27%

WYNBAY OUTCOMES EXCEEDED BY 225%

MMV OUTCOMES EXCEEDED BY 175%

CASE STUDY: FROM A CHALLENGING PAST TO A POSITIVE FUTURE

R, a young Indigenous man, came to Western Springboard in October 2013, from a local school for disengaged youth. R was an isolated youth who had endured severe bullying, and presented with numerous barriers to education and employment, including psychosis, bipolar disorder, substance abuse and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

This school referred R as they ‘had done everything they could’ with him and could not effectively cope with R’s aggressive and violent behaviours towards students and staff. R had been in residential facility for a very long time, but had moved back in his mother’s home.

The first time R met with his Springboard Worker, it was observed that R was a very shy, polite and highly intelligent young man who opened up about his personal aspirations and told his Springboard Worker about himself. It was shortly thereafter noted that R’s aggressive tendencies were likely the result of a long history of being bullied.

As R built a rapport with his Springboard Worker, they worked on coping mechanisms, positive thinking and other strategies R could use in his everyday life. After a short time, R began to speak of his traumatic past, his suicide attempts and his suicidal ideations. On numerous occasions, R would present to his Springboard Worker’s office after a suicide attempt, when he was having thoughts of suicide and when he had engaged in illicit drug use and/or self-harm to ‘escape the pain’. R’s Worker assisted in connecting R with mental health services for assessment. Despite R’s reservations about engaging with mental health services due to past experiences, R soon agreed to be referred to a psychiatrist, who treated him for psychosis and bipolar disorder. Shortly after this, R also accepted assistance to be referred to a counsellor.

After a period of stabilisation, R and his Springboard Worker discussed his future aspirations, and R expressed that his dream was to be a chef and work on a container ship so he could travel the world and cook.

SPRINGBOARD

Throughout the year, WCIG’s Western Springboard team of Youth Workers have made some outstanding progress in offering tailored case management and outreach services to young people aged 15 – 21 who have been in out-of-home care and are disconnected or at risk of disconnecting from education.

Serving the areas of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay (Wynbay) and Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley (MMV), Western Springboard has assisted many young people in overcoming barriers and reconnecting with education or training. The results also show that the team have consistently gone above and beyond in connecting with their participants.

As of August 2014, there were 14 current registrations in Wynbay, and 14 in MMV, which each exceed expectations by 127%.

18 Wynbay outcomes were achieved in the 2013/2014 financial year, which exceeded expectations by 225%, while 14 outcomes were achieved in MMV over the same period, exceeding expectations by 175%.

Approval was also sought and granted from the Department of Human Services to run a life skills program designed by our staff called Blueprint, which will assist young people in areas such as personal presentation, cooking, budgeting, job seeking, legal issues and many other life skills to assist them in adulthood. Several Blueprint programs are scheduled to be rolled out in the next financial year.