



**creating
opportunity**

annual report 2018/19



annual report 2018/19

we value:

social justice

equity and access
for all

diversity

respecting diversity
and being non-
discriminatory

compassion

caring, empathy
and respect for the
dignity of others

respect

cooperation and
mutual respect

quality

dynamic, flexible and
responsive services

ethics

professional practices
and accountability

innovation

commitment to
partnerships and
excellence

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*This report covers the
financial reporting period from
1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019*

SSI acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

cover Performers participating
in the Homelands tour of NSW
and Queensland.

inside cover An entrepreneur
supported by SSI's Ignite®
initiative

impact 2018-19



37,611+

people supported to achieve their full potential

settlement



9,500+

refugees supported in **early settlement** including

4,925
new arrivals



799

refugees settled in **regional Australia**

34,099

settlement sessions held with

11,739

refugees and migrants



58,000

engagements from community members via SSI's **social media**

volunteers



\$3.4m

in time contributed by SSI **volunteers**

These figures cover the financial reporting period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019



34

new businesses established by entrepreneurs with a disability or from refugee backgrounds

disability

10,870

people with disability, their family members and carers were supported towards their goals

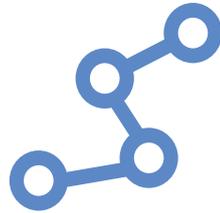


employment



1,510

people secured **employment** with SSI's support



5,116

refugees and people seeking asylum supported on the **pathway to employment**

1,755

people seeking asylum supported to **live in the community**



16,260+

people engaged with interculturally inclusive community events and consultations

multicultural foster care

165

children from

70+

different ethnic backgrounds cared for by SSI's Multicultural Foster Care program each day



5,293

families engaged with the community through **Community Hubs**



from the chair

I have enjoyed sharing another busy year of successes and lessons with SSI. We extended and deepened our work with our clients and communities. We invested in the organisation to ensure its strength as a well-governed, leading contributor to our sector and society.

As always, we remained mindful of the important role our partners play in delivering high quality services. Our Members and other community and industry collaborators enable us to extend our reach, while still remaining local. Together we are stronger, more creative, and more successful.

Our merger with Access Community Services Limited (Access) (see page 20) was a significant focus for the Board in 2018-19. Like SSI, Access is a community based, not-for-profit organisation. It has been one of Australia's leaders in multicultural issues for more than 30 years, with experience providing support to refugees, migrants and other Australian-born individuals.

Respectful of the great work Access had delivered over many years in Queensland, the Board wanted to ensure that our values were aligned, that we could truly enhance one another's work, and that our joint vision would enable great things for the communities we serve.

The Board was mindful of the risks and the opportunities this merger might afford us. We undertook painstaking due diligence to ensure its fit and to safeguard both organisations' capacity to continue to deliver quality services, while growing and extending in new ways. I acknowledge the work of Violet and her executive team, and that of Access CEO, Gail Ker, and her team, in respectfully and generously bringing their vision to fruition.

We kept our communities and our service promises front of mind at all times during this merger and in our subsequent integration (see page 12 for an integration update). We have been delighted to successfully welcome Access into the fold, while also preserving services and jobs. This is a credit to all the staff involved, and I thank my fellow Board members for their care in overseeing this process.

During 2018-19, SSI's strategic and business planning process continued to provide the organisation with a focused direction and targets. SSI experienced increased demand for employment services, out of home care and culturally responsive support. We don't always receive funding commensurate with demand. Our efforts to seek untied funds and to fundraise to improve our reach to vulnerable people are ever present. We are most proud of our capacity to set aside funds for value-add initiatives, including educational scholarships for refugees, or support for emerging refugee entrepreneurs through Ignite® Small Business Start-ups.

This year, the Board has especially focused on improving risk management and good governance in the face of learnings from various public enquiries into institutional behaviour. We have established improved Board structures including a Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee. We have also reviewed our Board skills matrix, key competencies and Board membership in order to set ourselves up for success in the new financial year.

This is a very sizeable and fast growing organisation — the size of many listed companies. We are now working in three states and have exported our initiatives internationally. Membership of the Board, and clarity about the tasks and responsibilities of each Board member, is pivotal for good governance.

During 2018-19, the Board also undertook some work to ensure that the dialogue around the Board table maximises our contribution. All relationships take work, and being confident in our contribution and our focus is key. We have also been very pleased to support our CEO to develop her executive team and to ensure that SSI is a well-led, well-structured organisation that is fit for purpose and ready to grow and succeed.

We have celebrated the increasing dialogue between the executive and community leaders and government officials, and welcome the ongoing opportunities to share our skills and experience to further our partners' aims. As a Board, we also welcome all opportunities to meet and collaborate with our members and partners to address community needs.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the importance of community voices in SSI's work. This is not only through story-telling, rich though that is. It is evocatively brought to life through SSI's arts and culture program, whereby poetry, song, painting and other arts communicate the refugee experience. We are proud to have various forums in which we can promote and present this work to the broader community, whether that

Elisabeth closes
SSI's New Beginnings Festival
in Refugee Week



is through arts festivals such as SSI's New Beginnings Festival or through Access's Brisbane Multicultural Arts Centre (BEMAC). We were also fortunate to be community partners for the second year running with TedXSydney (see page 24). These are just a few of the ways in which we can bring stories to the wider community in service of creating shared understanding and opportunities for dialogue.

I would like to end by acknowledging Violet for her outstanding leadership throughout the year. She has been an ambassador for SSI's work and earned some well-deserved accolades and appointments during the year, including being named one of the *Australian Financial Review's* 2018 Woman of Influence — opportunities that Violet uses to amplify SSI's work and vision. She and her amazing team set a creative vision and a high standard for service delivery, which continues to inspire.

Elisabeth Shaw
Chair



“This is a very sizeable and fast growing organisation — the size of many listed companies. We are now working in three states and have exported our initiatives internationally.”

from the ceo

Violet addresses the International Metropolis Conference



SSI's approach to growth is something in which I have always taken great pride. As CEO, my priority is ensuring our organisation is sustainable — but not at a cost to others.

Since 2012, SSI has grown from a Sydney-based organisation with 68 staff and one service line to one with more than 30 locations spanning Australia's east coast, 800 staff members and 18 program areas. As a result, our revenue has increased from \$9.4 million to more than \$115 million.

In pursuing growth, we aimed to safeguard SSI's funding in a way that would also increase our social impact and strengthen our sector. One way we did this was by forming consortiums with other community organisations and tendering for work, thereby growing the pie of available funding for our peers, as well as ourselves.

In April 2018, Queensland-based Access approached SSI about a possible merger. While we didn't have an intent to enter the Queensland market, this offer presented an incredible opportunity. Our organisations

work with similar communities and apply a client-centred, values-driven ethos to our work. We already had a strong collaborative relationship with Access, which was licensed to run our Ignite[®] Small Business Start-ups initiative in Queensland.

After extensive due diligence, our merger became official on December 4, 2018. This non-predatory merger and its successful implementation was both a key challenge and an achievement during the 2018-19 financial year.

Stage one of our integration focused on aligning our corporate services teams (see page 12). Already, we are seeing annual cost synergies, procurement efficiencies and a stronger balance sheet and cash flow (see page 30). We are about to embark on stage two of this integration, which will further reduce our internal duplication and increase collaboration. In the long-term, we intend to maintain local service delivery in order to capitalise on the unique strengths of each organisation and leverage opportunities to further expand our social enterprises.



Working as one, we can strengthen our position to support service growth in Queensland, NSW and Victoria — particularly in an environment of growing demands and shrinking resources in the community sector. The collaboration and joining of services and resources will provide better outcomes for clients, funding partners and key stakeholders.

During the financial year, SSI completed the appointment of its new Executive team. We have also undertaken extensive work to ensure our organisation is aligned with this new structure. This has created better accountability and, ultimately, ensured we are positioned for the future.

Having this leadership bench strength has enabled me to increase my focus on political engagement and putting SSI on the map nationally and internationally. I've been able to positively influence social justice policies in Australia and around the world. In April, for example, I participated in a UNHCR working group that informed the UN refugee body's three-year strategy on resettlement and complementary pathways (see page 26).

Greater international engagement has also lifted the profile of SSI initiatives like Ignite®. After several positive engagements with the Canadian government, Ignite® has now been licensed and implemented in Vancouver (see page 21). It is humbling to think that an initiative we developed and funded from scratch is now changing lives on the other side of the world. I am particularly grateful to Ignite®'s Global Manager Dina Petrakis, who spent close to six months in Canada to get this initiative up and running.

Since the conclusion of the financial year, my focus has been the implementation of our new 2023 Master Plan (see page 32). As part of an integrated approach to strategy development, SSI Executive General Manager Peter Zographakis is also leading a number of organisation-wide strategies to better position SSI in areas including employment, disability and regional settlement. Peter's team will continue to pursue new growth opportunities via the creation and addition of innovative revenue-generating social businesses and programs such as the commercialisation of our unique Diversity Training program (see page 23) and expansion of Ignite®.

Our changing external landscape influences this direction. For example, increasingly we are seeing regional settlement presented as the answer to Australia's congested cities and a must-have in any

“It is humbling to think that an initiative we developed and funded from scratch is now changing lives on the other side of the world.”

conversation on population planning. SSI is well positioned to make a contribution to future regional migration, building on our success in Armidale (see page 17) and the rejuvenation of the Coffs Harbour area. Regional settlement is something we know we do well, so we are prioritising this as a business strategy and looking at a wide range of opportunities for migrants to successfully settle in regional areas.

One of my personal highlights from FY2018-19 was SSI's decision to embark on a journey of reconciliation. During the year, we began developing our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), and we anticipate submitting this plan during FY2019-20. I believe that growing our engagement with, and understanding of, Australia's First Nations cultures is a shared privilege. By connecting with people from different walks of life, we have the opportunity to see that there are no gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities — just people, coming together to respect, accept and trust each other.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge our Chair Elisabeth for her efforts this year and thank her for the important role she has played in SSI's success in FY2018-19.

When I reflect on the year that has passed, the things of which I am most proud are those where our values shine through, whether it is embracing diversity in all forms through the development of our RAP, demonstrating our commitment to ethics through a non-predatory merger, or progressing social justice issues to improve the lives of the communities we serve. With these values at our heart, I am confident of another dynamic year ahead for SSI and Access.

Violet Roumeliotis
SSI CEO

highlights

July 2018

SSI funds refugee community innovation



July 2018

Access launches Australian-first sustainable home



November 2018

The International Metropolis Conference comes to Sydney



November 2018

Multicultural Foster Care achieves fully credited designation agency status



January 2019

Ignite® Small Business Start-ups launches in Canada

February 2019

SSI Speakers Series launches research showing CALD communities' underutilisation of disability services





August 2018
First 100 Ezidi refugees arrive in SSI's regional settlement location of Armidale



September 2018
SSI's Mosaic Gala ball fundraises to support refugee independence



December 2018
National Multilingual Disability Hub launches nationally



December 2018
SSI merges with Access



March 2019
Educators with lived experience deliver training through SSI's new Our Voice



June 2019
SSI and Access collaborate on Homelands, a music tour across Queensland and NSW

about us

SSI is a community organisation and social business that supports newcomers and other Australians to achieve their full potential. We work with all people who have experienced vulnerability, including refugees, people seeking asylum and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, to build capacity and enable them to overcome inequality.

SSI draws on its expertise and experience to advocate for the people and communities it serves. Through the work we do, we empower people to change their lives. Through our advocacy and representation, we influence ideas and policy.

We operate locally, nationally and internationally, with offices in metro and regional Queensland, NSW and Victoria. As a values-driven organisation, we look beyond the immediate needs of individuals and communities and invest in their aspirations. Drawing on community

feedback, we have identified unmet needs and invest in innovative initiatives to close these gaps. In the past six years, SSI and its partners have re-invested in initiatives that add value to our contracted programs.

Formed in 2000, SSI is the state-wide umbrella organisation for 11 migrant resource centres and multicultural services across NSW. Many SSI staff members are co-located in the offices of our member organisations, and we also deliver a number of services in partnership with our members, which enables us to provide tailored, local services.

Colyton NSW Community Hub members and SSI staff come together to mark National Sorry Day



our vision:

To achieve a society that values the diversity of its people and actively provides support to ensure meaningful social and economic participation and to assist individuals and families to reach their potential.

our mission:

We support newcomers and other vulnerable Australians to prosper. We build our sector's capacity and create positive social outcomes with government, corporations and communities.

our focus

SSI's activities during the 2018-19 financial year were driven by four focus areas identified in our three-year strategic plan.

These strategic priorities aim to strengthen our organisation, help us to shape and influence our environment, and equip SSI to move to our next stage of growth. In order to achieve these, SSI develops and implements annual business plans with goals linked to the four strategic priorities below.

1

Strategic priority one:
capability

SSI will continue to build organisational capability to deliver for its clients, members and partners

2

Strategic priority two:
clients

SSI is a client-centred organisation

3

Strategic priority three:
growth

SSI identifies and develops opportunities for sustainable growth

4

Strategic priority four:
contributing

SSI is a leading contributor to our sector and society

1. capability

During the 2018-19 financial year, a core priority was putting in place the people, processes and technology that will enable our organisation to meet current and future requirements. Our goal is to achieve a high performance culture that creates real results for those who entrust us to undertake our work.

SNAPSHOT >

More robust communications planning and team upskilling has led to effective **integrated media strategies**. In one month alone, a targeted marketing campaign for SSI's National Multilingual Disability Hub (see page 17) led to a 137 per cent increase in page views and a 187 per cent increase in new visitors.

SSI's **government relations function** developed and implemented member, government and **stakeholder engagement plans** that enhanced our organisational capability as they drove targeted, coordinated and fit-for-purpose engagement with stakeholders.

SSI embarked on a strategy to develop an **organisation-wide digital roadmap**. This included an infrastructure review, project prioritisation and the optimisation of our governance structure and operating model.

An integrated organisation

Our merger with Access has significantly changed and strengthened our organisational capability and moved the two organisations under a single Board and governance structure. While the merger came into effect in December 2018 (see page 20 for more), the integration itself is an ongoing project.

Integration of corporate services was the focus of the first stage of our merger, which concluded during the financial year. SSI and Access corporate services teams have focused on harmonising their systems, people and processes in order to make this integration as seamless as possible. For example, we reviewed our finance teams, systems and processes and created a transition roadmap that left us with a single group finance function.

Other areas of corporate services have also played a big role in integration. During the discovery phase of the merger, our facilities team inspected 11 Access locations and identified WHS issues that were later resolved. Our legal team successfully deregistered four business entities operating under Access and managed a number of compliance activities. Our IT team has also successfully managed a significant increase in demand for IT needs due to the merger, geographic expansion and an additional 252 staff who joined SSI in the financial year.

In FY2019-20, we will embark on stage two of our integration, which will further reduce duplication. For the most part, Access will continue to operate as it does now. However, over time we will look for ways to operate more effectively as one organisation with common processes, policies and systems. Ultimately, we hope to create more efficiency and opportunities for collaboration. Already, we are working on joint projects such as Homelands – a Refugee Week music tour that drew more than 2,000 attendees across Queensland and NSW.

We are adamant that the delivery of services will remain local. We recognise the importance of having staff embedded in the communities they support; it's why our settlement staff are co-located with our member organisations around Sydney. As one organisation, SSI and Access can get the most value from our limited resources, while safeguarding the quality, ethical services our clients value.



SSI staff were out in force at our New Beginnings Festival in Refugee Week



No wrong door

At SSI, we often talk about our services wrapping around individuals to meet particular vulnerabilities. But, in order to do this, we need a seamless internal referral process that maintains our “no wrong door” framework and approach.

In the reporting period, we developed an Internal Referrals Hub hosted on SSI’s intranet to make this process easier for frontline staff. The Hub includes critical information for all SSI programs, including referral criteria. It aims to address frontline employees’ knowledge gaps and create more consistent internal referral practices. An online referral form then gathers the information needed to facilitate stronger, client-centred referrals and practice in line with our strategic plan.

The Hub was launched in June 2019 with a six-month pilot phase, which includes communications, monitoring and a review to learn what works and refine as needed. Early data indicates the Hub is assisting frontline staff to make more internal referrals and has improved awareness of the breadth and diversity of programs SSI offers.

MEET KO ZAW

Ko Zaw is on track to realise his dream of becoming a chef after settling in Coffs Harbour in March 2018.

Originally from Myanmar, Ko Zaw lived for seven years as a refugee in Malaysia, where he worked as a chef. On arrival to Australia, Ko Zaw was supported by SSI to get the materials and uniforms he needed to study as a chef. With support from his case manager, Ko Zaw completed certificates in hospitality and the responsible service of alcohol, enabling him to obtain casual work in an Ethiopian restaurant.

After obtaining his local driver’s license, Ko Zaw saved to purchase a car. He now works as an Uber driver on the side and, along with achieving a five-star driver rating, he is accumulating funds to start his own business.



Investing in our people

Investing in our workforce and its development is a core priority for SSI. In 2018-19, we introduced initiatives designed to build a strong culture and to attract and retain the innovative, values-driven people who will help our organisation meet its future requirements.

A key change in our talent acquisition was the introduction of competency-based recruitment and selection practices to ensure fair and consistent recruitment outcomes based on merit. The Australian Network on Disability also recognised SSI as a Disability Confident Recruiter, in line with our ongoing priority to ensure our workforce diversity reflects the communities we work with (see page 28 for more).

SSI rolled out a tailored leadership development program, Lead@SSI, to strengthen our leaders' capability and capacity. This program enhances leaders' ability to achieve their performance goals, which are directly linked to our strategic plan.

We also brought our strength-based approach to service delivery into the workforce with the introduction of a new performance coaching model, Achieve@SSI. This requires all employees to set three to four annual achievement goals that build on their strengths, including things they enjoy and are good at.

Achieve@SSI also requires people to identify three SSI values and state how they will apply these values in their achievement goals. Staff members are then supported by a learning plan that helps individuals address their development needs.

The results of our investment in people and culture was quantified in a staff survey in March 2019. Our aim was to increase our previous employee engagement capital score of 66 per cent by one percentage point, which we did — achieving a 67 per cent engagement score. This puts SSI above our sector average of 60 per cent.

The same survey also tracked significant increases in our people's understanding of SSI values (+19%) and their belief that SSI is committed to our values (+12%). This is a great result that we believe was boosted by our new performance coaching model.



SSI staff, clients and volunteers participated in a range of events during the year

Trauma Informed Framework

During the financial year, we successfully developed a Trauma Informed Framework (TIF) that incorporates current research, industry standards, and SSI's family and community settlement knowledge. This was subsequently implemented across the organisation.

TIF offers all staff and volunteers 10 principles that guide our approach to working with families, individuals, children, communities and partners, as well as with one another. More than 320 staff and volunteers have received awareness education to assist their understanding of the impact of trauma and how to shift towards a trauma-informed approach in their own work practice.

It is important that SSI continues to recognise the lived experience of all clients, staff and volunteers and the impact that trauma has and can continue to have on people's lives. We encourage culturally responsive and supportive conversations within the organisation to continue to ensure that our services and endeavours do no further harm by inadvertently triggering and exacerbating symptoms.

Foster care excellence

In November, SSI's Multicultural Foster Care Program received a five-year accreditation as a designated agency under the Office of the Children's Guardian NSW Standards for Permanent Care.

This is the highest achievement possible under this process and builds on our previous accreditation we received upon launching the program in 2014. In order to achieve this accreditation, we demonstrated our capacity and compliance across 23 standards that cover every aspect of the care we provide. This included the way we engage with children and young people in our care to respond to their needs; the work we do to recruit, train and support foster carers; the way we recruit, support and supervise staff; and the way our organisation operates to have the highest standards of governance and service delivery.

During the year, SSI also worked in partnership with culturally diverse communities to build understanding of the role of foster care. Through community consultations, we improved our own understanding of the issues influencing attitudes towards pathways to permanent care, such as adoption and guardianship. SSI also advocated extensively in the sector to raise awareness of the needs of children from culturally diverse backgrounds in the care system.

Permanent care offers children and young people more secure childhoods and is a key focus for the NSW foster care system. We were proud to support foster carers towards this goal during the year, including two long-term foster carers, who secured legal guardianship of three children with support from SSI, their extended families and the community. This was a wonderful result that creates safety and stability for the children and security for the carers.

Strengthening risk and compliance

Over the last 12 months, SSI has extensively revised its monitoring and reporting of risk and compliance with the aim of providing our management team with timely, comprehensive information on which to base decisions and plan for growth. These efforts also mean that SSI will continue to tailor services so that they are responsive to the needs of clients.

During 2018-19, we undertook extensive work with our organisation and board to establish our risk appetite. This has translated into a detailed risk profile and has enabled us to operationalise an online risk management tool to decentralise the oversight of program and business area risks.

We also improved our capacity to identify and respond to risk and to ensure we are complying with legislative and contractual requirements and industry standards. Our comprehensive Quality Management System supports the implementation of our risk management system (based on ISO 31000) and an "audit ready" organisational approach. By adopting a risk-based model for internal audit, and working closely with program managers and content experts, SSI has continued to maintain ISO 9001 certification across all services in NSW and Victoria.



SNAPSHOT >

SSI's newly **integrated settlement division** supported more than 28,287 people.

Client stories were the centrepiece of the SSI News Blog, which received 42,707 visitors during the year.

16,260+ people engaged with **intercultural, inclusive community events** and consultations held by SSI's self-funded Community Engagement program.

top Loulla (third from right) received a scholarship for Ascham School

centre Harmony Day celebrations at Coffs Harbour

bottom Ezidi refugees have settled in the regional city of Armidale

2.clients

Clients and client-centred practices are at the heart of our organisation. In 2018-19, this was evident through our values, behaviours and approach to service delivery.

Client and community voice consultations

SSI is trialling a unique consultation method designed to identify our clients' and communities' aspirations, assets and challenges. Differing from a traditional Q&A or feedback session, these consultations call on individuals to identify their own way forward.

During 2018-19, SSI used this method to improve the retention of newcomers in the settlement location of Armidale, where refugee arrivals are from the persecuted Ezidi minority (also known as Yazidi). In a series of "community voice" consultations, Ezidi representatives explained that, given their recent experiences with trauma and loss, a crucial step toward feeling at home in Armidale was being able to properly care for family members who pass away in Australia.

"Just as life is continuous, so is death," said one senior Ezidi community member. "The Ezidi have been subjected to 74 genocide attempts throughout their history. We now feel Australia is our future and we want to build our lives here. Part of that is being prepared for death."

The Ezidis have since worked with SSI, our member organisation Northern Settlement Services, Armidale Regional Council, mortuary operators and other stakeholders to develop strategies for understanding burial practices in the community in culturally appropriate ways.

One new arrival said that, while getting used to the requirements of Australian bureaucracy could be frustrating, these community voice consultations were empowering. "It makes a big difference, having a choice. It's not just this is what you have to do."

Leading culturally responsive service delivery

People from CALD backgrounds should account for around one in five approved National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plans, based on levels of disability in these communities compared with the general population. But, so far, fewer than one in 10 plans are for people from CALD backgrounds.

In December 2018, SSI launched the National Multilingual Disability Hub to offer in-language information about disability and the NDIS in order to decrease this disparity.

Funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), the Hub comprises a website with multilingual resources and a telephone hotline serviced by operators speaking 14 languages.

The Hub is a full in-language experience. This process reduces the stress of having to get through language barriers before receiving support. It enables people to ask questions in a way that is meaningful for them, without mediation from a third party such as an interpreter.

A majority of callers (67%) have no existing NDIS plan, and one in three (36%) is seeking information on NDIS access requirements. This highlights the important gap the Hub is filling. As one caller with disability said, "I am a person with a disability and it has been a real challenge to get support from the NDIS. Without your encouragement, patience and great help, I would give up applying to NDIS already."

Breaking down silos in settlement

SSI amalgamated its key settlement programs into a new divisional structure during the year. This broke down silos and improved collaboration. Ultimately, this will ensure continuity of service and strong outcomes for clients and communities from the day they arrive in Australia for up to five years.

Across four settlement programs, SSI supported 28,287 people in 2018-19. Our flagship Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) supported more than 9,500 refugees through the early days of settlement, including 4,925 who arrived during the financial year itself.



MEET ANWAR

Originally from Syria, Anwar* has more than 20 years' experience as an engineering professor and holds multiple degrees, including a PhD in structural engineering. He came to Australia as a refugee in 2017.

SSI met with Anwar in July 2018 to develop a career pathway plan. In the short term, Anwar hoped to gain flexible employment so he could continue pursuing his long-term goal of resuming his work in academia. He faced a number of barriers to that goal, including English language fluency, a lack of local work experience, his qualification not being recognised, and a lack of understanding around how to search for work in Australia.

SSI supported Anwar to attend resume building workshops, employer mentoring sessions, English conversational groups, and workshops to improve his digital literacy and presentation skills. SSI also provided Anwar with financial assistance to complete a skill-gap training course and gave him support to have his overseas qualifications recognised in Australia.

SSI then linked Anwar with a range of professional contacts in his field, through which he secured an interview with the University of Wollongong and, ultimately, a part-time role as a lecturer in the civil engineering faculty. This is a significant first step towards his long-term career goal and Anwar says that it feels like a dream come true.

*Not his real name

A particular challenge for HSP during the year was a sharp increase in arrival numbers that saw almost half (45%) of SSI's annual intake arrive in the final quarter of the year. Upskilling staff helped us greatly in responding to this peak in arrival numbers. We also brought in SSI staff from other areas to assist in extreme peaks, with the added benefit of reskilling staff from programs whose own numbers were declining.

During 2018-19, SSI settled close to 800 refugees in regional locations, including Coffs Harbour. While Coffs Harbour has a history of refugee settlement, this area is currently experiencing some relocation of Ezidi settlers to Armidale and Toowoomba due to a natural alignment of kinship and friendship networks.

Working with local partners, SSI is developing a strategy for long-term retention in the area that focuses on infrastructure, planning, social engagement, inclusion and input from stakeholders. A draft action plan is currently under review.

During 2018-19, SSI successfully retendered for the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program via its NSW Settlement Partnership consortium. Led by SSI, the NSP is a successful collaboration of 20 settlement providers across much of Sydney and parts of regional NSW that offer settlement support to new migrants and refugees who have exited HSP. NSP supported 11,739 individual clients during 2018-19, including holding 3,910 education and skills training sessions.

In 2018-19, SSI also received a four-year extension on its Community Hubs program — part of a national initiative that serves as a gateway to connect families with each other, with their school, and with services. SSI is the support agency for 19 hubs in the South West and West Sydney regions, which connected 5,293 families to the community during 2018-19.

The final arm of SSI's settlement division, Status Resolution Support Services, supported 1,755 people seeking asylum to live in the community during 2018-19. SSI used a unique style of thematic case management in order to marry its client-centred approach with a new SRSS service model focused on overcoming barriers to employment. This approach responds to a person's individual needs in the areas of mental and physical health, domestic and family violence, child protection and alcohol and other drugs.

Career pathways for refugees

In 2018-19, SSI supported around 360 refugees to start their journey to get their qualifications recognised and resume their professional careers in Australia.

The Department of Social Services funded the 12-month Career Pathways Pilot (CPP) program in recognition of the wealth of skills and experiences refugees bring to our shores and the challenges they face in having these recognised. Through targeted assistance, we helped newly arrived humanitarian entrants who have skills and/or qualifications and vocational English language proficiency to use their skills and qualifications in Australia in the same or a similar career.

Using funds provided under the grant, SSI was able to offer practical assistance, such as contributing to the costs of qualification recognition examinations and training to close skills gaps. We helped individuals create tailored career plans to identify a pathway into their preferred profession. We also supported people to connect with other professionals by building peer support networks such as professional exam study groups and a women's mentoring program.

The breadth of SSI's experience in the employment sector meant we were able to identify complementary resources available to CPP recipients, such as through jobactive. As the delivery agency for the NSW government's Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP), we were also able to extend additional assistance to CPP participants. This integrated approach ensures individuals get the right support, while also maximising the services we can provide in a more integrated way and delivering great value for our funders.

While CPP ended on June 30, 2019, feedback highlights the merit of the pilot. As one participant said: "Your help, guidance and the financial assistance were very much essential in recognition of my certificate. The feeling that someone believes in me and supports me was awesome. I have received sadly the news that the program will no longer exist as I know that a lot of overseas qualified refugees may give up their own dreams of working in the same career they love due to the financial issues."

Introducing Access Community Services

At Access, a core point of difference is its collaborative service centres that deliver client-centred social services in community-based settings. Known as the Access Gateways, these centres are based on Access's End-to-End Client Impact model. They enable the organisation to offer services to a diverse group of people from a range of vulnerable backgrounds but always with a clear focus and dedication to refugee, migrant and newcomer populations, regardless of visa type or background.

The two Access Gateway centres in Logan and Goodna provide assistance to a wide variety of people who attend for everything from service support to free computer access to just having a cup of tea. The strength of this approach is the number and variety of programs and support offered. As well as our own services, the Access Gateway gives clients access in to services through our partners who co-locate from these centres.

Two of the core funded services delivered at the Gateway centres include Disability Employment Services (DES) and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Outside of these funded services, other programs run during FY18-19 included community education, English classes, homework support and women's wellbeing activities.

Among its other services, Access runs Queensland's only arts organisation dedicated to presenting, producing and developing CALD artists and arts. The Brisbane Multicultural Arts Centre (BEMAC) offers professional and skills development opportunities for emerging artists and arts workers. In 2018-19, BEMAC was engaged to partner on the national professional development program, GRID, as well as take the lead on the first ever professional development program in Logan City, known as BOOST. BEMAC also supported and delivered a number of festivals around the state, including the Cairns Children's Festival, the Ipswich Festival and Logan Live Music Month. In a Refugee Week first, BEMAC, Access and SSI delivered a seven-date collaborative live music tour across Queensland and NSW, known as Homelands.

3.growth

SSI is focused on remaining sustainable through the diversification of our revenue streams, developing partnerships with organisations and individuals outside our traditional sectors, and developing innovative solutions and programs that we can commoditise.

SNAPSHOT >

SSI operationalised **two new service delivery consortiums**, joining with our member organisations to successfully tender for and now deliver new contracts.

First international license sold for SSI's self-funded Ignite® Small Business Start-ups.

Culturally responsive **training delivered** to more than 2,700 people from over 350 organisations.



above SSI's self-funded Community Kitchen brought communities together during the year.

right Access employs more than 250 staff in locations across Queensland.

Growth through merger

Strengthening local and national strategic alliances is something SSI sees as a pathway to growth and sustainability. In April 2018, the board of Access formally approached SSI to enter into discussions with SSI with a view to a merger. Prior to this, SSI and Access had a collaborative relationship and were in discussions to explore new opportunities on the east coast.

SSI operates in a non-predatory way and did not have any strategic intent on entering the Queensland market, but we recognised in this approach an opportunity to strengthen both our sector and organisation, and so progressed to due diligence.

Our merger in December 2018 has created value for all stakeholders. While our integration is still a work in progress (see page 12), we are creating considerable value through annual cost synergies and procurement efficiencies. We have a stronger balance sheet and cash flow, and increased revenue with greater flexibility to invest in future growth.

Importantly, this merger also enables us to capitalise on each organisation's unique strengths to become a sector and market leader on Australia's east coast.

SSI in Victoria

This marked SSI's first full year operating in Victoria, where a key program was the Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS). This is a new national program for SSI and, in September 2018, SSI began taking referrals for those in the Australian community wanting to apply for protection visas (or any visa type for minors under the guardianship of the minister). Through our subcontracted service providers, people accessed professional immigration advice services, including advice on the merits of their cases and application guidance.

Once the implementation phase for the IAAAS was completed early in 2019, one of SSI's key focus areas was promoting IAAAS so that the community was aware of SSI as the new national referral pathway.

IAAAS is quite different from other services SSI has delivered and has offered some unique challenges, but we recognise it is a vital service to many in our community who fear returning to their country of origin and need protection in Australia.

Another key achievement for the Victorian office during the year was bringing to the state the Victorian Liveable Diversity Summit in November 2018. Experts in Australia for the International Metropolis Conference (see page 26) shared best practice on diversity with senior Victorian counterparts in public policy, research and civil society.

Melbourne is often highlighted as one of the planet's most diverse cities, while also consistently being named one of its most liveable. Through a series of study

tours, participants examined the Victorian model of liveable diversity, examining both the good practices and challenges in local governments, communities and industries. In each case study site, international academics, local policy makers, civil society and politicians interacted with their Victorian counterparts to compare experiences, consider common challenges, develop best practices and partnerships. At the conclusion of the tours, 300 participants convened for a summit to discuss and reflect on the issues they observed.

Partnerships are a cornerstone of SSI's existence and without them we would not be in a position to actualise our vision. The Liveable Diversity Summit was only possible due to our strong partnership with Monash University and collaboration and support from the Victorian government, Ballarat Regional Multicultural Centre, City of Hume, City of Dandenong, Australian Multicultural Foundation and the Immigration Museum.





MEET ROAN

Since arriving in Australia as a refugee in 2008, 19-year-old Roan has shown a deep commitment to advocating for the voices of young people and the needs of those from a refugee background.

Roan is co-founder of Muralisto and SSI's Art Crew — a youth refugee mentorship program that works to empower young people through creative expression. She is a member of the SSI Youth Collective Steering Committee and was recently selected as a delegate at the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN Headquarters in New York.

"Being in the presence of leaders that are powerhouses across a range of government, CSO and NGO sectors is exciting and empowering," she said.

"It was incredible to put my degree and experience into action, and I am so excited to share my experiences and learnings with my community back here in Australia."

Ignite® takes off

SSI's self-funded Ignite® Small Business Start-ups program had tremendous local and international success in 2018-19. During the year, we partnered with UTS and a philanthropist to scale up Ignite® in Sydney. Under this expansion, we will support 40 entrepreneurs from refugee backgrounds to launch businesses in western Sydney over the next two years. This demonstrates the importance of our partnerships and the very real impact they have on the lives of the people we support.

Ignite® and refugee entrepreneurship have both been topics for SSI's international conference participation in recent years, sparking interest from many of our global counterparts. During 2018-19, we sold the Canadian government a two-year license to run Ignite® in Vancouver. Our Ignite® Global Manager, Dina Petrakis, spent close to six months in Vancouver helping to set up the Ignite® program, which had established seven businesses by the end of the financial year.

Since 2013, Ignite® has supported the creation of 160 businesses in Australia, including 34 in 2018-19 alone. We are currently in talks with other organisations in Canada and the UK that are interested in this success rate.

Diversifying revenue streams

Developing new revenue streams enables SSI to grow our value-added, self-funded programs. A core focus of SSI's Partnerships and Fundraising function is acquiring sources of non-government funding in order to position our organisation for sustainable growth. These channels include corporate funding as well as community and individual giving.

In 2018-19, our partnerships with corporate stakeholders helped further widen SSI's reach and provide innovative solutions and initiatives for the social and economic participation of our clients. Partnerships with community-minded organisations such as Allianz Australia and AMP enabled us to invest in pathways to education and employment for refugees.

During the year, many of our corporate partners also made in-kind investments to support the needs of our client groups. For example, the Commonwealth Bank developed financial literacy toolkits to help newly arrived refugees avoid pitfalls. White Pages Australia helped us to link more than 250 refugee families with 85 local businesses in order to build connections to their new area.

*top An Ignite entrepreneur
centre and bottom
SSI's Mosaic Gala raised funds to
support refugee independence*

SSI shares culturally responsive knowledge

One of SSI's newer offerings is a training program grounded in our extensive experience as a service provider working with CALD communities. SSI Training supports organisations to work with CALD communities and create more culturally responsive and inclusive workplaces. SSI Training has developed cultural competency training modules that it now delivers to external organisations for a fee. Workshops cover aspects of working with diversity in areas including foster care, disability, young people, volunteering, housing, and children and family.

In 2018-19, we delivered training to more than 2,700 people from over 350 organisations across NSW, building their capacity to be more culturally responsive and inclusive in their service delivery and in their workplace.

During the year, we also launched Our Voice to build the capacity of mainstream disability services. A group of 16 people with lived experience of disability from CALD backgrounds received training and support to become lived experience educators. They have delivered learning activities that shed light on the issues they face in accessing services (see page 25).



*SSI's Community Kitchen
is an inclusive lunch event*



4.contributing

For SSI, being a leading contributor means finding ways to strengthen our sector through thought leadership, advocacy and policy influence. This manifests itself in research, partnerships, lobbying, media engagement, events and more.

Social policy index

During 2018-19, SSI refined its organisation position on the key social issues affecting our clients, partners and communities in order to influence our broader policy environment.

We created a social policy index comprising 20 documents articulating our position on everything from multiculturalism to affordable housing to access to income support and citizenship. These documents help our staff and partners better understand SSI's position on important social issues. They also ensure we are consistently communicating these positions internally and externally.

Our organisation positions were developed collaboratively, based on our experience working with clients and communities, and underpinned by research and government policy documents.

The work on the index has shaped our thinking on social issues and our capacity to respond promptly. A good example of this is the policy position on domestic and family violence, which outlines the unique challenges facing women and families from CALD backgrounds.

This became the focus of SSI's pre-election government relations activity, where SSI representatives advocated for CALD women and families to be prioritised in National Action Plan investments and funding. When a series of state and federal government funding announcements in February failed to make provisions for refugee and migrant women, SSI engaged in proactive media engagement to draw attention to the unique needs of these communities, resulting in an opinion piece based on our policy position reaching up to 2.7 million people.

SNAPSHOT >

During Refugee Week, SSI highlighted the **positive contributions of refugees** in a communications strategy that reached up to five million people through traditional media, with an additional 84,174 impressions through social media.

SSI's **Community Innovation Fund** allocated \$50,000 in grants to projects refugee communities developed to support their own newly arrived community members.

SSI representatives took a lead role in Sydney Alliance's pre-election People's Assembly with nearly 2,000 people in attendance to call for **affordable housing, energy and power**.



SSI held a number of intercultural events during the year



MEET HEDAYAT

An entrepreneur who attended TEDxSydney in 2018 as part of SSI's community partnership returned in 2019 — this time as a speaker.

Former refugee Hedayat was so inspired by his experience that he applied for the 2019 event, where he spoke about his journey by boat to Australia, experience in detention and what drove him to share his story.

"If you make the time and listen to our stories, then we will be able to understand why people like me have had to make the choice we had to make. My story is similar to thousands of refugees who have come to Australia to build a new life for themselves and a future for their families," he said.

After graduating from the University of Canberra, Hedayat founded social enterprise Nick Tiling Services with support from SSI Ignite® Small Business Start-ups. He now trains and supports other people from refugee backgrounds to overcome barriers to employment.

CALD people with disability

SSI undertook research during the year that quantified what we see at the coalface in our disability services: CALD communities failing to get their share of support (see page 17).

Our report, *Still Outside the Tent*, concluded that despite having similar rates of disability to the Australian-born population, people with disability from CALD backgrounds are about half as likely to receive formal assistance and support. The paper also pointed to programs and practices in the area of disability that have been shown to shift the needle towards greater inclusion for people from CALD backgrounds, including SSI's capacity building work in FutureAbility and our program delivery work in Ability Links.

The paper generated interest among stakeholders and resulted in media coverage in 25 outlets, including primetime ABC TV news with a possible reach of 595,000 people and radio syndications across regional NSW and Victoria. Importantly, the paper has also created opportunities to discuss the findings with policy makers and the statutory advisory body, the Disability Council of NSW.



Regional settlement

This year marked SSI's first full year resettling families in the new settlement location of Armidale. We partnered with Dr Sue Watt from the University of New England on research that monitored community attitudes towards refugee settlement in Armidale.

Through a series of pulse surveys, Dr Watt has assessed the attitudes, feelings and response to the arrival of refugees in the region. The majority of the findings highlight a positive and enthusiastic attitude towards refugees settling in Armidale. At each cluster analysis, the attitudes and understandings increased in positivity.

We believe one of the contributors to this success has been SSI's self-funded Community Engagement representatives, and we are quantifying this in new research due out in the current financial year.

Leading international discussion

The "international" in Settlement Services International is not an aspiration. It is a reflection of the critical work we do engaging with our peers to gain a global perspective on, and contribute to, international dialogue on refugee and migration issues.

At SSI, we excel in providing essential services to new arrivals in Australia but, to achieve the best outcomes, we use our knowledge and expertise to lead discussions that inform policy and help people all around the world.

One step in achieving this goal on an international stage was working with our partners, Multicultural NSW and the Australian Multicultural Foundation, to bring the International Metropolis Conference to Sydney in November 2018. This international conference on migration has a history of influencing refugee and migration policy in countries all over the world. The 811 registered attendees represented 38 different countries and, over the course of five days, they consumed 150 hours of content.

It was a significant achievement for SSI to bring this forum to Australia, given that finding a way to humanely and practically respond to the global flow of human traffic is quickly becoming the key challenge of our times.

We're living in a world where every minute 25 people are forced to flee their homes. Figures from UNHCR show that, by the end of 2018, 70.8 million people globally were displaced from their homes — representing the highest level since the UN refugee agency began 70 years ago.

above SSI launched research on CALD disability access at a Speakers Series event in February 2019.



In April 2019, SSI representatives attended a UNHCR resettlement working group hosted by the UK government and British Refugee Council. The discussions informed the development of the UNHCR-led three-year strategy on resettlement and complementary pathways. SSI shared best practice and experience from Australia and from SSI programs specifically.

During the year, SSI was also selected for an NGO expert group that will support the update of the UNHCR Integration Handbook. The expert group's purpose will be to ensure that the updated handbook reflects the progress that has been made in integration practices. It will provide the opportunity for NGOs to support the integration efforts of states and enhance third-party country solutions for refugees.

In 2018-19, SSI also participated in international forums hosted by UNHCR, where we shared lessons from Australian resettlement and elevated the voices and experiences of people who have come to our country as refugees. Refugee voice was a central theme for a meeting of the UNHCR's Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) Working Group on Resettlement in June 2019. During the meeting, our international peers spoke about how motivated and inspired they have been by the powerful work the Refugee Council of Australia is doing to elevate refugee voices.

One of the prevailing themes of these discussions was that "refugee" is a situation and not something you are born into. Being a refugee is not an endless notion. It is a fleeting time that reflects one aspect of a multifaceted identity.

Self-representation is always a priority during SSI's international advocacy work as this enables people from refugee backgrounds to advocate for their communities. During 2018-19, SSI supported people with lived experience to participate in the Refugee Council of Australia's International Policy Network and sponsored community representatives to attend key international events. We also provided funds and governance support to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network.

At a time where the UN has called for responsibility-sharing to support refugees around the world, SSI has taken the initiative to engage in international dialogue, participate in the development of the Global Compact on Refugees, collaborate with our peers in other countries and advocate for innovative solutions to refugee and migration challenges.



top to bottom
 Freedom feast in Coffs Harbour,
 Canadian government representatives visit Ignite
 SSI brought the International Metropolis Conference
 to Sydney
 Newly arrived refugees settling in regional Australia

people

SSI is undertaking steps to ensure the diversity and inclusion embedded in our service delivery is also reflected in our inclusive workforce and culture.

That process began two years ago, when we came to the realisation that, just because our workforce was culturally and linguistically diverse, it didn't mean it was inclusive. There was also scope to ensure it was diverse in all senses of the meaning

Since then, we've been working to ensure inclusion is the norm — that everyone who works at SSI can bring their whole self to work and receive respect, acceptance and support. At present, this diversity and inclusion work only encompasses SSI but, as our merger and integration progresses, we expect to incorporate Access too.



above Around 300 people volunteer with SSI each month

below An Ignite entrepreneur

To date, we've taken incremental steps in order to create sustainable culture change. One of our biggest achievements has been a significant improvement in the inclusive culture staff experience at work each day. This was demonstrated in our 2019 staff engagement survey, where diversity and inclusion lifted from one of the lowest performing areas to one of the top five strengths.

In 2018-19, other achievements included:

Inclusion: We created our own definition of inclusion and incorporated it into key touch points for staff, including leadership forums, the intranet, our end of year party and induction for new employees and volunteers.

Culture: Approximately 50 per cent of employees and volunteers have now completed our internal Culturally Responsive Practice Training program, and we are offering an additional 200 training places in the current financial year.

Disability: SSI successfully renewed its Disability Confident Recruiter status through the Australian Network on Disability. We rolled out disability awareness training and internal and external awareness raising events. Our Volunteers Team continues to demonstrate our commitment to disability and inclusion by sourcing volunteers to work in our disability sector programs and recruiting people of all abilities for volunteering roles across SSI.

LGBTIQ+: We launched our employee-led working group on gender and sexual diversity and grew awareness through an internal training program on inclusive practice, staff champions and recognition of key dates such as Wear It Purple Day. SSI joined Pride in Diversity to guide some of our work internally. Externally, we curated or hosted forums within the International Metropolis Conference, Canterbury Bankstown Council's Queer Inclusion Stories, and the Love and Disability Festival.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: SSI and Access joined forces to establish a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) working group and start developing our first RAP. We are particularly focused on connecting First Nations and CALD communities and peoples.



An SSI Speakers' Series event

SSI's diverse workforce

SSI is proud to see improvements in our workforce diversity to better reflect the communities we work with. In 2018-19, we saw a 50 per cent rise in staff who identify as having a disability, and a significant increase in staff identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. The figures below represent the changing make-up of SSI's workforce. As our integration with Access progresses, we will develop a clearer picture of the diversity of our entire workforce.

70%
of staff are from a CALD background

100+
languages spoken by staff

Staff who identify as...	2018	2019
Female	64%	66%
Male	36%	32%
Non-binary	Unknown	1%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	<1%	4.5%
Having a disability	2%	3%
LGBTIQ+	Unknown	4%

Age of staff	2018	2019
<35 years	38%	35%
35-44 years	28%	29%
45 years +	34%	36%

Workforce composition	2018	2019
Full-time	59%	67%
Part-time	9%	10%
Casual	32%	23%

SSI volunteers

An average of 300 community members gave up their time each month to make a meaningful contribution in local communities during 2018-19.

SSI's Volunteer Program has positions for volunteers, students and new graduates that reflect the diversity of our programs and the ambition of individuals we support. In 2018-19, our 45 different volunteer roles ranged from experienced industry experts helping budding entrepreneurs through to school readiness assistants connecting newly arrived families with their local community.

Volunteers are treasured members of our workforce, so it is our priority to invest in keeping them informed, upskilled and meaningfully engaged. In 2018-19, for example, we appointed a part-time trainer who facilitates workshops for volunteers that reflect the scope of their roles, duties and interests. This means volunteers are appropriately skilled and confident to undertake the tasks assigned to them.

1,595 volunteer hours contributed each week

\$3.4m in equivalent remunerative value contributed in 2018-19

50+ languages and dialects spoken by volunteers

finance

During the 2018-19 financial year, SSI achieved record high revenue levels of \$115.8 million, reflecting both our recent merger with Access entities and growth in core programs.

The newly merged SSI group of companies achieved revenue of \$115.8 million, up from the \$92.8 million in 2017-2018, and a 2018-19 net surplus of \$1.65 million, up from \$0.4m for 2017-2018.

The financial results reflect challenges including major contracts converting to a fee-for-service model; significant fluctuations in client numbers; operational losses from our community housing program, which has now been closed; and the cost of subsidiaries integration at the date of the merger with Access.

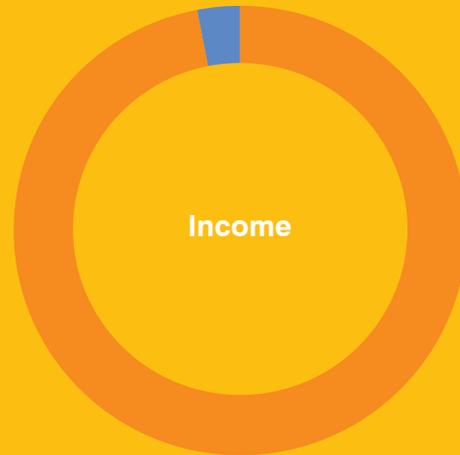
These results also reflect a willingness to invest in information technology to keep our organisation ahead of the curve and allocate funds to our self-funded, value-add initiatives such as Ignite® Small Business Start-ups, Arts & Culture and Community Engagement.

Notwithstanding this investment, the SSI parent entity achieved a surplus of \$2.94 million while the entities sitting within the Access group of companies achieved a surplus of \$0.49 million. This was partly offset by the \$1.78 million deficit in net assets of the Access entities on the date they became part of the SSI Limited consolidated group.

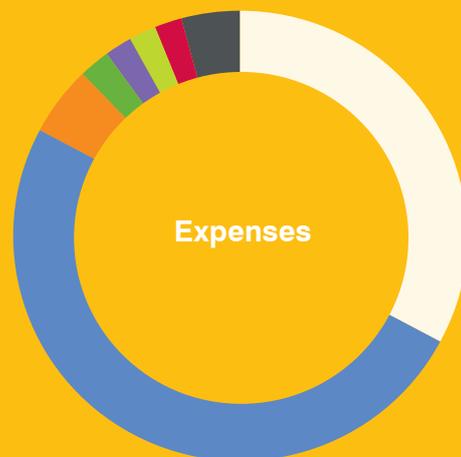
SSI's surplus was driven largely by higher client referrals than budgeted under SSI's flagship Humanitarian Settlement program, where 1,429 more refugee arrivals than budgeted were supported to settle. We also saw higher client numbers than budgeted in our Multicultural Foster Care Program and Status Resolution Support Services in both NSW and Queensland, where Access delivers the program.

An analysis of SSI's data over the past five years shows revenue levels are on trend, maintaining their upward growth trajectory in 2018-19.

The SSI Group's revenue portfolio is heavily weighted to a mix of both federal and state government funding. These contracts have an inherent variability driven by things like changes in government policy settings. The number of humanitarian arrivals, for example, often fluctuates due to offshore circumstances beyond the control of government departments or SSI.



- Government funding · 97%
- Other income · 3%
- Interest income · <0.5%



- Client support costs · 33%
- Employee benefits · 50%
- Rents and utilities · 5%
- IT expenses · 2%
- Professional fees · 2%
- Depreciation expense · 2%
- Borrowing costs · <0.5%
- Loss on disposal of property, plant and equipment · <0.5%
- Cost of subsidiaries integration · 2%
- Other expenses · 4%

Government funding accounted for \$111.8 million of SSI's 2018-19 revenue, or 97 per cent of the total revenue base, up from 92 per cent in the prior year. This reflects a high proportion of government funded programs from both Access as well as SSI. The organisation continues to strategically focus on achieving a more balanced revenue portfolio mix.

Staffing levels continue to represent a significant portion of overall costs at 50 per cent of total expenditure, up from 47 per cent, with the increase driven by the merger with Access.

SSI's cash and cash equivalents have increased to \$33.1 million, up 18 per cent from \$27.9m, with \$12.1 million held in reserves. Net assets are \$25.3 million, which represents a \$2 million increase over the previous year.

Five-year revenue trends



Changes in how we manage our finances

It is vital that SSI be effective and transparent in the way we manage our funds in supporting our clients. We are committed to continually improving our financial governance and management processes. A key focus area during 2018-2019 has been the ongoing strengthening of our internal financial controls, and alignment of financial practices across all entities with the recent merger with Access.

The integration of the finance function (see page 19) has included the simplification of the Access financial structure. This included streamlining banking services, refinancing a short-term loan, reducing intercompany transactions, aligning the finance practices and policies and procedures between SSI and Access, and aligning our people across two states into one team.

We have focused on improving the procurement function's internal controls and efficiencies with the introduction of a new procure-to-pay system, Coupa. This will streamline and automate our procurement function, which will create significant time and cost efficiencies organisational wide, and strengthen internal controls, including reducing supplier risks. Phase one of the rollout began during 2018-19, and the system will be fully implemented during 2019-20.

The financial outlook for 2019-20 remains positive, with a focus on maintaining quality services and a broader organisational focus on our operating models and obtaining synergies across the SSI group.

finance

2018-19 Annual Report Financial Summary

\$'000	2018-19	2017-18
Income		
Total revenue and other income	115,763	92,793
Expenditure		
Client support costs	38,067	32,445
Employee benefits	57,244	43,471
Rents and utilities	5,448	6,213
IT expenses	1,898	1,935
Professional fees	2,043	2,872
Depreciation expense	2,313	2,934
Borrowing costs	101	
Loss on disposal of property, plant and equipment	52	
Cost of subsidiaries integration	1,778	
Other expenses	5,166	2,476
Total Expenditure	114,109	92,346
Net surplus	1,653	445

2018-19 Annual Report Statement of Financial Position

\$'000	2018-19	2017-18
Assets		
Current	43,232	33,722
Non-current	7,2756	3,636
Total Assets	50,508	37,358
Liabilities		
Current	23,440	13,197
Non-current	1,735	872
Total liabilities	25,175	14,070
Net assets	25,333	23,288
Total funds	25,333	23,288



*Delegates at the 2018
International Metropolis
Conference*



Our 2023 Strategic Goal Themes are:



Growth & Revenue

Develop new opportunities to grow revenue and services



Operational Excellence

Lead in providing impactful and effective services



Workforce & Culture

Drive the focus on our people to build a great workplace



Client Experience

Ensure clients are at the centre of what we do



Social Influence & Leadership

Become the reference point for social impact and influence



Technology

Embed aligned systems and process across the whole organisation

SSI broke new ground in 2018-19 with a merger, the international expansion of our Ignite® program and the acquisition of new funding streams. Our strategic and business planning laid the foundation for that growth. It ensured we grew in a way that was aligned with our values and maintained the interests of our clients, members and partners.

Engaging in that business planning process itself has also led to growth in the way we think and behave. Over the past two years, more than 100 staff members have contributed to SSI's business planning. Staff from all levels and areas have contributed to our future direction through non-hierarchical, non-programmatic teams that we form to develop and execute our goals.

This structured, rigorous approach to business planning has improved our workforce's focus on strategic and business goals, individual accountability and completion of outcomes.

Staff surveys have quantified the impact of this. In 2019, our people told us they are now more confident about the future performance of SSI and think that SSI demonstrates openness to new ideas. As we enter the new financial year, we hope to maintain that confidence, innovation and rigour in how we plan, execute and measure our activity.

Our 2023 vision

The 2019-20 financial year marks our first full year with a new Executive team. With fresh eyes and minds, we have assessed the strategic and business plans that guided our achievements over the past three years.

This has enabled us to develop a vision for how we see our organisation in the year 2023. At the completion of our next strategic plan, we envisage SSI being a sustainable organisation with a client-centred delivery model. Our high-performing and values-driven teams will provide life-changing support and agency to our clients, locally and globally. We will take robust ideas and policies to stakeholders to positively disrupt and impact our sector.

In order to realise this, we have underpinned our vision with a master plan to take SSI through to the year 2023. This plan converts our high level, strategic goals into the activities that we need to execute in order to realise our vision.

2019-2020 and beyond

The 2023 strategic goal themes have in turn informed our business plan objectives for the 2019-20 financial year. This year, we'll continue diversifying our funding streams. We'll prioritise new competency frameworks and a technology overhaul that will optimise our interactions with our clients, staff and sector. We'll look at workforce planning, social impact, staff wellbeing, and new governance and outcomes frameworks. Importantly, we'll also strengthen the voice of the people who use our services to ensure they influence the design, delivery and integration of all programs and initiatives.

We are proud of everything we have achieved in this past year. But we want to be a standard setter. Our organisation is on a journey of continuous improvement, learning and growth. Where others see complexity and ambiguity, we see opportunity. We aim to ensure we are positioned to make the most of every opportunity that comes our way in 2019-2020 and beyond.



MEET GAZOIN AND HANA

Gazoin and Hana became SSI foster carers in 2013 because they had a strong interest in nurturing the cultural connections of children from their community. Initially, they cared for two siblings from the same ethnicity, language and faith. Later, they took on the long-term care of another child with significant health needs and showed extraordinary compassion and care during the long days and nights in hospitals during his recovery.

Gazoin and Hana have since supported numerous children and, with strong links in the community, have offered other carers informal and formal respite support.

During 2018-19, they participated in community discussions to explore how permanency is understood among community members and what different care plan goals mean in different religions.

After a lengthy process, Gazoin and Hana became legal guardians of three children in their care. A fourth, who has turned 18, lives independently and maintains contact with her brothers and carers.





how can you help? get in touch with SSI to volunteer, donate, fundraise or collaborate

**Want to stay informed
about what's happening at SSI?
Sign up to our newsletter at
www.ssi.org.au/mailling-list-subscription**

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