

Annual Report 2020|2021

A year of resilience

Who we are

Settlement Services International (SSI) is a provider of life-changing human and social services. We are also a leading supplier of evidence-based insights into the social sector. Our not-for-profit organisation was founded in Sydney in 2000 with the aim of helping newly arrived refugees settle in Australia. Over time, our expertise in working with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds served as the foundation for a gradual expansion into other social services.

Now, as well as those on humanitarian visas, we work with a wider group of migrants, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, children, families, people living with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the LGBTIQ+ communities.

We access federal and state funding, as well as private philanthropy, to provide pathways to employment and education, as well as health and support services for our clients.

In 2018, SSI merged with Access Community Services, which provides similar services in Queensland.

In 2020-21, we operated more than 37 programs and served approximately 52,000 people. Drawing on feedback from the communities with whom we work, we also identify unmet needs and invest in innovative initiatives to close the gaps.

We increasingly seek to influence global and Australian policy on refugees and other sectors of society, where we believe our research can inform the debate and make a positive difference.

SSI acknowledges the Federal and State Governments with whom we work, and we are thankful to be recognised as an organisation that delivers equitable outcomes for our communities. We are also thankful to our corporate partners and donors who support us as we pursue our purpose of creating a more inclusive society.

Where we are

SSI has offices in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. Our head office is in the Sydney suburb of Ashfield.

Acknowledgement of Country

Settlement Services International and its subsidiaries acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Ancestors have walked this country, and we acknowledge their special and unique place in our nation's historical, cultural and linguistic identity.

We will use our understanding of and commitment to cultural responsiveness as we welcome new cultures to Australia and implement our programs and services.

Contents

Who we are	1
Where we are	1
Acknowledgement of Country	1
Our reporting approach	2
How we create social impact	3
About us	4
Finance snapshot	4
Highlights	5
From the Chair	6
From the CEO	7
Explanation of the report	8
Stakeholder summary	10
External environment	12
Our strategy	14
Economic participation	16
Learning and growth	19
Health and wellbeing	22
Safety and stability	24
Social inclusion	28
Capacity building, advocacy and thought leadership	31
People and culture	34
Finance	38
SSI Board	41
Governance	42
Membership and partnership	43
Glossary	44
Contact us	45

This report covers the financial reporting period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. In this Annual Report, SSI refers to SSI Group unless otherwise specified.

Our reporting approach

Our FY2021 report is the second integrated annual report for the SSI Group. Through this report, we aim to communicate how we create value for the communities we serve.

Our report is informed by the principles of the International Integrated Reporting (IR) Framework. While we are still on our journey to achieve full IR, in this report we identify three of the six capitals of integrated reporting (human, financial and intellectual) as the main sources of energy by which we generate social value. We think of SSI's value as

falling into six categories, or outcomes. Most of these outcomes match the integrated reporting concept of social and relationship capital, but in this year's report we have not provided detailed mapping of outcomes to capitals.

How we create social impact

Our inputs

- Financial capital
- Human capital
- Intellectual capital

Our value creation – SSI programs and activities

- for asylum seekers, refugees & migrants
- SSI advocacy
- community engagement
- employment stewardship
- for children, young people & families
- for people with disability

Our outcomes

- Economic participation
- Learning and growth
- Health
- and wellbeing
- Safety
- and stability
- Social inclusion
- Capacity building, advocacy and thought leadership

SSI's programs and activities are designed to create value:

- For asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, by helping newcomers find their place in Australian society
- For children, young people and families, by helping people from diverse backgrounds achieve their potential
- For people with disability, by connecting individuals with the support they need to thrive
- Through employment stewardship, by helping people from diverse backgrounds find work and start businesses
- By community engagement, by fostering inclusion in social, economic and community life
- By SSI's advocacy, which speaks up for those who struggle to be heard in order to influence decision-makers

About us

Having proudly supported newcomers and other Australians for 20 years, we're pleased to see attitudes towards vulnerable and marginalised groups continuing to improve, catalysed by increased understanding as well as generational shifts.

However, despite decades of continuous economic growth, inequality in Australia persists.

Our purpose

To help create a more inclusive society in which everyone can meaningfully contribute to social, cultural, civic and economic life.

Our vision and mission

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 reach their potential.

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.

Our values

Social justice – Equity and access to all

Diversity – Respecting diversity and being non-discriminatory

Compassion – Caring, empathy and respect for the dignity of others

Quality – Dynamic, flexible and responsive service

Ethics – Professional practices and accountability

Innovation – Commitment to partnerships and excellence

Finance snapshot

SSI Group's finances withstood the first full year of the COVID-19 pandemic to end FY2021 in a healthy state. The organisation is financially resilient and well prepared to maintain the high quality of service it offers to the social sector in Australia.

FY2021 revenue was \$129.5 million (including COVID-19 support). The operating surplus was \$8.5 million.

The figures for FY2020 were \$127.5 million and \$8.07 million, respectively.

SSI has traditionally received a large percentage of its revenue from the Department of Home Affairs in exchange for supplying refugee resettlement services under the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP). In FY2021, revenue from the HSP was cut by about one half due to restrictions on refugee intake created by Australia's border closure.

However, the strategic decision made in FY2020 to diversify SSI's sources of revenue helped us through the crisis. Some of the shortfall from the HSP was offset by revenue of \$21.8 million received for implementation of two new contracts to deliver Local Area Coordination services for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). We also received \$5.7 million in other new revenue streams from employment, gambling prevention and prevention of family violence services.

We are fully committed to our diversification strategy. We are also committed to maintaining capacity in the HSP in order to respond to demand when Australia’s refugee intake resumes.

Our most far-reaching operational achievement over the course of FY2021 was undertaking significant investments in technology and systems. These investments are reflected in the rise of non-current assets on our balance sheet.

The net assets of SSI Group at the end of FY2021 stood at \$45.07 million, an increase of \$11.41 million from FY2020.

While we ended 2021 with a surplus, we are forecasting a deficit of \$16 million in our FY2022 budget due to our expectation that Australia’s border will remain closed to refugees and migrants until July 2022.

(See Finance and Strategy pages later in this document)

	2020-21 \$'000	2019-20 \$'000
Operating Revenue	115,120	121,617
COVID-19 Support	14,454	5,907
Total Revenue	129,574	127,524
Total Expenditure	121,044	119,445
Net surplus for the year	8,530	8,079

	2020-21 \$'000	2019-20 \$'000
Total Assets	81,043	65,594
Total Liabilities	35,971	31,938
Net Assets	45,072	33,656

Highlights

- 52,500+ people accessed SSI Group services(up 40.4% from FY2020)
- 12,000+ people engaged with SSI Group in workshops, information sessions and consultations,on topics such as COVID-19 and employment opportunities
- 37+ different programs offered by SSI Group

Economic participation

- 92% of Opportunity Pathways clients found work by the time they left the program
- 85% of clients in the LEAP & OPP employment programs reported confidence in their ability to get a job

Learning and growth

- 555 clients undertook overseas skills and qualifications recognition
- 355 clients upskilled and reskilled by completing an accredited course

Health and wellbeing

- 16,000+ people living with a disability were supported by SSI NSW Local Area
- Coordinator teams
- 1,200+ people accessed mental health support services

Safety and stability

- 850+ people awaiting refugee status accessed legal services
- 92% of HSP (Armidale) clients report feeling part of the Australian community

Social inclusion

- 70% of scholarship recipients (refugees and asylum seekers) report the financial support had a positive impact on their life and/or career in Australia
- 19,500+ people accessed refugee settlement services

Capacity building, advocacy, thought leadership

- 10 policy submissions were made
- 3,900 people in the general community received SSI diversity training
- 60+ citations of SSI research were made in academic journals
- 2 new Australian Research Council partnerships were initiated

From the Chair

Rather than deflating our organisation, the difficult circumstances of FY2021 demonstrated SSI Group's wonderful ability to rise to a challenge.

We successfully navigated the unprecedented conditions created by the pandemic, while protecting and retaining as many of our workforce as possible. We remained connected to community and kept advocating for the vulnerable.

However, what the challenges did do was showcase the diverse range of areas in which we now operate.

Our Care Packages scheme, for example, saw our offices opened up to distribute food and SIM cards to asylum seekers and people on temporary visas, who were otherwise unsupported. We also provided mental health assessment services.

Similarly, when COVID-19 re-emerged in many parts of the country at the end of FY2021, SSI was there to support the newcomer community.

One of the ways we did that was to use our knowledge of the information needs of disadvantaged and non-English speaking communities to provide vaccination clinics that were seen as safe spaces for everyone. We have welcomed new contracts in Victoria such as the Multicultural Foster Care Program and Multicultural Gambling Harm Prevention Services. We have developed new employment initiatives, especially in regional areas.

In Sydney's south-west, the roll-out of our Local Area Coordinator contracts for the National Disability Insurance Scheme has been particularly satisfying because it was an added service we could provide to the areas that were hit hard by the pandemic's second wave.

Through all the challenges, the strength of SSI's staff has been a constant. For that, I thank them all.

This year we welcomed two new members onto the Board, Voula Messimeri AM and Alex McCauley. And we farewelled Sophie Ray, to whom I extend my thanks and appreciation for her contribution to SSI.

Much of my attention has been on overseeing this Board renewal, and on ensuring the team continues to work well together.

SSI is a highly innovative and agile organisation. The Board aims to support the organisation's executive team in proposals that will better assist our communities while also maintaining the sustainability of our operations.

We have reviewed our approach to risk management and ensured that its balance of risk and opportunity is fit for purpose.

The organisation is on a solid financial footing and has a strong, convincing value proposition to attract employees and to be a sought-after service partner for government funders. SSI is well placed to greet the challenges ahead, which remain considerable given the lingering pandemic.

This calendar year marks my final year as Chair of the SSI Board, and it has been a privilege to play this role for such a remarkable organisation. I thank my fellow Board members for their work throughout the year, and commend our CEO Violet Roumeliotis and her executive team for their steady, prudent leadership during such turbulent times. I leave optimistic about SSI's future, with the prospects of humanitarian arrivals resuming and of conditions for SSI returning to a more normal footing. However, no matter what the coming year brings us, I am entirely certain that SSI will respond, as always, with enthusiasm, courage and perseverance.

Elisabeth Shaw

Chair

From the CEO

As we entered the 2021 financial year, SSI faced a period of enormous uncertainty. Australia's international borders remained firmly shut, and it was unclear what impacts the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic would have on the nation and our organisation.

And yet, we ended FY2021 in what in many ways is an enviable position. Our finances remain sound and our revenue stable. We have been able to continue and extend our work assisting the most vulnerable members of society. Despite some redundancies, our teams remain largely intact.

That so much has been achieved is testament to the extraordinary hard work and patience of everyone working within the organisation.

Some of our biggest achievements relate to service delivery.

In July 2020, a new team of 230 staff began delivering NDIS disability services to more than 16,000 people in the Sydney and South Western Sydney regions. This marked the first time SSI had acted as the senior partner in delivering such services. We have received positive feedback from both clients and government.

Meanwhile, with humanitarian arrivals suspended due to border closures, our Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) teams shifted focus. For example, we helped some 5,000 newcomers already on our books adapt to the challenges of the pandemic in areas such as digital literacy and home schooling.

A flexible attitude from the Department of Home Affairs allowed us to renegotiate our funding arrangements to be compensated for this work.

The year also saw the roll-out of our Multicultural Foster Care Program in Victoria, following its success in NSW. We have a four-year contract with the Victorian Government to deliver the program, which matches children from culturally and linguistic diverse backgrounds with appropriate foster homes and case worker support.

Our remote-working approach, initiated at the start of the pandemic, was a positive measure for many staff. We will adopt a more flexible approach to work as we move forward.

At the same time, remote approaches to service delivery allowed us to continue providing a high level of care to vulnerable communities. The value of this approach was reinforced by our ability to continue delivering services during the various lockdowns.

The JobKeeper scheme allowed us to retain staffing levels across the group, although stand-downs saw hours for many staff reduced. Both the Board and executive team took pay cuts of 10 per cent to help reduce costs.

To further rein in costs, a review was undertaken of the way our social enterprise businesses operate. In future, all self-funded social businesses must be able to meet their own costs by the end of their second year of operation.

FY2021 was SSI's 20th anniversary. While it may not have been the celebration we had planned, we continued to do what SSI was established to do. Namely, help the disadvantaged to thrive.

My heartfelt thanks go to every staff member, every contractor and every team leader of the SSI Group. Your efforts ensured the safe passage of our clients and our organisation through this tumultuous year.

Finally, I wish to thank Elisabeth Shaw, who will leave as Chair during the 2022 financial year. SSI has gained immeasurably from Elisabeth's careful stewardship over the past six years, and during FY2021 her guidance helped us adapt, unite and emerge stronger than ever.

Violet Roumeliotis
CEO

Explanation of the report

How we report our social value

The purpose of this Annual Report is to explain the key achievements that SSI Group made in FY2021 and to outline our plans for the future.

The way we report on our achievements and goals is guided by the concept of integrated reporting – a holistic approach that aims to explain how our organisation adds value over time. As well as detailing our achievements to stakeholders and potential funders, this approach is also intended to encourage evaluation within our organisation of how each of our activities adds to the whole.

Last year's Annual Report marked our first step towards integrated reporting. We adopted the key concept of the 'capitals of value creation' and we nominated finance, human relations and intellectual property as the drivers of successful delivery of the social outcomes we strive for.

We also introduced a discussion of our stakeholders, a concise analysis of our strategic focus, and we examined the impact of the external environment.

While it was a good first step, one shortcoming of our FY2020 Annual Report was a lack of connectivity. Integrated reporting should provide well-organised evidence about the entirety of operations, from leadership initiatives through to how the results of those initiatives fulfil the entity's purpose. This is one of many areas we have tried to improve on this year.

Move towards clearer reporting

The move towards integrated reporting in both our FY2020 and FY2021 annual reports has helped motivate SSI Group as an organisation towards accelerating the collection and interpretation of data about our activities.

Our fundamental value lies in our ability to deliver client-centred, culturally appropriate and efficient social services. We have chosen to divide this social value into six categories, which we call outcome domains. They are:

1. Economic participation
2. Learning and growth
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Safety and stability
5. Social inclusion
6. Capacity-building, advocacy and thought leadership

Details are provided later in this report. Much of the content in these pages comes from our 'Social Impact Framework' which defines our scope of activity across each domain, establishes reporting mechanisms, and keeps track of our performance.

Improved data analysis

Since FY2020, we have measured our social value performance in terms of outcomes as well as outputs. Our own literature review reveals that social scientists regard outcomes as a more reliable measure of service quality than outputs, because outcomes describe what a client has gained – not just what the service provider has delivered. Outcomes define why a project is important.

As an example of an outcome in the domain of economic participation in FY2021: 92 per cent of clients in the Opportunity Pathways program found employment by the time they left the program. By contrast, an output in the same domain would be the total number of people accessing SSI Group's employment services in FY2021: more than 13,600. In FY2021, we greatly improved the reliability of our data by exhaustively checking each set of numbers to ensure inclusion and remove duplication.

We estimate that our efforts to standardise measurements in our Social Impact Framework will result in fully comparable performance data from FY2022 onwards as we continue to build the foundations to move away from activity-driven reporting and shift towards more meaningful outcome and impact measurement.

Technology to benefit future reports

Also in FY2021, we made a series of investments in technology which, from FY2022, will improve our reporting on the relationship between each domain and the SSI Group itself.

We implemented a finance management system, which will, in FY2022, be integrated with our client management and human resources systems. Such data integration will allow us to more easily report on how activities in each of our capitals impact on the others. The aim is to allow for end-to-end, real-time information.

We have already begun breaking down data silos. In FY2021, we commenced the move to interconnected reporting by reporting the financial capital expended on each of the different domains. (See Finance pages later in this document)

Clients are our most important stakeholders. In the interests of continuous improvement, we implemented a new client feedback system in FY2021 which allowed us to respond to suggestions. Our Net Promoter Score rose to 36 in the June 2021 quarter from the initial score of 6 in the September 2020 quarter. More detail is provided about this in our Strategy section later in this document.

Staff are also a high priority stakeholder category, and further detail is provided in the People and Culture section of this Annual Report. Beyond these two categories, we consider that every stakeholder listed on page 14 of this report makes an equally important contribution to SSI Group.

In FY2021, in line with a particular focus on our sixth domain (Capacity-building, advocacy and thought leadership) we have added a new category to our list of stakeholders: the universities and research institutions with whom we partner to produce public policy recommendations.

Commitment to improvement

We want to excel in our communications to our stakeholders. Our FY2020 Annual Report received Bronze recognition from the Australasian Reporting Awards (ARA), which means it covered most of the ARA's requirements for effective reporting.

Our original hope that integrated reporting would encourage internal stakeholders to take a wider view of the organisation has been borne out. Staff support the journey towards clearer reporting, and we are determined to make further improvements over coming years.

This FY2021 Annual Report has been prepared under the general oversight of our CEO and Chair. Individual team leaders from the areas of advocacy, research and communication; client operations and insights; and corporate services supervised the inclusion of information from their areas of expertise.

A final note. We are aware of the requirements of the Global Reporting Initiative. Where possible we have included information required by the GRI disclosure standards, most directly in the People and Culture section, but we have not used the GRI reporting format.

Stakeholder summary

SSI's operations do not take place in isolation. In pursuing our strategic goals and mission, we interact with, influence, and are influenced by the following important stakeholders.

Clients

SSI is a social business that supports all sorts of Australians to achieve their full potential. Our clients are at the centre of everything we do and include people who are refugees, people seeking asylum, people living with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and First Nations people. We support children, women, men and LGBTIQ+ people.

Communities

SSI develops relationships and supports collaborations with a range of people and their communities in an effort to help achieve client outcomes including LGBTIQ+ communities, people with a disability, First Nations and culturally linguistically diverse communities.

Consortium partners

SSI is the lead partner in the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP), a consortium comprising 21 bodies, including SSI and its 11 members, and nine other NSW-based community organisations. This consortium delivers settlement services in agreed areas of NSW under the Department of Home Affairs' Settlement Engagement and Transition Support program (later in this document).

Corporate partners

We work closely with the business community through a range of corporate partnership programs aimed at developing the entrepreneurial spirit, work readiness and financial nous of our clients. Our social businesses are supported by a wide spectrum of community-minded companies and pro-bono collaborations.

Government departments and agencies

Some 90 per cent of SSI's funding comes through federal and state government departments. Many of our activities are delivered in cooperation with local governments. SSI provides governments of all levels with a means of implementing their programs and achieving social change.

Helping SSI create impact – community groups, staff at our vaccination hubs, young clients, Federal Government ministers Marise Payne and Michaelia Cash with SSI staff, volunteers and universities.

Government policymakers

Federal and state parliaments develop laws and policies which have significant impacts on our operating environment, the scope of our work and the vulnerable individuals with whom we work.

Media

Close working relationships with media are integral to the success of our programs. Strategic partnerships with organisations such as SBS improve our ability to enhance our reputation, strategic priorities and client services.

Member organisations

SSI was formed in 2000 as the state-wide umbrella organisation for 11 Migrant Resource Centres and multicultural services across NSW. By working together, SSI's member organisations can achieve more than by working alone. (See list later in this document)

Other NFPs

SSI regularly partners with other not-for-profit organisations with similar and complementary values and agendas to deliver services to vulnerable communities.

Private funders

Donations from philanthropists and foundations provide SSI with the means to develop and implement important self-funded programs, addressing needs and issues not covered by our main government-funded programs.

Staff

A competent, diverse workforce is crucial to the delivery of our services. We strive to be an employer of choice, with programs to create a safe and healthy working environment and develop the competence of individual staff members.

Universities and research institutions

We are increasingly focused on the development and use of evidence to produce improved government policy in areas affecting our client communities. We actively collaborate with organisations to access Australian Research Council funding for specific research projects.

Volunteers and interns

Volunteers and student interns allow us to extend the scope of our work, to deliver additional services and to reach additional clients.

External environment

Our context: risks and opportunities

Australia's not-for-profit (NFP) sector has been hit hard by COVID-19. While social services are being relied upon more than ever, economic conditions have put unprecedented financial strain on the sector.

As the effects of the pandemic escalated in March 2020, SSI's Board and management began to ask ourselves:

- How will COVID-19 restrictions impact our organisation and the delivery of our services and programs?
- How do we continue to operate if we predominantly deliver face-to-face services and programs, including those that are not considered 'essential services'?
- What are the implications for our existing contractual arrangements?
- How will our funding be impacted, and what does this mean for our organisation?
- Will our organisation remain solvent?
- How do we ensure the health and safety of our staff, clients and participants?
- How do we meet our ongoing legal obligations to regulators and members?
- How will we operate remotely, as our technology infrastructure is not on cloud?

Crisis management

As COVID-19 hit, SSI CEO Violet Roumeliotis established the Crisis Management Team.

The intention was to prepare the organisation to meet workplace health and safety challenges, and allow staff and volunteers to work remotely. SSI made changes to its IT Information and Security Policy to enable staff working remotely. By the time the Government announced the lockdown, SSI had already made preparations to equip its approximately 1,000-strong workforce with tools and cloud-based technology to work from home and leverage technology to deliver services to clients. Our IT systems required thorough testing to expose any weaknesses and vulnerabilities and tighten our cyber security measures. SSI secured ISO 27001 compliance certification in FY2020.

The Crisis Management Team was retired after employees settled into working from their home environment. Our CEO then established a Plan Ahead Team, which was asked to

prepare plans to navigate through the crisis COVID-19 imposed on the organisation due to closure of borders.

Financial challenges

SSI's flagship Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) was affected by restrictions to refugees who were already approved to enter Australia. HSP revenue declined by 57 per cent in FY2021. Revenue was \$21.2 million compared to \$49.72 million in FY2020. Due to the JobKeeper rebate provided by the Federal Government, SSI was able to maintain the core structure of the business. However, due to financial constraints it had to stand down (reduce the hours of) more than 200 staff under a JobKeeper- enabled stand-down direction.

As of mid-October 2021, the Federal Government had not provided any clarity on its plan to open Australia's international borders to refugees. SSI expects its business challenges to continue in FY2022. This will require us to undertake ongoing financial modelling to ensure that expenses match revenue as far as possible, and to activate contingency plans. The Board and management continue to work together to ensure timely financial information in order to enable the Board to make appropriate decisions. The finance team continues to evolve. It must repurpose its role during these difficult times by enhancing its capacity and capability to ensure financial sustainability of the SSI Group.

Our two new contracts to deliver disability services offset a little less than half of the revenue lost due to closed borders.

Health, safety and culture

SSI Group has had workplace health and safety challenges due to rapid changes to working conditions in response to COVID-19 crisis.

To meet those challenges we allowed flexible work from home arrangements to continue operating. Flexibility is required in management structure and staff communication throughout the office, with virtual meetings becoming increasingly common.

SSI Group continues to assess the evolution of the workplace as a result of changed work practices and to consider how this will impact future workforce planning.

Opportunities for FY2022

Looking towards the year ahead, SSI Group Board and senior management continue to reflect and assess which arrangements proved to be most effective during the pandemic. Although considered temporary at the time of implementation, some of the agility we discovered as a result of the pandemic may be transferrable to business-as-usual conditions. Examples include business efficiency measures such as the new budgeting system, the development of a service costing model to enable greater understanding of the total cost of producing a service or activity, and our ability to leverage technology to enhance internal efficiency and also to deliver services.

With most of FY2022 still ahead, and COVID-19 remaining a factor in political decision-making, SSI Group Board and the senior management continue to be future focused. We continuously review how to best adapt and meet environments and stakeholder expectations which can change overnight.

SSI Group's Board and management will continue to take stock of strategic opportunities by asking the following questions:

- Are there new or better ways of delivering services?
- Can technology be used to increase our impact and reach more people?
- How will we engage funding agencies?
- Are we positioned to acquire any other aligned organisations and expand our membership footprint?
- What opportunities are there to capitalise on any changes made to our workforce and how will we design our workforce of the future?

With the unforeseen impact of the past two years, FY2022 brings with it a sharpened focus on SSI's ability to mitigate risk. Introducing a comprehensive risk-management program, we now have a more rigorous annual process to identify factors critical to the successful delivery of our strategic priorities, our ability to create value and achieve outcomes long into the future.

Our strategy

In FY2021, we refreshed our strategy to ensure stable and sustainable growth after a year of challenging conditions due to COVID-19. As of October 2021, it seemed that Australia's national borders were unlikely to open to humanitarian visa holders until at least July 2022. Therefore, we must prepare for continuing financial constraints in FY2022.

SSI Group has set four strategic goals to ensure the ongoing vitality of our service delivery and business during this time. We are simultaneously diversifying our expertise into domestic social service delivery, while maintaining our core capability in humanitarian resettlement work.

Our strategic priorities:

- **To remain a client-centred organisation.**
Clients and client-centred practices will always be at the heart of our organisation.
- **To improve organisational capability.**
SSI will build capability (people, processes and technology) to meet today's and future requirements.
- **To maintain sustainable growth.**
SSI will be a sustainable organisation by diversifying sources of revenue.
- **To be a leading contributor to our sector and to society.**
SSI provides thought leadership, advocacy and policy influence.

Client-centred

In FY2021, we started providing Local Area Coordination services on behalf of the NDIA for people with disabilities in two areas of Sydney. These contracts will continue into FY2024. So far, we have received high rates of client satisfaction.

We intend to deploy our deep understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and communities considered hard-to-reach by mainstream providers – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+, homeless and psychosocially at-risk people – to expand our tendering activities for future NDIS contracts.

We introduced a client feedback system in FY2021, which enables all our clients to give their impressions of their experience of the organisation. Our client operations and insights

team uses this feedback to improve the quality of the experience and address individual concerns from clients. The information relating to individual programs, and how we have addressed the feedback, is reported to the Board. In December 2020, our Net Promoter Score rose to +36, which we believe is a direct result of this system.

In preparation for the opening of borders from July 2022, we have developed a prototype for a smartphone application that will allow newly arrived clients efficient access to the SSI Group services in their own languages.

In addition, we are developing an end-to-end Client Operating Model which will capture the full range of client interactions with our organisation, to deepen our understanding of our clients and improve client experience. It will be implemented organisation-wide by June 30, 2022.

Improve organisational capability

We are proud of the fact that we met many of our operational objectives in FY2021. We made considerable strides forward in technology in particular, and much of this work is continuing into FY2022.

We started to integrate our finance management and client management systems; we built upon our Microsoft 365 suite and implemented further collaboration products such as Teams. We identified a core competency framework, started a national stakeholder mapping matrix and developed the concept of 'One SSI', to ensure that our operations in Victoria, NSW and Queensland are unified with duplications across states minimised.

We developed a new brand strategy in FY2021. In the early part of FY2022 the focus has been on the development of the communications activities that will underpin our brand.

This will enable staff and stakeholders to better articulate SSI's value proposition and position the group for sustainable growth. We're looking forward to introducing new brand tools such as a refreshed website and digitally accessible information. Over the course of FY2022, we will also select an integrated contract management system to make tendering for contracts more efficient.

In FY2022, our People and Culture division will move from six disconnected systems to a single Human Capital Management (HCM) system. We regard this as an important strategic move, as it will allow us to match our people with emerging opportunities more readily.

Our workforce will need to be more agile in future, as many of the new programs we are working on are renewed every two to three years. The HCM will allow us to redeploy staff to other areas as quickly as possible, and identify any training needs they have.

Maintain sustainable growth

FY2021 was in many respects a year of consolidation when it comes to our business health. As well as new funding for our disability contracts, we received \$5.7 million in other new revenue streams in the areas of employment, gambling prevention and prevention of family violence.

While we ended 2021 with a surplus, we are forecasting a deficit of \$16 million in our FY2022 budget due to our expectation that borders will remain closed to refugees and migrants until July 2022.

Diversification plans for FY2022 include an assessment of the aged care sector to identify areas in which we can contribute to the wellbeing of older Australians. We plan to enter the aged care sector by June 2022.

Our registered training organisation Access Education and Skills Development, which is based in Queensland, has been approved to increase the number of qualifications it is registered to deliver nationally.

To be a leading contributor to our sector and to society

As we move into FY2022, our advocacy, communications and government relations teams achieved positive engagement with the people of western Sydney. We provided services to reinforce the area's social infrastructure as the community faced economic deprivation and social stigmatisation as a result of the acceleration of COVID-19 cases there.

Stemming from this, we were able to join with local leaders to make representations on behalf of the community to the NSW State Government. Our community engagement and Humanitarian Settlement Program teams conducted forums and briefings with community leaders to gather insights into the impacts of COVID-19, and to support effective management of health and safety protocols and vaccine take-up.

In conjunction with Western Sydney University, our research and policy team developed Foundations for Belonging 2021, a report which analyses the social and civic dimensions of integration in the early stages of settlement, with a focus on refugee women and digital inclusion.

We will continue to generate evidence and partner with universities to produce more nuanced insights like this in future. We believe SSI has an important role to play at the intersections of research, policy and practice, especially in relation to culturally diverse communities and others experiencing disadvantage.

Economic participation

Being able to participate in the workforce provides individuals with more than a source of income. It opens the way for economic independence, helps build identity and self-esteem, and deepens ties within the community.

SSI has clear goals for economic participation.

We aim to help people get equal access to job opportunities, to gain paid work and to understand how to navigate and access employment support. Our goal for those with entrepreneurial ambitions is to help them understand the Australian business environment, and to access the skills, knowledge and support they need to establish a successful business.

Over the longer term, we want our clients to feel confident about the steps they are taking towards employment or running a business. We want them to gain sustainable employment and achieve financial security and resilience. One of the ways we help people achieve these outcomes is by facilitating partnerships and connections with employers and industry bodies to create employment opportunities. Ultimately, our goal is to help our clients achieve financial security, lead active and productive lives and to have opportunities to participate in and contribute to their communities.

At the end of FY2021, we welcomed two new Victorian-based programs whose outcomes will contribute to the reporting in FY2022. These are: Jobs Victoria Advocates and Jobs

Victoria Employment Services, contracted through the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

Job Advocates will help Victorians navigate employment and training services, and to find the information, advice and additional support they need via proactive outreach in communities. Jobs Victoria Employment Services prepares culturally and linguistically diverse communities in specific Victorian regions to become job ready, and then supports people in their job for the first six months.

Following are examples of programs that contribute to the Economic Participation outcomes for our clients. Each of the programs below may also contribute to one or more of our other outcomes.

Disability Employment Services

SSI is a provider of Disability Employment Services (DES), the Australian Government's employment service that helps people with a disability, injury or health condition to find work and keep a job in NSW and Queensland. Over 80 per cent of SSI's DES participants are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, with over 80 per cent of participants also having been assessed as having complex and multiple barriers to employment.

Ignite[®] Small Business Start-ups

Starting a business is a great way to achieve economic empowerment for people who face barriers to gaining employment. SSI's self-funded Ignite[®] Small Business Start-ups initiative supports refugees, people from CALD communities and people living with disability to establish or expand their small business. In FY2021, we offered this support to people from Indigenous communities and extended our reach with new regional programs in Armidale and Coffs Harbour with partner, Lendlease.

Across the year, Ignite[®] facilitators worked with 224 entrepreneurs to establish 35 small businesses, positively impacting lives and contributing to the Australian economy.

Jobactive

SSI is a member of CoAct, a national network of locally embedded community service providers working together to create social and economic opportunities for Australia's disadvantaged. In this capacity, we deliver the Federal Government's Jobactive service to job seekers living within the Sydney East Metro region. We work closely with employers to promote workforce participation, ensuring that they are connected with job seekers who meet their business needs. We do this through activities including candidate screening, paying wage subsidies, and providing work-preparation training as well as equipment.

Leadership Empowerment Aspiration Participation (LEAP)

Funded by the NSW Government through the 2020 Investing in Women fund, the Leadership, Empowerment, Aspiration, Participation (LEAP) program is a mentoring scheme aimed at assisting job-ready, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women to gain meaningful and sustainable employment. LEAP delivers two mentoring programs with a focus on individual career pathways, training and networking to empower CALD women to strengthen their economic independence and participation.

Case study

Rose Lovelock: Igniting Armidale

Rose leads the Armidale Aboriginal Culture Centre and Keeping Place (AACCKP), an Aboriginal-run community centre, art gallery and museum of ancient cultural artefacts. Ignite[®] Small Business Start-ups has been supporting Rose and her Elders Board to strengthen their operational foundations, explore new avenues for increased visitation and revenue and to ensure the long-term sustainability of their service to community, tourists, and Indigenous artists.

Through funding from Bennelong Foundation and with the support of Ignite[®], a review of existing and potential funding sources and opportunities was undertaken.

This activity and resultant report have helped the Cultural Centre management team to better understand their financial situation and strategise according to currently available funds while creating plans for future financial stability.

Local Jobs Program

The Federal Government's Local Jobs Program aims to boost employment in those regions hardest hit by COVID-19. SSI provides employment facilitators for the program in the Sydney South West region in NSW and the Gold Coast and Wivenhoe regions in Queensland. The program focuses on reskilling, upskilling and creating employment pathways to assist people to move back into jobs as the economy recovers. Facilitators work with employers, employment services providers and training providers to develop and leverage opportunities to match jobseekers with current and emerging employment and training opportunities.

Opportunity Pathways Program

Opportunity Pathways is a NSW Government, employment-focused program that helps people receiving social-housing assistance to access education, training and employment. It is aimed at those who want to improve their employment options and who are living in social housing or receiving a Rent Choice subsidy.

In FY2021, SSI's Opportunity Pathways team supported more than 150 people to overcome complex barriers to employment. Some 41 per cent of program participants were supported into employment and 80 per cent of people we supported in pre-employment activities or received educational support to assist in securing employment. Some 79 per cent of participants this year were women. The program achieved 13-week and 26-week employment milestones for 36 per cent of people.

ParentsNext

Becoming a parent often means that an individual spends less time in the paid workforce. ParentsNext is a Federal Government initiative aimed at helping parents prepare to enter or re-enter the workforce once their youngest child reaches school age. SSI delivers ParentsNext in NSW in partnership with Metro Assist across the Sydney Metro East and Sydney South West regions, and in Queensland, Access provides services in Logan City, Ipswich and Townsville. The program helps parents to identify goals and develop skills that will help with eventually gaining employment.

Refugee Employment Services Program

The Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP) is a four-year initiative by the NSW Government that is delivered by SSI and addresses the challenges experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum in finding suitable and skilled employment opportunities. The program is focused on community-based solutions to employment through the involvement of local employers, organisations and other non-government organisations to connect eligible refugees and people seeking asylum with training, support and jobs. The NSW Government has confirmed that RESP will continue until June 2022 with an additional \$5.5 million in funding provided.

In FY2021, RESP supported more than 500 participants in overcoming education barriers and supported more than 840 participants in achieving employment. RESP also supported 555 participants to have their overseas qualifications recognised in Australia. There were 7,237 participants supported over the past three years and 3,893 employment outcomes achieved in the same period.

Learning and growth

Ongoing education and self-development can assist individuals to participate and contribute to the society in which they live. As well as providing the skills needed to join the workforce, learning provides an opportunity to grow as a person and to gain confidence, self-esteem and agency.

The ongoing education of staff and knowledge transfer across SSI enables our teams to leverage skills to better serve the needs of clients – and to problem solve more optimally. Our expected outcomes in this area are to help our people to support clients to understand and navigate educational and training pathways. We aim to improve our clients' language, literacy and other skills that are important for job readiness, and to help them gain recognition for their existing skills and qualifications to enable economic participation through employment.

In the longer term, we aim to help our clients attain the highest possible standard of knowledge and skills to make informed choices based on their needs and aspirations, and to help them develop active citizenship and an understanding of their rights and responsibilities. SSI works with communities to facilitate inclusion, such as participation in community events, and enable access to economic and social opportunities for people with disability.

Following are examples of programs that contribute to Learning and Growth outcomes for our clients. Each program may also contribute to one or more of our other delivery outcomes.

Case study

Mohamed's on the right path

Mohamed* came to Australia in 2014, alone and as a refugee. Today, he is at university studying commerce.

Mohamed faced a steep learning curve when he arrived in the country. He spoke no English and had to start from scratch. He eventually moved from Queensland to NSW, all the while working to improve his English and to support himself through TAFE to prepare for university entrance.

While studying, Mohamed looked for refugee education support opportunities. An online search led him to SSI, and he decided to apply for a scholarship. The Scholarship Program greatly reduced Mohamed's financial stress. He believes it transformed his life. Mohamed notes the self-confidence he gained with the support from organisations such as SSI has been just as important to him as the cash. Knowing there are organisations that care about refugees and are there to help has made him feel part of society. Mohamed has made friends at university. He has also worked as a volunteer for SSI, which made him feel great. He was recently proud to have been given an interview for the Allianz Graduate Program. From refugee to successful university student to potential Allianz employee – quite a journey.

*Name has been changed

Access Education and Skills Development (RTO)

Access Education and Skills Development strives to assist those most disadvantaged to reach their potential through employment and training. Our Registered Training Organisation (RTO) works with clients who need encouragement and an opportunity to get qualified and work experience that will enable them to get a job. These include the long-term unemployed, parents returning to work, benefits recipients needing to meet job search obligations, migrants and school leavers.

Access Education and Skills Development also works with clients who are already working who may be new to the job and require mentoring, support and training. Other clients may have been working for quite some time but are lacking formal qualifications that will enable them to progress in their occupation or be considered for promotion.

In FY2021, the number of students being able to attend face-to-face training was severely impacted by COVID-19.

Community Hubs Program

The Community Hubs program is delivered through primary schools and community centres and aims to support migrant and refugee families to connect with each other, with their schools, and with existing services. SSI serves as Community Hubs Australia's support agency for 20 hubs in Sydney across five local government areas. Through Access Community Services, we also operate 10 hubs across the Queensland local government areas of Ipswich and Logan. In FY2021, SSI supported 1,320 families in Community Hubs and Access supported 854 families.

NSW Settlement Partnership(NSP) and Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)

The Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program delivers settlement services across NSW and Queensland in agreed areas funded by the Federal Government's Department of Home Affairs. In NSW, SETS is delivered through the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP) – a consortium of 21 community organisations, led by SSI. In Queensland, it is delivered by Access Community Services, and contracted to Multicultural Communities Council.

SETS aims to equip and empower humanitarian entrants, other eligible permanent migrants and their communities to address settlement needs and to improve social participation, economic and personal wellbeing and community connectedness.

The program fills an important gap in the post- arrival period for eligible clients who do not have family and other community support to rely on. The program is complementary to the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and other Commonwealth support to humanitarian entrants and for other vulnerable migrants.

In FY2021, the partnership achieved high levels of client engagement, with 11,915 NSW and 1,735 Queensland clients supported across 32,369 casework and group sessions.

Key highlights were:

- In February 2021, Insights into Regional Settlement in Practice was compiled by the regional members of the NSP who serve Dubbo, the Hunter, Illawarra, the Mid North Coast and Nepean Region. The policy paper showcases key regional settlement insights and highlights the key ingredients of successful regional settlement.
- In May 2021, the NSP's preliminary report Exploring Settlement: Life in Australia was released. More than 250 clients participated by sharing their stories of building life in Australia, contributing to the findings. These clarified priorities for advocacy, highlighted
- areas for change and innovation, and identified opportunities for service improvement and increased collaboration.

In FY2021, Queensland's SETS program experienced an increase in referrals and requests for support with close to 340 families being referred to the program. There were some 6389 low- and medium-intensity sessions delivered to 1390 clients across Logan, Ipswich and the Gold Coast.

In responding to the unique needs of young people in the Queensland SETS program, the Youth Hub at Gould Adams Community Centre was opened. The Centre, which offers a safe and attractive environment for young people to meet their peers and case workers, supported improved engagement and relationship building opportunities, as well as access to social and sporting events.

The Queensland SETS program includes the Youth Transitions Support Pilot helping young refugees participate in the community through work, education and sport. In FY2021, some 129 employment outcomes were achieved, along with 133 vocational outcomes, 111 educational outcomes and 194 sports outcomes.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW)

SSI's Queensland subsidiary Access Community Services delivers the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program in the areas of hospitality, tourism, business administration, conservation and land management, and construction.

Funded by the Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, in FY2021 we were able to open new doors to skill development and create 95 employment outcomes for local jobseekers. Programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work enable SSI to further build strong partnerships with government, training providers and local employers, to create opportunities for under-employed members of our community.

Scholarships

SSI continued its collaboration with a number of donors including Allianz Australia to deliver scholarships and learning programs. Such activity contributes towards Australia's

long history of providing safe asylum to refugees, many of whom have gone on to make great civil, social and economic contributions to Australian society.

In 2016, the SSI Allianz Scholarship program was established and in FY2021 we were able to award 20 scholarships to people with a refugee background distributed across four streams – Secondary, Vocational Education and Training (VET), University, and Skills Accreditation and Qualifications Recognition. The amounts awarded ranged from \$1,500 – \$5,000.

To date, 181 scholarships have been awarded via the partnership, with a combined value of over \$400,000. The cohort of recipients ranges from teenagers who aspire to be doctors and teachers, through to a father who is re-skilling by pursuing a tertiary education.

In February 2021, the report, Evaluation of SSI Allianz Refugee Scholarships Program, was conducted pro-bono by postgraduate students in the University of Sydney's School of Project Management. This was the program's first outcome evaluation since inception and we are proud of our ability to now more optimally identify the impact achieved by such important work.

Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing play a crucial role in an individual's or family's ability to participate in society, to work and to achieve satisfaction and happiness. As well as physical health and having access to medical care, the concept takes in emotional and psychological wellbeing, too. Many of SSI's clients come to Australia from areas of conflict and may need support with both their physical and mental health. Others are living with a disability, and some face severe social stigma in relation to their sexuality and/or gender identity.

Our long-term goal in this area under our Social Impact Framework is to empower people through improved health, wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Our goals in the interim are to support people to understand, navigate and access health and wellbeing services and to maintain improved physical and mental health.

Following are examples of programs that contribute to Health and Wellbeing outcomes for our clients. Each of the programs below may also contribute to one or more of our other delivery outcomes.

99 Steps

Run by SSI's Queensland subsidiary, Access Community Services, 99 Steps is a support service for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and families affected by domestic and family violence.

In FY2021, some 185 women were supported by 99 Steps through support including care coordination, crisis counselling, advocacy, safety planning, and referrals for legal and immigration advice. Support also included court support, referrals for safe emergency accommodation, and practical and emotional support.

Clinical Practice Unit

SSI's Clinical Practice Unit provides mental health assessment and treatment and wellbeing support to people of all ages. Many clients have experienced trauma and stress due to forced migration and/or visa insecurity. The Clinical Practice Unit staff take a culturally responsive, multisystemic approach to supporting clients. The team also

provides support to carers and young people in the Multicultural Child and Family Program.

Clients may present with a range of issues including depression, anxiety, domestic and family violence and, for younger people, behavioural challenges and school struggles. The unit also supports case workers across programs, helping them find appropriate services to address clients' specialised needs.

During FY2021, the unit's five staff provided 1,082 hours of counselling sessions to clients across SSI's various programs. The unit also supports students on placement and attracts students who speak community languages. The placement gives students invaluable experiences and our services benefit from their cultural knowledge and counselling skills.

Core Supports

SSI Group business Access Community Services Limited was active in delivering the National Disability Insurance Scheme's Core Supports program throughout FY2021. Core Supports enable NDIS participants to complete activities of daily living and work towards their goals and meet their objectives. This includes transport and assistance with household chores. Some 48 participants were supported and some 30 casual support workers were employed across South-East Brisbane.

Harmony Place

Harmony Place is a community-based organisation located in Logan Central in Queensland that provides mental health support to people from all walks of life. In FY2021, Harmony Place continued to deliver mental health supports to individuals aged 18 to 65 from CALD communities who were living with severe and complex mental health challenges. This work was delivered through a team of psychologists and counsellors within the psychology clinic and mental health support facilitators within South-East Brisbane. Over the year, Harmony Place provided support to 244 participants and conducted 3,324 service contacts. This program exceeded its KPIs and was successful in securing block funding from the Brisbane South Primary Healthcare Network to continue delivering services until 2023.

Harmony Place also continued to experience growth in demand for NDIS therapeutic supports, delivering psychological therapies to NDIS participants living within South-East Brisbane. This is an area of business set to grow in FY2022, with the expansion of office space and an internal restructure of the clinic allowing for a senior psychologist to oversee clinical practice.

Meanwhile, NDIS Support Coordination was the largest area of growth within Harmony Place over the year, with support provided to 208 participants.

Support Coordination and NDIS Recovery Coach are fee-for-service programs, delivering care coordination to both children and adults living with a disability, including of psychosocial disability. We provide assistance in implementing NDIS plans to help clients meet their full potential.

Case study

Step-by-step support

Adrianna* self-referred to 99 Steps having experienced domestic and family violence perpetrated by her partner, Nasum*. Although born in the same country as Adrianna,

Nasum had been granted permanent residency in Australia and had coaxed Adrianna from their country of origin with the promise of a spousal visa.

Adrianna was 38-weeks pregnant, caring for a three-year-old child, and was being denied maternal health care by Nasum. 99 Steps assisted Adrianna to access a women's refuge, obtain urgent medical care for herself, and get baby clothes and furniture. Given her tourist-visa status, Adrianna incurred large medical debts. 99 Steps arranged for a payment plan for Adrianna and continues to support her in relation to legal issues and court orders, and in applying for Centerlink benefits for the children and for housing. She struggles to meet the day-to-day needs of her family on her limited income and 99 Steps assists with access to emergency relief funds and food parcels from various organisations given she does not have the funds to pay bills or rent.

*names have been changed.

Safety and stability

A sense of being free from danger and upheaval is crucial to an individual's ability to adjust to life in a new community and to embrace new challenges. It's particularly important for SSI's clients, many of whom have experienced trauma and conflict, or may face prejudice with regard to their race, sexuality or gender identity. We aim to help people to live in safe, stable and affordable environments, and to have access to services that support safe, stable and secure lives. This includes individuals receiving education around their rights and the role of our justice system, and also receiving support to seek assistance when needed. Our interim goals are to help people understand, navigate and access safe, accessible and affordable housing or care. We also aim to support people to understand and identify threats to their personal safety.

Following are examples of programs that contribute to Safety and Stability outcomes for our clients. Each program may also contribute to one or more of our other delivery outcomes.

Building Stronger Families

Building Stronger Families (BSF) is a women and children's advocacy program that offers a suite of interventions aimed at addressing domestic and family violence.

Funded by Women NSW, the program is a joint innovation by SSI and Relationships Australia NSW that works with men and their partners or ex-partners to assess risk, to help with safety planning and to facilitate connection with other services and supports. The accredited Men's Behaviour Change program has been adapted for different languages and related cultures, including Tamil, Arabic, Dari and Farsi.

In FY2021, the program worked with 29 men who attended groups and casework sessions. Women and children's advocacy support, which is optional for partners and ex-partners, was provided to 12 women.

Domestic and family violence

In FY2021, SSI strengthened its advocacy and service footprint to address domestic and family violence across multicultural communities as well as our client base. The Supporting U Program run in western and south-west Sydney and Coffs Harbour aims to build and deepen the capacity of local women leaders to support victim-survivors of domestic and family violence in their own communities. Also, FY2021 saw SSI awarded a three-year

Australian Research Council grant investigating the feasibility of DFV screening with refugee cohorts, as well as receiving a grant for a parenting program including child protection and DFV content.

At SSI, staff are increasingly recognised for the contribution they make to combating DFV. Our CEO was appointed to the NSW Council of DFV and Sexual Assault, and staff participate in advocacy, especially on behalf of people on temporary visas, and DFV sector meetings. Extensive advocacy through several submissions to government inquiries contributed to settlement providers being awarded funding to address DFV. And with 99 Steps in Queensland, SSI now has a fully-fledged frontline DFV service. SSI has taken steps to engage an internal DFV Practice specialist, too.

Emergency relief for asylum seekers programs

In NSW, SSI provided emergency relief payments and case management support to 876 asylum seekers not eligible for any other government income support during COVID-19. In Queensland, 250 people seeking asylum who were not eligible for other government income support were provided emergency relief support.

Humanitarian Settlement Program

The Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) is an Australian Government funded program that provides settlement support to individuals and families who have been granted permanent visa status under the Australian humanitarian guidelines.

During FY2021, the program provided close to 6,000 individuals with support around orientation and transitioning from newly arrived status to settlement.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted HSP functionality. With the number of new arrivals heavily reduced and clients exiting the program, economic necessity required that SSI restructure the program. A thoughtfully considered application-and-interview process was implemented, and impacted staff were given the opportunity to apply for roles across the organisation. This resulted in many positive outcomes.

During this period, the HSP team adapted a hybrid service-delivery model that involved face-to-face support for urgent and critical services and using remote services via various digital platforms for less-urgent matters. Clients were contacted regularly and provided with wellbeing checks and updates on the health guidance and restrictions regarding COVID-19.

Strategic planning was applied to identify the needs of the existing cohort. This involved the successful application of additional funding to support current needs and develop projects that could be maintained once the borders reopened and new arrivals began travelling to and settling in Australia again.

SSI is looking forward to supporting many humanitarian entrants who were not able to travel since mid-March 2020 due to COVID-19.

Case study

Benny's journey to self-employment

Arriving as a refugee in a country where you don't speak the language is a daunting experience. But with help from SSI, Syrian man Benny has thrived in Australia, transitioning from new arrival to entrepreneurial business owner in just over two years. Benny, his wife Ela, and the couple's six children arrived in Australia in 2019, having

spent six years living in Jordan. SSI helped them to secure accommodation in Newcastle, NSW, and supported the couple to enrol in the Adult Migrant English Program. By February 2021, and with a few casual jobs under his belt, Benny came up with the idea of his own garden care business.

Benny's case manager referred him to SSI's Ignite® Small Business Start-ups and the Newcastle Business support and community loans scheme. With a small loan and land under the Refugee Health Nurse scheme, Benny established a small commercial plant and flower garden business.

With an increasing customer base, Benny and his family have made great strides in settling in. Ela is closely connected within the Newcastle Syrian community and their children are enrolled in local schools and private swimming lessons.

"I felt so supported and you gave me a big positive feeling," Benny says of SSI.

Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme (IAAAS)

SSI delivers services under the Australian Government's Immigration Advice and Application Assistance Scheme. The scheme exists to ensure the most vulnerable members of our community have the ability to apply for asylum if they are unable to return to safety in their home country.

In FY2021, SSI assisted more family units and individuals than in previous years, including the transition of 30 cases from the government's previous Primary Application Information Service program to the IAAAS.

These families have extremely complex needs and SSI has successfully worked closely with our subcontracted partners and the wider community sector to support them.

Multicultural Child and Family Program

Established in 2013, SSI's Multicultural Child and Family Program (MCFP) delivers multicultural foster care plus other specialist child, youth and family services. Over this time, we have cared for 500 children, including 270 in FY2021 where 82 per cent of children are between the ages of 0 and 13, encompass 37 different ethnic backgrounds, 32 different languages and 13 different connections to faith.

The program aims to keep children and young people safe, connected to family, community and culture. We do this through cultural responsive practice with the support of bilingual team members, dedicated staff and carefully selected foster carers and families. The Program includes a number of key services and initiatives that assist children in the development and maintenance of their identity including the:

- Permanency Support program that works with foster carers to support children to either return to their families' care, take on a guardianship or adoption or commit to caring for children on an ongoing basis until the child is 18 years old.
In FY2021, 17 per cent of children were under a restoration care plan, four per cent were under a guardianship, one per cent adoption and 78 per cent in long-term foster care.
- Family Group Conferencing service which supports family members where there are significant care concerns and when the courts are involved.
- After Care program which maintains and builds relationships with families, communities and schools and supports young people when they turn 18 and

formally leave the State's care. We have maintained ongoing engagement with 85 per cent of the 19 young people who have left SSI's care.

- Family Preservation program which works with families where there have been reported child protection concerns with the aim to improve a family's capacity to keep the child safe at home.

The Multicultural Child and Family Program works at identifying and finding solutions that positively impact a child's sense of belonging, identity and connection. The FY2020 launch of the My Life and Me resource continued this financial year with resounding success.

During COVID-19, the program designed a revised version to help children capture and make sense of their pandemic experience and help ease their anxiety.

In late 2020, SSI welcomed a new Victorian Multicultural Child and Family Program whose outcomes will contribute to the reporting in FY2022. The Victorian Government's Department of Families, Fairness and Housing awarded SSI the contract to meet the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, becoming Victoria's first multicultural foster care agency. The program's area of service will focus on the northern suburbs of Melbourne.

Status Resolution Support Services

The Australian Government's Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program provides support to approved persons who are transitioning into the community from immigration detention; living in the community under residence determination; or living in the community on a bridging visa. The support may include temporary accommodation, income support and case management.

In FY2021, 771 asylum seekers were supported in NSW and 280 in Queensland. The asylum seekers who remain on SSI's SRSS program have significant barriers to employment including mental health, physical health, domestic violence, and child protection issues.

Strong and Resilient Communities

The Strong and Resilient Communities program aims to build strong, resilient, cohesive and harmonious communities to ensure that individuals, families and communities have the opportunity to thrive, be free from intolerance and discrimination, and have the capacity to respond to emerging needs and challenges. Thoughtfully designed community forums such as the Ipswich Diversity and Inclusion Forum developed by our Queensland subsidiary, Access Community Services for Refugee Week 2021, are a demonstration of how we support and unpack emerging needs and challenges. In this forum, Access presented its learnings on settlement and the gaps that remained for new arrivals and established CALD communities primarily in the health, employment and youth spaces specifically in the Ipswich region.

Case study

Foster carers keep cultural identity strong

Esperance* and her five siblings first came into care in 2013 when she was aged eight. While she had been given a traditional Burundian name, she insisted on anglicising it. Because there was no foster carer immediately available who culturally matched the children's needs, they were matched to a carer who was firmly committed to helping them

maintain connections with their birth culture. This included learning about traditional foods, how to braid African hair, and helping the children connect with families in similar circumstances.

But in her teens, Esperance struggled with her sense of identity and belonging and she began pushing boundaries. This led to tensions with her foster carer. Eventually, she identified a community member she wanted to be fostered by and this move was facilitated.

The change has had a positive effect. Esperance has gone back to using her birth name and has been able to more deeply explore her cultural history and her cultural life story. She is maintaining contact with her siblings and has recently rebuilt a connection with her original foster carer who she refers to as her “grandmother”.

* Name has been changed.

Social inclusion

It's one thing to live in a community, another to feel a welcomed and valued part of it. Social isolation can limit an individual's ability to reach their potential, achieve happiness and participate in and give back to society. Promoting social inclusion among our participants and clients, and building initiatives and practices to improve social cohesion with the wider community are key principles of SSI's Social Impact Framework – and a foundational element of our mission.

SSI's long-term outcomes goals in this area are to give individuals the autonomy and freedom they need to develop as people and live the lives they choose. This includes having the ability to express themselves, enjoy a social life and achieve a greater sense of belonging. In the interim, our goal is to provide a platform for individuals to preserve cultural identity and values. We strive to link people to community-based organisations and activities that promote social cohesion and community participation. These activities help people develop social bonds, social bridges and social links integral to their sense of agency and empowerment. This in turn helps them develop a sense of their rights and social responsibilities.

FY2021 marks the first year that the delivery of Local Area Coordination services in partnership with the National Disability Insurance Agency is included among our Outcomes.

Following are examples of programs that contribute to social inclusion outcomes for our clients. Each program may also contribute to one or more of our other delivery outcomes.

Arts and Culture Program

Over FY2021, the Arts and Culture program implemented more than 15 projects and more than 30 activities through its program framework pillars.

The program engaged more than 240 artists and an audience base of more than 9,900 – an increase of about 40 per cent over the previous period due to the pivot to online activities due to COVID-19.

More than 40 cultures were represented in the programming and more than 75 artists with refugee and asylum seeker experiences were supported on a one-to-one basis. That is almost double the number supported in the previous period.

BEMAC

Brisbane Multicultural Arts Centre (BEMAC) engages, develops and showcases culturally diverse artists, supporting social inclusion and belonging regardless of origin, beliefs, language, or level of ability. BEMAC aspires to be Queensland's leading multicultural arts development organisation, and

on behalf of the Queensland Government, BEMAC manages the \$11 million Queensland Multicultural Centre (QMC) in Kangaroo Point.

Amongst many programs during FY2021, BEMAC hosted the Brisbane City Council QUBE Effect 2022 – a six-month music development program showcasing 24 musical acts.

BEMAC supports Arts Queensland's Regional Arts Service Network which increases arts engagement in the regional areas

of Ipswich and Logan through building capacity, strengthening networks, and celebrating stories. In FY2021, BEMAC's activities attracted 14,000 participants, with 870 artists and arts workers engaged.

Community Forums

Two Leaders' Dialogue sessions were held in FY2021.

- South West Sydney COVID Persistence, referencing the Community Pulse Check Report: facilitated
- by ABC journalist Danuta Kozak, attended by 29 community leaders from south-western Sydney. It was held on September 28, 2020 via Zoom.
- The Federal Government Announcement on Sustained Cuts to the Humanitarian Program: facilitated by ABC journalist Lydia Feng, attended by 20 community leaders from metropolitan and regional NSW, Victoria and Queensland. It was held on December 7, 2020 via Zoom.

SSI also convened seven client and community roundtables about the impact of COVID-19 on women, in the regions, on the multicultural arts sector and on employment.

Local Area Coordination Program

SSI's Local Area Coordination (LAC) program began in June 2020. Under the program we are a National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) 'partner in the community' for the Sydney and South-Western Sydney service areas.

Over 200 staff members support approximately 16,500 participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). LAC staff members bring diverse experience and a deep understanding of the needs of people with disability in local communities, through previous experience with LAC, Ability Links and Future Ability programs.

The program's intake officers respond to approximately 900 calls and 350 emails per month from the public. Six per cent of the calls are conducted in one of 12 community languages spoken by intake officers.

Highlights from FY2021 include:

- Highly successful implementation of the LAC Program within SSI, onboarding 200 new staff and 16,500 clients in three months.
- Achieving or exceeding the benchmark for key performance indicators (KPIs), leading to a low-risk rating from the NDIA by June 2021. As early as December

2020, at the first contract management meeting, the LAC team achieved a compliance rating of 94 per cent.

- Employment of four Aboriginal staff members in identified positions, providing authentic connection with local communities.
- Celebrating International Day of People With Disability (IDPWD) in December 2020 featuring the NSW Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and a successful business owner with disability who had achieved success with the support of SSI's IgniteAbility® Program.

Volunteering

Each year, SSI draws on the contributions of hundreds of volunteers, students and corporate partners to deliver services to some of the most vulnerable individuals and families in Australia. Our volunteers work in a variety of capacities including mentoring, entrepreneur coaching, housing assistance, teaching English, gardening, playgroups, and assisting in social enterprises.

During the pandemic the Volunteer Program embraced technology to enable virtual volunteerism. Video conferencing and remote volunteerism opened up previously unexplored methods of working that reduced geographical barriers to engagement, training and networking events.

More than half of our voluntary workforce speak a language other than English, including Arabic (30%), Urdu (6%), Farsi (6%), Hindi (5%) and Dari (4%). In FY2021, four corporate volunteer groups were hosted by SSI at The Experience Centre.

Case study

Zhen Hua Lin's new life

Shortly after migrating to Australia in 2015, Zhen Hua Lin suffered an allergic reaction to antibiotics which left him vision impaired.

Within three weeks, Lin went from enjoying an active life to being confined to a nursing home.

Coming to terms with this new way of living when first arriving in Australia was challenging and distressing. Lin also faced the barrier of being a non-English speaker, which made it difficult to explain what help he required.

With the support of SSI and bilingual staff member Li Hua Chu, Lin learned how to rebuild his life. Li works as an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Consultant for the Local Area Coordination (LAC) program and was able to help Lin access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and get the support he needed. Before his first review meeting, Li helped Lin understand the complexities of the scheme, translating information that was previously only accessible in English. She accompanied Lin to his first review meeting as his supporter and advocate to help explain his situation and needs.

Now, with his confidence boosted, Lin has the agency to establish his own massage business through SSI's IgniteAbility® Small Business Start-ups, enjoys being able to give back to the community by helping other Chinese-speaking people, and has discovered a passion for running.

Capacity building, advocacy and thought leadership

A challenge faced by many of the most vulnerable members of society is shifting the unfair and stubborn perception that they are somehow of less value than others. While any human being can find themselves in a vulnerable situation, unconscious biases can lead society to vilify individuals in this position, assigning them labels like refugee, asylum seeker, unemployed, gender diverse, single mother or person with a disability, rather than acknowledging the nuanced and valuable human being within.

Our focus on capacity building, advocacy and thought leadership is based on developing and using evidence to engage with policymakers and program designers to more effectively promote the needs and strengths of people experiencing a period of vulnerability. Our interim goal is to directly help other relevant service providers to understand the barriers faced by individuals and families experiencing vulnerability. We also seek to familiarise governments with the voices, experiences and stories of the people with whom we work and to help policymakers understand their world. Our long-term goal is to help services better respond to the needs of vulnerable people and the individuals who SSI supports. We develop initiatives and networks to enable trust and collaboration. We partner with all levels of government, with multiple agencies and educational institutions, community organisations, service providers and advocacy groups. Following are examples of initiatives that contribute to capacity building, advocacy and thought leadership. Each of the programs below may also contribute to one or more of our other delivery outcomes.

Advocacy and Government Relations

Through our advocacy and government relations work, SSI aims to speak up for those who struggle to be heard. To provide optimal support to society's most vulnerable members, and to remain effective in delivering services that improve the lives of our clients, SSI's Advocacy, Research and Communications team campaigns for change to influence public narrative, imprint upon decision-makers and impact policy. We do this by creating evidence-based media and awareness campaigns, government briefing tools and social policy indices that support our thought leadership agenda and outcomes framework. In FY2021 key campaigns included:

- SSI 20th Anniversary '20 for 2020' stories reaching more than 50,000 via social mediachannels Refugee Week reaching a potential 40 million people with 25 news and 25 broadcast articles globally with 50 international and domestic newsand broadcast articles
- Refugee Council of Australia and UNHCR campaign on the impact of COVID-19 on Australia's border restrictions for the 8,000+ refugees granted visa status but kept strandedoverseas
- Ongoing engagement with all levels of government including more than 50 briefings, issues management such as changes to the SRSS program, and the curation of key ministerialvisits including International Women's Day, International Day of People with Disability
- Western Sydney Multicultural COVID-19 Hot Spotbriefing campaign
- Diversity Training workshops delivered

Diversity Training

SSI's Diversity Training provides learning experiences that transform how people respond to diversity in ways that are thought-provoking, inspire curiosity, and build confidence to engage more effectively with cultural diversity.

The program, established in 2016 as a fee-for-service initiative of SSI, delivers training to government, non-government and corporate organisations. In FY2021, the program received funding from the Australian Department of Social Services for the CultureReady project. This project aims to build the ability of NDIS-registered service providers to be more responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse participants and their families. FY2021 was an extraordinary year for the program, as it had to quickly adapt to the pandemic shutdowns and convert all its training to online delivery. Key achievements include:

- 4,300 participants
- 298 workshops delivered
- 96% saw our training as relevant to their work

As a result of the SSI's Diversity Training program's shift to an online model, the fee-for-service program was able to expand its footprint and reach audiences across the world.

Case study

Disability sector gets CultureReady

'CultureReady: An NDIS workforce for our diverse community' was a project concept developed by SSI Diversity Training and funded by the Australian Department of Social Services to address the low participation rates of people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in the NDIS. Through a series of workshops, CultureReady aims to improve the capability of disability service providers to respond to the intersectional needs and aspirations of people with disability from CALD backgrounds. SSI took its extensive experience delivering services to people with disability, particularly those from a CALD background, and shared it with the disability sector through four workshops aligned to the priority areas of the 2018 NDIS CALD Strategy.

Due to be completed at the end of November 2021, the project has demonstrated how SSI Diversity Training can work with government and sectors to design and deliver national workforce capacity building projects.

So far, the project has:

- delivered 193 workshops
- reached 2,488 participants nationally
- been rated 96% of participants as being relevant to their work
- motivated 92% to change practices to be more culturally responsive after attending

International efforts

In FY2021, SSI participated in a number of global humanitarian events, made written submissions, and endorsed international guidelines. In March 2021, we were involved in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) and hosted a global webinar. SSI was also one of the first organisations in Australia to sign The Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, and it is committed to taking climate action. We

were one of 21 organisations globally that worked with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) over the last two years to update the content of its Integration Handbook. Our International team engages with the United Nations and other global non-government organisations and partners to implement strategic goals of strengthening the capacity of the sector through new partnerships and contributing to the sector through influencing and developing policy that affects the communities with whom we work.

Multicultural Peer Network Program

The Multicultural Peer Network (MPN) is funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) through the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) stream. It aims to increase social and community participation for people with lived experience of disability, to increase independence and to improve access to the NDIS.

In FY2020-21, the MPN recruited and trained 28 lived-experience facilitators to facilitate community discussion on five topics, including NDIS access, circles of support, volunteerism, self-advocacy, and employment. Lived-experience facilitators gain up to 72 hours of employment in their role.

Over 150 peer-support sessions were held over the year, reaching over 500 people across greater Sydney and regional NSW. Peer Networks are facilitated in Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Greek, Farsi, Thai, Bhutanese, Nepalese, Kurdish Kurmanji and English.

All lived-experience facilitators participate in an independently facilitated Community of Practice.

The MPN is supported and informed by an external reference group that meets quarterly with representation from government, not-for-profit and disability sector organisations.

Research and policy

SSI published the policy paper, Stronger Starts, Brighter Futures, which explored the early development trajectories of children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Australia. The paper, developed in partnership with the Telethon Kids Institute, was launched by Anne Hollonds, the National Children's Commissioner, in an online event in March. Early education in pre- school years is critical to a strong start in life, yet the analysis, using data from the Australian Early Development Census, found CALD children were more likely to be developmentally vulnerable at school entry than non-CALD children. They are also less likely to attend early childhood education such as preschool, daycare and playgroups. In 2018, almost one in four children starting school in Australia were from CALD backgrounds. The research points to ways to improve attendance by this growing segment of the population through a mix of universal and targeted approaches involving governments, policy makers, early education providers and settlement services.

In FY2021, the SSI Group also published the first wave of Foundations for Belonging. The research, in partnership with the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University, shed light on social and civic dimensions of refugee integration. Newly arrived refugees reported strong family and community connections, have high levels of trust in their neighbourhoods, government and civil society institutions and are committed to fulfilling their social and civic responsibilities in Australia. The online launch, in partnership

with the Refugee Council of Australia, had over 300 attendees drawn from government, philanthropic and non-government sectors.

Women and Girls Strategic Plan

At SSI we are acutely aware that women and girls do not always achieve their full potential and may need targeted intervention to reach their goals. In FY2021, SSI developed a Women and Girls Strategic Plan 2021-2023 focusing on the advancement and protection of the rights of women and girls associated with SSI. The aim of the Strategic Plan is to drive change towards equal choice, prosperity, and economic empowerment.

The SSI Women and Girls Strategic Plan targets all women employed and supported by SSI, with a particular focus on women of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, who make up a significant proportion of our community. The plan recognises the breadth of gender diversity. It encompasses transgender women, people who identify as non-binary and other diverse genders, acknowledging the intersectional layers of identity.

This plan presents our progress so far and our strategic priority areas as we continue to achieve greater outcomes for women, and in turn their families and communities. An implementation committee monitors progress and ensures that the organisation stays true to the plan.

People and culture

More so than for many other organisations, SSI's core business revolves around human interactions.

The relationships our people build with vulnerable members of society, within their teams, and with managers and leaders, are the cornerstone of our operation.

Effectively managing, supporting and growing our staff and volunteers is critical to our ongoing success.

From a people management perspective, FY2021 was remarkable both for the way in which the organisation continued its agile response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and also due to a major restructure of the People and Culture function.

In terms of the pandemic, a freeze on new humanitarian arrivals and requirements for social distancing both impacted our people's ability to do their regular work. At the end of FY2020, we successfully pivoted to a remote working and service-delivery model and for the majority of FY2021 work continued to be conducted largely away from our offices. That this approach was viable reflected considerable IT support as well as initiatives including a new flexible-working model, staff check-in surveys, wellbeing webinars and a desk-booking system for those who needed to attend formal workplaces. In March 2021, we commenced the process of returning staff to our offices with our theme of adapt, unite and emerge stronger.

Meanwhile, the successful use of the JobKeeper subsidy in combination with more than 200 JobKeeper-enabled staff stand-downs allowed us to retain a large proportion of our valuable people. There was a limited number of redundancies offered to staff working with Humanitarian Settlement Program service delivery and social businesses.

Simultaneous with our response to the pandemic, the People and Culture function was restructured around six new 'centres of expertise' and a three-year road map was created for developing SSI as a compelling value proposition for talent. Future milestones on the

road map include achieving full automation of HR services and the encouragement of innovation and growth.

The identified centres of expertise (around which the rest of this section is based) are Talent and Organisational Capability; Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing; Work, Health and Safety; Business Partnering and Talent Acquisition; Portfolio and Innovation Management; and Operations and Rewards.

SSI's people at a glance

Employees	988	
Female	694	(70%)
Male	294	(30%)
Casual	214	(22%)
Full time	692	(70%)
Part time	82	(8%)
Back office	140	(14%)
Front line	848	(86%)
Pro bono	163	
Volunteers	149	(91%)
Students	11	(7%)
Interns	3	(2%)

Diversity of new hires FY2021

Total number of new hires	302	
Female	227	(75%)
Male	75	(25%)
Non-binary	0	
Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples	7	(2.3%)
Born outside Australia	160	(53%)
First language other than English	112	(37%)*
Identify as persons with disability	11	(3.6%)*

*Total for Access not known and not included

Talent and organisational capability

To help assist staff members in reaching their full potential, a Core Competency Framework was developed and socialised with senior leaders during the year. This spells out the skills and behaviours people require to thrive within the organisation, with key attributes in the framework including delivering results, being resilient, creating solutions, communicating effectively, working collaboratively, focusing on clients, and personal learning.

To enable leaders to plan ahead, work was also undertaken to map the organisation's current capability requirements. This work informed a number of policies including 'One SSI', an initiative to create a more cohesive organisation.

Meanwhile, in its third year, our Achieve@SSI annual performance-planning framework was streamlined, reducing the number of forms required to take part. There was a focus on facilitating more productive conversations between staff and leaders.

Business partnering and talent acquisition

SSI acquired Queensland-based social business Access Community Services in 2018. While work was undertaken in FY2019 and 2020 to merge the two organisations, it was recognised during

FY2021 that divisions remained and that there was duplication of services. People and Culture staff supported the 'One SSI' initiative to finalise the integration, something that was ultimately achieved by year end of FY2021. This has created a united organisation with one strategy and business plan and one leadership team.

Another major change for the organisation during the year was a restructure of HSP service delivery, which in turn impacted HSP staff. Due to a COVID-19-related freeze on humanitarian arrivals and a decrease in workload it was determined that the program's workforce of 134 full-time employees needed to be cut by 50 positions. Some 11 staff were successfully redeployed across other programs, while redundancy was offered to 38 employees.

JobKeeper stand downs of some 211 employees were undertaken between June and December 2020. From January 2021, most staff returned to their contracted hours.

Portfolio and innovation management

As SSI's reputation and social impact continues to grow, so too does the need for our people to be technology and data literate. In FY2021, we defined the People and Culture Technology Transformation Roadmap, comprising human capital management, people service management, and employee engagement solutions.

Culture, inclusion and wellbeing

A highly diverse workforce has long been a strength of our organisation, and this year we continued our journey to grow our inclusive culture.

We received recognition for our work in the LGBTIQ+ space, when we were awarded Bronze Employer for a second year running at the LGBTQ Inclusion Awards 2021.

Importantly, some 100 staff completing our internally developed and facilitated training program, Gender and Sexual Diversity Inclusive Practice. We achieved Disability Confident Recruiter status for the fourth consecutive year through Australian Network on Disability. Staff members were invited to speak on diversity and inclusion to share our learnings and insights at a number of external forums, including Diversity Council Australia and Pride in Diversity.

The introduction of Cultural and Wellbeing Leave from May gives staff access to up to three days of paid leave to honour days of cultural significance and take care of their wellbeing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are provided five days of Cultural and Wellbeing leave per year, in line with our commitment to reconciliation.

The thoughts and feelings of our people help shape our policies. During forced office closures, we ran staff surveys in July 2020 and January 2021 to check in on our people, the support they needed and how they felt about returning to work. Pleasingly, around 75% responded and the majority of people (88 per cent) felt they had adequate support from their leaders. Some 48 per cent of staff returned to office in March 2021 with subsequent office closures occurring in line with government and public health requirements during the remainder of the reporting period. Wellbeing webinars were also run throughout the year, to encourage mindfulness and help support staff during a particularly trying period.

Meanwhile, a new approach to flexible working implemented in January 2021 introduced an optional nine-day fortnight for full-time staff (compressing 10 working days into nine). This supported other types of flexibility, enabling any full-time and part-time staff member to make a formal request for flexible working. Some 76 per cent of SSI staff and 31 per cent of Access staff used at least one compressed fortnight from commencement in February 2021 to June 2021.

Also, some 31 female and four male staff members took parental leave during the year.

Operations and rewards

The framework and guiding principles for our remuneration and benefits policy were signed off by the CEO and Board in FY2021.

The concept of Job Family architecture, meanwhile, was introduced to help determine the optimal organisational design for the business. Under the process, some 330 existing position titles were translated into 115 generic position titles. This approach is expected to make external remuneration benchmarking easier, provide a foundation for our capability framework and help in workforce planning.

The organisation also collaborated with professional services firm AON to conduct salary benchmarking in April 2021. The process is aimed at helping us track changing trends in salaries, benefits and compensation within industries, and also increasing employee motivation and retention by offering competitive packages.

Work, health and safety

Strengthening our health and safety practices was particularly important in FY2021. We focused on safety leadership and awareness, with 18 training sessions and a refresh of our Work Health and Safety Committee. Attention was placed on improving the incident management framework, workplace inspections, site safety audits and additional consulting was undertaken with health and safety representatives to implement COVID-19 safety protocols.

Some 20 COVID-19 Safety webinars were run for all staff, 18 WHS training sessions were completed, plus a series of Mental Health First Aid accredited training sessions were held with 45 people trained.

Overall, SSI is performing well since the move to a Loss Prevention and Recovery strategy, with claims kept to a minimum and a focus on risk reduction strategies.

Our Reconciliation journey continues

SSI believes it has a role to play in a more unified, equal and respectful nation. We have a deep commitment to knowing and understanding more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' wide-ranging cultures, beliefs, and kinship systems.

Two years ago, we established a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) working group called Walking Together to gather input from staff, clients and community and to focus attention on developing our first RAP. While COVID-19 delayed our internal timeframes, work continued in FY2021 and Reconciliation Australia conditionally endorsed our RAP at the Innovate level in July 2021. Implementing an Innovate RAP signals SSI's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Artwork created for SSI in 2019 by Julie Ruttley, a Gomeroi woman from Northern NSW, and former SSI staff member.

Finance

Overview

In FY2021, SSI Group achieved a revenue figure of \$129.57 million and delivered an operating surplus of \$8.5 million. The revenue recorded was marginally higher than in FY2020, when the revenue achieved was \$127.52 million, to deliver an operating surplus of \$8.07 million.

This result was achieved in spite of the impact that borders closed to refugees had on the organisation. SSI Group's flagship Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) was affected by restrictions to refugees who were already approved to enter Australia. HSP revenue declined by 57 per cent in FY2021: from \$49.72 million in FY2020 to \$21.2 million in FY2021.

Factors that minimised the financial impact on SSI from the closed borders and broader impact of COVID-19 included: the implementation of the Local Area Coordination program awarded by the Department of Social Services; support received from the Federal Government's JobKeeper rebate; and sound financial management. The total revenue generated during FY2021 included \$14.45 million of support received from the JobKeeper rebate. The amount received from JobKeeper in FY2020 was \$5.9 million. The net assets of SSI Group at the end of FY2021 stood at \$45.07 million, an increase of \$11.41 million from FY2020. The difference between the increase of \$11.41 million and operating surplus of \$8.5 million relates to the unrealised gains made from the long-term financial investments and increase in market value of land and buildings owned.

The revenue trend over the past five years shows that the upward growth trajectory has been maintained. While government funding continues to be the major source of revenue, the implementation of the Local Area Coordination program and broadening of the revenue base through other NDIA programs and employment programs, has provided SSI Group with the means to achieve financial stability in times of uncertainty.

Staff costs and client support costs continue the historical trend of comprising a high proportion of the cost base. In FY2021, these components made up 86 per cent of total expenditure, similar to FY2020.

However, staff costs as a proportion of total costs have gone up from 53 per cent in FY2020, to 65 per cent in FY2021. This reflects a greater proportion of staff required to

support the Local Area Coordination program and a commitment to maintain adequate infrastructure in the Humanitarian Settlement Program to respond to the change in environment and a decline in client support costs provided to the Humanitarian Settlement Program.

Figure: SSI Group Revenue

Government 84%
Other 4%
Investment Income 1%
COVID-19 Support 11%
Total Revenue \$129.5 million

Figure: SSI Group Expenditure

Client Support Costs 21%
Employee Benefits 65%
Depreciation Expenses 4%
Rents & Utilities 3%
IT Expenses 2%
Professional Fees 2%
Borrowing Costs < .5%
Loss on Sale of Fixed Assets < .02%
Other expenses 2%
Total Expenditure \$121 million

The Statement of Financial Position shows an increase in non-current assets, reflecting the investments made in technology and systems. The increase in financial assets reflects an additional \$5 million directed to longer term investments and over \$2.1 million of unrealised gains made from the investments.

The following figure shows the expenditure mapped to program outcomes during FY2021. The outcomes reflect the goal of SSI Group to deliver specific and measurable results to improve the lives of both recently arrived clients and other cohorts in our broader communities. Both the Federal and various state governments' commitment to the program outcomes championed by SSI Group is reflected in the graph showing the outcomes by funding source.

Figure: Program outcome expenditure

Economic Participation 14%
Learning and Growth 17%
Health and Wellbeing 5%
Safety and Stability 39%
Social Inclusion 25%
Capacity building, advocacy and thought leadership 1%
Total Expenditure \$121 million

Investing in managing our finances

During the 2021 financial year, SSI made further investments to strengthen its financial management and governance functions. A new budgeting system was implemented,

providing a platform to improve the planning and monitoring functions. This investment, together with further enhancements made in FY2021 to the finance system and procurement system, has given SSI the ability to manage its financial affairs more effectively and to facilitate future planning. In addition, financial information is more accessible to a broader base of staff than before, arming them with better means to make sound decisions.

The efficiencies gained from system investments have provided opportunities to develop the skills of the finance team. They have also prompted SSI to create roles that are specifically required to support the organisation grow, and to anticipate and manage financial risks in the future.

Overall, these measures, and the operational analysis taken to navigate SSI through the challenges posed by COVID-19, have improved the long-term financial resilience of the group. SSI has much to look forward to, with a healthier balance sheet, a broadening revenue base and cautious optimism that the doors will open to those looking to come to Australia for a safer and better life in the near future.

2020–21 Annual Report Financial Summary

	2020-21 \$'000	2019-20 \$'000
Revenue		
Operating Revenue	115,120	121,617
COVID-19 Support	14,454	5,907
Total Revenue	129,574	127,524
Expenditure		
Client Support Costs	25,500	39,011
Employee Benefits	78,942	63,090
Rents & Utilities	3,285	3,942
IT Expenses	1,975	2,631
Professional Fees	2,671	2,484
Depreciation Expenses	5,234	5,161
Finance costs	433	514
Loss on Sale of Fixed Assets	17	6
Other expenses	2,986	2,606
Total Expenditure	121,044	119,445
Net Operating Surplus	8,530	8,079
Revaluation of Property, Plant & Equipment	732	-
Market Movement in Financial Assists	2,153	244
Other Comprehensive Income	2,886	244
Net Surplus	11,416	8,323

2020–21 Annual Report Statement of Financial Position

	2020-21 \$'000	2019-20 \$'000

Assets		
Current	35,038	31,418
Non-current	17,830	13,800
Financial Assets	28,175	20,376
Total Assets	81,043	65,594
Liabilities		
Current	29,930	22,960
Non-current	6,041	8,978
Total Liabilities	35,971	31,938
Net Assets	45,072	33,656

SSI Board

The Board welcomed two new Independent Directors during FY2021. One is Voula Messimeri, who has enjoyed a long career in the community and multicultural services sector, and the other is Alex McCauley, who has a background in innovation and geopolitics. And we farewelled Sophie Ray in November 2020 who had been on the Board of SSI since 2017.

Meanwhile, Chair of the Board Elisabeth Shaw has signalled her intention to step down from the position in FY2022.

Elisabeth Shaw Chair

Elisabeth Shaw has been on the Board of SSI since July 2015, and Chair since November 2016. Elisabeth is CEO of Relationships Australia NSW and is a senior consultant at The Ethics Centre. She has a background as a clinical and counselling psychologist and has taught masters programs in business, clinical practice and professional ethics. She is a Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Nathan Hagarty

Nathan Hagarty is Chair of Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, an SSI member organisation. He is a Councillor of Liverpool City Council, and Chief of Staff to the Federal Member for Werriwa, Anne Stanley MP. Nathan has a Bachelor of International Studies from Western Sydney University, and has accreditation in project management and information and communications technology.

Scott Machin

Scott Machin is Chair of Metro Assist Limited, an SSI member organisation. Scott has extensive experience in the financial services industry, including senior leadership roles in strategy, finance, advice and program management. At present he is a consultant to the financial services sector. Scott holds a Bachelor of Economics, Master of Business Administration, and a Graduate Diploma in Applied Finance and Investment.

Alex McCauley

Alex McCauley is CEO and Executive Director of Australia's peak advocacy group for tech start-ups, StartupAUS. He is Chair of the Startup Advisory Panel for the Department of Home Affairs' Global Talent Scheme, and has advised policymakers at all levels of government. He represented Australia as a diplomat in Israel from 2012 to 2015.

Elfa Moraitakis

Elfa Moraitakis is the CEO of SydWest Multicultural Services, one of SSI's member organisations. Elfa has a degree in Sociology and Modern Greek (Honours) from the University of NSW, and an Associate Diploma of Applied Management from the Australian Institute of Management. She has an extensive background in developing services for linguistically disadvantaged communities.

Voula Messimeri AM MAICD

Voula Messimeri has held Board roles, including as Chair of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, Deputy Chair of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, inaugural Chair of Women's Health in the North, and Chair of InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence. She has also held appointments on a wide range of ministerial state and federal advisory structures.

Sophie Ray

Sophie Ray joined the Board of SSI in November 2017. A business owner and experienced non-executive director, Sophie is skilled in diverse sectors including law, professional services, early childhood, social and welfare support to name a few. She has an extensive background in growth and transformation, and was the Chair for SSI's Risk, Compliance & Internal Audit Committee.

Professor Lucy Taksa

Lucy Taksa is Professor and Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University. She is the convenor of the Cultural Diversity Research Network at Macquarie University and has collaborated actively with the Ethnic Communities Council NSW as well as being a member of the Ministerial Roundtable on Cultural Diversity in the Workplace.

Frank Zheng

Frank Zheng is the CEO of Auburn Diversity Services, an SSI member organisation. He holds a Master of Applied Finance from Macquarie University Applied Finance Centre, along with significant experience in service delivery, case management, finance, HR, IT and operations at an organisational level. Frank has led programs in organisational change with proven positive outcomes. He has a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Governance

SSI recognises that a commitment to strong corporate governance, to transparency and to accountability is essential to our long-term performance and sustainability.

We achieve the best outcomes for our members, clients and other stakeholders when the actions of our people are subject to suitably high levels of scrutiny.

With this in mind, we regularly review our governance arrangements in line with good practice, expectations and regulation.

SSI's operations are overseen by a Board comprising up to four Independent Directors and up to four Member Directors. Member Directors are currently drawn from the boards and senior executive of SSI's member organisations. The CEO reports directly to the Board, and the Board, in turn, is accountable to SSI's member organisations.

The Board has adopted a charter that details its role and responsibilities, and Board elections are held at each year's Annual General Meeting. A total of six Board meetings are held each year.

The work of the Board is supplemented by the meetings of the following sub-committees: Finance and Audit; Risk and Compliance; Governance; Nominations and Remuneration; Board Nomination; and Member Relations. Each sub-committee performs 'deep dives' into particular areas of focus and concern, to enable the Board to meet its full obligations in an efficient way.

While the Governance sub-committee examines each of these focus areas in depth, the whole Board is required to be familiar with all aspects of governance and to be satisfied that members are informed and making the best possible decisions.

Our sub-committee structure also plays an important role in allowing the Board to monitor operational, financial and ethical risk. Meanwhile, complaints and compliments are routinely recorded and presented in a high-level report at the Risk and Compliance committee and also to the Board.

One of the tasks of the Member Relations sub-committee is to examine how SSI connects with its membership and how the membership model may be enhanced. Based partly on the committee's work, SSI is now in the process of fielding applications from other organisations who share the same values and who can support the organisation's diverse work. As new member organisations are admitted, the Board will be able to draw Member Directors from an even wider pool, expanding the depth of experience on the board and further enhancing our governance structure.

The Board also actively seeks to ensure that it has a diverse membership to effectively discharge its responsibilities and equip SSI for good governance. To assist in identifying areas of focus and maintaining an appropriate experience mix, the Board has developed a skills matrix that is regularly reviewed.

Innovation is an important part of how SSI responds to community needs and, as a consequence, the Board has endorsed an innovation strategy.

In addition, any innovation requiring significant investment comes to the Board. We welcome and endorse the executive's creativity and ingenuity in seeking new ways to solve community problems.

Following the requirements of the Corporations Act and our Constitution, Directors must declare any conflict of interest and abide by the Conflict of Interests Policy, including, in certain circumstances, abstaining from participating in discussions or votes.

The performance of the Board, associated committees, Directors and Chair is reviewed annually, and the findings and recommendations of this review are provided to the Board.

Membership and partnership

Partnerships and collaborations with other organisations are crucial to SSI's operations. The need for the services we deliver is so great and the opportunities to assist so large, that working together to pool skills, access complementary resources and extend into new areas is both smart and necessary.

SSI is itself the state-wide umbrella organisation for 11 migrant resource centres and multicultural services across NSW. We also lead the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP), a consortium of 21 entities comprised of our 11 member organisations as well as nine community organisations located around the state. The NSP delivers settlement services in agreed areas of NSW under the Department of Home Affairs' Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program.

During FY2021 we explored the benefit of allowing additional organisations outside our migrant resource centre base to become member organisations of SSI.

SSI member organisations

Accessible Diversity Services Initiative Ltd
Advance Diversity Services
Community Migrant Resource Centre Inc.
CORE Community Services
Focus Connect
Illawarra Multicultural Services Inc.
Metro Assist
Northern Settlement Services Ltd
Sydney Multicultural Community Services
SydWest Multicultural Services
Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre Ltd
NSW Settlement Partnership
Consortium members
Accessible Diversity Services Initiative Ltd
Advance Diversity Services
Cambodian Australian Welfare Council of NSW Inc.
Community Migrant Resource Centre Inc.
Community Northern Beaches Inc.
Connecting Community Services
CORE Community Services
Focus Connect
GyMEA Community Aid and Information Services Inc.
Illawarra Multicultural Services Inc.
Lebanese Community Council of NSW
Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services Inc.
Melkite Catholic Welfare Association Inc.
Metro Assist
Mount Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency Inc.
Nepean Multicultural Access Inc.
Northern Settlement Services Ltd
Sydney Multicultural Community Services
SydWest Multicultural Services
Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre Ltd
Northern Settlement Services Ltd
Sydney Multicultural Community Services
SydWest Multicultural Services
Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre Ltd

Glossary

Arts	Arts Queensland
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
DCJ	NSW Department of Communities

	and Justice
DESBT	Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
DESE	Federal Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence program
DHA	Federal Government Department of Home Affairs
DoE	NSW Department of Education
DSS	Federal Government Department of Social Services
LAC	Local Area Coordination. A contract to deliver disability services to NDIS participants living in a particular area
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse, intersex, queer, asexual and questioning
LEAP	Leadership Empowerment Aspiration Participation program
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency The NDIA is the organisation that administers the National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NSP	NSW Settlement Partnership program
OPP	Opportunity Pathways program
PHN	Brisbane South Primary Health Network aims to improve accessibility to primary health
PiTC	Partners in the Community is an NDIA supplementary program
WNSW	Women NSW

Contact us

How can you help?

get in touch with SSI to volunteer, donate, fundraise or collaborate

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Volunteer:

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