



2021 - 2022

# Annual *Report*

*Your* Side

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# Your Side

Your Health and Wellbeing.



## On *Your Side*



**Your Side is here for older people, people with disability, other vulnerable members of the community and carers. We support you to live independently by getting to know you and your circumstances, helping you choose the best supports from the complex service system, and coordinating delivery of your services. This is our Total Care model, which aims to reduce the stress of coordinating care.**

Your Side began in 1987 - 35 years ago - as forum to support organisations delivering home and community care in the northern parts of Sydney, and to coordinate and plan for future care needs.

Over time, we expanded to deliver direct care services to older people, people with a disability, and carers. We have also expanded to serve all of Greater Sydney and now the Murrumbidgee region of NSW.

As we grow, we build on our strength, our knowledge of care services, and our history of working collaboratively and supporting other organisations. Total Care means we partner with a network of over 100 care and support providers. Our team of consultants help you choose the very best match to suit your needs. Maybe that's a particular language or cultural fit, maybe it's a specialist skill such as support workers trained in mental health, or maybe it's working out what mix of services would best suit your needs. We aim to help you achieve your goals, keep your home safe and comfortable, your health as good as it can be, and to maintain or increase your independence.

**Our vision is simple:**  
*that every life can be a good one*

# Our Chair

**Yet again, the continuing pandemic has challenged the Your Side Australia Board, staff and volunteers to sustainably grow our business and deliver the services our customers need.**



As well as managing the impacts of COVID-19, we also had a change in the Australian government, increasing accountability demanded from government departments at state and federal level and uncertainty about the future models of in home aged care and their attendant funding following the Aged Care Royal Commission. As a result, this year has been both full of promise and apprehension for all organisations delivering services in the care sector.

Your Side Australia has approached the challenges and doubts that have arisen by staying focused on its strategy of sustainable growth and thereby seeing revenues increase by 28% percent. This follows a 30% percent increase in growth the previous year. In four years, Your Side has grown from an \$8 million a year organisation to a \$20 million a year organisation.

**“This growth was hard earned by relentless efforts by Your Side staff to secure every funding opportunity presented and sustain multiple relationships with diverse and geographically dispersed partners, with the added difficulty of a general shortage of available staff in the sector and intense competition for them.”**

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, a welcome addition to lifting the standards of care in the aged care sector, has quite rightly been a confronting and educational engagement. Their audit will help us improve our services. We look forward to working with them closely in the future as more improvements are made.

The stability on our Board has contributed to Your Side's progress. Two changes occurred. Suzanne Jones joined our Board in June 2022 after an extensive search for a Director who had experience in Clinical Governance. This area was identified last year as a priority to build as more complex forms of care were being delivered by Your Side Australia. Mathew Tsang resigned from the Board in May 2022, due to a promotion to a more demanding role at work and we thank him for his astute contribution.

Next year will present us with more of the same.

**“Change is the only constant in life,” said Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher. Your Side is well prepared.**

Thank you to all who made it happen this year and for your continued commitment to and interest in Your Side Australia. We are grateful to be able to continue to offer life enhancing support to people in our communities.

*Linda Mallett*  
**Chair - Your Side Australia**

# Our CEO

Although last year was particularly challenging given ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks across NSW, we continued to expand our services and our geography, now delivering services for NSW Ministry of Health in the Murrumbidgee Local Health District.



Amongst this, we had a very busy twelve months reviewing our services. Our commitment remains to support people to live at home independently. To do so, we focused on improving our operational clinical delivery. Greater focus was spent on developing health literacy for our care consultants in order to support people to remain at home safely. The recruitment of a registered nurse with responsibility to oversee our clinical services, as well as be an interface with our Board for Clinical and Care Governance, means that we can integrate the benefits of community care with the benefits of health care. We have shifted in this direction in response to more people choosing to age in place coupled with the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission.

In building our clinical capability, we have:



Delivered education and training sessions on the concepts of clinical care.



Increased awareness about how Aged Care and Disability Standards impact the support of clients.



Given staff and clients immediate support and advice on clinical care related questions and learning through an employed and onsite registered nurse.



Continued clinical reviews of complex care needs.

During this period, an analysis of our NDIS business resulted in a restructure of the services that we offered. The result of this was that we transitioned a proportion of clients to our partner providers where they only required one lower complexity service, such as one cleaning service a fortnight. This is because the cost of transaction of these services for us was considerably higher than NDIS pricing allows. Our model includes the cost of care coordination as well as frontline services and works best with people who need a range of services all under one roof. We are there for people when coordinating care becomes a full-time job. As a result, we refocused our offering towards more personal care services for people living at home.

Further changes to our disability services meant that seven years after merging with DARTS Inc, we made the difficult decision to wind up DARTS (Disabled Alternative Road Transport Services). With more changes coming to aged care, greater contract demands for more trips with a reduction in price paid, plus the annual uncertainty of NDIS pricing, continuing DARTS with its unique high cost, quality model and mixed funding streams was not possible. Our team took great care to ensure all clients had a plan for continued support once the service was withdrawn, and we managed to have a lovely farewell and produced a booklet of memories for long time users of the service.

**I want to thank the very special team at Your Side. The impact of COVID-19 policies meant that we lost some very talented people, and the scope of work expanded considerably. It was challenging, however the focus on client wellbeing never faltered. The efforts displayed by everyone were nothing short of extraordinary, and I thank you.**

I extend thanks to the staff of our remarkable Total Care partner network who have demonstrated such skill and resilience with a willingness to continue to respond positively to very real challenges.

I also thank our clients, who each day put their trust in us to provide safe, quality supports so they can remain independent at home and active in their communities.

Finally, I thank the Board of Your Side, who have continued to guide our organisation through uncertainty, and never wavered from an emphasis of personalised, integrated and safe quality care.

*Danielle Ballantine*

**CEO - Your Side Australia**

# Our Ambassador

**It's been another challenging year for the community care sector, battling with workforce shortages. During this difficult time, I've seen Your Side's partnership model stand up to this pressure, and still deliver high quality care services to clients. Your Side works with more than 100 local organisations, which provides the added benefit of an inbuilt 'surge workforce'. If one partner is short on staff, Your Side can move to another which may have capacity.**

We can see the government taking active steps to widen the pool of care workers: 33,000 additional training places have been funded at TAFE over the next two years. Further, the Commonwealth Government's endorsement of a wage rise for aged care workers will significantly improve the attraction of staff to the industry. We have known for some time that increasing wages in the care sector - and the value given to this work - will improve the quality of care for all. A worthwhile investment to make in all of our futures. It's a start!

Your Side also applauds the announcement from our new government that more meaningful reform is coming to the care sector. We welcome a reform approach that consults comprehensively with older Australians and the aged care sector. We value the quality of reform over speed. We want to see real and meaningful improvements for in-home care support, as we move into the future with an ageing population that will have higher clinical needs. If more time for appropriate consultation means the sector is funded and supported to deliver better care, then we want to play our part.

As Your Side's Ambassador, I also had the pleasure this year of meeting some of wonderful people while filming the 'Client Voice' series. You'll see the results later in 2022. It was both moving and joyous to chat to Sarah and Michelle (NDIS clients), Joan and Ron (Home Care Package clients), Ola and Sue (Carer Gateway clients) and Bob, Christine and Cecilia (Commonwealth Home Support Program clients) about the impact Your Side has on their daily lives. In some cases, the impact has



**Tracey Spicer AM,  
Your Side Ambassador**

been life changing. It has helped people to remain living independently and safely at home, allowing more time to spend on themselves by providing simple domestic assistance services, delivered respite and support to carers. It's also helped them build the confidence to socialise and make friends. Some of them have better social lives than me!

Finally, I'd like to say thank you to the wonderful team at Your Side and the partner providers for their kindness and commitment to the clients. It's something that stands out every time I come in to visit the office and overhear a phone call of someone going the extra mile. Your compassion and resilience are remarkable.

*Tracey Spicer AM*

**Your Side Ambassador**

# Our Story

2017-2022

**2017**

**HOURS OF CARE:**  
24,906

**ASSESSMENTS:** 1,112

**GEOGRAPHY:**  
North and East Sydney

**REVENUE:** \$5,826,222

**STAFF:** 46

**CLIENTS:** 2,078

**PROVIDER PARTNERS:** 35

**2018**

**HOURS OF CARE:**  
49,904

**ASSESSMENTS:** 2,764

**GEOGRAPHY:**  
North, East and West Sydney

**REVENUE:** \$6,343,484

**STAFF:** 52

**CLIENTS:** 3,698

**PROVIDER PARTNERS:** 52

**2019**

**HOURS OF CARE:**  
82,813

**ASSESSMENTS:** 2,764

**GEOGRAPHY:**  
Greater Metro Sydney

**REVENUE:** \$8,264,365

**STAFF:** 59

**CLIENTS:** 5,410

**PROVIDER PARTNERS:** 63

**2020**

**HOURS OF CARE:**  
124,229

**ASSESSMENTS:** 2,401

**GEOGRAPHY:**  
Greater Sydney including Nepean

**REVENUE:** \$12,218,212

**STAFF:** 82

**CLIENTS:** 5,788

**PROVIDER PARTNERS:** 85

**2021**

**HOURS OF CARE:**  
195,708

**ASSESSMENTS:** 3,906

**GEOGRAPHY:**  
Greater Sydney, and expansion into Murrumbidgee region

**REVENUE:** \$16,031,449

**STAFF:** 91

**CLIENTS:** 6,934

**PROVIDER PARTNERS:** 131

**HOURS OF CARE:**  
221,215

**ASSESSMENTS:** 6,350

**GEOGRAPHY:**  
Greater Sydney and Murrumbidgee region of NSW

**REVENUE:** \$20,491,509

**STAFF:** 98 internal, 650 Total Care partner staff

**CLIENTS:** 7,465

**PROVIDER PARTNERS:** 105

**2022**



# Our People

The Your Side team pride themselves on being a positive and purposeful group of people making strong social impact and walking alongside our clients to help them achieve their goals.

At Your Side we have a warm, sharing culture that celebrates personal and work achievements, cultural differences, and personal growth. We work hard on our culture and believe it has a significant impact on the quality of the services we deliver, and the quality of the future we imagine for our clients and ourselves.

We are kind, creative, collaborative, transparent, accountable, diverse, solutions-focused and human. We model this in all our interactions – with clients, with partners, and with each other. We show up and support each other every day, have a great sense of humour and are driven to deliver person centred outcomes.

We enjoy social and fun times together including dress-up days, treasure hunts and heaps of delicious food! At Your Side you are allowed to bring some of your pets to work. All part of our new Pet Policy (yes – it is a real thing) that is part of us re-imagining what it means to be at work after COVID-19 lockdowns. We know that having our pets at work improves the overall mental health and wellbeing of the team.



We are **98 internal staff** and **650 staff** working with our **Total Care partner network**.



We are **46 volunteers** who have completed nearly **18,000 hours** of support.



We are qualified (**40%** of our workforce have Postgraduate Qualifications, **30%** have a Bachelor Degree and **30%** have a Cert IV or Diploma).

## Our qualifications include:

- ★ Registered Nurse
- ★ Cert IV Complex Care Disabilities
- ★ Certified Practicing Case Manager
- ★ Diploma Community Services
- ★ Bachelor of Behavioural Science
- ★ Master of Science (Nutrition and Dietetics)
- ★ Bachelor of Pharmacy
- ★ Masters of Social Work
- ★ Project Management Cert IV
- ★ Cert IV in Mental Health
- ★ Cert IV Training and Assessment
- ★ Bachelor of Psychology
- ★ Masters of Public Health
- ★ Masters of Gerontology
- ★ Postgraduate Diploma Counselling
- ★ Certified Practicing Accountant
- ★ Translator and Interpreter
- ★ Our staff are members of AHPRA, the Australian Association of Social Workers, Governance Institute of Australia, CPA and PACFA (Psychology and Counselling Federation of Australia).





We are diverse. We speak **21 languages** from Arabic and Armenian to Tamil, Mandarin, Serbian and Auslan. **One in three** of us were born overseas, **14%** of staff identify as a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and **70%** have experience of being a carer.



We keep learning! Our team completed **1787 hours** of on the job training this year - that's **18 hours** per person.



We are **kind and compassionate**.



We are **great listeners**.

We are all very different, but we share one thing: **our clients come first!**



## Meet Fred

Beloved by all, Fred is the Skeleton Staff at Your Side who's been with us for a mysterious amount of years. He's kept our seats warm during the holidays and held the fort down at the office during the pandemic when most of staff worked from home.

"I'm a pretty transparent guy, no bones about me. If you ever need someone to fill in for an absent employee, I'm your man. I've been around for thousands of years, so I consider myself an expert on numerous topics. Apologies in advance if my work ethic startles you, I am often the first person in and the last person out of the office. My hobbies include bike riding, dress ups, soil science, playing the trombone and napping. I am allergic to shellfish.

Here are some of the projects I've worked on in 2021-2022:

- Workplace Humour Research
- The Art of Surprise Workshop - Team Training
- Ambassador for Staff Survey





Fatema Raftopoulos  
Clinical and Care  
Governance Manager

## Our Clinical *Journey*

Increasingly, Australians want to age at home independently for as long as possible. This, along with an ageing demographic profile is driving a big demand for home care services. But it also means people will require more complex, clinical services at home. Some believe we are headed towards a 'Hospital in the Home' model. We see this as a part of our journey to be a part of an integrated care system.

Your Side's history is in community services, which traditionally did not have a clinical focus.

**“In the last year, to get ready for the future of home care, Your Side accelerated our clinical delivery and therefore our Clinical Governance journey.”**

Our Board level Clinical Working Group has built our clinical framework. We hired a Clinical & Care Governance Manager who has been a Registered Nurse for over 12 years, with Aged Care roles focusing on clinical governance and aged care quality indicators, as well as significant clinical education experience to help us expand our clinical skills across our entire team.

This year we tweaked our systems to be ready for the Serious Incident Response Scheme that becomes compulsory for home care services in December 2022. We have built a structure to manage and review clinical risk, particularly in our Home Care Package and NDIS teams, including a high-risk register and a range of assessments to support different client needs. We have reviewed our assessment processes and support plan templates for clinical oversight and made sure this information flows right to Board level in a clear and transparent way.

We have also invested in clinical literacy training for our staff, delivering sessions with topics from advanced care planning to return from hospital processes, case conferencing, dignity of risk, infection control, wound care and falls prevention, restrictive practices, palliative care, abuse and neglect, dementia and diabetes awareness.



We have also opened these training sessions to our partner providers through Total Care.

We know this depth of understanding will improve quality of delivery for all our clients, increase safety, and support our clients to live independently.

# Our Clients Say...



"To actually speak to people who know that heart-wrenching part of caring for someone and watching the decline is amazing, life-changing. Someone needs to walk beside you so you can talk about that experience. I would definitely recommend contacting Carer Gateway to help."

*Sue* Carer Gateway Client



"The very first time I went to a Your Side social event, I thought this is so good. I lost my husband and that was the first time I had been out since the loss. You only have one life, and you have to enjoy it. It has changed a lot for me."

*Christine* Commonwealth Home Support Programme Client

"Social Support has made me far more social. I get out now and have a ball. It's fantastic!"

*Bob* Commonwealth Home Support Programme Client



Joan, Home Care Package Client with George, Carer Gateway Team Leader

# Our Future Focus

The last two years have been a rocky time for community care. The system was already under pressure, and two Royal Commissions have highlighted some significant problems. Not to mention managing COVID-19 – a crisis that pushed an already stretched system to breaking point.

We are ready at Your Side to lift our eyes to the future and the path to stronger, better quality care at home. But what does the future hold? And what should we be doing to prepare for it? We think there are a few key themes, and we are very keen to focus on how we are getting ready for this future.

# 1 *Increased* demand for care at home

We have an ageing population in Australia. We increasingly want to stay in our own homes as we age – in our communities. This funding shift has begun – most of the increase in dollars delivered in the home care sector recently, by both Labor and Coalition Governments, has been to simply fund more Home Care Packages. Whilst welcome, because it is aimed at reducing waiting lists, it does not represent funding better quality care, just the hugely increased demand that is driven by our demographics. This increased demand will continue to put pressure on our workforce for the foreseeable future. Just because there is a package funded, does not mean that there is a worker available to fill the shift. This means that we need to work hard, together with government, to recruit the workers needed to fulfil this demand. We continue to work with our partners to grow workforce capacity. The scale of the increase in workers is big – we will need to look at all angles including better pay and conditions, making it easier for people to access entry-level and ongoing training, and making it straightforward and attractive for migrants to continue to work in our sector. And as more people age at home, we should expect...

# 2 *...Increased* clinical care at home

As people increasingly age at home, we should expect them to need higher level clinical care. Your Side has invested in our Clinical Governance Framework, including Board level representation, and employed a full-time Clinical Governance Manager and Registered Nurse, to help us be ready for this. We are training staff to increase their clinical understanding, including the ability to observe and understand which risks need to be flagged with a clinician. We are also reviewing our information systems and processes to better cope with the increased oversight this requires.

As a community care organisation, this is a really important step and brings together two distinct ways of working. Which leads us to...

# 3 *...More* integrated care

As more people age in community, integrating community care and health is going to become even more important than it already is. With people ageing at home with more complex needs, we will need to coordinate and have more integrated pathways in and out of health and community care systems. People don't exist in silos. We will need different services from different funding buckets and disciplines. Which means we will also need...

# 4 *...Quality* care coordination

Your Side's consultants are at the heart of everything we do. We are increasing our investment in training for our consultants and have decreased their caseloads because we know that more demanding clinical oversight and an increasingly complex system means that people need support to find, set up and review the services they need. That's core business for us. People consistently tell us they find the system difficult to access, hard to navigate, and challenging to understand. Our consultants have to become experts. That's central to what we do as Your Side, and when you know what you want to do well, you can focus on working with others who complement your skills. Which is why we are so committed to...

# 5 *...Authentic* collaborative partnerships

Your Side's TOTAL CARE model relies on partnership. We coordinate care and we bring together a range of partners so that people can access the right care for them with our help. We actively seek likeminded organisations, and look to partner to multiply our ability to create impact. We work with partners to access unique skills and abilities (like delivering culturally safe care), new models or ways of working, or new geographic areas. We work with organisations, improving together to meet the increased demands that our regulators place on us. We know we can't be everything to everyone, but together we can deliver extraordinary outcomes. **We think collaboration is the future.**

# Our Partners

Your Side's diverse eco-system of providers is central to the success of our Total Care model - especially our ability to build high quality services support to new client groups.

Being effective over the past 12 months demanded flexibility. And in many ways, we worked best when we listened to the expertise of our providers, shared our problems, and worked together to find solutions. Our provider relationships were essential in enabling us to tackle the frequent changes to Health Orders and at varying times this past year our brokered workforce experienced:



Limits on their movement if they resided in Local Government Areas of concern;



The risk of arrest if they could not verify their essential worker status (at one time State and Federal Governments defined essential workers differently);



Frequent adjustment in both personal and client requirements to use PPE; and



Changing requirements around vaccinations and delays and frustrations accessing them.

We could not have provided the volume of client services we did this year without the dedication and support of our provider-partners and their workers. They helped us meet onerous reporting requirements and vaccination deadlines; they helped us work through the impacts of changes in the SCHADS award to client services; and they even helped us re-design our invoicing system as we moved to Recipient Created Tax Invoices (RCTI).

We owe them a lot and thank them for their service to our mutual clients.



"Your Side is a respectful, responsible and supportive partner. We feel very lucky to collaborate with them. Whenever Your Side has obstacles, its management focuses on improving and solving problems. We learn from Your Side and do our best to grow with them."

*Jennifer Ren*  
MeToU Care



"Over the past 12 months we have found the support that Your Side provided to be one of the best we have experienced. We were most impressed with the informative emails and government updates which ensured we kept abreast of developments. As a workforce service provider, we feel that Your Side understands our needs, challenges and areas for opportunity."

*Sara Pando*  
Care Live Smile



"The Recipient Created Tax Invoice process is working perfectly for us, payments are received regularly and earlier than the old system, queries from both businesses are handled swiftly and quickly. Well done for putting this in place."

*Rafael Andres*  
Bridging Care



"Of all the providers we currently work with, we would most definitely rate Your Side as one of our better partners. Over the past 12 months we have worked extremely well together during times of much pressure. Clear and concise sharing of information has contributed to a smooth and effective relationship."

*Anne Butt*  
Around the Clock Care



"Your Side really stood out as a partner during the COVID-19 pandemic. They gave us extremely up to date and relevant public health information and were supportive as we navigated the new requirements for workers (vaccines, boosters, and COVID-19 infection control training). They also stayed calm when COVID-19 infections among workers and clients occurred and worked with us methodically to replace workers."

*Morgan Keefe*  
Careseekers

As well as our TOTAL CARE partners, Your Side also works as a subcontractor to The Benevolent Society to deliver Carer Gateway, and to Community Options Australia to deliver Regional Assessment Services.

Your Side is a lead contractor to deliver Out of Hospital Care with Community Services #1.

Our partners make it possible for us to reach new clients, deliver in new areas, and deliver specialist skills. We thank them.



From left to right: Jeanine Aughey (Case Manager Coordinator CS#1), Barb Gillen (Case Manager CS#1), Sharon Smith (Case Manager CS#1), Rosemary Garthwaite (MLHD), Lama Nehme (Case Manager CS#1), Onaiza Ribeiro (Program Manager - OHC Your Side), Kerry Sandral (MLHD), Amanda Tobler (CEO CS#1), Danielle Ballantine (CEO Your Side), Jennifer Edwards (MLHD), Michelle Parr (Case Manager CS#1)

# Our Clients Say...



"Through the social activities Your Side have started doing weekends away which are absolutely fabulous. They have taught me to get out and about and enjoy life again. Your Side also support me to live independently at home."

*Joan* Home Care Package Client



"Reach out to Carer Gateway because they will find a solution. I was desperate at the beginning, and I didn't have high hopes but what I found with the Carer Gateway was real support. It was a lifesaver for us and our family."

*Ola* Carer Gateway Client



"From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank Your Side, it has totally changed me. Before I had depression and now I'm positive, I'm active and I'm social."

*Cecilia* Commonwealth Home Support Programme Client

# Our Services in Focus

## Regional Assessment Services

Assessments are a critical part of quality service delivery, and Your Side carries out assessments in all of our programs, from the Carer Star assessment in Carer Gateway to clinical assessments in Home Care Packages. We spoke to Judy Hallett, our Team Leader, Regional Assessment Services (RAS) about working in a team that travels out in community, determining eligibility for home-based care services for older people by doing around 400 assessments a month.

**Q: What are the main things our RAS assessors are trying to determine when they visit a client?**

**A:** We are looking at functional capacity. What can the person do themselves, what support do they have in place already? What can't they do and what's the reason why? We also look at the external environment like equipment and how the home is set up.

We always encourage people to continue to do as much as possible for themselves – we know this leads to a longer, happier and healthier life.

**Q: What are some of the barriers and challenges you see for older people?**

**A:** For most people, we decline in function and cognitive capacity as we age. This can be hard to accept. We see loneliness, and grief and loss. Grief for people but also grief for the loss of capacity and comfort, for example, being able to do things around the home or loss of a driver's licence. Social isolation and depression go together.

**Q: What are the skills of a RAS assessor?**

**A:** All assessors have met the Standard of Attainment (RAS) through the Canberra Institute of Technology. We also do a lot of on the job training. You learn:



Communication skills like empathy, open ended questions, open stance and voice, and how to build rapport with a stranger in their home.



Assessment skills like Work, Health & Safety (WHS) as you enter the yard. What hazards are you looking for? What access issues are there for client or care workers?



How to recognise signs of abuse, neglect or that the person not coping, and what to do if you do see these signs.



How to understand and apply the Aged Care Act and legislation.

Modules of training are updated every year. For example, right now we are refreshing our cultural competency skills, understanding the impact of the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their carers.

We also hear from specialists about conditions like dementia or Parkinson's.

**Q: What are the outcomes of a really good assessment?**

**A:** An effective assessment is one where the person has discussed concerns, set some goals, and referrals and information have been given.

I like to be as holistic and creative as possible – like referring to Probus, a learn to cook group at a local church, or the fire brigade for alarm testing; it all goes into the support plan as well as My Aged Care referral codes and lists of providers. The goal is that people can live at home with peace, security and independence.

**Q: What's the best thing about being as assessor?**

**A:** Working independently. We've always worked from home, and move from house to house doing assessments every day. You can plan your own day, you are out and about meeting people and sharing their stories. If you ask the right questions you get an amazing story. Where were you born? What is your story? You are invited into someone's world for a short period of time – and you become close in an hour asking quite deep and personal questions. It's great to be able to suggest practical and meaningful help for people.

**Q: What are you proud of about your team?**

**A:** They are all extraordinarily strong and determined to help people to find solutions, to help people stay at home as long as possible. Our oldest team member is 75 – she doesn't want to retire!

We are diverse and can do assessments in several languages including Chinese, Arabic and Russian. We have people on our team who have trained as doctors, teachers, nurses, and psychologists. This diversity in the workforce helps us understand people and get their needs accurately assessed, so they can access the right support to keep them safe and happy a home for longer.



From left to right: RAS Assessors Jean McCoy, Tatiana Souvorova, and Annie Huntley

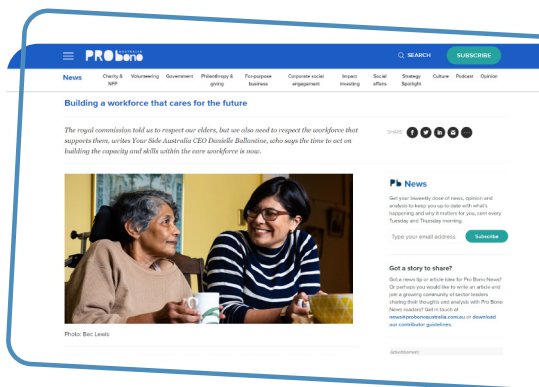
# In the News

Your Side cares deeply about our clients, the dedicated workers in our sector, and the future of care. At times, our Ambassador Tracey Spicer, our CEO Danielle Ballantine, and our clients use their voices in the media.

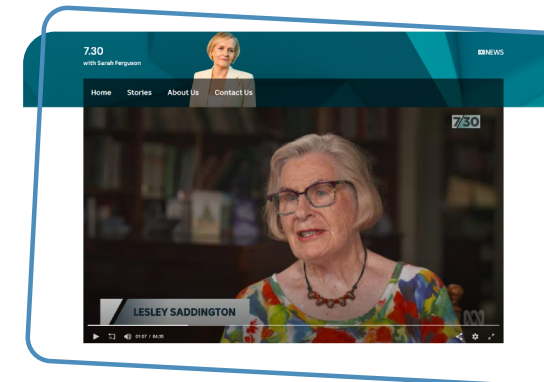
This year our team have commented on issues like worker shortages and the massive contribution unpaid carers make to society. We have also made sure that as many people as possible access the help that's available, by appearing on radio, television, in print, and online – in English and other languages that our clients speak.

## Here are some of the highlights:

- ★ **Pro Bono Australia:** “Building a workforce that cares for the future”
- ★ **Hello Care:** “How aged care policies could decide the next federal election” & “Giving carers much needed hope”
- ★ **Australian Ageing Agenda:** “Remove barriers to plug staffing hole”
- ★ **SBS Radio:** “How to access the Carer Gateway”
- ★ **2CR Chinese Radio:** “Interviews about Carer Gateway in Mandarin & Cantonese”
- ★ **Chinese TV Media:** “Carer Gateway client story – Laura Chu”
- ★ **North Shore Living:** “Supporting our carers”
- ★ **Aged Care Insite:** “Tracey Spicer and Your Side CEO get real in new conversation series”



- ★ **The Post (Hornsby, Kur-ring-gai & Willoughby):** “Industry reforms create brighter future for aged care workforce” & “You can't pour from an empty cup”
- ★ **North Shore Times, Mosman Daily & Wentworth Courier:** “Simply priceless – unpaid carers”
- ★ **Alive 90.5FM:** “Sydney Spotlight Carers Week interview”
- ★ **Pittwater Online News:** “National Carers Week”
- ★ **Healthcare Channel:** “Supporting our carers – you can't pour from an empty cup”
- ★ **7.30 ABC TV:** “Pen Pal Project – Special friendships forged through the power of the pen”
- ★ **Third Sector:** “Supporting our carers”



Your Side's CEO, Danielle Ballantine, and Ambassador, Tracey Spicer, also sat down and filmed a five-part “In Conversation” series that was shared on social media covering topics including:

- ★ How we recruit a workforce to care for our ageing population
- ★ Aged care reforms
- ★ How to find good home and aged care support
- ★ What can we do to support women who are doing the bulk of unpaid care
- ★ What it is like to lead an organisation during a pandemic







Shirley, Customer Care Consultant, and Monique, Senior Consultant

# Meet Shirley

Customer Care Consultant, Your Side

Shirley has been with Your Side for 20 years! In that time, she's helped countless people, and lucky for us she is happy to share a bit about what it's been like.

Shirley was born in Hong Kong and came to Australia after living in the UK. Her background was in hospitality before she moved into administration.

"I used to work for a property developer in administration. I travelled with the boss and translated as his PA (Shirley speaks fluent Cantonese). He wanted me to drive a Bentley, but I was too scared to touch it! I moved to a call centre that booked hotels for people (before the internet!) and then applied for the job at Your Side."

Shirley's people skills transferred straight away - through her previous work experience she could already talk to and connect with anyone.

Shirley's first role was with the HACC (Home and Community Care) Program - when Your Side was known as Northern Sydney Regional Forum. Shirley started her professional journey with Your Side as an administrator booking training sessions, venues, catering, printing training materials, collecting evaluations for our sector training projects and organising the sector regional forum twice a year.

One month later she started working as an Executive Assistant to the CEO. Then Shirley had time off to have a second baby. That baby is now 15 years-old and in high school and we are so lucky to still have Shirley at Your Side.

When Your Side started the Regional Assessment Service (or RAS) in 2015, Shirley trained as an assessor and visited people's homes to assess eligibility for the CHSP (Commonwealth Home Support Programme).

"I felt like I was I was good RAS assessor because I was a bit older - the life experience and the upskilling really helped in my new role."

When Your Side won the contract to deliver the Carer Gateway in 2020 Shirley then moved into that team as a Customer Care Consultant - to help unpaid carers get the support they needed.

"This new role in the Carer Gateway team opened a whole new world of learning for me about NDIS, domestic violence and alcohol abuse. It was a real revelation to go into the life of people and help with their struggles and challenges.

“Month after month of providing support to carers you slowly gain their trust. The positive feeling of helping someone in need is invaluable.”



Shirley has experienced an amazing professional journey at Your Side and is admired and adored by both clients and staff.

“When I look back at where I started 20 years ago, I saw the more senior women in the office as nurturing and caring. They had older kids and grandkids and they helped and supported me. Now I see myself taking on that role – it’s about belonging. I see my role now as being part of the future and growth of Your Side. There are always new staff to support. I am proud of being able to manage what I have – a simple life – the right balance, a good family life with my husband and kids, caring for our ageing parents. Your Side has given me the opportunity to have that balance in my personal and professional life and be happy.”

Shirley says that working at Your Side has also taught her advanced people skills and how to connect with people on all levels.

“Everyone has a different story to tell as to how they became the person they are today. It makes me realise everything is going to be okay. There is always a light at the end of the tunnel and helping others has helped me keep that balance of positive and negative. Humans are so interesting! You also must always keep learning. As soon as you think you have a solution there is another gap to fill, you just have to adapt. Oh - and you should also always have a bit of fun at work. We are good at that at Your Side.”

**I enjoy working at Your Side. I listen into conversations and sit in meetings and realise how much we CARE. I think this will be my last job. The staff and management are so nice, and even though the sector is always reforming and changing, it is still a great organisation to work for. It is a rare workplace – we have tissues at every workstation because sometimes we cry with the clients. That is pretty special!”**

**We think you are special too Shirley!**



**Monique, Senior Consultant, Carer Services**

## Meet *Monique*

**Senior Consultant, Carer Services, Your Side**

**Monique was introduced to Your Side as part of her Social Work placement through her study in 2018.**

“While I was on my placement, I gained experience in a range of programs that Your Side offers - Social Support for older people, DARTs events (group social outings for wheelchair users), Young Carers, and the Friendship Space (for people experiencing social isolation).”

Mon (as she is affectionately known in the Your Side team) quickly started to understand how beneficial the range of services was, as it became evident no single program could support a client to meet all their needs or reach their goals.

"I learnt that clients could get help through My Aged Care or the NDIS, but also the whole family could access support through the Carer Gateway program. That seemed great to me."

After Mon completed her placement, she started working in the DARTS team assisting the coordinators, Kay and Dita, organising events, and helping with reporting.

As soon as Mon graduated from university, she started working full time in the Carer Gateway team when it launched in 2020. She showed a lot of potential and was soon promoted into a Senior Consultant role for Carer services.

"I complete assessments with carers and organise support to assist them in their caring role. As well as assisting clients I also mentor the team and do special projects."

Before working at Your Side, Mon was unsure about what sector of social work she wanted to work in.

"I have always found the NDIS quite overwhelming. While working in the Carer Gateway my understanding of the NDIS has improved and I am now interested in learning more about the NDIS space so I can help clients navigate it."

Mon says she learns every day from her team and loves the collaborative nature of the Your Side working environment.

**“Every one of my colleagues has a diverse background of skills and experiences. I’ve received information and advice from colleagues about My Aged Care and the NDIS which has improved my understanding of these systems. This sharing of best practice is beneficial in supporting each other through complex situations or communicating effectively with clients.”**

Mon and the Your Side Carer Gateway Team have faced down multiple challenges in the social services sector through the last few years of the pandemic – something she is very proud of.

"During the lockdowns there were many uncertainties about how people in need were going to receive services. We also experienced a worker shortage because of the pandemic. We had to change the way we responded to urgent incidents to ensure clients received essential services. The way that Your Side adapted to operating in a pandemic highlighted the flexibility and caring nature of our workplace. The transition from working from the office to home was easy and efficient. The organisation created a space where employees were able to communicate regularly and effectively which was appreciated and necessary during the lockdowns. Your Side always puts clients support needs first."

When Mon started her student placement at Your Side in 2018, she never imagined she would be leading a carer support team in 2022 – and through a global pandemic no less.

"I am grateful to have completed part of my degree at Your Side and to now be working full time here. When I graduated, I was unsure about what field I wanted to work in, and Your Side has helped me to gain a range of experience in different programs and sectors. To be part of a team that started a program at the beginning of the pandemic and to see how much it has grown and developed over the past two years is so rewarding."

**Shirley & Mon with the Carer Gateway Team**



# Photo Gallery!



# Our Clients *Say...*

"The best things about the NDIS social groups are interacting with people, having fun, feeling like you belong somewhere and getting to know people. Through the Your Side NDIS social group I go out every week and we meet up in different venues and places to have fun."

*Sarah,*  
NDIS Client

"Your Side has helped me so much in the home with cleaning and outside with the garden. I now have more time to pursue my hobbies, work with my charities and do the online cooking classes with the social group. They have supported and encouraged me along my journey."

*Don,*  
Home Care  
Package Client

LET'S  
CONNECT.

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Your Side acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and wherever we meet, we pay our respects to elders, past and present.