

CEO introduction

Addiction and mental health were front page news items in Victoria on a very regular basis in 2017 and 18. This is for two primary reasons, one a bad sign, and the other a positive one.

Firstly, the prevalence of mental illness and addiction is extremely high and the support available is insufficient. Approximately 148,000 Victorians suffer severe mental illness each year, and approximately 93,000 of those are not receiving adequate support (Mental Health Victoria, Saving Lives Saving Money, June 2018).

Secondly, the prevalence of this issue in the news cycle also reflects an increasing awareness and gradual reduction in stigma, both of which are essential for long-term, society-wide change for the better.

Within this treatment landscape First Step occupies a truly unique position. Not only is First Step one of the few places in Australia with equal focus and expertise on addiction and mental health (in the sector this is called dual diagnosis), but we also provide other key services onsite. First Step Legal is the first and only criminal law practice embedded in a health service anywhere in Australia. It shouldn't be the only one, because illicit substance use is a huge factor in population health, and because people who regularly use illicit substances often have interactions with the criminal justice system.

Our attitude to the co-occurrence of and support for mental ill health, addiction medicine and legal supports can be summarised in these three core beliefs:

- At First Step we believe that everybody deserves every chance to turn their lives around.
- We believe that addiction and complex mental health is often a long-term and painful response to trauma; it is a physical and mental health issue that must be treated with dignity and compassion.
- We know from experience that addiction is concentrated in areas of multiple disadvantages, and that it's timely and effective treatment is a matter of social justice.

First Step has experienced some extraordinary successes and ongoing growth in 2017-18. We have remained a bastion of best practice treatment for people with complex, comorbid mental health and addiction taking on 473 new clients (totalling over 2,600 people clients for the year) and providing over 14,000 consultations. Our ability to provide these services was greatly enhanced by winning the commission for Mental Health Integrated Complex Care from the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network, which funds mental health nurses and care coordinators to look after people with complex mental health in the City of Port Phillip and beyond.

437 new clients
totalling 2,652+ clients for 2018



14,000+ consultations
provided by First Step during 2018

The presence of in-house psychiatry through Dr Dianne Grocott and a partnership with the University of Melbourne to research ADHD and substance use is breaking new ground for the clinic. The addition of First Step's Women's Space, funded by the Bank of Melbourne, is an exciting innovation to watch in the coming months and years. Thanks to a grant from the Department of Justice and Community Safety, First Step has been able to employ a family violence specialist lawyer within First Step Legal, and this year the service provided assistance to 107 people.

In 2018-19 we formalised a 3 year strategic plan that will keep us on track to help more vulnerable Victorians to stay in treatment, get back in work or study, stay out of hospitals and prisons and be with their families.



Patrick Lawrence
First Step, CEO



Chairperson's report

First Step has continued to provide outstanding care for the patients during the financial year ended 30 June 2018. It has maintained its high level of consultations during a year of considerable change and consolidation.

Amongst the most significant operational changes are:

- Our new CEO Patrick Lawrence maintained his focus on building the team through focusing on our core values and objectives and has placed a stronger focus on the medium to longer term objectives of the business. The manner in which Patrick has taken to the challenges of the role has been amazing and he has continued to lift the awareness, perception and image of First Step in the community, the addiction treatment sector, with government and with our donors and philanthropic supporters;
- First Step remains the largest provider of approved opiate replacements therapies (such as methadone and buprenorphine) in Victoria; and
- We have expanded our organisations to include services like the Women's Space and the provision of family law support were appropriate.

The demands on not-for-profit services in the current business environment are high. Not immune to these pressures, we enter the new financial year with a number of challenges. It is critical that we are able to consider and identify a way forward, to expand our footprint, to enable the continued growth and extended reach of our services.

We will continue to work with both Federal and Victorian government departments, and our corporate, philanthropic and private supporters to ensure we are at the forefront of service provision and providing a leading voice to the discussions about how to support our patient cohort and the broader community.

Change brings with it many new challenges and opportunities, all of which are being met by the combined ability, expertise and enthusiasm of the entire staff. I can only offer them the humblest thanks from the Board of Directors, and an appreciation of their capacity and commitment.

In addition to the work of the team on the ground, I extend my thanks to the Board members and all of our donors and supporters who have made the work of the organisation possible.

As I have said in previous years, it constantly amazes me that an organisation such as ours continues to tackle and deal with some of the largest and most difficult social and health issues which confront our community and governments. The lives of our patients, their families and the community at large are made better because of the contribution and work of First Step.

Bernard McNerney
First Step, Chairperson

Strategic Plan

In 2018, we formalised our 2018-2021 strategic plan. The plan consists of six key goals. Each goal is underpinned by a number of realistic strategic priorities. This plan will guide our efforts in helping patients reduce drug use, improve their mental health, general well-being and lead to richer, more functional lives.

Goal 1.

CONSISTENTLY PROVIDE EXCELLENT CARE

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Articulate and embed **best practice** and continuous improvement.

Perform long-term funded **evaluation** of our unique collaborative model.

Continue to **remove barriers** to vulnerable Victorians accessing all the care they need.

Trial, perfect and document **innovative treatment** modalities and combinations.

Embed **impact measurement** tools.

Goal 2.

HELP MORE PEOPLE MORE PROFOUNDLY

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Build on the 6 Critical Support Elements with optimal services in-house and strategic referral partnerships.

Extend **'Whole-Person Care'** to more of our 3,500 clients.

Look to **additional sites** and spheres of influence, whilst maintaining collaborative model.

Research and develop Hub & Spoke model to reach new areas of need.

Goal 3.

MAINTAIN OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Find long-term **premises** solution encompassing bold vision.

Match **operational and management resources** to growth.

Utilise **partnerships** to achieve vision.

Engage external partners and seek funding for ongoing business planning.

Goal 6.

EXPAND THE HORIZONS OF FIRST STEP AND THE SECTOR

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Overcome mental health vs addiction funding silos.

Explore bringing more **stages of recovery and specialisations** in-house.

Promote game-changing Housing Health partnership.

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This report is structured on the progress of each of the goals as outlined in the strategic plan.



Goal 4.

DIVERSIFY INCOME & ACHIEVE LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Grow funded treatment income.

Pursue state and fed **government funding**.

Grow financial supporter/donor base.

Strengthen philanthropic relationships.

Develop innovative and effective fundraising programs.

Fully engage financial supporters to develop long-term, mutually beneficial relationships

Secure financial support for our boldest ambitions.

Goal 5.

ADVOCATE FOR COMPASSION FOR ADDICTION

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Champion innovative and effective treatments.

Be a voice for **compassion and tolerance** in the community.

Fight for a **progressive approach to drug policy** and other related areas (eg. Homelessness).

Do not accept the status quo. Always lobby for **better services** for vulnerable people.

Advocate for universal mental health care.

1. Consistently provide excellent care



First Step strives to remove all barriers to vulnerable Victorians accessing all the care they need for mental health and addiction. We seek to provide the most impactful and evidence-based interventions in the best possible environment.

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First Step continued to be the only primary health clinic in Victoria with equal expertise and focus on mental health and addiction, as well as being the only health clinic in Australia with an onsite criminal law practice (First Step Legal). There are many benefits to people seeking help that flow from this multi-disciplinary team:

- We don't turn people away due to the nature of their problem (so many mental health clinics will turn people with serious substance use away and vice versa).
- People have access to the services they need
- The practitioners in the various services discuss the shared clients on a daily basis, and the result is genuine, collaborative team care
- All practitioners have a good working knowledge of each other's disciplines, and a complete understanding of the supports available within the organisation.



: Haydn Salomons (Clinical Care Coordinator) trains a worker on overdose reversal technique

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This year First Step was awarded the commission for Mental Health Integrated Complex Care (MHICC) from the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN). This makes First Step the provider for the City of Port Phillip and beyond for complex/severe mental health and has enabled us to employ mental health nurses and care coordinators to undertake this work. It's a big win for First Step, and an even bigger win for the people we support. Reports from SEMPHN and its independent assessor indicate that First Step is truly excelling in the efficiency and impact of its work in this program, due primarily to the quality of staff we have engaged (including senior clinician and manager Joe Fishburn - pictured) and the multi-disciplinary environment in which we are implementing the program.

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With considerable support from Perpetual Trustees First Step was able to enhance the level of support (mental health nursing and casework) to people who use crystal methamphetamine or 'ice.' Additional clinical and non-clinical consultations were targeted at clients who did not qualify for other intensive supports (such as Mental Health Integrated Complex Care). This not only resulted in over 60 people receiving enhanced care, but also led to the development of a research partnership with the University of Melbourne, led by Dr Dianne Grocott.

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In 2018 we welcomed our in-house psychiatrist Dr Grocott to the team. It is extremely rare for a primary health clinic to have its own in-house psychiatrist and First Step clients began to benefit immediately from Dr Grocott's expertise and team approach. In 2018-19 Dr Grocott will lead our partnership, funded in part by the John T Reid Foundation, with the University of Melbourne School of Population and Global Health into comorbid illicit substance use (often methamphetamine) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

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Throughout the year our Practice Nurse and Clinical Care Coordinator Haydn Salomons ran a program of Chronic and Complex Care Coordination (funded by SEMPHN) focussing on the management and support of chronic physical illness. Chronic and Complex Care Coordination was a 12-month program to enhance First Step's capacity to support clients with chronic physical health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder, many of which are exacerbated by drug use and related factors. People were assisted to monitor their well-being on an ongoing basis, coordinate treatment and develop healthier lifestyles.

2. Help more people more profoundly

First Step seeks to extend its brand of multi-disciplinary support 'Whole-Person Care' to a greater percentage of clients, whilst looking to additional sites and spheres of influence.

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In more than 14,000 consultations in 2017-18 First Step supported over 2,600 people, mostly vulnerable Victorians with multiple significant needs. First Step supported more people on opiate substitution therapies (such as methadone) than any other clinic in Victoria - work of truly national significance.

In terms of harm reduction of any drug or alcohol intervention, methadone maintenance therapy has the strongest evidence base globally. This includes:

- Reduction in illicit drug use and related harms including overdose
- Reduction in injury or death from accidents
- Reduction in hospital visits, offending and incarceration
- Increase in family connection
- Increase in work and volunteering
- Increase in social connection

Our unique form of multi-disciplinary support is 'Whole-Person Care'. Delivered collaboratively by our team of clinicians, it can include:

- Medical support for addiction (general medicine, addiction physician, nursing psychiatry)
- Mental health support (mental health nursing, clinical and counselling psychology, care coordination and counselling)
- Legal support (lawyers and legal case managers),
- Social inclusion support (brief interventions, groups, referral to external activities), and
- Meaningful engagement (case management support and referral for volunteering, paid work and parenting).

First Step's provision of Whole-Patient Care was supported by a mental health case managers (funded by the Asian Australian Foundation, E.H.Flack Trust and City of Port Phillip), working with particularly vulnerable clients, including people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

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With funding from the Bank of Melbourne Foundation, First Step opened its Women's Space to provide a friendly drop in space for social inclusion, financial counselling, parenting education, art therapy and brief interventions. It's a new intervention for us and very different to the usual one-on-one scheduled appointment basis on which most support is delivered at First Step. Amy Walker, who is coordinating the program, calls it '1980s-style social work' and it's already proving very popular. A number of vulnerable women attending the space have disclosed key issues in their lives that they had never discussed with their doctor, and that's what the Women's Space is all about. Plus acceptance.

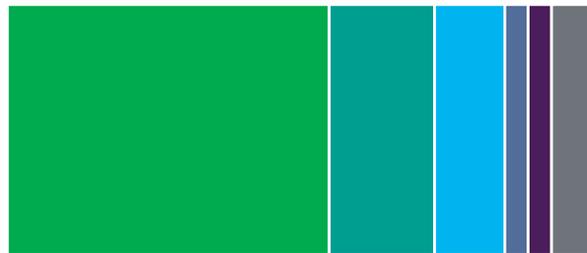
First step legal

First Step Legal is the only criminal law practice in Australia that is fully embedded (and co-located) within a health practice.

First Step Legal's primary goal is to assist people to break the cycle of relapse and re-offending by adequately addressing historical legal issues whilst receiving mental health and addiction support from First Step clinicians. The long-term outcome for people who have been convicted of serious crimes are far better, for those individuals and for society generally, when people are supported to stay in treatment, stay in the community and stay connected to work and family.

Client breakdown

(First Step Legal year ending 30 June 2018)



- Criminal (55)
- Family violence (18)
- Infringement (12)
- Tenancy (4)
- Financial (4)
- Other (7)



⋮ Tania Wolff (First Step Legal Manager)

3. Maintain operational sustainability

First Step seeks to match operational and management resources to our growth whilst forming key partnerships in many sectors including addiction, mental health and homelessness.

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Welcome to new CEO Patrick Lawrence

First Step's new CEO Patrick Lawrence started in the role in May of 2017. However, Patrick is hardly new to First Step having commenced his involvement with the organisation 16 years ago as a volunteer. Patrick has an extraordinarily diverse background having had an early career in the performing arts as a pianist and vocal coach. His transition to the community sector began with a volunteer position at First Step, and included a 10-year stint with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre in the role of Director of Humanitarian Services. Patrick brings a passion for social justice to the CEO role encapsulated in the expression *"everybody deserves every chance to turn their lives around."* His determination to champion the cause of compassion for addiction and his vision for universal mental health care are reflected in everything he does at First Step.



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A major rebrand (you are looking at it) expressed a new vitality and professionalism, helping First Step to embody our principles of non-judgement, compassion and professionalism. Big thanks go to Albie Colvin and the team at ACGD Design for our new look and feel, and for the consultation process that engaged all the staff and many of our clients also.

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With funding from the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science First Step was able to bring some much needed TLC to our premises at 42 Carlisle St. We thank Michael Danby MP and his staff for advocating for First Step to receive this support which has enabled much needed building maintenance, as well as the transformation of a storage area into our new, cosy, case management room.

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First Step has been the grateful recipient of many years of support from the Toll Group who have provided external accounting support pro bono. Managing the accounts of our wide variety of income streams (grants, commissions, Medicare, donations etc) as well as payroll and monthly reports could not have been achieved without this crucial support.

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This year, as with every year since 2000, First Step would not exist with the support of Peter White, who owns our physical premises, allowing us to continue our crucial work here rent free. Peter and his wife Lyndy were heavily involved with volunteering at First Step back in the early days, and their continued support is key to our success.



..... (left to right) Dr Peter Wright, Roslyn Hill (Senior Receptionist), Gayle Wood (Operations Manager).
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"Genuine, hard working, raw, effective, direct, honest, caring."

Vincent,
First Step Client

4. Diversify income and achieve long-term financial sustainability



First Step strives to combine government grant funding (state and federal), philanthropic grants, Medicare and corporate and individual donations to maintain financial sustainability. Of these, only Medicare is guaranteed and continuous effort and innovation is required to ensure that the doors stay open, that all our services remain free of charge and that First Step has the capacity to grow and innovate.

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First Step worked in partnership with the South Eastern Primary Health Network to implement two federally funded commissions in 2017-18: Mental Health Integrated Complex Care and Complex and Chronic Care Coordination. A strong and growing partnership with SEMPHN has been crucial to First Step's success this year, most particularly our ability to provide Whole-Person Care. We see this relationship as a key ingredient to our future ability to help more and more vulnerable Victorians. First Step is, among other things, a general practice, which has enabled us to build this relationship with SEMPHN (one of Australia's 31 Primary Health Networks, SEMPHN covers one-third Melbourne) and therefore deliver programs funded by the federal Department of Health. While Care Coordination was a 12-month program, funding of MHICC at First Step is guaranteed into 2022.



... Lauris Hanlon (Case
... Manager) with a client.

First Step was supported by many individuals and philanthropic trusts in 2017-18. Without this support First Step would be unable to care for over 2,600 people at more than 14,000 appointments. The board, staff and our clients thank all of our generous supporters.

A very big thank you to...



First Step would not exist without the generous support of the following organisations, government departments, trusts and individuals:

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| Asian Australian Foundation | Jodie and Farhad Bell |
| Bank of Melbourne Foundation | Modara Pines |
| City of Port Phillip | Paul Little |
| Collier Charitable Fund | Perpetual Trustees |
| Deborah Glass | Peter White |
| Department of Industry, Innovation and Science – Australian Government | R.E.Ross Trust |
| Department of Justice and Regulation – Victoria State Government | Sarah Davies |
| Golden Messengers | South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network |
| Gourlay Charitable Trust | StreetSmart |
| Harry Boon | The Choir of Hard Knocks |
| Humanity Foundation | The Marian and E.H.Flack Trust |
| Igniting Change | Thomas Creedon |
| Jagen Nominees | Toll Group |
| | Victorian Legal Aid |
| | Victorian Legal Services Board |
| | Virgin Unite |

This year for the first time the Department of Justice and Regulation (now the Department of Justice and Community Safety) funded both First Step's ongoing Case Manager position, and our first family violence lawyer, Michelle Goldberg. Michelle brings a wealth of experience, compassion and determination to the lives and circumstances of people affected by domestic and family violence. In the field of alcohol and drugs the issue of family violence is even more prevalent than in the general community, therefore introducing family violence support at First Step is a very logical next step. Our clients are very fortunate that the state government chose to back this initiative.



You can help us make a valuable difference.

Go to firststep.org.au/donations to make a once off contribution or become a monthly supporter (All donations over \$2 are tax deductible).



⋮ Patrick Laweance (CEO) speaking
⋮ at the World's Largest Overdoses
⋮ Prevention Training

5. Advocate for compassion in addiction

At First Step we believe above all that everybody deserves every chance to turn their lives around. We will always lobby for better services for vulnerable Victorians and be a voice for a progressive approach to drug policy.

First Step has sought to step up its social media engagement. Starting from a very small base, First Step now has several hundred Facebook followers and rising. We try to do this by being an easily accessible source of intelligent conversation on the issues of mental health and addiction, whilst feeding people the latest developments in the field. In 2018 First Step very vocally supported the Supervised Injecting Room at the North Richmond Community Health (NRCH), including speaking supportively in the media at times when NRCH found it prudent to stay out of the limelight. Having spent time at both the Safe Injecting Room in Kings Cross and the facility in North Richmond, First Step's CEO Patrick Lawrence actively promotes this and other progressive interventions across the country.

At First Step we believe there is much to learn from the mental health sector which has achieved significant progress in reducing stigma in that area. There is more work to be done in that sector, but by contrast the general public does not yet begin to understand that chronic illicit drug use is usually an adaptation to cope with a traumatic childhood. While First Step supports people from all kinds of backgrounds, there's a commonality of experience among our most vulnerable people that all too often includes growing up in out-of-home care, childhood neglect and abuse (verbal, physical and sexual), early school leaving, juvenile offending, pre-teen hard drug use and intergenerational poverty. It would likely shock most Australians to know that the portion of male prisoners in Victoria who finished VCE is just 6%, and prevalence of mental health in the prison system is over 50%.

At First Step we believe that deep addiction is generally a long-term and harmful response to childhood trauma. It is a health issue that must be treated with compassion and dignity. Furthermore, addiction is concentrated in areas of great disadvantage. Timely and effective treatment benefits all of society. And that's what we're doing.

First Step's CEO makes himself available to speak at events and to groups about mental health and addiction, both in general terms, and specifically about the work of First Step.

6. Expand the horizons of First Step and the sector



First Step seeks to overcome government funding silos, promote housing health partnerships and secure financial support for the organisation's boldest ambitions.

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In August 2017 First Step led 11 other community organisations in the World's Largest Overdose Prevention Training. Supported by the City of Port Phillip, led in reflection by Rev Tim Costello (First Step's inaugural Board Chair) and uplifted by the fabulous Choir of Hard Knocks, 100 people learnt how to reverse a fatal overdose and left the event with the necessary equipment and supplies to do that. It was an amazing night and hopefully the first of many.



Jonathon Welch leads the Choir of Hard Knocks at the World's Largest Overdose Prevention Training

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In 2017-18 First Step actively began the process of developing an innovative and impactful model of Housing Health Partnership for vulnerable people. By engaging with the homelessness sector and meeting with relevant thought leaders and managers, First Step hopes to form the right partnerships to develop an effective, integrated, measurable and replicable blueprint. This model will integrate First Step's multi-disciplinary service model (Whole-Person Care), through partnership, with the one key element that we don't directly provide: housing. 17-18 was the year of networking and brainstorming. Watch this space for something ground-breaking and impactful developments in 18-19.

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First Step has begun the process of lobbying state and federal governments to overcome funding silos impeding the care of vulnerable Victorians. The clearest example of bureaucratic funding silos is seen in the fact that mental health services are federally funded whereas addiction services are state funded. Too often these needs both arise in the one individual and building organisations to meet that need is extremely challenging, and certainly not the norm for which this 'system' was designed. First Step hasn't has not yet had a significant impact in this regard, but we are not going to give up, and we will redouble our efforts in 2018-19.

Financials

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2018

	(\$) 2018	(\$) 2017
Revenue	1,192,596	1120945
Other income	2,443	3,034
Salaries, wages and employee benefits expense	(968,328)	(1,001,633)
Depreciation expense	(2,965)	(3,868)
Bad debt expense	-	(720)
Administration expense	(194,878)	(97,065)
Profit before income tax	28,868	20,693
Income tax expense	-	-
Profit for the year	28,868	20,693
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	28,868	20,693

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2018

	(\$) 2018	(\$) 2017
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	402,436	335,218
Inventories	1,562	2,442
Prepayments	12,959	7,445
Trade and other receivables	63,944	75,446
Total current assets	480,901	420,551
Non-current assets		
Plant and equipment	6,496	9,461
Total non-current assets	6,496	9,461
Total assets	487,397	430,012
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	307,953	316,117
Provisions	99,648	62,967
Total current liabilities	407,601	379,084
Total liabilities	407,601	379,084
Net assets	79,796	50,928
Equity		
Retained earnings	79,796	50,928
Total equity	79,796	50,928

“Came in against my will. First step nurtured me and catered for my every need and supported my mindset regardless of whether I thought I needed help or not. They were always professional and courteous, always calling to check up on me and accommodating me to the best of their ability. Very highly trained in dealing with at risk patients. They managed to get my legal issues sorted which is a whole other story, but the legal time are amazing, can't speak highly enough about them, but the whole organisation is amazing and always kept faith and hope in me which helped stimulate self-motivation for myself. My life has changed because of you guys and I'm out there living 9-5 normality that is all so comforting and manageable. Thanks for bringing choice back into my life!”

Penny, First Step Client



We acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Yalukit Willam clan of the Boon Wurrung people and pay our respects to their elders both past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.



First Step are committed to equity irrespective of cultural or linguistic background, sexual orientation, gender identity (LGBTI+), intersex status, religion or spiritual beliefs, socio-economic status, age, or abilities.

A thought...

It is a beautiful spring day in Melbourne. You just popped into your favourite local café and the sun is shining.

You're walking calmly, towards the train station. Your travelling companion is a 10 year old girl called Jasmine. You see Jasmine once a month as part of a Big Brother Big Sister program, and it really is a highlight in your life. Jasmine is already with her third foster family, is struggling academically and is having great trouble making friends. But, after a first couple of nervous meetings, the two of you are getting along beautifully. She's a bright-eyed, curious young person with a flair for drawing, and you're taking her to the NGV.

You're on the train, talking to Jasmine about your favourite parts of the gallery. She's interested and you're feeling that life just couldn't get any better.

Then someone gets on the train Then suddenly you hear a bang then a loud female voice cursing "Dammit. I dropped me f&%kin' phone?!"

That's it. Your bubble is burst, and your mood is suddenly heading south. With trepidation you look up to see a very dishevelled woman in her early 30s (maybe, it's hard to tell) who is clearly very intoxicated (which you assume is normal for her) and looking pretty pissed off at the world (which you also assume is normal).

Why did she have to get on this train!? Will she ask for money? Is she dangerous? Why can't she look after herself!? What's wrong with people these days!?

Everything about this woman annoys or even disgusts you. You know it shouldn't, but it does. She's clearly vulnerable, probably had a shitty life, certainly needs help, but your heart is devoid of compassion at this moment

Then something very strange happens. The train and everyone in it appears to slow to a halt. A strange light enters the carriage, and everything is blurred out except Jasmine and this woman. Suddenly, in a supernatural moment of epiphany, you realise that this woman is Jasmine. Not metaphorically, but literally, and somehow you've been given a glimpse across time. This woman is Jasmine after 3 school expulsions, 17 foster homes and 2 group homes where she was sexually abused. After 5 years spent in prison for attempted murder of a man who wouldn't stop dealing drugs to her little brother. After 10 more years in and out of the prison system, mostly on drugs charges. After numerous failed and sometimes violent relationships, no steady employment and an infinite variety of unstable living arrangements including park benches.

If Jasmine the child deserved your compassion/energy/commitment, at what age did she become unworthy of it? How as a society can we change our own attitudes and make some significant progress? How will you react next time you see someone like Jasmine?

