

Rural Business Tasmania

*Supporting and Growing
Rural and Regional Enterprises*



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

ABN 43 790 148 538

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Chairman's Report

It is with pleasure that I provide the Chair's report on the activities of Rural Business Tasmania for the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

This financial year has continued to be a challenging environment for all Australians and although Tasmania has been fortunate in escaping the worst of the pandemic; we have seen the flow-on effects from the lock-down on the mainland impacting our local growers and small businesses that rely on visitors to our state.

Tasmania has experienced exceptional conditions for the production season this year with commodities and exports performing very well. The challenges facing our primary producers are uncertainty surrounding trade sanctions and labour shortages due to travel restrictions resulting in loss of the farm earnings which has a direct impact on our farming community.

These disruptions to our economy seem likely to continue and the need for our services is evermore important to support many businesses and primary producers as they adjust to longer-term structural changes in the market.

The Board of Directors at Rural Business Tasmania is very proud of the service delivered by our small but dedicated team. The organisation and Board continue to review strategic objectives, Board succession and effectiveness together with operational improvements, efficiencies, and emerging industry issues to ensure Rural Business Tasmania is well-positioned to remain a key go-to service provider in Tasmania.

We recognise the Australian and State Government grants as our main source of revenue, and I thank my fellow Board members for their unwavering efforts for the governance and oversight to deliver quality service throughout the year. I would also like to thank our member organisations for their support through our Forum of Rural Stakeholders that meet quarterly throughout the year.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of our CEO, Elizabeth Skirving, and her team for the excellent work and diligence.

We look forward to continuing to provide quality support to Tasmanian communities and key stakeholders.



Michal Frydrych
Chairman – Rural Business Tasmania



Chief Executive Officer's Report

The period from July 2020 to June 2021 has provided a vast variety of opportunities and challenges as the world continued to navigate the pandemic.

Rural Business Tasmania continued to play a critical role in supporting our clients and community in adapting to the changes ensuing from the current situation and providing a vehicle for collaboration and effective service provision.

The agricultural community have welcomed a return to a prosperous season with good climatic conditions, good to exceptional commodity prices and limited impact from the pandemic. Our rural and regional small businesses have been impacted by Covid-19 and our additional service portfolio has provided valuable support. Key issues that the business industry has experienced include workforce challenges, freight and supply logistics and changing supply demands. Rural Business Tasmania has continued to participate in industry discussions during this time and be available and ready to assist where appropriate.

All programs continued as per the previous year but with significant uncertainty of funding options for our Rural Financial Counselling program post June 2021 due to funding renewal delays.

We were fortunate to in late April have been successful in securing a three-year funding grant for the Rural Financial Counselling Service with both considerable funds received from Australian and Tasmanian Governments. We have also had additional program support for our proactive programs from the Tasmanian Government and enjoy a close working relationship with AgriGrowth. We continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with other organisations and strive for a cohesive

agricultural industry association and service provider network. Our staff and board have been instrumental in this outreach work attending many events, field days, training and presentations thus ensuring the services of Rural Business Tasmania continue to be promoted to potential clients and community throughout the year.

Our financial counselling suite of services, **RFCS Tasmania** and **Small Business Support Program** consolidated to provide ongoing support to all rural and regional small business, including farming, fishing and forestry. Although our reach is focussed on those in financial hardship, the services provided can have a significant impact on the economic sustainability of the community. By assisting a farming venture or a small tourism business firstly navigate some short-term 'band aid' support (e.g., a grant or low-interest loan) and then look to analysis and remedial actions (through case management framework) to improve long-term business health, the impact on the wider community and on the family is positive.

The Rural Relief Fund, through the provision of emergency grants, can act quickly to support those most affected from disasters like drought, bushfire and flood and we would like to thank the Tasmanian State Government, corporate and individual sponsors for their generous donations throughout the year. With these funds we have been able to assist farmers with grants both in drought, bushfire and Covid recovery opportunities to build resilience or to meet immediate hardship requirements of food

on the table.

Based on our successful administration of the Relief Fund, we also now offer the **Forestry Contractors Resilience Program** on behalf of Tasmanian Government. This provides specific grant funding up to \$15,000 per business to implement agreed actions to build resilience for the business. An action plan is generated through business coaching guidance from our experienced team to support the continued growth, adaptation and resilience of the businesses we support.

Our third intake of participants commenced **Cultivating Rural Excellence** in March 2021 through a hybrid delivery of face-to-face and online platforms to deliver the small group workshops, one-on-one coaching at a subsidised cost, business financial and strategic review and action plans. An extensive suite of topics was explored.

The **Agribusiness Career Pathways (ACP) Cadetship Program** was implemented with limited success and the pilot first intake of school-aged participants undertook an eight-week program in the last quarter of the financial year. Engagement from industry needs further development and the program is currently being reviewed to determine application in 2021-22.

The **Forum of Rural Stakeholders**, convened by Rural Business Tasmania and chaired by myself as Chief Executive, has again grown in membership and profile. The Forum has had a variety of guest speakers including regular visits from Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Guy Barnett. We recognise the support of DPIPW (Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment) and Agri-Growth in providing a venue and catering together with invaluable advice from their representatives on current, emerging issues and future forecasting. The sharing of resources and strategic planning amongst members has been an opportunity to maximise service to the community.

The membership has collaborated, and subgroups include that for the “Respect in the Workplace” project and the Resilience Program Collaboration Group (a Future Drought Fund informal discussion group).

The Australian Government, supported by the Tasmanian Government, continued to expand and develop a suite of programs and concepts to assist with adaptation, innovation and resilience to drought through the Future Drought Fund. Rural Business Tasmania were involved in discussion from early concept and have become a partner in the **Adoption and Innovation Hub for Drought Resilience – Tasmania**. We continue to look for opportunities to support our business clients to build a resilient, adaptive enterprise through managing the ever-present challenges and building risk mitigation strategies.

The staff of Rural Business Tasmania have again provided consistent and quality of service through difficult times: an everchanging landscape, funding uncertainty and high workloads. It is fitting to recognise the team for their tireless efforts throughout the year and their commitment to the Tasmanian community. We look forward to the future and are ready for any challenges that we may face.

I would like to thank our Chairman, Michal Frydrych, and Board members for the support of myself and our team through another challenging year. Their strategic oversight and links to industry provide a valuable sounding board together with appropriate governance to enable Rural Business Tasmania to maintain its valuable work supporting rural and regional small businesses, including agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors.



Elizabeth Skirving

Chief Executive Officer - Rural Business Tasmania

Who We Are

Established in 1986, Rural Business Tasmania Inc. is a not-for-profit association that primarily offers financial counselling and business support expertise to rural and regional communities.

Rural Business Tasmania's key objective is to help rural and regional families, businesses, and the community manage the ever-evolving demands and challenges facing the sector.

Rural Business Tasmania has assisted many hundreds of Tasmanians to find pathways to sustainable futures. It has extensive networks that connect quickly and deeply into rural and regional communities. Our services help clients to gain a better understanding of their financial position and identify financial and business risk and opportunities. We assist clients to negotiate with lenders and creditors where necessary and refer to specialist service providers including accountants, family mediation, health and well being counsellors.

Vision

A sustainable and prosperous future for rural and regional Tasmania.

Mission

To develop and deliver services and projects that foster viable and sustainable economic development within Tasmania's rural and regional communities.



Rural Relief Fund For Tasmania

The Rural Relief Fund is owned and supported by Tasmanian rural community members, and co-ordinated by Rural Business Tasmania.

We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing support provided by the Tasmanian Government who have provided a grant of \$10,000. Together this generous support of Rural Business Tasmania enables the fund to keep administrative costs to no more than 10% of the Grants paid.

Donations made to the fund have in this year supported four applications to provide immediate assistance for those suffering hardship.

All donations are fully tax deductible as the Rural Relief Fund is a registered charity with the ATO.

There were a further five applicants who received assistance from the State Government from the funds remaining from the \$150,000 Grant received in 2019-2020 totalling \$31,306.00.



Our Strategic Goals

1

Assist clients to understand their business & financial management outcomes.

2

Implementation of stand-alone complementary Fee for Service.

3

Raise awareness in rural and regional business communities of our role, purpose and value of Rural Business Tasmania to broaden our support services.

4

Support young people to increase business acumen, financial and functional literacy to support workforce and industry for the future.

5

Position Rural Business Tasmania to partner with corporate support and expand grant opportunities through key alignment with strategic entities.



Our Core Values

Our core values guide the way we work and behave:



Safety

A genuine care for the health and wellbeing of our people, clients and the wider community



Integrity

Staying true to our values even when it's hard



Professional

Providing excellence in service



Caring

Truly caring for our clients



Trust

Working together to achieve common goals and shared outcomes



Empathy

Understanding the concerns and fears of our clients

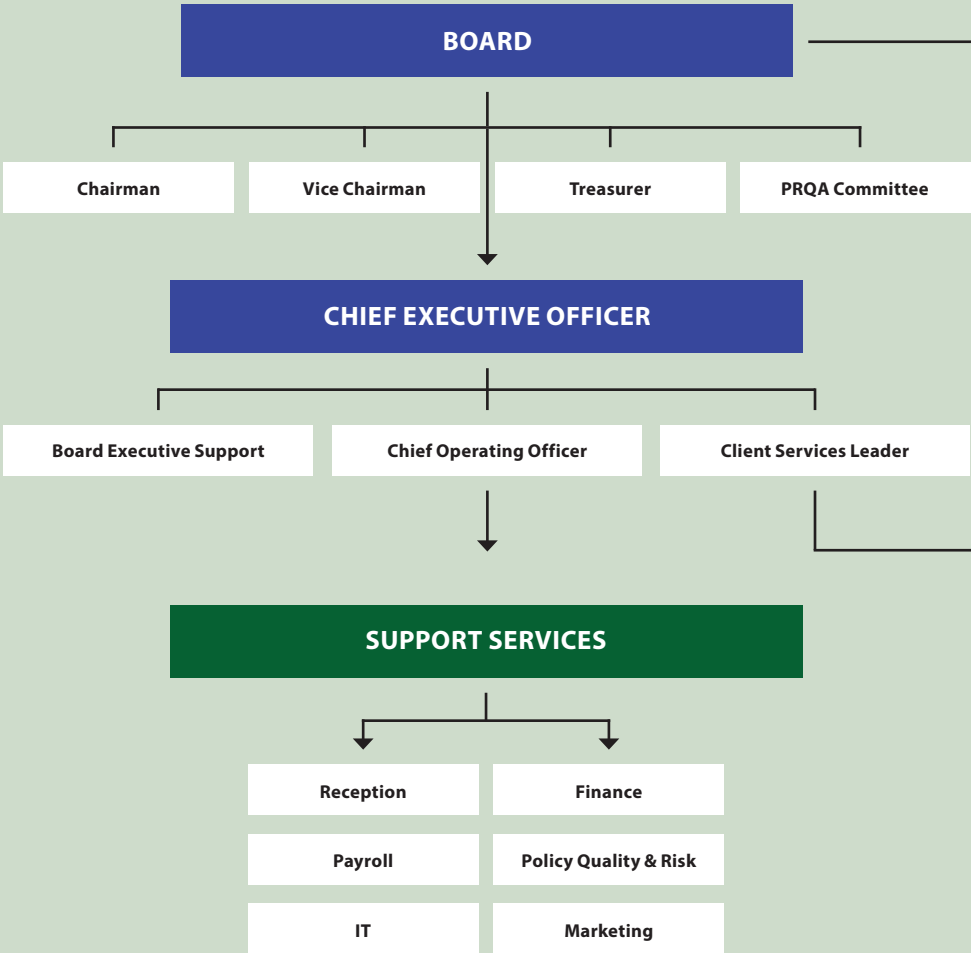


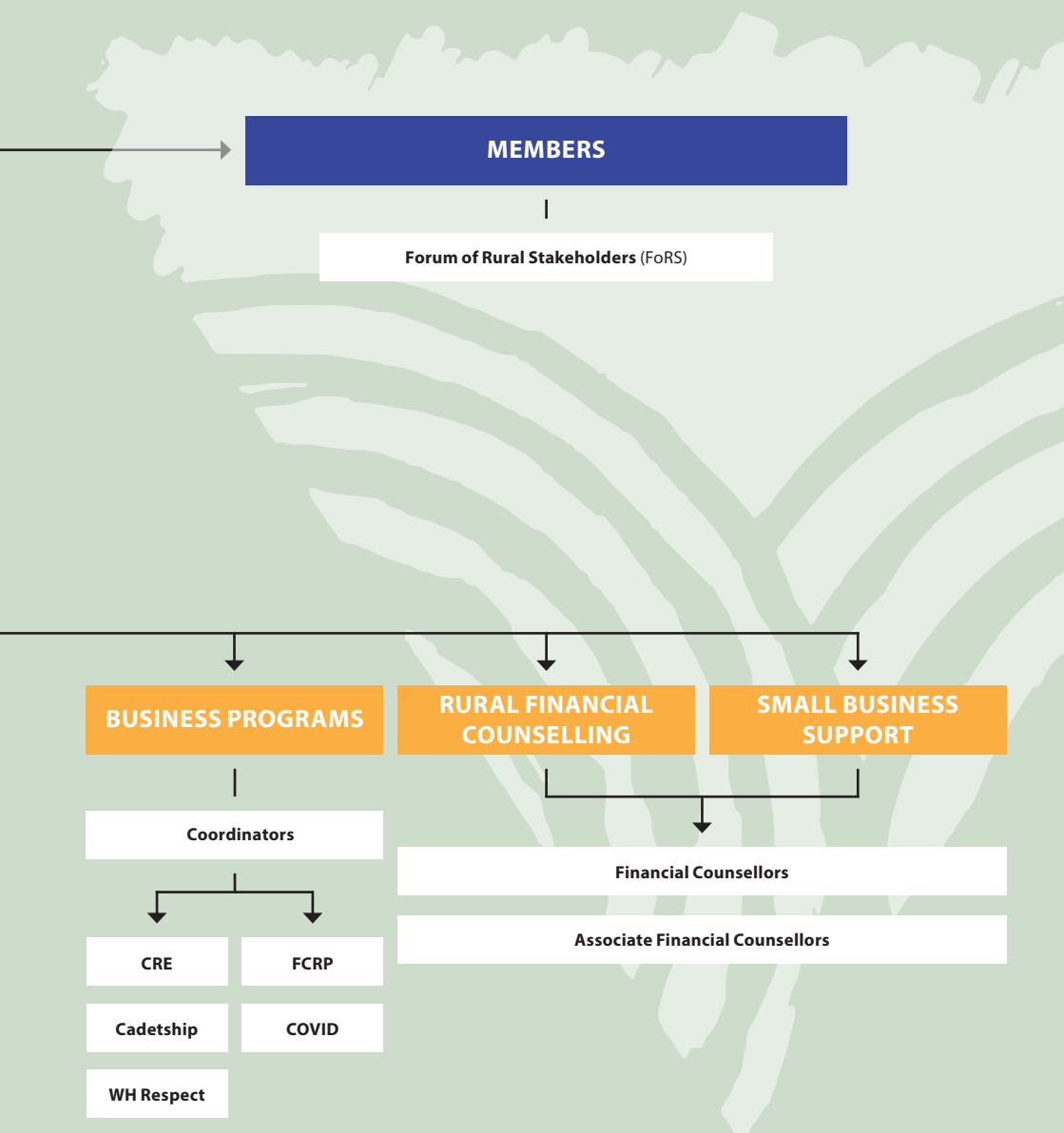
Collaboration

Working together as one team



Organisational Structure





Board Members

Name	Appointed	Position
Michal Frydrych	29/01/2014	Chairman from 20/11/2019
Geoff Fader	10/11/2011	Emeritus Chair from 20/11/2019
Keith Rice	14/12/2016	Treasurer from 20/11/2019
Tony Barker	16/04/2012	Vice Chair
Nathan Cox	01/01/2019	Board Member
Belinda Hazell	18/11/2016	Board Member
Karen Robinson	14/12/2016	Associate Board Member

Rural Business Tasmania is governed by the Board, supported by the Reference Group who provides advice and assistance as required. Members are invited to the Board as a representative of the community, industry or member group.



Picture (L-R): Tony Barker, Belinda Hazell, Nathan Cox, Michal Frydrych, Geoff Fader and Keith Rice.



Michal Frydrych

Chairman

- » Business strategy
- » Marketing
- » Project management
- » Staff development



Geoff Fader

Emeritus Chair

- » Marketeer
- » Business mentor
- » Governance
- » Board positions



Keith Rice

Treasurer

- » CEO Poppy Growers
- » Board positions
- » Director of Tasmanian Productivity Group



Tony Barker

Vice Chair

- » Diploma in Agriculture
- » Diploma of Farm Management
- » 2006 Nuffield Farming Scholarship



Nathan Cox

Board Member

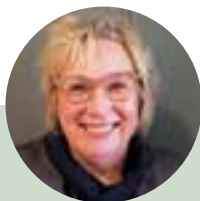
- » 350 acre beef & cropping business
- » TFGA Vegetable Council
- » Training with a focus on safety



Belinda Hazell

Board Member

- » Advanced Diploma of Horticulture
- » Diploma of Occupational Health and Safety
- » Board positions



Karen Robinson

Board Member

- » CEO Rural Youth
- » Associate Director
- » Board positions

Meet Our Team



Top Row (L-R): Roly Chugg, Tim Hickey, John Dunbar

Second Row: Karen Hinds, Kate Cox, Kim Woolley, Tania Cornwall, Linda Groombridge

Front Row: Stephen Hansen, Elizabeth Skirving, Chantal Filgate

Additional: Rhett McKenzie-Edwards (L), Vanessa Smith (R)



Elizabeth Skirving

Chief Executive Officer

- » Bachelor of Business
- » Chartered Accountant
- » AICD
- » Small business industry leadership roles
- » Strategic agricultural connections
- » 5th generation farming family



Chantal Filgate

Chief Operating Officer

- » AdvDip Ldrshp & Mgt
- » Dip Financial Services



Stephen Hansen

Client Services Leader

- » AdvDip of Accounting
- » Cert Ag Bus Mgt
- » Financial Counsellor



Vanessa Smith

Executive Assistant

- » Executive support to Chairman & Board Directors
- » Liaison with external stakeholders



Roly Chugg

Financial Counsellor

- » Diploma of Community Services (Financial Counselling)
- » AdvDip of Ag Bus Management
- » Certificate in Financial Services



Tim Hickey

Financial Counsellor

- » Dip Farm Management



Kim Woolley

Finance Officer

- » Financial Management
- » Support Services



Tania Cornwall

Payroll Officer

- » Marketing
- » Cert IV in Bus (Sm Bus Management)



Kate Cox

Support Officer

- » Marketing



John Dunbar

Associate Financial Counsellor

- » Bachelor of Business
- » Associate degree in Agribusiness



Linda Groombridge

Associate Financial Counsellor

- » Grad Cert Business Management
- » Advanced Leadership Program
- » Member of TWiA Executive Committee



Karen Hinds

Compliance Officer

- » Certificate IV in Financial Services
- » Finance and Admin support
- » Certificate IV in Credit Management



Rhett McKenzie-Edwards

Business Development Officer

- » Undergrad in applied science Agribusiness
- » Cattle Council Australia - Policy Working Group Member
- » Cert 4 Hospitality

Position	Incumbent	Term
Chief Executive Officer	Elizabeth Skirving	30/10/06 - Current
Chief Operating Officer	Chantal Filgate	04/05/20 - Current
Client Services Leader/Financial Counsellor	Stephen 'Steve' Hansen	20/02/20 – Current
Board and Executive Support	Vanessa Smith	11/11/19 - Current
Financial Counsellor	Roland 'Roly' Chugg	19/08/13 - Current
Financial Counsellor	Tim Hickey	14/09/20 - Current
Associate Financial Counsellor	Linda Groombridge	11/12/19 - Current
Associate Financial Counsellor	John Dunbar	18/02/21 - Current
Business Development Officer	Rhett McKenzie-Edwards	06/04/20 - Current
Finance Officer	Kim Woolley	05/04/16 – Current
Payroll Officer	Tania Cornwall	14/02/20 – Current
Compliance Officer	Karen Hinds	15/02/21 - Current
Support Officer	Kate Cox	26/11/19 – Current
Consulting - CRM	Trevor Chalk	Current
Policy & Quality Review Officer	Maree O'Sullivan	02/03/09 – 25/03/21
Business Programs Co-ordinator	Sam Wedgwood	16/12/19 – 28/09/20
Business Programs Co-ordinator	Erin Hughes	15/01/20 – 30/06/21
Rural Financial Counsellor - South	Tony Doyle	14/03/18 – 21/05/21
Rural Financial Counsellor – North West	Paul 'Bluey' Briant	15/06/10 – 31/05/21
Reception & Administration Officer	Karlie Johnston	17/04/18 – 30/06/21



Rural Financial Counselling Service

During the 2020-2021-year, Rural Business Tasmania employed 3.4 full time equivalent Rural Financial Counsellors (RFC'S) based as follows:

- » 1.0 North West - Devonport
- » 1.4 North/North East -Longford
- » 1.0 South - Hobart

Rural Financial Counselling Service Tasmania (RFCST) remains the flagship program for the organisation — a highly respected and valued service that has been operational for over 30 years and we continue to look for ways in which we can boost the support we provide to Tasmanian rural and regional agribusinesses.

A brief summary of factors for 2020-21 impacting on primary production and ultimately the demand for the RFCS include:

- » Rainfall at or slightly above long-term averages for vast portions of Tasmania. Whilst this is a welcomed and positive change, regions such as the East Coast and Southern Midland Regions are very much in recovery mode from the many years of drought like conditions. In addition, the RFCS program is still also assisting clients impacted by the devastating 19/20 bushfires.
- » Covid-19 related challenges that have arisen include, access to goods & labour e.g. harvest workers.
- » The Tasmanian Seafood Industry is suffering significant financial hardship as a whole due to loss of markets from Covid-19 and international trade issues which resulted in an increase in demand for our services.

Average debt levels have reduced over the past year which is a good sign that clients are putting in place effective strategies to reduce debt and better manage their on-farm expenditure. It must be said that improved seasonal conditions has also assisted in reducing debt levels.

Increased interest in Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) Drought and Farm Investment loans to support various on-farm infrastructure is also occurring along with interest in the State Government Concessional Loan Packages offered through the Department of State Growth.



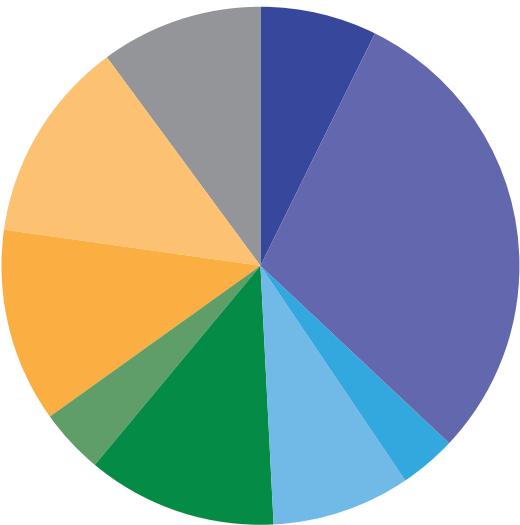
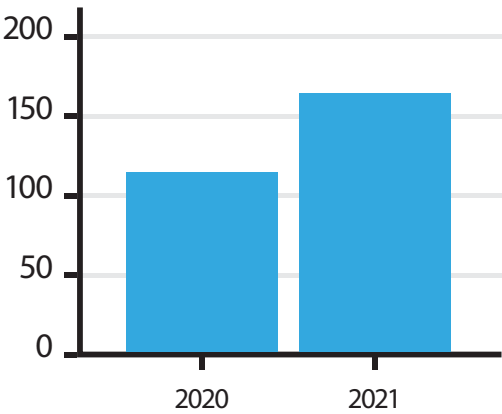
Client Levels

Our client levels have risen this year due in large part to primary producers in the Midlands and East Coast regions seeking our assistance as they start to recover from the extended dry conditions that prevailed for several years prior.

Two new client financial counsellors commencing in the south has allowed the program to become more well-known and establish good referral sources, whilst the media and social presence of RBT continues to assist in brand awareness.

The majority of our new clients were referred from a government agency (e.g. Centrelink, DPIPW, etc.) or through word of mouth but discovery of RFCST via social media is becoming more prevalent.

Active Clients As At 30th Of June



Active Client Service Discovery

- Referral from a financier or accountant
- Referral from a government agency
- Advertising
- Information session (e.g. field day)
- Previous RFCS client (word of mouth)
- Current RFCS client (word of mouth)
- General community (word of mouth)
- Referral professional services
- Other

A Quick Snapshot Into Our Program



**286 physical
farm visits**



**95,876
kilometres
travelled**



**199 farm
businesses
assisted**



**99% satisfaction
rate of surveyed
clients with 81% of
clients achieving
their stated goals**



**\$751,653
average
debt level
with average
income of
\$243,811**

Counsellor Engagement

Our counsellors continue to regularly refer their clients to external parties in order to ensure that they are accessing all the necessary support and assistance they need to support them – as is to be expected, these referral sources include government agencies such as Centrelink and semi-government agencies such as Rural Alive and Well (RAW) in addition, referrals are made to other professionals such as accountants and solicitors.

It should be noted that the RFCS are well aware of the need of the clients to have support around their mental and emotional wellbeing, and so regularly refer clients to various social support groups/ organisations again such as RAW and/or their medical practitioner.

Communities impacted by recent bushfires in the local government areas of Break O'Day, Central Highlands, and Glamorgan-Spring Bay in particular continue to require assistance as they seek to recover from the devastating impacts on their lives.

Our visits to Flinders Island and King Island which provide support to our primary producers on the islands, particularly around cash flow budgeting and Centrelink programs, have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Due to our strong connections on the islands however, the RFCS have been able to provide support and assistance to our existing clients, and deal with any general enquiries as they are made.

RFCS Program – Outcomes Focussed For Clients & Emerging Issues

The Rural Financial Counselling Program as part of its core client duties is focussed on assisting clients develop their own clear goals and desired outcomes.

Rural Business Tasmania has in place a Client Survey Program as part of its commitment to deliver a quality service to the clients that ensure key desired outcomes are delivered. Client survey respondents achieved the following:

- » 84% of clients achieved improved business planning skills
- » 78% of clients advised that they now had improved confidence in their ability to make better informed business decisions
- » 88% of clients now have clear strategic goals
- » 89% of clients ceased support from Rural Business Tasmania advising that they had achieved their goals.

In 2020-2021 our clients have experienced evolving challenges derived from key economic events specific to the Covid-19 pandemic. Rural Business Tasmania Counsellors have been focussed on supporting clients with building robust strategies for long-term business resilience, innovation, pathways to pivot their farming enterprise and assisting in setting achievable goals that lead to long term viability. Key evolving issues that have been of significant impact include:

- » Covid-19 related challenges around labour shortages access to markets etc.
- » The Tasmanian seafood sector in particular is suffering from a loss of markets which is causing significant distress in part due to Covid-19 issues and international trade disputes causing market access issues.
- » The service is still also assisting clients in recovery from the disastrous 2019 bushfires.

Client Business Type Breakdown



Small Business Support Program

Rural Business Tasmania’s Small Business Support Program is designed to assist regional and rural small business enterprises that are either under financial hardship or have the potential to be under financial hardship.

The focus of the program is to assist businesses:

- » Better understand their financial position and options moving forward
- » Develop self-reliance and enhance business viability
- » Access assistance measures as required.

This program is a relatively new offering for Rural Business Tasmania and has been in operation since February 2020 with funding secured until June 2022 via a mixture of federal and state government funding.

The program was launched in March 2020 with funding from the Federal Government under the guise of the Drought Communities Small Business Support Program.

Initial funding was provided for one counsellor to service the small businesses of drought impacted communities (e.g. East Coast of Tasmania). This has now grown to funding for 2.5 FTE providing state-wide coverage as a result of additional funding due to the impact of Covid-19.

This program whilst being able to provide support to any small business across the state, has chosen to focus its resources on businesses located greater than 20 kilometres from Hobart or Launceston.

This focus on regional and rural communities outside metropolitan regions allows for program alignment with the core vision of Rural Business Tasmania.

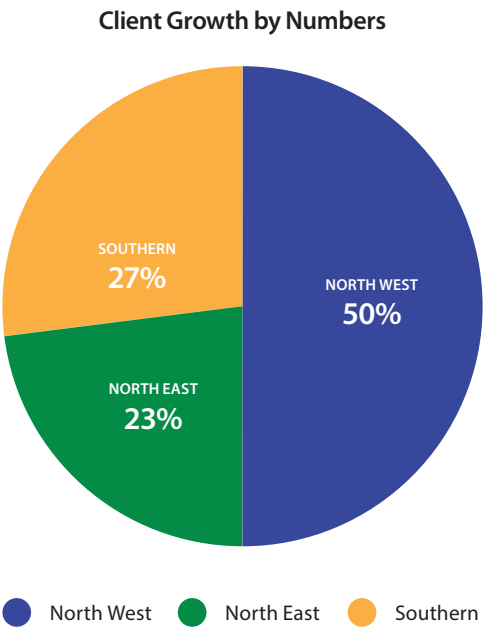
The Small Business Team services greater Tasmania as follows:

Northern Tasmania

- 1.0 FTE Counsellor
- 0.5 FTE Associate Counsellor

Southern & Eastern Tasmania

- 0.5 FTE Counsellor
- 0.5 FTE Associate Counsellor



Client Focussed Outcomes

The program key area of focus is to assist clients with the following:

- » Understanding their current financial position
- » To identify options and implement plans to improve the viability of their enterprise
- » Understanding the benefits and drawbacks of different options to manage financial issues
- » Develop budgets and cash flow management
- » Negotiate with creditors and financial providers on client behalf
- » Understand rights and access broader professional advice and support services
- » Access government and community grants, programs or schemes

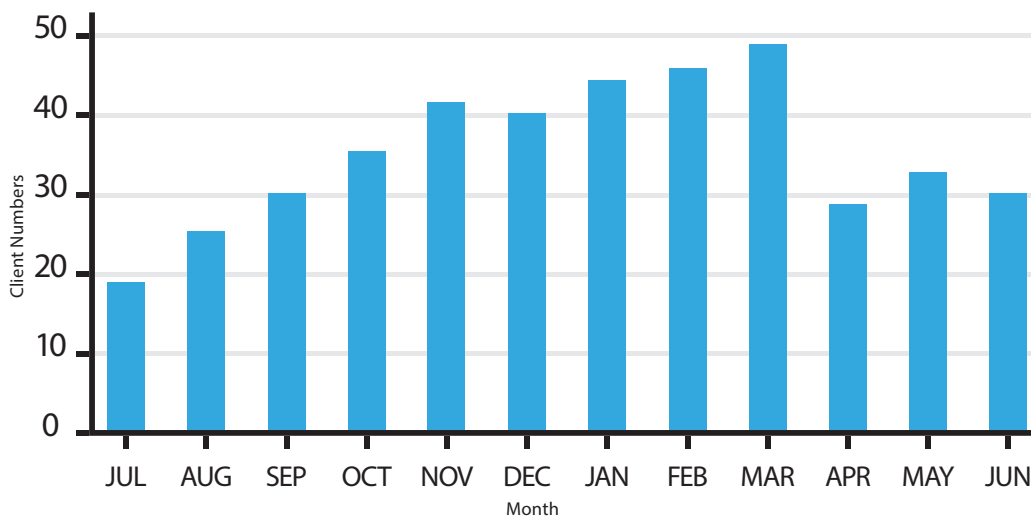
Assistance Provided

Strongest demand has been seen in the retail sector followed by the accommodation sector with Covid-19 related impacts being the main cause for businesses seeking assistance.

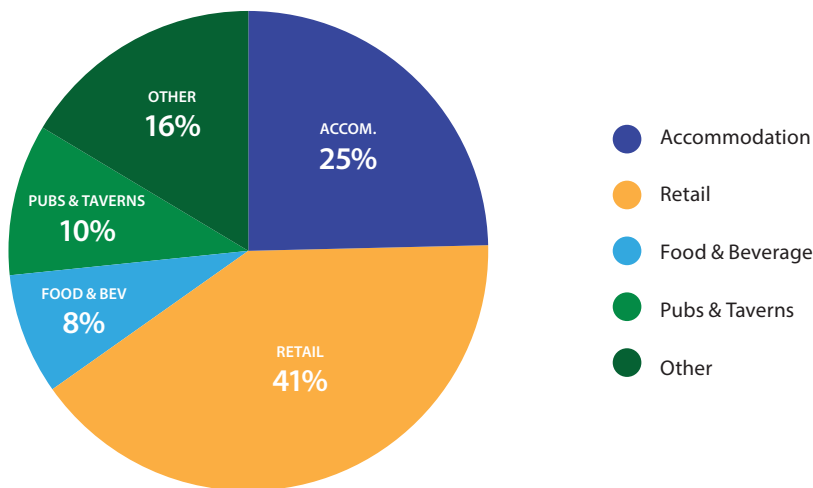
Coupled with the above, strongest demand by location has been in the Circular Head LGA and the Glamorgan Spring Bay LGA.

Uncertainty around the level of federal government funding post June 2021 led to a reduction in client numbers in April & May 2021. Pleasingly the federal government in late May 2021 recommitted to the program and client numbers are back on the increase as the program is actively marketed once more.

Active Clients



Assistance By Industry



Rural Business Programs

Our business programs are designed to support and develop both the skillset and knowledge base of Tasmanian regional and rural communities and primary producers alike through innovative programs.

Our programs are funded through a mixture of Tasmanian Government funding and commercial support from regional and rural Tasmanian businesses. Our current programs are as follows:

Cultivating Rural Excellence

An innovative online course hosted by industry specialists. The program runs over a six month period from March through to October. This year will see 10 participants enrolled in the program with valued support from the following organisations

- » Tasmanian Women In Agriculture
- » McCain
- » Greenham's
- » Meander Valley Financial Services (Deloraine Branch of the Bendigo Community Bank)
- » Rural Youth
- » Simplot
- » Tasmanian State Government
- » TasAgCo
- » Findex Accounting
- » Elders Insurance
- » Belinda Hazell
- » Simmons Wolfhagen Law Firm
- » Primary Employers Tasmania

Cultivating Rural Excellence has in its third year of running been designed to empower farmers to grow their businesses by developing essential skills from wealth management to marketing and everything in between. This program allows participants to hone their business skills by working on their business, rather than in it.

Agribusiness Career Pathway Cadetship Program - Cadetship Program

The Cadetship Pilot Program is designed to bring young people and employers together to create opportunities in rural communities and attract young people into agriculture. It is the intent of this program that school aged people take the opportunity to do some work experience and potentially transitioning into Australian School based Apprenticeships in the rural sector. This year students from the following schools engaged in the program.

- » Prospect High School
- » Campbell Town District High School
- » Queechy High School
- » Latrobe High School

The following employers/training organisations were also involved

- » Skills Tasmania
- » TasTAFE
- » MAS National
- » Safe Farming Tasmania
- » M & F Richards
- » McCain
- » Clear Springs Dairies

This pilot program is due for review in late 2021 and is funded by the Tasmanian State Government and supported by various industry stakeholders.

Forestry Contracts Resilience Program

Under the program Tasmanian forestry harvest and haulage contractors have the opportunity to work with business specialists in business and financial management to identify future opportunities and build stability and resilience into their operations. Eligible applicants will receive up to 5 hours of professional business coaching and may also be eligible for up to \$15,000 to deliver agreed business improvements. This pilot is funded by the Tasmanian State Government.

Key Outcomes Delivered:



13 grants paid out



**\$195,000 total value of grants
paid out to contractors**



**65 hours Of business
coaching delivered**

Mentorship Program

This program due to the impact of Covid-19 was placed on hold for 20-21 and will be relaunched in late 2021. A brief outline of the mentorship program funded by the Tasmanian State Government is:

- » Match young farmers with experienced farmers, to help impart their knowledge onto the next generation.
- » Build the young farmers knowledge through mentoring and research to develop report and business plan and competition of 2 units through RuralBiz Training.
- » Provide support to mentee's through RFCS, to help develop their business acumen for future ventures.
- » Provide Outline to mentors on what the mentee hopes to gain from the experience, as well as how the mentor can benefit from having an active and interested mentee available to work with and learn from.



Forum Of Rural Stakeholders

Over 20 stakeholders are members of the Forum representing a wide range of industry groups and associations.

Bringing stakeholders together to achieve goals for a common purpose ensuring a sustainable future for rural agribusiness.

Meetings are hosted by Rural Business Tasmania with the support of the Department of Primary Industries.

Guest speakers include Honourable Guy Barnett (Minister of Primary Industries and Water), Dick Warner (26TEN Ambassador), National Recovery Agency, TWiA - Boots on the Ground and Rural Business Tasmania - Cultivating Rural Excellence Program.

- » Representatives of government departments provide updates and advice from State Government on emerging issues and future forecasting. Biosecurity updates, the challenges and solutions facing the supply chains for essential services.
- » Member updates on strategic planning with sharing of resources to emerging issues.
- » Discussions on the importance of improvement of literacy and numeracy skills and how best to achieve the best outcomes for Tasmanians.
- » Impacts of Covid-19 to the agricultural sector and associated businesses. Labour shortages and skilled worker requirements. Export and domestic transport challenges.

Resilience Program Collaboration Group, members of Forum of Rural Stakeholders, has been formed in 2021 to ensure Future Drought Fund programs are being delivered in Tasmania or are secured to be delivered in Tasmania, and Tasmanian service organisations are maximising benefits of the programs through collaboration.

Four Forum of Rural Stakeholders meetings were held during 2020/2021:

- » October 13th, 2020
- » December 8th, 2020
- » February 16th, 2021
- » May 24th, 2021

Members include:

- » Rural Business Tasmania
- » Department of AgriGrowth/DPIPWE
- » Dept of State Growth
- » DHS – Centrelink
- » NRM North & South
- » Primary Employers
- » TiA – Tas Institute of Ag
- » UTAS
- » Regional Investment Corporation

Industry Support

- » TFGA
- » Dairy Tas
- » Poppy Growers
- » Fruit Growers
- » Tasmanian Small Business Council
- » Tasmanian Industry Seafood Council

Emotional Health & Networks

- » Rural Alive and Well
- » Rural Youth
- » Tasmanian Women in Agriculture
- » Country Women's Association
- » Local Government Association Tasmania

Healthier, Safer And Productive Workplaces - RBT Projects

In January 2020, Rural Business Tasmania, as co-ordinator of a Forum of Rural Stakeholder's working group, spearheaded previous work of Tasmanian Women in Agriculture (TWiA) and Belinda Hazell, a Worksafe Tasmania Grant to review workplace bullying and harassment resources and initiatives. The group developed practical guidance tools specifically focused on rural workplaces to prevent, respond and reduce the harm sexual harassment and other forms of bullying and harassment have on rural workers.

The aim is to develop education and training initiatives to assist workers and employers in identifying, improving and promoting work health safety and wellbeing, including injury management, and preventing health hazards in the workplace.

The desired outcomes of this project, would be to give employers and workers the skills, knowledge and confidence to prevent and/or report, and respond to sexual harassment in the rural workplace. This would lead to an improved workplace culture, where workers feel safe and can go about their everyday work without fear or harassment. The project aimed to reduce the risk of productivity losses and staff turnover, and increased levels of conflict between workers, decreases sick and stress leave which in turn reduces workers compensation claims. It also addresses reputational damage, poor workplace culture and industry barriers due to perception of the workplace.

Regular meeting were held with the stakeholder group, which consists of:

- » Rural Business Tasmania (RBT)
- » Tasmanian Women in Agriculture (TWiA)
- » Safe Farming Tasmania
- » Rural Youth Tasmania (RYT)
- » Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association (TFGA)
- » Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group (TAPG)
- » Fruit Growers Tasmania (FGT)



The stakeholder group have developed:

- » 3 x 15-second videos, for reference and use in the rural workplace
- » With a focus on good leadership, sexual harassment and bullying
- » 3 posters that can be printed for reference and/or use in the rural workplace
- » A series of workplace Policy and Checklist templates to assist the rural workplace with developing their own Workplace Harassment Policy
- » Another 2 x 15-second videos are still in development
- » Focussing on cultural diversity and calling out bad behaviour

This campaign had its media launch at Brickendon Estate, Longford by the Hon. Mr Guy Barnett MP, Minister for Primary Industries and Water on 22nd October 2020. The media launch featured on the news on both commercial channels in Tasmania, together with radio coverage with the ABC news network and printed media editorial coverage.

The videos and posters are also on social media; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.

Rural Business Tasmania have developed a page on their website dedicated to the Healthier, Safer and Productive Workplaces, with access to the available resources. Over time these resources can be added to and changed as required.

A television campaign was commenced, with the 3 videos being shown at various times throughout the day on the Nine Network channels (TDT 9, 9 Life, 9 Gem, 9 Go). In total (over all the channels) it was estimated the advert was run approximately 30 times a day over a 1 month period.



Engagement And Networks

The organisation was represented at many industry forums throughout 2020/2021. These included:

- » Tasmanian Agricultural Group
- » Future Drought Fund
- » Adoption and Innovation Hub partner
- » Consultation and contribution to Safe Farming Reference Group
- » Panel for Senior Safe Farming Health and Safety Adviser recruitment
- » Farm Debt Mediation Legislation consultation
- » Agricultural Coordination Group
- » NIG Coordination Group meetings
- » ASIC Business Advisory Panel discussions
- » Regional Intelligence Sharing hosted by RDA
- » Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia (COSBOA)
- » Tasmania Small Business Council

We also participated in media events, including:

- » The launch of Tasmania - Strategic Industry Partnership Program.

We also completed:

- » Radio interviews and contributed to editorials within local papers

Rural Business Tasmania supported Agfest 'back on the paddock' in 2021 as an exhibitor. Patron numbers were limited this year due to Covid restrictions however, client engagement remained positive with many visitors to our exhibit throughout the event.

In 2021 Rural Business Tasmania completed an upgrade in our branding and communication to improve our overall outreach to clients. This included improved digital presence with the launch of our new website, and a complete rebrand of our marketing documentation and collateral.



Support Services

The Support Services team have continued to provide service support that ensure we meet the financial and administrative commitments, to sustain effective delivery of our programs and ongoing positive relationships with its partners.

Finance and Admin

RBT has continued to build and manage its workforce and provide resources necessary to ensure it delivers requirements of all grant deeds that it operates under.

During the year, the vehicle fleet has been renewed, with older vehicles replaced. We thank Buckby Motors for their continued support in supply.

PRQA

The Support Services team works closely with members of the board, as part of the PRQA group. The Committee reviewed Policies and Procedures monthly and made recommendations to the Board for change as required.

HR

With increase in employment of team members, HR has remained busy during 2021-2022. Renewal of contracts for the team, and general compliance with Human Resource Laws, has been a focus this year. Thank you again to Tess Moore and Andrew Cameron for their ongoing assistance and expertise in this area.

IT

IT has been focused on continued upgrading of our CRM in preparation for the implementation of the new RFCS program. This has meant significant change to the current CRM system so as to capture key elements of our 2021-2024 counselling program and Small Business Program. We completed a rebuild of our website, which was successfully launched late 2020. The website provides an easily navigated platform, where clients can source current information about the agricultural sector and our partners and network connections.

Support Services Team provide critical business support to all aspects of the business including;

- » Administrative support
- » Financial administration
- » Processing payroll
- » Human resources assistance to the CEO
- » Accounts payable and receivable
- » Managing IT issues with the help of Beyond IT
- » Vehicle fleet oversight
- » Asset requisition and disposal
- » Compliance and oversight of statutory reporting to regulatory bodies
- » Policy review and oversight

This year has been a year of change and resilience where we have achieved ongoing success through striving to meet and exceed the goals and expectations of the business. It is with great anticipation that the Support Services Team look forward to 2021-2022.

Compliance And Policy

Rural Business Tasmania has complied with all reporting requirements including to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission and the Australian Taxation Office.

The Board's sub-committee continues, in conjunction with staff, to oversee and complete periodic reviews of all policies and procedures to ensure that Rural Business Tasmania is at the forefront of its compliance and regulatory responsibilities.

Funding Partners:

Rural Business Tasmania thanks and acknowledges, as our main source of revenue, the critical financial support received from Australian and Tasmanian Government agencies.

In addition, we thank and acknowledge the support of our sponsors including our founding body Rural Youth Tasmania Inc. for their generous cash and in-kind support and the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania and Devonport Agricultural and Pastoral Society for office accommodation.

- » Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE – Australia)
- » Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE – Tasmania)
- » Department of State Growth

In-kind and Financial Sponsors:

- » Rural Youth Organisation of Tasmania Inc. – Launceston office facilities
- » Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania – Hobart office facilities
- » Devonport Agricultural and Pastoral Society – Devonport office facilities

Founding Body:

Rural Youth Tasmania



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment

Treasurer's Report

On behalf of the Board of Rural Business Tasmania I am pleased to provide an overview of financial activities and present the audited financial statements for the 2020-2021 financial year.

During the 2020-2021 financial year there were a total of nine government grants, received providing substantial income for the year which included the continuation and expansion of the Small Business Support program

It is pleasing to note that this year's income has grown to \$1.7m which has provided a sound operating surplus of \$58,767. This surplus will enable Rural Business Tasmania to continue developing programs to support our rural and regional communities.

Financial Reporting

To ensure financial governance remains at the highest level, financial reporting is provided to the Board on a monthly basis. Reports include Profit & Loss Statement, Balance Sheet and Statement of Cash Flow including a detailed overview of the financial situation. At each Board Meeting, financial performance against budget and cash flow is tabled, with a robust financial strategy remaining a priority.

Audit of Accounts and Compliance

The audit report for the 2020-2021 year has been completed utilising the general purpose financial statements methodology as issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board.

All compliance with funding bodies, taxation, superannuation and Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (ACNC) has been met for the financial year.

A complete set of audited financial statements is available upon request by emailing finance@ruralbusiness Tasmania.org.au.

Summary

The 2020-2021 financial year produced a number of significant changes placing Rural Business Tasmania in a unique position to provide a continued expansion of our financial counselling service in rural and regional communities. We acknowledge the ongoing and new support received from both Federal and State Governments during this period.

We are pleased to be the successful recipient of the Federal 2021-2024 Rural Financial Counselling Service for Tasmania Deed, and the continuation of Federal support of the Small Business Financial Counselling space until the end of December 2021.

I wish to again thank staff and the Board for their hard work and generous support over the last 12 months.



Keith Rice
Treasurer





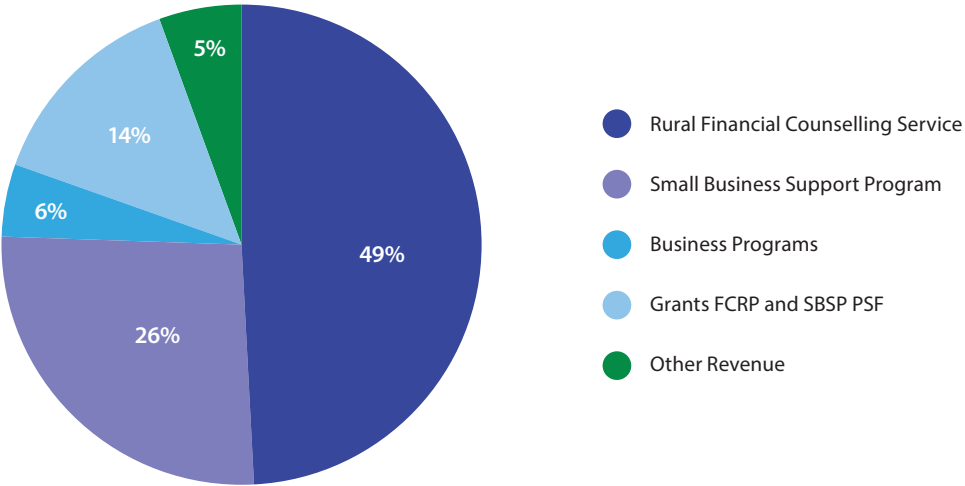
Statement Of Profit Or Loss And Other Comprehensive Income

Revenue	2021	2020
Rural Financial Counselling Service	\$845,468	\$771,296
Small Business Support Program	\$454,403	\$284,930
Business Programs	\$332,269	\$123,048
Other Revenue	\$86,077	\$78,311
Rural Relief Fund	\$13,807	\$139,775
Total Revenue	\$1,732,024	\$1,397,360

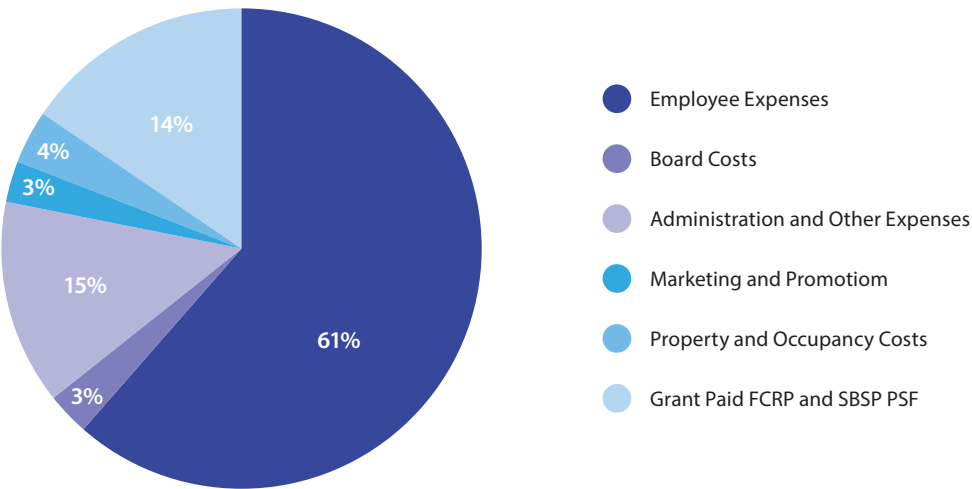
Expenditure	2021	2020
Rural Financial Counselling Service	\$809,039	\$680,160
Board Costs	\$44,180	\$42,569
Small Business Support Program	\$404,519	\$256,454
Business Programs	\$323,615	\$111,502
Other Revenue	\$80,904	\$66,900
Rural Relief Fund	\$11,000	\$107,963
Total Expenditure	\$1,673,257	\$1,265,548

Net Surplus/Deficit	\$58,767	\$131,812
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Source Of Revenue



Areas Of Expenditure



Auditor's Report



Auditor's Independence Declaration

To the members of Rural Business Tasmania Inc

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, as auditor of Rural Business Tasmania Inc for the year ended 30 June 2021, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- a) No contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of section 60-60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 in relation to the audit; and
- b) No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Synectic Audit & Assurance Pty Ltd

Benjamin Coul
Director

Date: 21/06/2021

Synectic Audit & Assurance Pty Ltd

ABN 62 628 111 111 | 100 St Georges Road, Hobart TAS 7000

Phone: +61 8 1300 1300 | Email: info@synectic.com.au

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CALL US 1300 883 276

F. (03) 6334 0979

62 York Street, Launceston TAS 7250

P.O Box 322, Launceston TAS 7250

www.ruralbusinessstasmania.org.au