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#### **Our Vision**

Our Vision is to bring businesses, educators and communities together to form partnerships that identify opportunities, innovates and finds solutions.

We will collaboratively build on our region's strengths and opportunities in the tourism, agribusiness, horticultural and related education and technology spaces.

#### A Driven Team with a focused goal

A work culture where tourism and economic development is a passion and people strive to achieve beyond their beliefs.

#### **A Collaborative Environment**

Always being open to new ideas and trends and working amongst our peers to create desirable outcomes.

#### **Our Values**

We will host a strong team ethic, operate transparently, morally and commercially all while remembering that we are custodians of public money. We will endeavour to protect the reputation of our organisation, and our region.

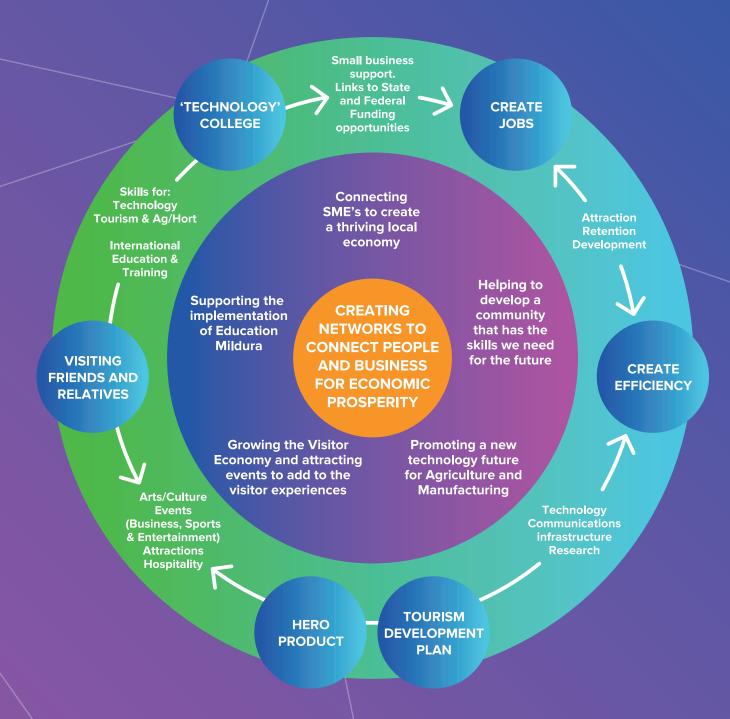
We will provide no information or take part in any action which might be harmful or detrimental to commercial and economic development activities or our organisation.

We will be well-researched, use evidence-based best practice principles all while recognising and appreciating our history and traditions with respect to the work done by those who came before us.

Mildura Regional Development acknowledges that we conduct our business on the traditional lands of the Latji Latji, Nyeri Nyeri, Wergaia and Ngintait peoples of Victoria, and also the Barkindji peoples of New South Wales. We acknowledge and pay respects to the traditional owners and elders past and present.

Photography Credits David Sickerdick Photography, Robert Klarich - iSEEiHEAR and Grant Schwartzkopff

# What We Do



# **Chair Report**



The Global Pandemic involving the COVID-19 virus has destabilised the world economy, and since March, provided significant challenges to the way we exist. Locally we have all experienced the effect of lockdowns and border closures which, because of our geography, has been amplified in our accommodation and hospitality industries. We have been heavily involved with MRCC in response and recovery planning whilst also planning for the time people can return by keeping the Mildura region brand "front of mind" with new marketing initiatives.

The first quarter of the 2020 calendar year was showing some great signs that our region would continue to flourish when it came to events, visitation and investment. A strong opener was the inaugural Crafted by Mildura – taste better walk, which the MRD team conducted in such a way to sell over 115 tickets and had all attendees express their support for more events such as this in the region, celebrating our local product offerings.

MRD also relocated to a new physical location in the CBD taking control of the old Sunraysia Citrus Growers building where we have been able to brand the building whilst maintaining the previous strong iconic branding.

Brett and the team must be commended for their efforts through COVID-19 and the support the organisation has shown to local businesses via funding avenues, industry webinars, information sessions and recovery initiatives.

The launch of the new MRD website has provided a vibrant new feel to our business structure and representation. The website hosts clear messaging, valuable resources, and user-friendly functionality to provide website visitors with the most relevant and up to date information of our business operations.

Marketing activities undertaken during the pandemic aimed to keep our brand consistently in the market which has provided the greatest boost to our region's national exposure. The launch of the 'Start here' TV campaign emphasised with the voice of actor Samuel Johnson, had the specific intent to deliver messaging directly into Adelaide, Regional Victoria and South Australia aiming to attract both new and return travel to the Mildura region when it was safe to do so. This campaign was elevated through our social media platforms allowing us to target more capital cities around Australia. This was a significant factor in growing visitation numbers to our Visit Mildura website and social pages and should continue well into the following months enhancing our inspirational narrative.

Our endeavours are always directed towards responsible use of available funds to increase brand exposure and tourism awareness and this further motivated the Board to examine ways of how MRD could continue to deliver the best possible outcomes for our region as we moved into the remainder of the calendar year.

In many instances, our marketing reach was successfully extended due to the efforts of industry partners such as Tourism Victoria, Murray Regional Tourism and Destination New South Wales.

The MRD board would like to acknowledge and thank all operators, businesses and individuals who have supported the organisation in so many ways throughout the year. In particular, we are grateful to the many businesses that assisted our on-going media and trade familiarisation and workshop programs which helped to generate greater domestic and international exposure for the Mildura region.

MRD has now developed a strong and influential presence in the economic and tourism sectors and we look toward meeting, and push to exceed, our strategic goals in the coming financial year. Our relationships with strategic partners, in particular Mildura Rural City Council is a testament to this. Our relationship both at Councillor and Senior Administrative level has allowed for a collaborative and transparent relationship that will ensure positive outcomes for the Mildura Region.

#### **Geoff Thomson**

Chair, Mildura Regional Development

# **CEO Report**



The 2019/20 financial year has been one of significant adversity in the third year of operating as Mildura Regional Development (MRD), but one that has been embraced and used to connect with our community and deliver against our Strategy.

A number of the strategic projects that were initiated in the previous two years of operation, particularly the LoRAWAN introduction to the Internet of Things (IOT) project and the SMART farm initiative at SuniTAFE continued to gain momentum and add value to the community. The memorial Silo Art project had also progressed before the COVID-19 outbreak, and subsequent lockdowns prevented the initiative from moving to the delivery stage. The early work on the partnership with Ouyen Inc to assist in the significant Ouyen Intermodal project was also initiated.

In December 2019, we assisted the First People of the Millewa Mallee with the engagement of their Aboriginal Economic Broker (AEB) via the funding arrangement with the Department of Premier and Cabinet. We also delivered them with the prospectus for the Yerre Yerre Aboriginal experience as a shovel ready opportunity while continuing to pursue opportunities to foster that relationship.

The Professional Bull Riding (PBR) held in October 2019 was hugely successful and a great example of how MRD and Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) work effectively together to identify and deliver events that bring significant expenditure into the region. The adoption of the new five-year Events Strategy by the MRCC has paved the way for further collaboration in this space.

The famils and program itineraries and operator visits' for the Australian Alternative Wines Variety Fellow showcasing Mildura and Wentworth region as well as the inaugural Crafted by Mildura – Taste Better walk, were amazing opportunities to show off our food, wine, spirits and delicacies to the world. We hope to do more in this space over the coming years.

The just short of 9 months that I had since taking over the CEO role have been some of the most challenging, and rewarding, of my career. The Board and staff have been amazing to work with in our adaptations to scenarios of Blue Green Algae, to heatwaves and bushfires before the emergence of the Global Pandemic COVID-19 for the last three months of the financial year. With every hurdle, came a new opportunity to connect with our community, understand their needs and ultimately try and deliver the value of a prosperous and resilient economy.

If the past year has taught us anything, it is that we can achieve great things through collaboration, through connecting business and the community, and demonstrating the amazing values and many faces of the environment in which we live. Mildura has always been a great regional city at the heart of a thriving agricultural industry; the time to tell its story is now.

#### **Brett Millington**

CEO, Mildura Regional Development



# **Economic Development**



## **Magnify Mildura Program**

Being one of the first horticulture regions in Australia, Mildura has deep and extensive value chains across agricultural sectors that exist from pre-farm gate through to advanced manufacturing and exports. Similar can be said for the value chains of industries such as mining and renewable energy. This funding was for a 1-year program of skills development, events and programs that will help to grow the start-up ecosystem and directed by a local representative group with a long-term view which was extended until September 2019.

Regional Representative Group consisted of:

- MRD Sharon Morell
- SuniTAFE Greg Leslie
- LaTrobe University Bec Crossling
- NMLLEN Rod Martin
- Ag-Hort industry Jennifer Zappia

#### **New Zealand Delegation**

In February, Mildura Regional Development hosted a 20-strong New Zealand trade delegation to Sunraysia to learn and explore new partnership opportunities in Agtech and agribusiness.

The group visited the Olam almond processing plant, Nu-Edge Solutions, SuniTAFE Smart Farm and Agromillora Australia.

A synthetic food source for bees, tissue culture lab and facial recognition for sheep were among the new technologies shared with the visiting delegation.

This was a great opportunity for businesses in our region to build some good contacts and showcase potential areas of investment for future growth of our region.

# **Economic Development** *Continued...*



#### **SmartFarm and Education Mildura**

Mildura Regional Development maintain close connections with the staff involved in the Smart Farm and sit on the strategic reference group for the facility. The aim continues to introduce and connect potential users/customer/technologists to SuniTAFE SmartFarm management and to assist as required in its strategic use.

A Partnership Agreement between SuniTAFE Smart Farm and MRD was established regarding the collection and use of data centering around the attraction of new technology.

As the Smart Farm becomes more established we are looking to use this as a focus for visits to the region and how we can assist in making Mildura the region for Ag/Hort and Tech education especially catering to international students.

#### #DIF

The goal of this program was to increase business and the communities ability to develop, test and commercialise digital solutions, robotics, renewable and solar energy solutions and associated technology thereby increasing the productivity and sustainability in our region.

This program helps to position Mildura as a recognised centre of excellence in digital technology and applications, and continues to provide future pathways for young people in both education and employment.

#### **Small Business Workshops**

Mildura Regional Development help conduct an extensive list of training sessions and workshops throughout the year, they included:

- · Small Business Bus Mildura City Heart
- Finance Fundamentals
- Business Planning Essentials
- Victorian Chamber of Commerce Digital Innovation Roadshow
- ANZ/MRD Business Growth Seminar
- Winning Government Business
- Marketing your Business
- Finance Fundamentals
- · Business Resilience
- Selling or succession planning

# Tourism Marketing



## **Media Coverage**

Throughout the year, Mildura Regional Development attracted and supported an impressive list of travel and lifestyle programs and publications, generating significant media exposure for our region. Television programs included "The Living Room", "Postcards", "TODAY Show Weather" and "Sunrise". The Sunrise A-Z Virtual weather segment generated a huge engagement on social media and put the region in the immediate spotlight of morning viewers all while the nation was in lockdown. While CH9 Postcards were schedule to return to the region to film a new episode, this had to be cancelled due to the ongoing travel restrictions imposed on Victorians, the network instead scheduled a re-run of their 'best of series' which featured the Mildura episode from 2017.

#### **Print Media Publications**

The Mildura region featured in various print media throughout the 2019-2020 financial year. Mildura Regional Development focussed around seasonal campaigns and the experiences on offer in the region, including; National parks and nature based adventures, food, wine and distilleries, arts and culture, history and regional events. Publications which featured Mildura included; QantasLink SPIRIT Magazine, Caravanning Australia, QANTAS magazine, Mildura Living Magazine, Herald Sun Escape, The Age and Halliday Wine Companion.

#### **TV** Campaigns

Mildura Regional Development successfully launched two TV Campaigns (TVC) for the 2019–2020 financial year.

Commencing September 2019 was the 'your holiday, your way' campaign which ran for 5-weeks over a tri-state program. The campaign featured 15 and 30 second commercials which provided viewers with the widest possible range of local holiday experiences and attractions, directing them back to the Visitmildura website for further details.

The second TV campaign 'start here' was launched in April 2020, this was a direct advertising campaign targeted around future travel and holiday inspiration post COVID and restrictions. The soft and sensitive messaging throughout the TVC – complemented by Actor, Samuel Johnson, resonated with many Australian's. The TVC went to market throughout regional Victoria, Adelaide Metro and regional South Australia via the Seven and TEN networks. The campaign was also targeted to national audiences and capital cities plus New Zealand via our Visitmildura social media pages.

# Tourism Marketing Continued...



### Crafted By Mildura - Taste Better Walk

MRD successfully coordinated and hosted the inaugural 'Crafted by Mildura – taste better walk'. Working with local businesses MRD was able to pull together the event in under 2 months. The event was well received by locals and some visitors with 115 participants. A survey was sent to those who purchased tickets after the event with over half completing the survey, 100% of responses were a yes to whether they would attend again.

#### Silo Art

The silo art project has evolved and will now be referred to as the 'Mallee Track Art Trail' due to complexities involved with each site, and Grain Corp announcing they will not be accepting any new silo art projects. This will also open up a wide range of opportunities for artwork instalments along the Mallee Highway between Ouyen and Murrayville. These kinds of projects will be vital for the reactivation of Mallee Track towns after the hardship of 2020 and impacts of restrictions and nearby border closures.

The Walpeup silo art project has been progressing, with the artist Julian Clavijo still locked in, despite delays due to COVID-19.

It is hoped that painting of the silo in Walpeup can commence in 2021, once it is safe to do so and critical works have been carried out at the site.

# Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Campaign

While Mildura Regional Development's main marketing focus is as a destination of choice to a national audience, a key driver for tourism in our region stems from the VFR market. An element of our marketing is targeted to locals who can become ambassadors and showcase what they know and love about the region to their visiting friends and family. Mildura Regional Development undertook a local media campaign through both the Sunraysia Daily and Mildura Weekly papers with a monthly 'Talking Tourism' column. The column featured a variety of tourism information and local businesses.

On top of this MRD brought back the 'Tourist in your own town' campaign along with initiating the #forkitlocal campaign during COVID which aimed to encourage locals to support locals wherever they could.

#### **Research Data**

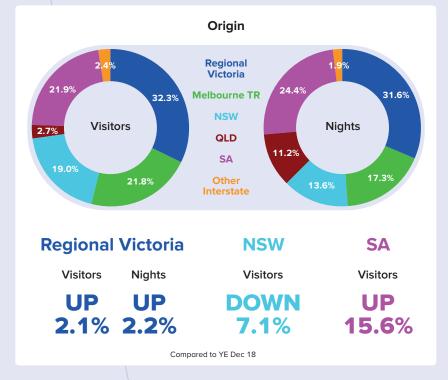
MRD maintained its extensive suite of annual and quarterly visitation research and quantitative tracking measures, sharing this intelligence with industry and media. This data also assists with general marketing campaign development and promotional decisions. A more detailed breakdown of the year's visitation data heads this report.

Please note: we have used the YE DEC 19 Statistics in this report as this visitation period was pre-COVID19. YE March and June 2020 data has been impacted by COVID19 and therefore unreliable/nil travel data.



# Domestic Overnight Travel to Mildura for the period January 2019 - December 2019





#### **Expenditure**

Domestic overnight visitors spent

\$262m an average of \$145 per night

### Length of Stay

Visitors stayed, on average

3.5 nights

Compared to YE Dec 18

#### **Visitor Age**

24.3% of our visitors were aged

**65**+

21.4% - 55-64 | 18.1% - 45-54

Source: National Visitor Survey, YE Dec 19, Tourism Research Australia (TRA). Further travel data available by contacting Mildura Regional Development.

# Social Media





## MRD Facebook

The Mildura Regional Development Facebook continued to share relevant and informative information & opportunities to the local community with a focus on supporting tourism and economic development in the region.

This page also assists us share what we are up to as an organisation, getting to know our team and our roles. Successful campaigns we have undertaken this year are: #forkitlocal, tourist in your own town and our MRD team videos covering a range of topics.

Mildura Regional Development New Page Likes on our MRD Facebook page.

Last 12 months





## **MRD YouTube**

Mildura Regional Development have reignited the existing Visitmildura Youtube channel, this channel is used as another means to share our current TVCs and any social media videos (meet the locals etc.)

# Sharing our TVCs & Videos



## **MRD LinkedIn**

Mildura Regional Development continues to utilise our LinkedIn page for professional social networking, relationship building with relevant stakeholders and keeping our networks in the loop by sharing relevant information or opportunities.

Relationship **Building** 





# Visitmildura Instagram

The Visitmildura Instagram page continued to showcase the best of the best images captured by a range of local photographers. By using professionally taken images on our page helps showcase the region in the most visually appealing way. This also helps to entice people to engage with us and put Mildura on the radar for holiday bookings.

Visitmildura
New Page Likes on our
Visitmildura Instagram page.

Last 12 months





## Visitmildura Facebook

The Visitmildura Facebook continues to promote the Mildura region as an attractive place to visit, using high quality images, creative, engaging captions and share relevant and up to date information on upcoming events, new products, things to see and do across the region.

Also a great way of promoting some of the more remote areas of the region such as the Mallee track, Millewa and Pooncarie.

Successful campaigns undertaken this year have been; Epic Sunset Sundays, tourist in your own town, A-Z virtual pitch to Sunrise and elfie on tour. The 'Meet the Locals' campaign was also launched on our VM Facebook and aimed to bring human connection and build relationships with visitors and potential visitors. Introducing some of the friendly faces you might meet when visiting the Mildura region.

Visitmildura
New Page Likes on our
Visitmildura Facebook page.

Last 12 months



# Stakeholder Partnerships



### **Murray Regional Tourism**

Where appropriate, Mildura Regional Development integrated with Murray Regional Tourism initiatives and activities. There was further local participation in meetings of the Murray Tourism Managers' forums. The Mildura Region hosted all Murray Tourism Managers at the November 2019 forum.

#### **Business**

Mildura Regional Development continued liaising with local and national organisations including; Richmond Institute of Sports Leadership, Mildura Airport Corporation, ANZ Mildura, Mildura City Heart, Sunraysia Institute of TAFE, Latrobe University, Lower Murray Water and other likeminded businesses to maintain strong business relationships, partnerships and support.

#### **Marketing Partnerships**

Mildura Regional Development formed a range of new partnerships throughout the year to help broaden our marketing reach and engagement. The business relationship and partnerships included; Red Star Media who undertake our media buying and national marketing partnerships, Bendigo Spirit Partnership in conjunction with MRCC, Josh Waters Racing for the superbike series and Sports Marketing Australia who continue to inform and pitch to us sporting events or marketing initiatives we could undertake, one of which is the Australian Fishing Championships which was schedule to film in region until COVID hit.

## **Government and Agencies**

Throughout the year Mildura Regional Development participated in numerous Ministerial, Government agency, Regional Partnerships, and more recently Local Government recovery sessions placing particular emphasis on reporting and interpreting local business and tourism data and responses through various changes and funding announcements throughout COVID.

Regular liaison also occurred with State and Federal politicians as well as organisations including Mildura and Wentworth Councils and Regional Development Victoria.

# Governance and Operations

#### **Directors**

The name of the directors in office at any time during, or since the end of the period (June 2020) are:

- Paul Gibbens (Retired November 2019)
- Geoff Dea
- Geoff Thomson (Appointed Chair November 2019)
- Maria Carrazza
- Judith Damiani
- Brett Millington
- Jodie Bromley
- Stefano de Pieri

Brett Millington was appointed CEO of Mildura Regional Development in October 2019.

An internal audit is conducted through Mildura Rural City Council and a financial audit is conducted through VAGO.

#### **Committees**

The name of the directors who represent the following committee are:

#### Governance Committee – meet quarterly

- Brett Millington
- Judith Damiani
- Maria Carrazza

#### Audit Committee - meet quarterly

- Geoff Dea
- Judith Damiani
- Glen Hornsby (independent/company accountant)

#### Tourism Committee - meet as required

- Jodie Bromley
- Stefano de Pieri
- Geoff Thomson

#### **Memberships**

Mildura Regional Development hold memberships with the following organisations:

- Employsure (workplace relations)
- VTIC (Victorian Tourism Industry Council)
- Victorian Chamber of Commerce (Business relations)

#### **Policies**

Mildura Regional Development has adopted and amended the following policies throughout the year:

- Employee Handbook
- CEO Appointment Policy
- Financial Delegations & Purchasing Policy
- Delegations Policy
- Purchasing Card Policy
- Investment Policy
- Fraud Control Policy
- Gifts Benefit's and Hospitality Policy
- Working from Home Policy

- Conflict of Interest Policy

- Risk Management Policy
- Workplace OHS Policy
- Project Management Policy
- IT Policy

Mildura Regional Development has also implemented the organisations COVIDSafe Plan which commenced August 2020.

# Financial Report

OFFICIAL



## **Auditor-General's Independence Declaration**

#### To the Directors, Mildura Tourism and Economic Development Pty Ltd

The Auditor-General's independence is established by the *Constitution Act 1975*. The Auditor-General, an independent officer of parliament, is not subject to direction by any person about the way in which his powers and responsibilities are to be exercised.

Under the *Audit Act 1994*, the Auditor-General is the auditor of each public body and for the purposes of conducting an audit has access to all documents and property, and may report to parliament matters which the Auditor-General considers appropriate.

#### Independence Declaration

As auditor for Mildura Tourism and Economic Development Pty Ltd for the year ended 30 June 2020, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- no contraventions of auditor independence requirements of the Corporations Act 2001 in relation to the audit.
- no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

MELBOURNE

7 October 2020

as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

Level 31 / 35 Callins Street, Melbourne Vic 3000. T 03 8601 7000 unquiries@audit.vic.gov.cu www.audit.vic.gov.cu

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# **Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income**

for the Year Ended 30 June 2020

	Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
Sales revenue	2	1,364,866	1,558,987
Other revenue	2	7,494	15,070
TOTAL INCOME		1,372,360	1,574,057
Administration expenses		(223,434)	(115,090
Interest		(2,991)	-
Employee benefits expense		(699,065)	(786,614
Occupancy expenses		(54,723)	(59,847
Project costs		(416,705)	(258,262
Depreciation		(2,740)	-
Amortisation - Right of use assets		(8,545)	-
TOTAL EXPENSES		(1,408,203)	(1,219,813
PROFIT (LOSS) BEFORE INCOME TAX		(35,843)	354,244
Tax expense		-	-
PROFIT (LOSS) FOR THE YEAR		(35,843)	354,244
Other comprehensive income		=	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (LOSS) FOR THE YEAR		(35,843)	354,244

Full financial notes form part of these financial statements and can be obtained by contacting Mildura Regional Development.

## Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2020

	Note	2020	2019
		\$	\$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	823,354	841,583
Trade and other receivables	5	14,025	7,240
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		837,379	848,823
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property plant and equipment	6	324,683	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		324,683	-
TOTAL ASSETS		1,162,062	848,823
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	7	112,973	74,303
Employee provisions	8	26,746	24,516
Lease Liability	9	27,899	
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	-	167,618	98,819
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		. ,	
Employee provisions	8	15,141	-
Lease Liability	9	265,142	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		280,283	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES		447,901	98,819
TO THE EN INTERNAL		117,001	00,010
NET ASSETS		714,161	750,004
EQUITY			
Retained earnings		714,161	750,004
TOTAL EQUITY		714,161	750,004

Full financial notes form part of these financial statements and can be obtained by contacting Mildura Regional Development.

# Financial Report Continued...

# Statement of Changes in Equity for the Year Ended 30 June 2020

	Note	Issued Capital Ordinary	Retained Earnings	Total \$
BALANCE AT 1 JULY 2019		-	395,760	395,760
Total comprehensive income for the year		-	354,244	354,244
BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2019		-	750,004	750,004
Total comprehensive income for the year		-	(35,843)	(35,843)
BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2020	10	-	714,161	714,161

Full financial notes form part of these financial statements and can be obtained by contacting Mildura Regional Development.

## Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 30 June 2020

	Note	2020 \$	2019
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from funders and customers		1,493,972	1,707,184
Payments to suppliers and employees		(1,388,064)	(1,236,270)
Other revenue		7,494	15,070
Net GST (paid) / collected		(85,713)	(98,246)
NET CASH FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	13	27,689	387,738
CASH FLOWS USED IN INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Capital expenditure		(36,070)	-
NET CASH FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		(36,070)	-
CASH FLOWS USED IN FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Lease payments		(9,848)	
NET CASH FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		(9,848)	
NET CASITI NOMITINANCINO ACTIVITIES		(9,040)	
NET INCREASE IN CASH HELD		(18,229)	387,738
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period		841,583	453,845
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF PERIOD	4	823,354	841,583

Full financial notes form part of these financial statements and can be obtained by contacting Mildura Regional Development.



## Mildura Regional Development

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