

OCTOBER 2019

# Chair Chat

with Prof. David Gilchrist



## Farewell from Chairperson, David Gilchrist

Welcome to my last Chair Chat as Chair of the Nulsen Board. My term as Chair and Director has come to a conclusion as I have now completed my maximum period of service per the organisation's constitution. This is an important constitutional rule as it ensures we continue to build governance capacity within the organisation and that we create spaces for new people to contribute.

Your Director, Evelyn Hogg, who has been one of the two Deputy Chairs for some time together with Penny Knight, has been appointed by the Board as the next Chair and I wish her every success in her role as I do for the remainder of the Board and Executive. I know the Board is well served by its members and the Nulsen Way is in safe hands.

There is no doubt that Nulsen has grown and changed over the period I have been involved. However, thanks to the dedicated employees, my colleagues on the Board and the many members, corporate partners and volunteers who support what Nulsen does, we have reinforced and strengthened the Nulsen Way rather than lost it. In 2015, for instance, we provided around half a million hours of service delivery while, in 2018/19 we provided 700,000.

This increase in activity is reflected in income growth (almost \$52m in 2018/19) and in employee numbers where we have seen our staff grow from 630 in 2015 to 724 currently. This might not seem like significant growth, but it represents almost 2,400 shifts per week and 13,500 hours worked in that time – translating to 847,600 hours worked per year. This is an impressive number when we think that Nulsen also boasts being a member of the top 25% of employers in Australia and New Zealand for employee engagement – our team members are not only working hard, they are also engaged fully in

supporting our clients with high quality services. Of course, we do not always get everything right but the Nulsen team work hard to identify issues and to correct them. We rely on our members, clients' families and supporters to undertake quality evaluations and review of our services. For instance, in 2019 we undertook 328 of these. We want to get things right every time but know very well that we need to learn from our mistakes and feedback offered in order to achieve consistently better results. As such, the Board and the Executive team have striven to create and maintain an open culture where team members are confident that they can communicate issues and be supported to manage them effectively.

This philosophy is more important than ever as we head into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The roll out of this service model is increasing in momentum across Western Australia and the challenges associated with it are becoming more substantial as the proportion of funding from the NDIS arrangement increases. The challenges are being felt by all in the sector not just Nulsen. However, it is very significant that these challenges are more profound for providers of services and supports for people with complex needs and/or intellectual disability. The Nulsen team has been very effective and strong in leading the sector by advocating toward an equitable outcome but there is a long way to go. Having said that, I remain confident that the Nulsen team and the newly re-constituted board will continue to fight for the interests of our clients.

Thank you to all of the staff and volunteers without whom the Nulsen Way would be an advertising gimmick rather than a lived experience. I also wish to register my great respect for the Executive team

and appreciate their guidance and commitment to our organisation over long hours and in the face of complex challenges. Gordon Trewern, Graham Holman and Caroline Watt have led an outstanding team by example. They have supported my role as Chair and the Board in its endeavours mightily and I thank them. At Board meetings we often have a chance to meet and hear from Managers and senior staff from across the organisation. However, we also ensure that we have an opportunity to hear from our team members who are providing services at the service level and this is always enlightening as well as reinforcing. These opportunities serve to reinvigorate the Board's work and re-energise our efforts greatly.

Thank you also to the Board itself. Being a volunteer Board in an organisation of the size and complexity of Nulsen is not an easy task. Each Board member takes considerable time out of their family and work time to prepare for and attend meetings of the Board and sub-committees as well as undertaking considerable work in providing advice and support for the Executive. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with a team that I have such respect for.

As outgoing Chair, I am pleased to say that I will continue as a member of Nulsen and will always maintain a strong interest and support in the organisation. Thank you to the members for supporting the Board for my tenure and I look forward to watching Nulsen continue to achieve and contribute in years to come.



**Professor David Gilchrist** BA BBus PhD FCA FAIC is a chartered accountant and a historian. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Notre Dame Australia and is currently a Professor at the University of Western Australia as well as the Public Sector Accounting and Disclosure Research Cluster. Over his 25-year career, David has held many senior roles in the not-for-profit, commercial and public sectors. He has taught at several universities across the globe, sits as Chairman on multiple boards and has published several key national reports. Achievements include: working as the Assistant Auditor General WA, the Associate Dean of the School of Business, University of Notre Dame Australia, Chairman to Nulsen Disability Services, and the Kimberley Individual and Family Support Association. [See David's full profile here.](#)