

Tuesday 11 February 2020

DISABILITY PROVIDERS ANNOUNCE INTENTION TO MERGE

TWO of Queensland’s largest specialist disability service providers, Cootharinga North Queensland and CPL – Choice, Passion, Life – have announced their intention to merge to achieve greater outcomes for people with a disability in regional Queensland.

The Board of Cootharinga today issued a Notice for an Extraordinary General Meeting on 10 March 2020 at which members will be asked to vote on Constitutional changes to pave the way for a merger.

Cootharinga is the largest North Queensland-based disability services provider, with almost 500 employees supporting more than 1,000 people in North, Far North and North West Queensland. CPL is the largest provider of integrated supports in Queensland and Northern New South Wales, with 2,700 employees supporting around 10,000 clients.

Chair of Cootharinga, Mr Rob Grant, said the proposed merger would harness the strengths of both organisations to deliver better services to people with a disability, particularly in regional and remote Queensland.

“CNQ has been supporting the people of North Queensland and surrounds for almost 70 years, but changes in the disability sector in recent years – though positive for people with disability – have placed pressure on our organisation and limited our ability to meet increasing demand for services,” he said.

“The proposed merger is designed to ensure the long-term viability of Cootharinga and ensure we can continue to deliver quality services to regional and remote communities for many years to come.”

Mr Grant said the merger was contingent on Cootharinga members voting in favour of the resolution.

“While Cootharinga is currently financially solid, we want to do more than sustain. We want to flourish and grow. We want to take a leadership role in the communities in which we operate, using our size to influence perceptions and change behaviours towards people with a disability. We are confident our members want the same,” he said.

“Importantly, we also want the Cootharinga brand, which has become so trusted with our customers, to be preserved. This merger will achieve that.”

Under the proposed merger, Cootharinga will become a subsidiary of CPL, operating with its own Board and local leadership, including Townsville-based Chief Executive Officer, Matt Kinnane.

If accepted by members of Cootharinga, the merger will take effect from 1 July 2020, with little to no change for customers or employees of each organisation.

“Cootharinga customers will remain as Cootharinga customers with their services delivered by Cootharinga employees. The same will be true for CPL,” Mr Grant said.

Chair of CPL, Mr Bruce Cowley, said CPL respected the important role Cootharinga played in regional communities and shared its commitment to ensuring high quality services were available throughout Queensland.

“CPL and Cootharinga share a very similar history. Our organisations were started within two years of each other and our objectives and vision, even today, remain remarkably aligned,” he said.

“Though our business was started by families based in Brisbane, we have been operating in regional Queensland since 1951. Since then, we have expanded wherever we recognise an unmet need for quality, local support services.

“Despite having more than 80 locations throughout Queensland, we know there are still many Queensland communities without adequate disability support services and are looking forward to how we can address these needs in partnership with Cootharinga.”

The CEOs of Cootharinga and CPL, Matt Kinnane and Rhys Kennedy respectively, will spend this week meeting with members and employees of both organisations.

Both CEOs are available for interview in Townsville between 11.30am and 1pm on Tuesday 11 February (today). Please contact Jen Fleming on 0481 752 729 to arrange an interview.

-ENDS-

MEDIA CONTACT

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About CPL

- CPL – Choice, Passion, Life is the leading provider of integrated support, therapy and advice for people living with a disability in Queensland and Northern New South Wales.
- CPL was founded in 1948 by parents of children with cerebral palsy who felt they were not receiving the services they needed and imagined a better world for their children.
- Today, CPL is one of Australia’s largest disability service providers with more than 2,700 employees who deliver quality supports to more than 10,000 people each year.
- CPL’s services support people to achieve their developmental goals, live independently, access their community, develop their skills and talents, and achieve meaningful employment. This work is underpinned by a deep commitment to the organisation’s vision of an inclusive society for all people.
- In 2018/19, CPL provided more than 2 million hours of support and placed more than 2,000 people with a disability or barrier into sustainable employment.

About Cootharinga

- Cootharinga North Queensland is the largest North Queensland-based disability support provider committed to delivering a range of services that are relevant to the choice and needs of our customers.
- Cootharinga was founded in 1951 in response to community concerns for the care, education and training of children who contracted poliomyelitis during the poliomyelitis epidemic.
- Cootharinga continues to play a part in the achievements of many North Queenslanders delivering quality supports to over 1,000 customers each year and employing more than 480 staff across North and Far North Queensland.

