

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

# Lived Experience Guides Us

Annual Report 2023-24



## Acknowledgement of Country

Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and their connection to land, water, and community.

We pay our respects to them, their culture and customs and to their Elders past and present, and the continuation of knowledge and culture. We believe that reconciliation must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians. We are committed to an ongoing journey towards truth-telling and reconciliation.

We also recognise and value the contribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, carers, people we support and communities to our continued reconciliation journey together.

**'Empowered Voices' artwork created by Keisha Leon (Waanyi and Kalkadoon), Lisa Sorbie Martin (Moa and Murray Islands, Torres Strait Islands), and Gilimbbaa.**



# Our purpose

To partner with people  
to change lives for the  
better

This year, we celebrate how the lived experience of people all across our Life Without Barriers community has guided us to live our purpose more fully through our values of respect, responsiveness, courage, imagination and relationships.





**Greg Ridder**  
Chair



**Claire Robbs**  
Chief Executive

## Board and Chief Executive message

Over the 2023-2024 Financial Year we have continued to be shaped by the personal and lived experiences of people across our community. We have always understood that people are experts in their own lives and have a right to make decisions about the supports they receive, yet being an organisation truly guided by lived experience has required a deeper level of investment from across our organisation.

This year we invested in expanding how as a for purpose charity, we are led by the experiences, insights and choices of the people we support, including their families, communities and carers. It has been an incredible time of learning and connection and we believe a pivotal year in preparing our organisation for a greater impact in the years ahead. Our sector, government and community collaborations and partnerships, including the Alliance20, Allies for Children and The Possibility Project have gone from strength to strength and we thank all our partners for their investment and generosity.

The year was also shaped against the backdrop of a National Referendum. Over 6% of our staff identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and we work with First Nations people across the country. Our Board and organisation made a clear decision to fully support the Voice to Parliament as part of our commitment to the Uluru Statement in its entirety. Our Board issued a statement of support and we have discussed and reflected on the significant impact of the outcome of the referendum. Our organisation is unwavering in our partnership with Reconciliation Australia, the RAP program

and all it continues to offer in our journey towards unity and healing, which includes a two-way cultural governance model in train from Board through to direct service delivery.

Our Innovations team made strong progress on our Lived Experience Strategy which included learning and development for the Board and Senior Leadership team. An immersion opportunity run by Rebus Theatre company challenged what we thought we knew and instilled a much deeper understanding of the impact unconscious bias and assumptions can have. We also welcomed our first CEO intern in partnership with the Disability Leadership Institute, Ms Debbie Heron, and Board Observer Fathia Tayib, and we look forward to continuing these leadership opportunities.

Our workforce comprises more than 12,300 carers and this year we recorded more than 14% of our employees as identifying as having disability, 12% identifying as members of the LGBTQIA+ community and more than 13% of employees with disability are in leadership roles. In April our Board and Senior Team relaunched our culture statement and it was



a moving event where the true spirit and values of our organisation were on show around the country. We have continued to invest in our representative committees including Pride Without Barriers, the DAWN Committee and Youth Advisory Groups. These committees elevate lived experience and create a culture of inclusion and shared knowledge sending wonderful ripples of engagement through our organisation.

We spent time in our services, hearing from our employees and carers and from people trusting us with their services every day. In Darwin we met with children and young people and heard about what is important to them for the future. In Launceston we spent time meeting with people who we support to live independently and had great discussions about how we can work together with people and families in contemporary solutions in housing. We have invested in great conversations with our aged care and Refugee and Asylum Seeker teams to sustain our understanding of the opportunities and challenges they face in the support they provide.

Our leadership team has continued our research in our disability services, speaking with people with disability who we support in various housing arrangements to understand how and where they want to live. These insights will directly shape our future home and living strategy.

We had the difficult task this year of farewelling key non-executive directors from our Board, Gill Calvert AO and Cain Beckett. Gill joined our Board in 2014 and has been the epitome of a dedicated director and exceptional steward of our organisation. Well loved and well revered, Gill's career has always centred on propelling the lives of children and young people forward and sharing the importance of Practice Governance at Board and Senior Leadership levels. Gill's contributions are etched in many chapters of our organisation and we are better off because of her legacy. Cain joined our Board in 2022

and gifted incredible innovation in the Board's thinking and decision making. Cain was pivotal in discussions on how we ensure our organisation extends itself to be genuinely influenced by lived experience. His positivity and knowledge was a real asset to our Board and organisation. We thank both Gill and Cain and they will forever be an important part of Life Without Barriers.

As Gill and Cain departed, we welcomed three new Board members, Karen Knight, Shannon Tobolov and Cathy Taylor. Each bring unique and diverse experience to our board and are united in supporting our organisation through the years ahead. We are grateful for the contribution they have already had and the dedication they will continue to give in the years ahead.

We are a national charity in a global context. International fragility and national uncertainty weighs on our society. Over the year we focussed heavily on the quality of the direct services we provide and across disability, aged care and child youth and family programs, there has been a strong approach to listening and responding to the choices and preferences of people we support. We approved the organisation's first 5 year Financial Sustainability Plan and a Technology roadmap that will bring foundation in a rapidly moving area. Our policy and advocacy agenda was remapped this year with a leading principle that all our social policy investment would be shaped by lived experience. We are working hard now towards these goals.

The stories shared in this year's report are only a small number of the tens of thousands we have witnessed over the year but we do hope you enjoy reading them. We celebrate and thank our more than 12,300 employees and carers who are the driving force of our organisation. They are humble people who believe in a community for all. We thank our partners for the learnings you have shared and for the comradery as we strive together to partner with people and change lives for the better.

# 2023-2024 Highlights



Partnered with **21,203** people in service delivery across Australia



We are a community of **12,362** staff and foster and kinship carers



**5936** children, young people and families supported nationally



**7175** older Australians chose us to provide at-home supports



**5133** people chose our disability support services



**1619** people engaged our mental health support services



**1147** refugees and asylum seekers welcomed and supported



Enrolments increased to over **90%** for our compulsory school-age children and over **80%** in Early Education and Learning



**14%** of employees with disability and **13.8%** of employees with disability in leadership roles



Invested **\$594,900** in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses

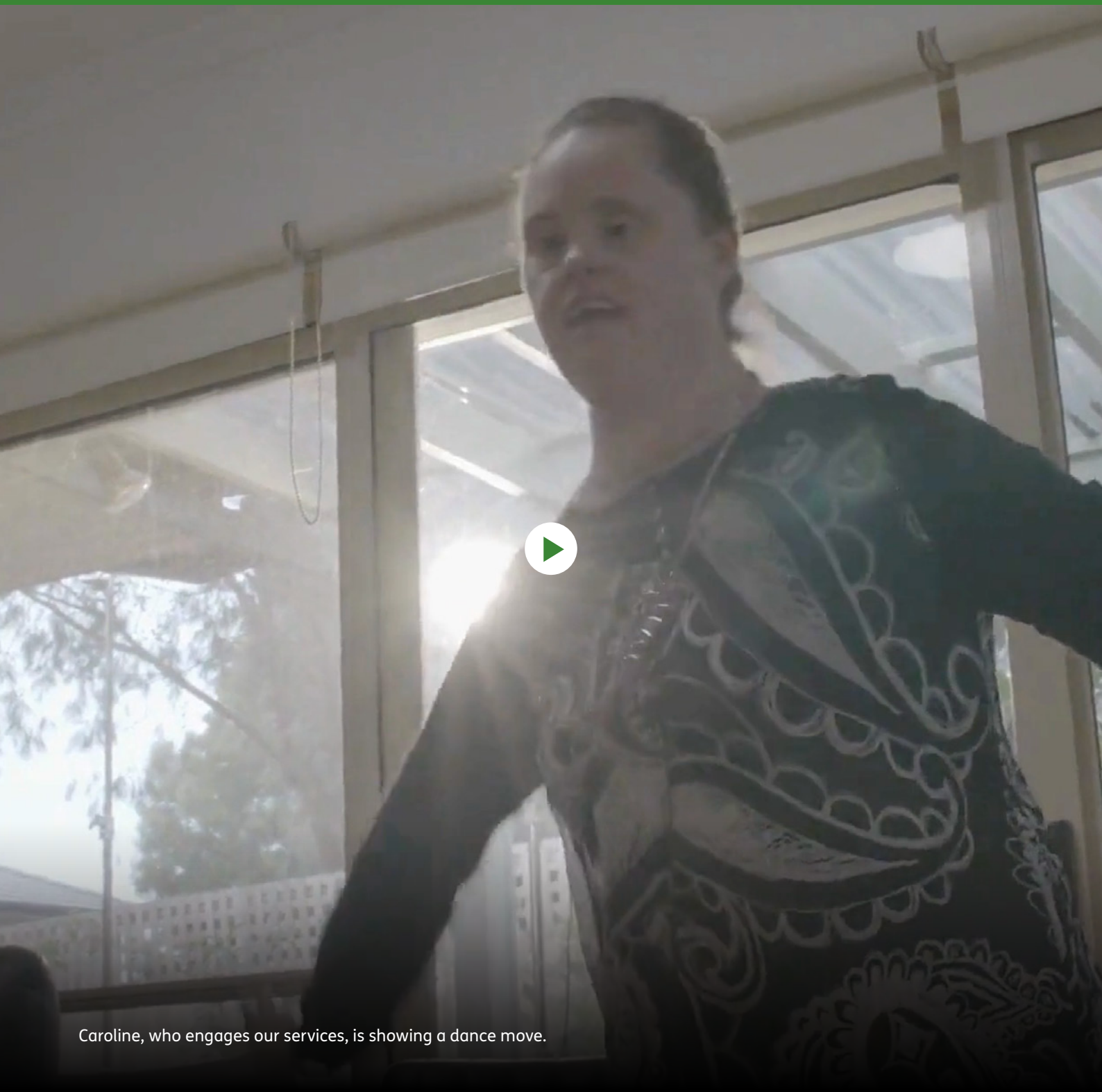


**62** working partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations across all states and territories



Produced **10** Statements with Allies for Children and the First Nation NGO Alliance advocating transitioning First Nations children and resources to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

# Delivering Great Service



Caroline, who engages our services, is showing a dance move.



## Delivering Great Service



Mark unpacks a box of groceries at our Broadmeadows Hub.

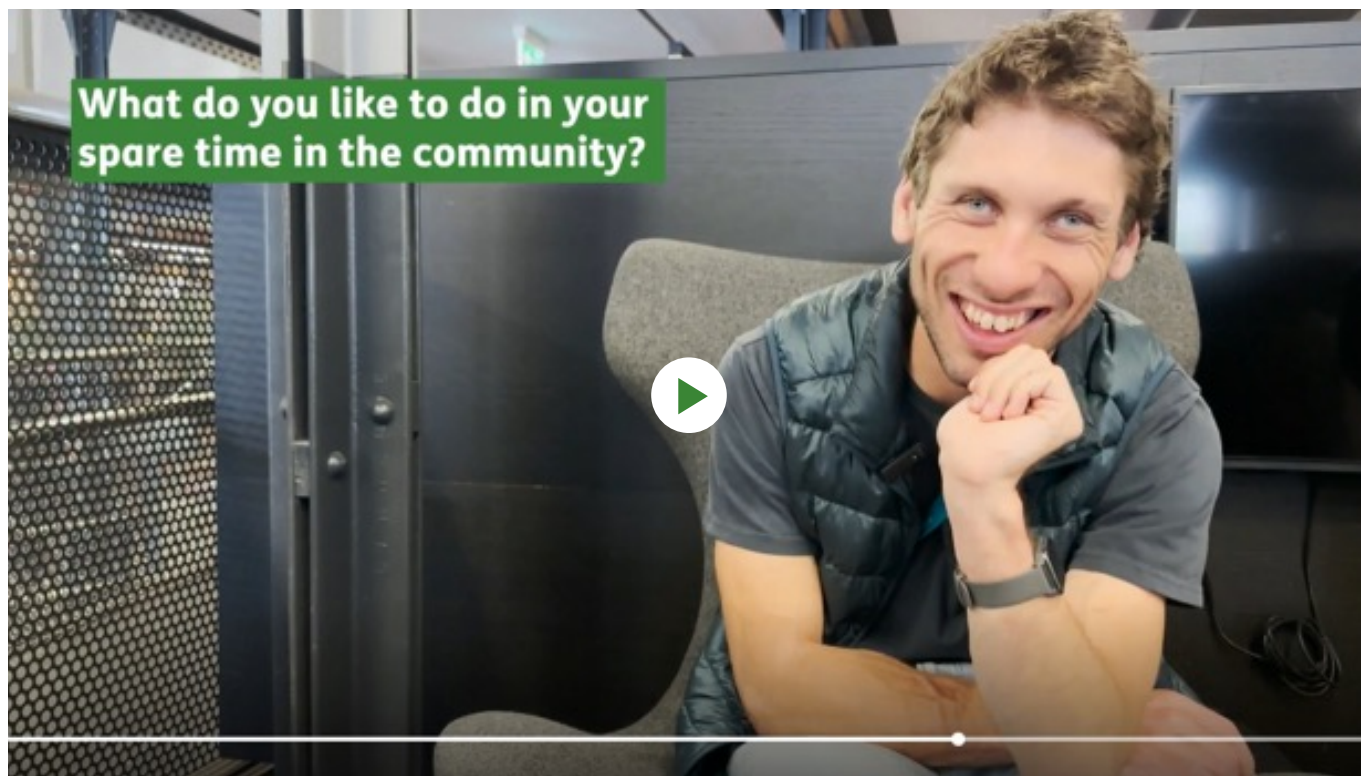
## Disability and Mental Health Services

**This year, 6752 people with lived experience of disability or mental health issues trusted us with their support needs. Their choices and insights have guided our efforts, and led how we deliver services that meet a person's unique needs, choices, and goals.**

Through strong relationships, we've heard and understood how to deliver the best support for each individual with some great outcomes including:

- Robust insights from our Client Voice Survey, which provided valuable insights on the choices and preferences of people with disability.
- Achieved NDIS recertification and mental health accreditation with unanimously positive feedback from auditors, family and people we support.
- Delivered active support and frontline practice leadership training to all frontline leaders, enhancing the foundation of our practice.
- Introduced a co-designed medication administration system with updated policies and procedures.
- Strengthened our clinical expertise with the appointment of a National Director of Mental Health and expanded our mental health services in SA and NSW informed by lived experience of people with mental health issues.

## Delivering Great Service



Daniel has chosen Life Without Barriers to provide support to live at home since 2017. He chats with us about how he lives independently and what he likes to do in his local community.

[Click here for Audio Description version of Daniel's video.](#)

## Delivering Great Service

## Lived Experience

## Dennis speaks up about why people with disability need to guide how they want to live life

Dennis is a passionate advocate and is keen to ensure people understand the power of using their voice. He is supported by support staff from his home to participate in a range of self-advocacy activities.

“Giving people chances and opportunities empowers them,” he said.

“People with disabilities need support on how to ask for things in life to make your life worthwhile – like living your best life for your abilities and dealing with things you have to deal with every day.”

We assist Dennis in his advocacy by supporting him to attend the Having A Say conference earlier this year, and to attend “Speak Up for Yourself” (SUFY) meetings which are facilitated by VaLiD.

“SUFY is a group that represents people with disability to talk and discuss problems and learn about topics or things that might be brought up in the focus group. All your human rights. How staff are running things in your house. Who to turn to if anything happens or if you have a complaint,” said Dennis.

Dennis encourages other people with disability to take an active role in making decisions about their own lives. “The support you have may not

always be there. Therefore, you have to learn and be educated in speaking up for yourself and having a say, so that you can represent yourself.”

“The thing is, nothing is impossible. It all depends on the individual, and how much work that individual wants to put in to become independent and to gain the ability to do things with their disability to maintain a better and/or longer life, to reach an overall goal and greater outcomes in their lives.”



Debra, Regional Director VDAS North East, and Dennis sit at the Life Without Barriers booth at 2024 Having a Say conference.

“

Giving people chances and opportunities empowers them.

– Dennis

”



## Delivering Great Service

### Families and supporters help us improve our services

The relationships built by listening to the members of the Victorian Disability Accommodation Supports Family and Supporters Group, have shaped and enriched the support we provide.

The group, made up of dedicated family members and our senior leaders, offers invaluable insights into our processes and practices by drawing on their loved ones' experiences in Supported Independent Living services and their interactions with the NDIA as a plan nominee.

Their contributions continue to drive meaningful improvements across our services. Their feedback has assisted us in refining service agreements and the group is working with us to strengthen communication channels with all families and supporters. They help identify where there is room for improvement and partner with us on solutions.



Family and Supporter Group member Kristie with her brother Andrew, and her sister Alana.

“

Having the opportunity to share issues and concerns is crucial, and we are also able to give encouragement where things are working well. We just want to ensure our family members and others are living their best lives and receiving the best care. A life without a barrier.

– Catherine Catlow, Family and Supporter Group member

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## Delivering Great Service

## Lived Experience

## Louisa chooses how she spends her time

“For a very long time, I enjoyed attending the Day Service my parents chose for me. But over the last few years, I did not want to go much anymore,” said Louisa, who is supported by Life Without Barriers to live at home.

“It was hard talking about it to Mum as she felt safe with me going to the same place I had been going to for the last 30 years. My family fought very hard for me to get access to the right services and keep me safe.”

“I spoke to my support staff and told them why I was not happy. I didn’t have any friends at the Day Service. I felt alone.”

Louisa’s support team helped her find alternative day service providers and prepare for her conversation with her mum.

“I talked to Mum about how I want to have choice and control in my life and how I know that there are limits to what is appropriate – like maybe she was right that a house full of puppies is not a good choice. Changing service providers when I am not happy is a great choice. Mum agreed that a change was necessary.”

Louisa now attends the Day Service she wants and enjoys the new and different programs they offer. Louise also hangs out with her best friend and has made new friends as well.



Louisa, at a party.

“

I have lots of friends now.  
I love to spend time with my friends.

– Louisa

”

## Delivering Great Service



Radi talks to us about her life and art, her experience of the services she receives from Life Without Barriers, taking part in the mindshare Exhibition, and the misconceptions people have about mental illness.

[Click here for the audio description version of Radi's video.](#)

## RELATE Framework

The **RELATE framework** was developed in a collaboration between people we support in mental health programs and our staff in Western Australia, Tasmania, and South Australia. Launched in March 2023, we use the RELATE framework in our services, which includes Lived Experience and Professional Learning Working Groups, three National Practice Guides, and national mental health induction training. It has strengthened our integration of lived experience into practice and enhanced the quality of care we provide.



## Delivering Great Service

## Support built on relationships – Anne and Emmeline's partnership

Emmeline, a peer support worker in South Australia, helps people move into a recovery period using her own personal experiences in mental health to build trust and sustain hope. Emmeline plays an important role in the life of Anne\*, a person we support who primarily speaks Greek. Emmeline recognised early on that listening was the most valuable support she could provide. Anne and her husband expressed how Emmeline's presence positively impacted Anne's mental health. He said, "You have had a very good effect on Anne's overall health. Your personality has really helped her."

When reflecting on why the relationship was important, Emmeline said, "My companionship helped her to de-escalate her anxiety and engage in healthy coping mechanisms like distraction, controlled breathing, and socialisation."

Drawing from her own experiences with anxiety, Emmeline supported Anne with strategies that eased her feelings of isolation and distress. Through patience, compassion, and trust-building, she also helped Anne to secure appropriate aged care services that worked for her.

“

Gaining Anne's trust was a long process but being patient and compassionate proved vital to her feeling comfortable and supporting her to transition to the most appropriate health care and support.

– Emmeline

”

## Delivering Great Service

### Empowering people with disability to confidently exercise their rights

Extensive discussions with many of our key stakeholders, including people we support, self-advocacy group members, frontline staff, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, highlighted that many people with disability face difficulties in understanding and exercising their rights, including access to services and the ability to choose or change providers.

Led by these insights, we have commenced work to educate both the people we support and our staff on Rights, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. We are helping people to find a path to express and experience Rights at their own pace.

The work involves systems readiness, staff readiness, and building knowledge about active support. Our aim is to empower people with disability to confidently and safely exercise their Rights in all aspects of their lives.



Katrina, who uses our services, sits at a desk smiling.

## Delivering Great Service

## Lived Experience

## Jarrold's journey home

"I just want a place to really call home" is something we often hear from people with disability. With limited suitable choices about where and with whom they live, people with disability may have a house to reside in, but it may not truly feel like 'home' for them.

Life Without Barriers has **a strong policy that says we are working towards not providing support and housing services together** because it may limit choices for people with disability. This means we will provide supports in the homes people have chosen, when they invite us to do so. This change came directly from the recommendations of disability representative organisations. It is a way we can support people to maximise their choice and control and make a place truly their home.

However, housing shortages for people with disability are substantial nationwide. New Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) provisions were introduced by the NDIS and new SDAs are being purpose-built for the individual across Australia. We are partnering with SDA providers and encouraging them to build homes suitable for people with disability based on insights and research we have conducted with hundreds of people choosing our services across the country.

Jarrold will be one of the first people we will support in a new-build SDA property. Jarrold told us he wanted a better home – his privately

rented property did not meet his needs, his tenancy was not secure and he felt isolated. We connected Jarrold with high quality SDA Provider KinKera Community. KinKera Community listened to Jarrold's needs, and others in the local community, then began constructing their SDA houses.

It was an exciting day when Jarrold, his father Tony and support worker Robert, met the builders and toured two of the houses under construction. At the second one, his dad said, "This will be your place, Jarrold". Jarrold will soon have his own fully self-contained house and gardens, a secure lease and neighbours in three adjacent properties.

Jarrold's new home is one of multiple new building projects underway in which Life Without Barriers is being invited to support new participants. Others include SDAs in Alice Springs, Darwin, Broken Hill, Perth and Newcastle.



Jarrold is with his dad and two other people at the site where his new house is under construction.



## Delivering Great Service

### Lived Experience Learning Sessions

Our online Lived Experience Learning Sessions were inspired by our new Relationships, Intimacy, and Sexuality (RIS) policy, which recognises the rights of people with disability to have intimate relationships. Through the views and perspectives of people with disability, these sessions provided our staff with valuable insights into the diverse challenges people with disability may encounter.

These educational sessions featured guest speakers who offered fresh perspectives, challenged outdated ideas, and inspired innovative thinking. Notable speakers like Rachel Wotton, an academic, educator and sex worker, offered guidance on navigating NDIS-funded sex worker services, and advocate Uli Cartwright explored the complexities of intimate relationships from the perspective of a person with disability residing in a Supported Independent Living home.

By highlighting the fundamental human right to engage in positive, consensual relationships, these sessions have been vital to our commitment to the national implementation of the RIS policy. They also reinforce to our staff that relationships and intimacy are central to the human experience of the people we support.

“

People have been calling for a policy like this for 20+ years! Congratulations, Life Without Barriers, for supporting the diverse needs and sexual expression of people with disability. Great to see it freely available online within the suite of policies and guidelines you have developed, instead of secretly tucked away for only staff to access.

– Rachel Wotton, Academic, Consultant and Sex Worker

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## Delivering Great Service

## What people who choose our disability services told us

This year we asked people we support a range of questions about the disability services they receive from us. The results showed that people feel they have choice and control when it comes to their supports, and that they are listened to about how they want to be supported.

We heard that when staff listen to people's choices and show respect, it has a positive impact on the lives of the people we support both at home and in the community. Many people said that they appreciated how we supported them to have a voice and be heard by developing caring and respectful relationships with our staff.



**92%** of people told us that they are treated with respect and their ideas, interests and feelings are valued.



**98%** of people said they feel safe and protected from exploitation.



**78%** of people told us that they get to make their own decisions about what to do in their life.

## Delivering Great Service

## What people who choose our disability services told us

I feel safe and supported in my home.

The carers are respectful and calm and treated me very well, this made me feel safe and totally comfortable. Staff were confident and knew what they were doing.

The care I receive from my carers and knowing that my home is a safe and welcoming place to live.

I have my voice and I have choices.

Staff at my house listen to me and make me feel safe all of the time.

I feel supported. I am asked what I would like to do, I feel respected.

Active listening and responsiveness to what I say.

They are easily contactable, and approachable. I like that I can be myself around them.

My workers communicate openly and honestly with me.

Friendly staff and other colleagues are very supportive.

They listen to me.

Experienced carers who do things cooperatively.



## Delivering Great Service



A family enjoy the outdoors.

## Child, Youth and Family Services

**Partnering with 1691 carers and their families, we provided 5966 children and young people a safe place to call home this year. We were guided by young voices and carers to keep improving our quality of care, including young people in Youth Advisory Groups, as well as collaborations with carers in Carer Advisory Groups.**

We listened to, and worked alongside, young people, carers, families, community organisations, peak industry bodies and governments to achieve the following:

- Co-designed our Reimagining Residential Care Strategy with young people and staff.
- 149 children and young people were successfully reunified with their families, including 59 First Nations children, and 100% of the children and young people in our MST-CAN program were kept together with their families.
- Commenced developing resources following carer feedback from our annual survey, such as induction support, when a child first comes to stay, and the first few years as a carer.
- Our **National After-Hours Service** answered over 100,000 calls this year to respond to queries and concerns from children, young people, carers and staff outside of standard business hours.
- Our staff and carers were incredible in our first-ever staff campaign to raise awareness in their communities at the grassroots level, with one carer making the **Channel 10 News**.
- As the partner agency for CARE in Australia, we helped the evidence-based, trauma-informed **CARE model** be revised within the Australian context. This year our Western Australia and Northern Territory teams gained CARE certification.

## Delivering Great Service

### Engaging young minds to co-design our services

Our Youth Advisory Group (YAG) is a partnership where young people co-design how we provide services. This year, 62 YAG participants were involved in lived experience empowerment activities. This means their voices have started to shape the care young people receive from us, from activities in a residential house to feedback for carers and Life Without Barriers' future technology strategy (check out the story below). State-based YAGs have run successfully in Tasmania and Queensland for several years, and this year we rolled out a YAG in Western Australia. The National Youth Advisory Group (NYAG) members participated in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) strategy planning, leadership forums, Innovating the Foster Care Journey project, After Hours Project and briefing the Life Without Barriers Executive team on their lived experience. Twelve young people were also supported to attend the biannual CREATE Conference in Adelaide where they were able to engage with other young people in care from across the country. This feedback is already informing the development of our Lived Experience Strategy.

## Delivering Great Service

### Young voices co-design our future technology strategy

Young voices and ideas are helping us build a more inclusive, transparent, and responsive ICT infrastructure that will empower young people and create solutions. Youth Advisory Group members shared ideas on how the right use of technology can enable children and youth in care to feel more respected and connected.

Tara, a participant, said, “The technology that Life Without Barriers uses is a major part of how they support and protect young people in care. Young people have the knowledge and experience to understand how technology can be used, and they understand what will and won’t work when it comes to developing an ICT blueprint.”

The group saw the pros and cons of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential for what it means in the lives of young people. They also gave great insights into where the appropriate use of technology could bring real-life improvements to care. Young people spoke of the lack of transparency and accountability about decisions that directly impacted young people and offered ideas of how that technology can help. They embraced the potential for technology to connect young people in care within Life Without Barriers.

Their feedback is directly informing our Technology Roadmap for the future!



Tara, a Youth Advisory Group member, took part in our future technology consultation.

## Delivering Great Service

### Lived Experience

## Stable Foundations paves the way for reunification

Consistency and stability in care have been consistent feedback from children and young people we support. They wanted more sustained relationships with staff – to know the person putting them to bed will be the same person there in the morning.

Siblings Julie (9), Stephen (5) and Jacob (2) are Aboriginal children with a range of health and care needs. It was very important that the siblings stayed together and crucial that they remained on Country to maintain their connection to their mum and culture. Our team understand how important reunification was for the children and their mum. Whilst that process was underway, we knew we needed to take some steps to make sure the children felt as secure as possible. So, we came up with something a bit new: the Stable Foundations staffing structure, designed especially to meet the needs of the siblings.

The Stable Foundations staffing structure provides care through two primary carers who alternate weekly, with one carer living in the home for seven days while the other is off duty. A residential staff team also provides additional support after school and on weekends. The staffing enabled the siblings to develop strong relationships with people helping them, consistent with the principles of the CARE model, and to participate in typical activities for children their age including dancing, gymnastics and swimming.

The children were supported to stay really connected to their mum and kin and spent time returning to Country, which was a highlight for the children and all involved.

The children could spend time with their mum whenever and however it was needed, exemplifying the Family Involved principle of the CARE model. Over the course of a year, this changed from family time in the park to visits in the community, to parent visits at school and finally mum visiting the children's house to take over the care and routine of the children. It was wonderful when the children were reunified back to live with mum!



The Stable Foundations staffing structure enabled the siblings to build bonds with people helping them and to participate in more activities for children their age.



## Delivering Great Service

### Listening to carers

Our National Carer Advisory Group, which includes 22 foster and kinship carers, co-designed and consulted on major projects to improve our services to help the children and young people in their care, their families and the carer experience.

This year, they advised on peer connection and support, conditions for carers, and influencing cultural change to recognise carers' value within our organisation, the sector and the community.

State Carer Advisory Groups also met in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. Leanne, who has been a Life Without Barriers carer for 18 years with her husband Geoff, explained why she joined the Queensland Carer Advisory Group. "If it's going to bring about positive change for children and carers by sharing with Life Without Barriers management what's happening with carers – challenges or what's working well – that's valuable to have that input and outlet to share experiences."



Pictured above from left to right at the Queensland Foster and Kinship Care Conference: Teena Ingram, Executive Director, QLD Child, Youth and Family, with carers Tabatha, Nikki and Debbie, Deirdre Van de Pol, Manager, Specialised Programs, QLD CYF and carer Leanne.

## Delivering Great Service

### Guided by each other's personal experiences

Adelaide Hills foster carer Julie said that giving children in out-of-home care a home is rewarding but isolating if you do not have a good support crew to lean on. This is why she values being part of the MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY®.

“Just being able to talk to people about what’s happening in your life, what’s happening in your home with someone who gets it, is huge,” Julie said.

MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY® is a game changer in out-of-home care and links foster parents and children to create an extended family-like support system, with an experienced carer as a central port-of-call for advice and a helping hand. Life Without Barriers has MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY® constellations in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

**See the ABC’s story about The MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY® [here](#).**



Julie Critchley and her husband have fostered vulnerable children for a decade. They are standing in front of a colourful patchwork art which says “Mockingbird”.

## Delivering Great Service

## What our carers had to say

In our 2023 Carer Survey, foster and kinship carers voiced how we can better support them in their pivotal roles. Their voices shaped our priorities this year.

Knowledge on how to access external services like Centrelink, Medicare and health care providers was a top priority. Carers told us they wanted more support for new carers, planned short breaks and to co-design services. They also wanted more training, including for trauma, mental health, navigating the out-of-home care system and developmental competency.

Guided by their feedback, this year we improved learning opportunities and shared practical advice, we are simplifying the documentation process for application and assessment and commenced developing a carer onboarding and support pathway to provide increased guidance to staff and resources for carers. We are building a Peer Support Program for carers to support one another and our National and State Carer Advisory Groups are ongoing.



**73.4%** are long term carers



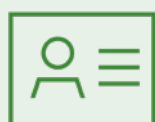
**10.9%** are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers



**10.6%** are culturally and linguistically diverse carers



**19.5%** are kinship carers



**93%** are employed



**56%** work in aged care, disability, social services, health/ medical, or education

## Delivering Great Service

### Lived Experience

## Working together to reunite a family

Separating a family should be a last resort. When it does happen, we work hard with families and governments to support them to be reunited wherever that is possible.

Lola, Casey, and Belinda were placed with carers when they were 9, 2, and 9 months old respectively. We found and connected Lola with her dad John, whom she hadn't seen in two years. John connected consistently with Lola following a well-designed plan and Lola's relationship with her dad and 'Nanny' (John's mum) grew. So much so that Lola asked her Life Without Barriers case manager, "I like my dad – can I stay with him?" We worked with Lola and John to make this possible and 12 months in care, Lola went home to John with a 6-month supervision order.

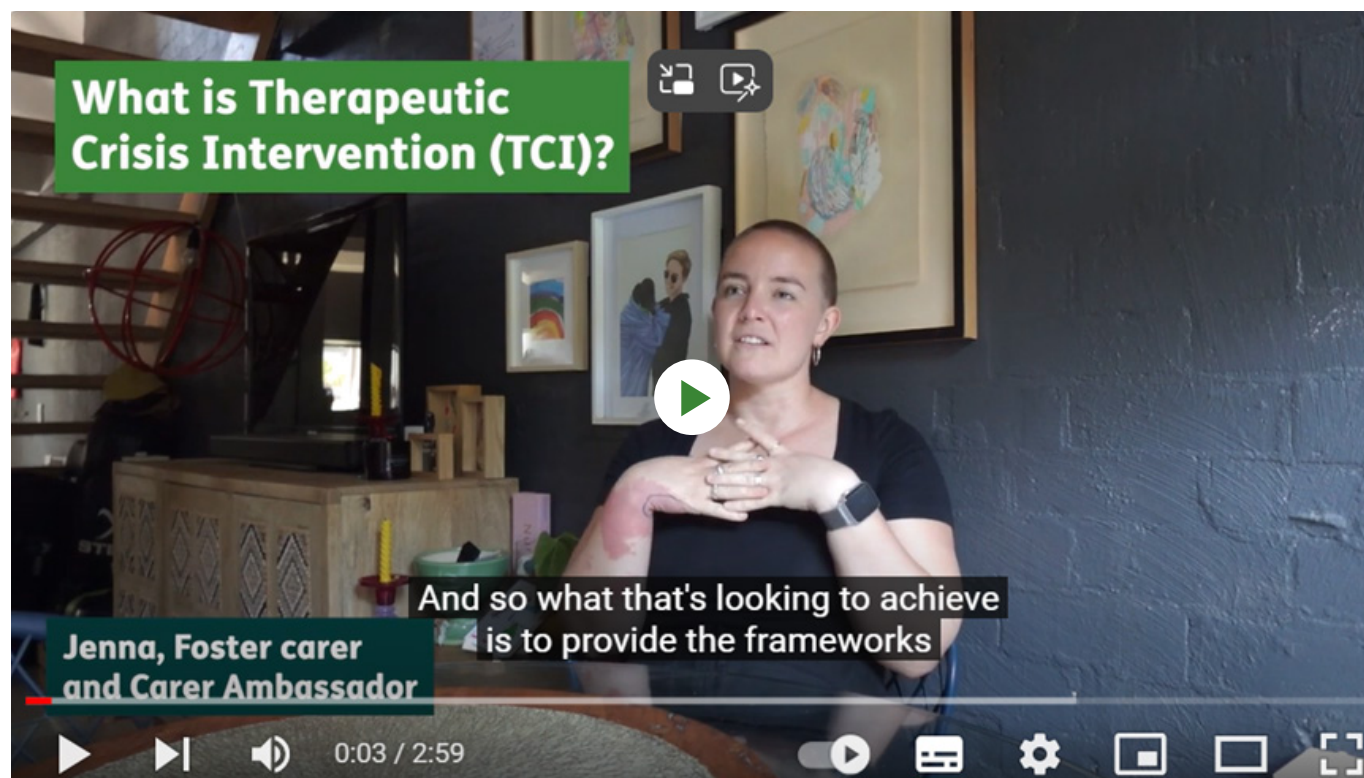
We have restoration specialists, communities of practice, education for carers and staff and enhanced case review processes guided by children and those significant to them.

The children's mum, Suzie, and Jack, Casey and Belinda's dad, desperately wanted their children back, so we worked with them to start the change that would see that happen. We explained how they can bring security and safety into their home so they could be ready to give the children everything they needed..

Belinda and Casey returned home to their mum and dad, and we continued to work with them after the reunification. After 12 months, their home is a safe and nurturing place, the relationship between parents and kids is loving and secure, and we continued to support the family. John maintained Lola's connection to Suzie, Jack and her siblings. Through the family finding process, the children are now connected with their extended maternal family. What a beautiful outcome!



## Delivering Great Service



Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families (TCI-F) are crisis intervention models developed alongside CARE at Cornell University. Jenna, a single carer in Victoria who works full time, talks about how the TCI model supports her.

[Click here for the audio description version of Jenna's video.](#)

## Delivering Great Service

## Lived Experience

## Responding to John's artistic and cultural calling

At only 9-years-old, John, a proud Barkindji boy from the Darling River basin in Far West New South Wales, is already an award-winning artist.

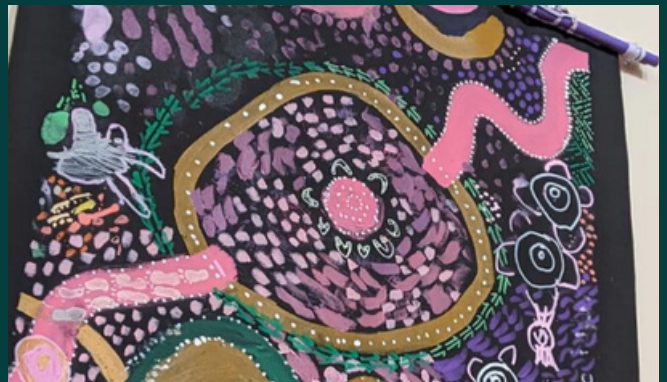
John treasures a Barkindji artwork that his foster carers Paula and Brenton bought for him and his sister. When he was introduced to art through our Living Arts school holiday program, John wanted to replicate that artwork.

It was easy to see that John had a raw, natural talent. John wanted to nurture his gift, so he has fortnightly sessions with resident Living Arts artist Mark and artist Natasha during school holidays. He also creates art at home.

When asked what he enjoys most about painting, John answered, "It makes me feel calm."

Paula said, "It's been a wonderful way of connecting John and his sister to culture. He just sits down and just the whole structure and the colours and elements from his Country, like the Barka River (Darling River) he always features and the hills from Mutawintji National Park also from his Country, it just sort of, comes so easily."

With the support of his foster care family, kin and community, John has developed a number of stunning pieces. This year John won the Nunga Kids Art Competition and was presented an iPad by the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.



John painted this, emulating one by Barkindji artist Caitlin Davies Plummer, for the mindhare Exhibition in 2022 when he was 7 years old.



The award-winning painting: John won Year 3 and 4 (Junior Primary) Nunga award this year. His description: "My culture is Barkindji and I learn about my culture, so I am strong. I learn about my culture because I am connected. I love to see my cousins and visit my Country, so I can learn more about it. It made me happy to meet my cousins last year, it felt good to be together. I paint because it is my culture. I always put the Barka River in my paintings because it is my river. Learning about my culture makes me feel proud and strong."

## Delivering Great Service

### Lived Experience



John and his carer Paula discuss John's art, how it makes him feel and its connection back to his family and Culture.

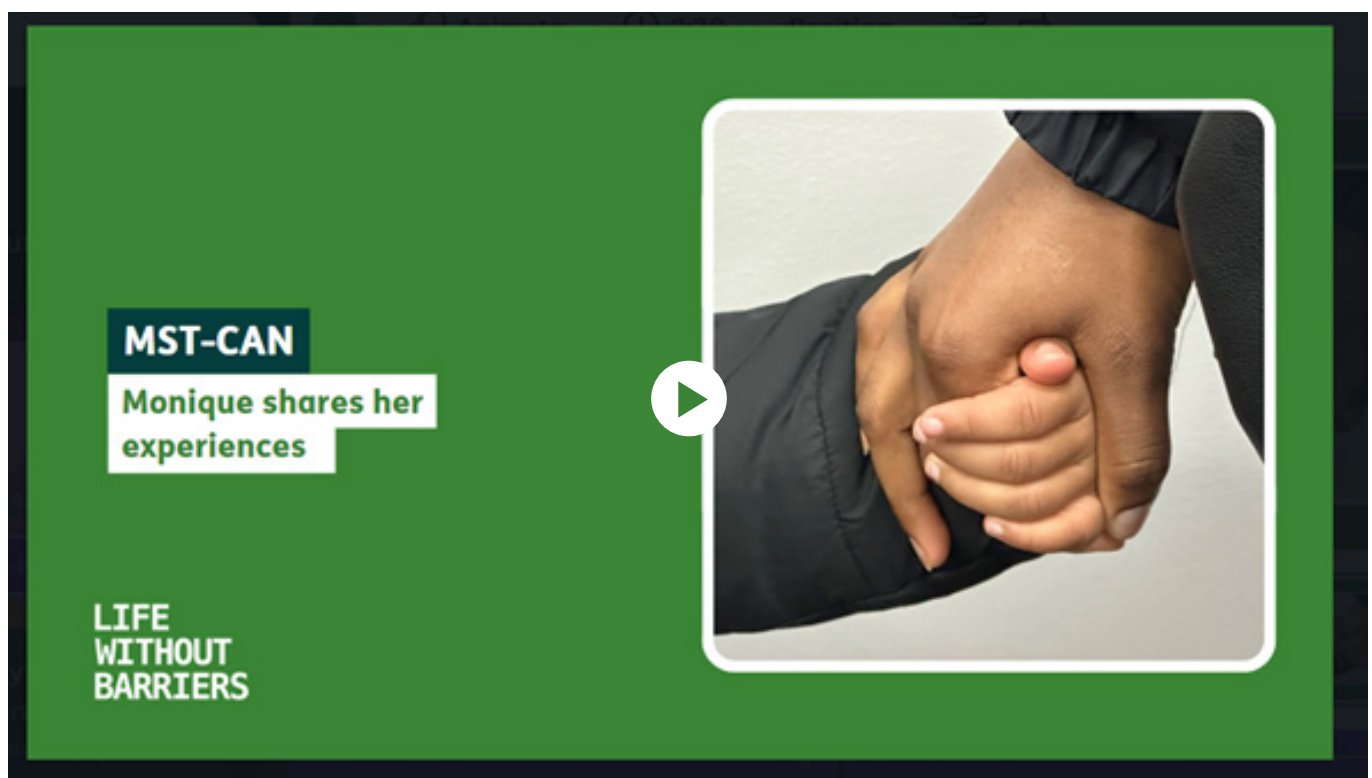
**[Click here for an audio description version of John's video.](#)**

## Delivering Great Service

## Intensive family preservation program keeps families safely together

Our MST-CAN program in Tamworth aims to keep families together and prevent children from entering the child protection system. The evidence-based program works with parents to develop the tools they need to provide a safe, nurturing environment and to keep families safely together. We are guided by families and tailor programs to each family's strengths and needs. The support can range from anger management to problem solving skills development to trauma treatment for children or parents.

Monique signed up for MST-CAN and collaboratively developed her MST-CAN goals. She and her family worked incredibly hard to make sustainable changes for their future. At the end of the program, Monique showed significant mood improvement, had reduced experiences of mental ill health, and remained abstinent from drugs. She was highly attuned to, and meeting, her child's needs. Her child was engaged in and doing well at school. Monique started a new job and is also studying at TAFE. Monique speaks about her experiences in the video below.



Monique had a chat with us about the things she likes about the MST-CAN program, and the biggest things she took away from the program.

[Click here for the audio description version of Monique's video.](#)



## Delivering Great Service

### Sexual Safety Series

Guided by young people from the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect's (NAPCAN) Youth Speak Out, we launched the Sexual Safety Series to speak directly with children and young people about safe relationships. The 6-part series for young people aims to prevent sexual abuse and sexual assault by addressing respectful relationships, consent, sexual abuse and sexual assault, sexual exploitation, intimate images and pornography. The videos were made possible with an auDA Foundation grant, and support and advice from the Australian Centre for Child Protection and the National Office for Child Safety.



Image of two young people from the Sexual Safety video series.

### Alcohol and drugs support services

Over 3300 people and their families experiencing drug and alcohol concerns trusted us to support them this year. Across three programs, we provided 12,000 formal counselling appointments and offered case management for people experiencing complex medical conditions. Our team's experience include social work, nursing, psychology, community services, and aboriginal health and wellbeing. A number of our staff have lived experience,

including a peer worker in our team, allowing us to better understand a person's recovery journey. Throughout the year, we received feedback that the way we supported people – by truly hearing where someone is at, listening to their needs, and encouraging them to strive forward – has been life changing and in some instances lifesaving.

## Delivering Great Service



A young lady wearing a colourful floral hijab is at a work meeting.

## National Immigration Support Services

**Our National Immigration Support Services (NISS) supports refugees and asylum seekers who are living in the Australian community, while their immigration status is resolved. Our services were guided by the 1147 refugees and asylum seekers we worked with this year.**

This year:

- We became one of two national providers to offer Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program. Over 200 people in Queensland and Western Australia now use our services.
- We supported 64 individuals to resettle in the United States and New Zealand.
- We assisted families to transition into the Australian community following visa grants after years of uncertainty in community detention. Our new Housing and Employment team supported 100 people who were immediately released to the community.
- Our nutrition project, which connects people with nutrition experts, supported 80 families.
- We launched an initiative to support victims of domestic and family violence.
- Our Specialist Intake team worked with 250 asylum seekers and refugees from the community to ensure they could access our services and support.
- We embedded evidence-based practice frameworks, CARE and TCI, to bolster our support provided to people as they heal from migration-related trauma.

## Delivering Great Service

## Lived Experience

## Selam's biggest motivation to seek refuge was a safe life for her daughter

After her marriage broke up, Selam was about to return to Ethiopia with her daughter Liya when her father warned her not to come home. "There is genocide. My brothers were missing. I'm afraid for my life and my child. So I ask for asylum to stay here," said Selam.

The Asylum Seekers Centre connected her with our NISS services. Selam told her case manager Charlotte that her first priority is a stable home. "In the hotel we stayed in one room. There's no kitchen, no cooking. That's the difficult part, because I have child."

To help Selam secure the place she wanted in a competitive rental market, Charlotte spoke with the landlord about Selam's readiness to move in and that she was able to pay the bond and first month's rent upfront. It worked and Selam and Liya moved into their new home.

"Charlotte helped me a lot. She fixed our Medicare card. She helped with finding furniture, finding daycare for Liya," said Selam. Selam also secured a special benefit for Liya for daycare with Charlotte's assistance. Having Liya in daycare now meant Selam could start her job search, with Charlotte by her side.



Selam holding her daughter's hand.

“

I'm here because I have the responsibility to do good things for my daughter. So I will be strong for her.

– Selam

”

## Delivering Great Service



Hameed, Case Coordinator, sat down with us to answer some questions about his role in Life Without Barriers' National Immigration Support Services and reflect on his lived experience as a refugee.

[Click here for the audio description version of Hameed's video.](#)



## Delivering Great Service

### NISS Clinical Team

A new Clinical Team enables refugees' and asylum seekers' lived experience to guide the support they receive in a more targeted way that works for them. The NISS Clinical Team's mental health nurse and psychologists offer specialised case consultations, clinical and forensic assessments, and tailored interventions. They work in collaboration with the person and their support staff and network to deliver individualised, holistic support. The service aims to bolster people's abilities to improve their quality of life, experience mental health wellness and be a part of the mainstream Australian community.



A man is talking to a female clinical team member in the therapy room.

### Employment Mentor Program for Palestinian-Australian and Muslim Communities

We began supporting Palestinian-Australian and Muslim communities in the Sydney local government area with an Employment Mentor Program. The program promotes social cohesion and improves the emotional and social safety of communities affected by the conflict in Gaza. Guided by Palestinian and Muslim community leaders, and working closely with local government, multicultural organisations, local employment agencies, educational bodies, and small business networks, the program implements initiatives to reduce recruitment, workplace, and cultural barriers, improve individual employability, strengthen financial independence, and foster a sense of belonging within the broader Australian community. Some of this work includes a job-ready program,

finance and legal workshops about work and housing, and a linkage program to connect people to supporting organisations for health, finance, education/training, accommodation, family support, safety, and security.



Supporting Palestinian-Australian and Muslim communities, with guidance from community leaders.

## Delivering Great Service



A woman is helped to keep her home clean.

## Aged Care Services

**We partnered with 7175 older Australians to enhance their independence and enjoyment of life at home through Life Without Barriers' in-home support services.**

Putting the people we support and their choices at the heart of their care, this year we:

- Captured experiences and feedback from the people we support through the annual National Client Voice Survey and quarterly Client Advisory Group meetings to improve our services.
- Bolstered our person-centred care focus through strengthened governance and a contemporary, operating model.
- Streamlined service delivery through the progressive roll out of the AlayaCare client management platform.
- Consolidated quality of care and best practice decision making through implementing a Quality Care Advisory Body.
- Improved consistency and continuity of care through enhanced recruitment and retention activities, including induction and onboarding.
- Received 515 award nominations across the 12 months of our Values Champion Awards staff recognition program, many based on compliments from people who use our services.
- Enhanced team-wide collaboration through the inaugural Aged Care Leadership Conference and Community of Practice groups to drive continual improvement and prepare for upcoming aged care reforms.

## Delivering Great Service

## Lived Experience

## “Waiting at the door” – culturally supportive care turns things around for Ernest

For many older people we support, taking the first step towards receiving care even at home, is a daunting and stressful experience – for them and their family.

Ernest, a Jirrabal Elder living in Far North Queensland, was reluctant to receive care, but his family carers felt he needed support – ideally from a home care provider who could deliver culturally appropriate care.

Our Care Coordinator Joanne chatted face-to-face with Ernest and his family about their needs. “I explained that we had a male, culturally appropriate support worker who could deliver his daily care,” said Joanne. “That news changed everything and gave them a bit more comfort.”

Things were about to get even better, when support worker Peter came to the door. It turned out Peter played rugby league with Ernest’s son, and the family all knew him from when he was a boy.

“Ernest and his family were over the moon to know Peter personally,” said Joanne.

“Once Ernest knew it was Peter coming every day, it really turned everything around for him. Now he can’t wait for his care visits, he’s ready and waiting at the door for Peter to arrive – it’s a positive start to his day.”

“

Ernest and his family were over the moon to know Peter personally.

– Joanne

”

## Delivering Great Service

### Improving our services by listening to people we support

During 2023-24, our Aged Care Client Advisory Group grew to more than 70 people, including people we support, their carers, and family members from across Australia.

The advisory group met quarterly to make sure any new initiatives or service delivery improvements are shaped by the people who receive these services.

One initiative that has been designed and delivered with the advisory group is a national 1800 contact number.

Developed to meet the need for one central number for all enquiries, input from the advisory group was integral to the success of the service. The 1800 number has reduced confusion about who to call and ensures calls are answered promptly and escalated to the right person.

The advisory group influenced the way we design our communications, particularly the annual Client Voice Survey, ensuring all language and terminology is accessible to people we support. The same goes for payment methods, with advisory group members sharing their lived experience with limitations such as mobility, transportation, and technological literacy to make sure that people can pay their invoices in a way that suits them.



The Aged Care Client Advisory Group's feedback improves the services we provide to help people continue living independently.



## Delivering Great Service

## What our older Australians said about us

The annual Aged Care Client Voice Survey is one way we ensure that lived experience guides our service delivery. In October 2023, 1,800 people we support had this to say about their aged care services:



**90%** said they are treated with dignity and respect



**83%** said support workers understand and respect their needs, goals, and preferences



**80%** said that staff communicate with them clearly in a way they understand.



**83%** would recommend Life Without Barriers to a friend or family member



**82%** said their support workers have appropriate skills and knowledge to meet their needs.



**81%** said their services are regular and consistent.



Staff and day centre members gathered around tables at Capalaba Senior Day Centre for a friendships celebration.

“

I look forward to coming here. Without this centre, I don't know where I'll be.

– Capalaba day centre visitor Tom

”

## Delivering Great Service

## Responding to weather emergencies – Cyclone Jasper emergency response

Our Risk and Resilience Unit worked with operational teams across the country to develop tailored business continuity plans to respond to disruptive events.

These plans, along with briefing sessions, assist teams to prepare for and respond to extreme weather events such as Cyclone Jasper. Thanks to methodical preparation and implementation of their emergency response, the Aged Care team was able to keep delivering care to more than 600 people.

Our priority was the safety and well-being of our people, particularly those with no family or in an isolated geographical area. With some people we support and staff cut off and without power for an extended period, phone calls to check in and offer emotional support became vital. We also checked whether they had enough medication and food.

Lessons learnt from Cyclone Jasper will ensure that the team are even more prepared as they look ahead to the next storm season.



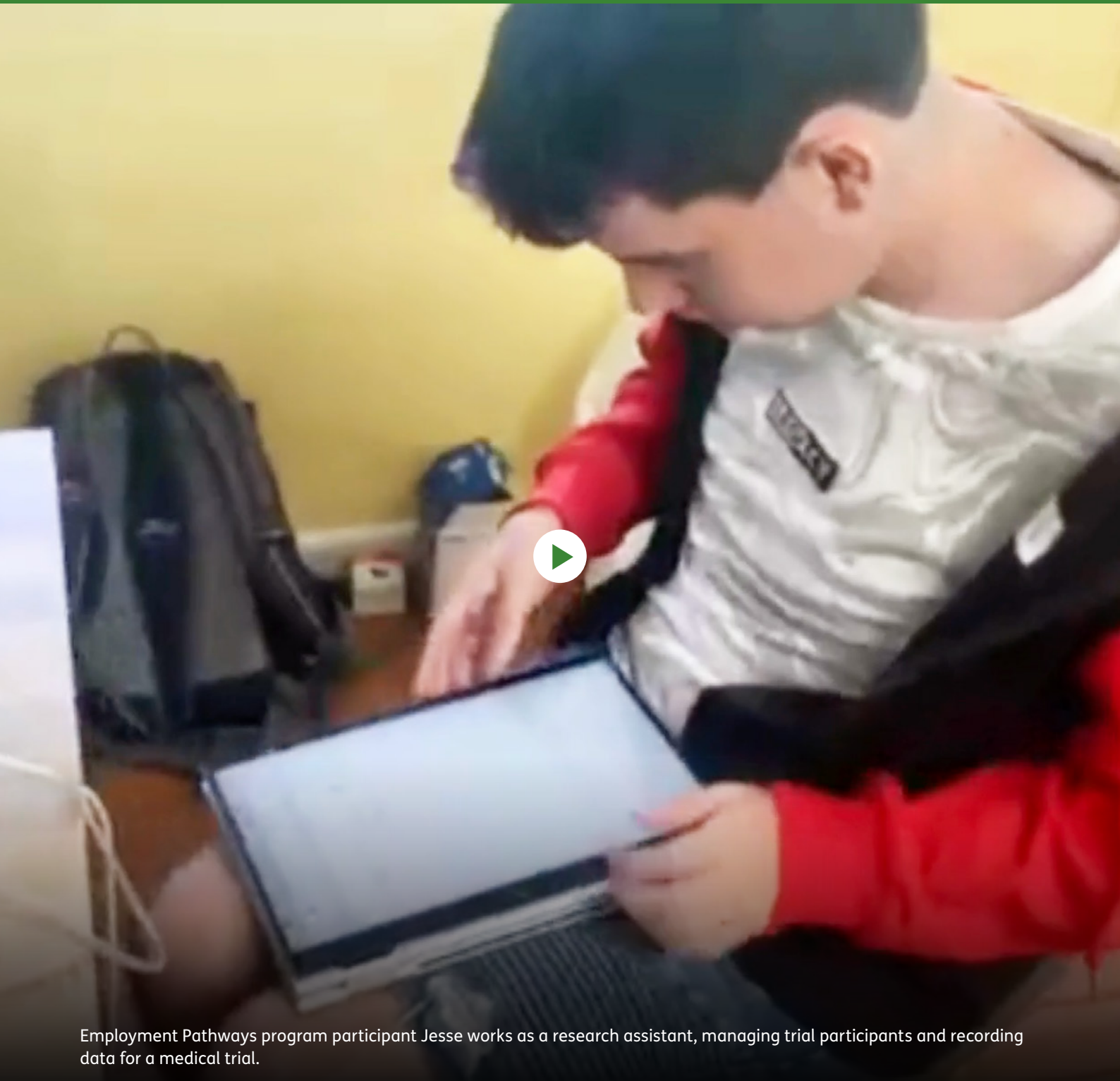
Destruction caused by Cyclone Jasper in Daintree Village.

Thank you for the support given by the Life Without Barriers team before, during and after the event.  
– John

Thank you to Life Without Barriers for showing you care at a time in need. I now can celebrate Christmas with my daughter.  
– Sylvia

Very kind of Life Without Barriers to show such care during an event such as this.  
– Christine

# Influencing Systemic Barriers



Employment Pathways program participant Jesse works as a research assistant, managing trial participants and recording data for a medical trial.

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Lived experience of people with disability in Australia today

The Disability Royal Commission (DRC) released its report in September 2023, and the report from the Independent Review of the NDIS was released in December 2023 – both reports offer important reform areas for a more equitable society.

Both reports included substantial input from people with disability and we believe people with disability must be at the centre of implementing these reforms. We also provided contributions to

the two reports and supported people choosing our services and their families to do so as well.

These reports have influenced our approach to social policy and advocacy this year including through our Access, Inclusion and Employment Plan and our Lived Experience Project. We will continue to partner with people with disability for an inclusive society by contributing to the broader reform agenda in Australia.

### Leading change, guided by personal experience

Our Innovation Team, led by Chief Innovation Officer Emma Bennison, is at the forefront of Life Without Barriers' efforts in diversity, equity, inclusion, and developing a lived experience strategy. In line with our values, the team is dedicated to transforming our organisation to reflect the experiences and needs of people we support and employ in all areas. Drawing on its members' personal and lived experiences, the team provides an evidence-based approach to creating meaningful change. Their focus spans thought leadership, social policy and advocacy, and embedding diversity and lived experiences into all aspects of our work.



## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### A workforce reflecting the community we serve

Our 2022-2025 Access Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP), is our strategy to address barriers for people with disability in gaining meaningful employment. This year we established some metrics to measure our progress; this is what they show us:

- Against our target of 15% of our workforce, at all levels of our organisation, being people with disability:
  - 14% of our employees have a disability (D&I Survey, Nov 2023)
  - 13.8% of employees with a disability are in leadership positions (HR system, Jan-Mar 2024)
- We hired 100 new employees with a disability in the last financial year.
- Our annualised retention rate remains comparable for employees with disability, i.e., we retain employees with disability at a rate similar to that of non-disabled employees.

Our AIEP includes over 60 actions designed to drive change across several areas of our organisation.

**Learn more about our progress so far.**



We continue to work towards an inclusive and accessible workplace.

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Voices of Lived Experience: Our Lived Experience Strategy

We know it is important to deepen and broaden our commitment to valuing and elevating lived experience perspectives consistently across Life Without Barriers. This year we began co-creating a draft vision statement with the people and communities we support and employ, emphasising our dedication to embedding lived experience throughout our organisation.

Building on the strong efforts already underway, we aim to incorporate the perspectives of people with lived experience into every aspect of Life Without Barriers. Together with our allies, people with lived experience are helping to shape our vision and roadmap, which will guide our strategy moving forward.

This collaboration explores how lived experience can shape our services, policy commitments, governance, leadership, and strategy. Life Without Barriers also partners with like-minded organisations through The Voice of Lived Experience initiative, uniting those seeking to elevate lived experience perspectives to drive meaningful change in the for-purpose sector.



We are building more ways to incorporate the perspectives of people with lived experience, like Hannah's (pictured above), to better guide how we operate.

### Learning through Theatre

In March 2024, we hosted a Rebus Theatre Disability Immersion session, facilitated by our Disability Accessibility Wellness Network (DAWN) Committee, for our board and executive members. Rebus Theatre is an inclusive company that runs theatre-based workplace training. The immersion session was a powerful learning opportunity, where participants engaged in interactive role-playing exercises led by actors with lived experience. The immersive workshop placed our leadership in realistic scenarios, encouraging them to navigate challenges faced by people with disabilities in the workplace. This experience deepened understanding, fostered empathy, and promoted a more inclusive mindset within our leadership team.



Chief Innovation Officer Emma Bennison sits between members of our DAWN committee, at the Disability Immersion Session.

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Disability Employment Catalyst Project

We are proud to be a lead partner in the Disability Employment Catalyst, funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation. This innovative, disability-led initiative aims to boost employment opportunities for people with disability within the community services sector. In collaboration with Achieve Australia and Yooralla, we are focused on creating meaningful, ongoing employment opportunities. Currently, only 53.4% of Australians with disability are employed, compared to 84% of those without disability. Our project aims to address this disparity by piloting innovative recruitment practices and reducing skills shortages across the sector. Together, we are fostering inclusivity at scale.



The Disability Employment Catalyst aims to increase the employment of people with disability within the community services sector.

### All Abilities Project

We partnered with the Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA), uLaunch, and Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) on the All Abilities Project. As part of this collaboration, we hosted an intern who played a crucial role in developing our project outcome—a comprehensive reference guide for organisations beginning their inclusion journey. This guide offers practical insights and strategies, empowering organisations to create more inclusive workplaces.



The All Abilities Project supports community services sector employers who want to increase employing people with disabilities at all levels of their organisations.

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Supporting the next generation of board directors

The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) is the largest director membership organisation in the world and responsible for growing skilled and knowledgeable board directors. Life Without Barriers continued our support of the AICD by sharing the knowledge and wisdom in several AICD webinars with senior Life Without Barriers representatives, including CEO Claire Robbs and Director Gillian Calvert AO. In a series focussing on Practice Governance, Gill and Claire shared insights into developing the organisation's **Practice Governance Framework** and the framework used by the Life Without Barriers Board and Leadership team.

Claire hosted a special session that delved into the dynamic shifts in governance practices in the care economy and social sector and their consequential impacts on care and practice.

Claire said sharing knowledge on practice governance with the sector significantly contributed to improving how we strengthen practice governance in community services. "We have always believed that knowledge and expertise must be shared with the care sector so we can all benefit from collective wisdom and improve what we offer together."



## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Co-CEO intern leads with lived experience

We loved partnering with the Disability Leadership Institute this year to hire a Co-CEO Intern. Debbie Heron joined Claire Robbs at the helm of Life Without Barriers, working together to drive inclusion for people with disability.

“I’ve been able to see my disability as a positive, and I can see the good that I can bring to others’ lives through utilising my experience,” said Debbie. She encourages others with a disability to believe in what is possible for themselves.

“I want other people with disability to see examples like mine and say, ‘I can see myself represented here; maybe I could do that.’”

[Read more about Debbie’s story here.](#)



Debbie Heron (left) and Claire Robbs.

### Life Without Barriers’ Board Observer

“People underestimate the power of representation,” said Fathia Tayib, Life Without Barriers’ Board Observer as part of the Observership Program.

The first-generation Somali Australian would like to see in the future “people who look like me or people of different ethnicities being represented on boards in corporate Australia and the not-for-profit sector.”

Fathia learned about the term ‘lived experience’ at a Board disability immersion session. “I saw that practised at Life Without Barriers, where people with lived experience lead programs.

From that day, I started to learn what I could about lived experience,” she said.

[Read more about Fathia’s story here.](#)



Board Observer Fathia attended all board meetings for the year and observed the inner workings of the board.

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### The budding careers of a new generation of jobseekers

Our Employment Pathways team is fully guided by young people with disability, co-designing employment plans that are holistically tailored to their specific needs. Here are a few great stories of young people making their way in the world.

Bradley wanted to work in the community but had barriers because of his communication and social skills. Over two years, our Employment Pathway Coaches worked together with him to develop these abilities. Volunteer work also helped Bradley to experience different employment paths, and one placement at an Alpaca Farm led to Bradley's permanent role under the Supported Employment Award!

Nick wanted to be more independent, so he and his employment team researched opportunities he was interested in and set up meetings with potential employers. The team supported Nick in discussing his workplace adjustment requirements, and he secured part-time work at the local Recycling Centre. The Recycling Centre staff recognised Nick's interest and competence in Occupational Health and Safety, and Nick completed a Work Health and Safety certificate. Nick is now working towards full-time employment.

Jake and his Employment Pathway Coach worked together to identify career pathways that aligned with his interests, and adjustments he needed to help him be successful. With a passion for graphic design Jake, with the support of his coach, researched a Certificate III in Design Fundamentals at TAFE. Although the enrolment process was challenging, he secured essential academic adjustments—such as a reader, writer, extra tutorials, and verbal assessments. While studying, Jake sought part-time work, and with the Employment team's assistance, he attended a trial day as an Eco Myst technician, where they developed a workplace adjustment plan. Now, Jake is earning money while he studies!

This year, our Employment Pathways team successfully supported over 40 participants to achieve some significant outcomes, including skill development through work experience, job placement in open employment and undertaking further study. We have recently launched our hybrid model (virtual coach and employment support worker on the ground) and are partnering with young people in Tasmania, Norfolk Island and regional NSW.

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Calling for people's rights to be heard fairly in media



Uli Cartwright, in a red suit, stands in the middle of nine staff from Life Without Barriers, Yooralla and the Victorian Law Reform Commission.

As a society, we need to embrace the understanding that everyone should be able to make decisions about their lives. When a person needs assistance, supported decision-making is an important way to uphold a person's independence and rights. Even so, a person with a Guardian or Administrator still has inherent rights. That is why we joined the Office of the Public Advocate and like-minded advocates in lobbying to change Victorian laws that prevent people with disability from sharing their experiences about Guardianship or Administration with the media if they choose.

"This law means I couldn't publicly speak about my own life," said disability rights advocate Uli Cartwright. "I came up against it when the movie I made about my life aired on SBS. It was the first time in Victoria that someone contested this little-known law. It's time for society to move away from protectionism and not be afraid of what people under these orders have to share."

We also urged the media to actively engage in ethical reporting on issues relating to disability and prioritise the dignity and safety of people with disability. The rights, choices and preferences of the person the story belongs to should always remain central to any reporting.

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Co-designing people's supports with them

Life Without Barriers partnered with Enliven Housing to implement a Shared Onsite Support model in Braddon, ACT. Through a collaborative pilot program with Enliven Community, a Community Cooperative was created to empower people with disability to foster a strong sense of ownership and clearly define their support expectations.

With facilitated discussions, the group members gained the confidence to express their needs and preferences, resulting in better communication with their support providers. The workshops we held also strengthened the connections within the group and provided essential knowledge about their rights and options.

As a result, many people took on leadership roles within the Cooperative, advocating for themselves and their peers. This collective mindset created a supportive community where every voice was heard and valued. The positive changes have been evident, with members actively engaging in decision-making, building meaningful relationships, and improving their quality of life.

Together, Life Without Barriers, Enliven Housing and Enliven Community are making a lasting impact, inspiring confidence and resilience in the lives of the people we support and demonstrating the value of collaboration in building stronger communities.



Empowering people with disability to confidently express their needs and preferences has been one of the aims of a collaboration between Life Without Barriers, Enliven Housing, and Enliven Community.



## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Alliance20's Disability Dialogue

In the context of sweeping reforms to the disability service system, we continued supporting Alliance20 as an active group member and coordinating the group's work by acting as its secretariat. Alliance20 comprises 24 major disability providers that have come together to work with people with disability, governments and other stakeholders to support and improve the NDIS.

In the last year, in addition to engaging with the NDIS Review through meetings, workshops and submissions, Alliance20 set itself eight new priority areas that it is pursuing to improve the NDIS and disability provisions generally in Australia. A key initiative is that Alliance20 was instrumental in establishing the Disability Dialogue in which people with disability, advocates, providers and others now regularly come together to discuss, debate and promote disability issues, with the result of this engagement being strong advocacy to policymakers and the wider community. Other priority areas include improving employment opportunities for people with disability, reforming accommodation services, assisting with Australia's new Foundational Supports initiative, workforce measures, establishing better markets with pricing arrangements that genuinely empower people with disability, safeguarding and registration measures, and the ethical use of AI.



Alliance20 members partner to develop initiatives to strengthen the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and deliver better services and outcomes for participants, including Sophie who uses our Broadmeadow Hub services.

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Direct experience makes better policy

Learning from people with lived experience of the child protection system is essential when creating policies to support children in out of home care

The South Australian Minister for Child Protection, the Hon. Katrine Hildyard, established the Direct Experience Group (DEG) to provide an opportunity for care leavers and parents and family members of children in care or engaged in the child protection system to have a voice in the improving the system.

With 10 members meeting quarterly, the DEG recognises the importance of listening to people with experience of the system who have experience as biological parents. Some members have been through their own care experience or may still be undergoing a diverse range of child protection processes.

In partnership with The Reily Foundation, Life Without Barriers supports and facilitates the group while utilising the Aboriginal cultural and systems change expertise of DS Consulting.

The DEG takes a considered and trauma-informed approach, building the capacity of members to express their experiences and ideas using a systems change lens that is safe, supported and empowering.

The DEG has used this approach in the past 12 months to create strong foundations, develop peer support roles for the project, and create robust and dynamic terms of reference and work plans. The DEG also completed research into the first work plan topic area, presenting 15 solution-focused recommendations to the Minister.



Pictures above from left to right: DEG Chairperson Hayley, CEO of the Reily Foundation Nadia Berginetti, SA Minister for Child Protection the Hon. Katrine Hildyard, Life Without Barriers State Director Lucy Wade, DEG member Jacinta and DCP CEO Jackie Bray.

“

DEG believe children deserve a system that works together to keep them connected with everyone involved in their life. Breaking bonds between children and their family does not work in the short or long term. Our recommendations are about strengthening bonds not breaking bonds.

– DEG Joint statement on recommendations 2024

”

## Influencing Systemic Barriers

### Advocating alongside families with experience of child protection processes



Family inclusion is the active and meaningful participation of parents and family in the lives of children.

We have continued to partner closely with Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter (FISH), a community organisation led and staffed by parents and family with lived experience of child protection processes.

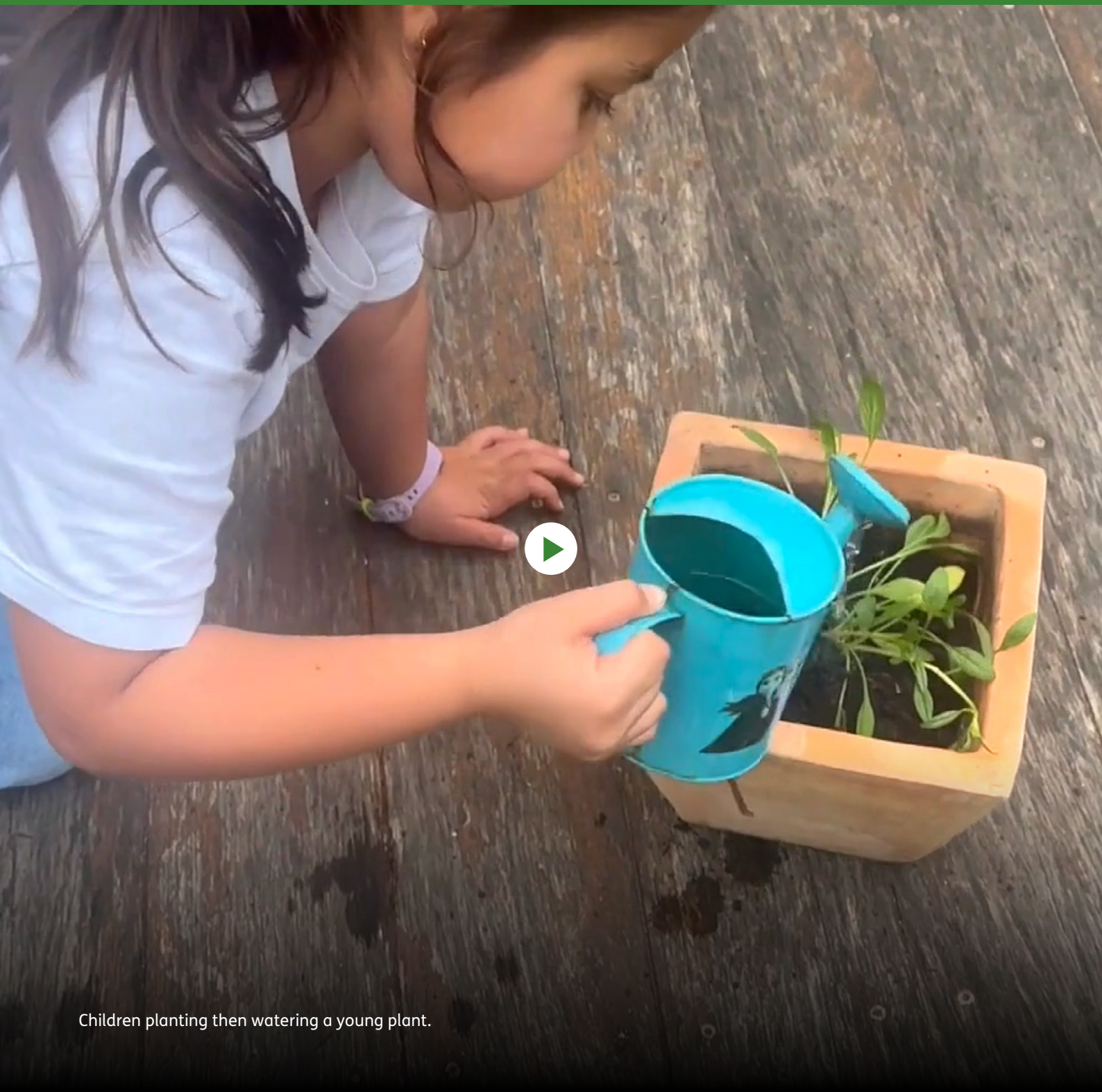
This year we co-designed a three-year participatory action research project to explore and embed peer parent and family advocacy in child protection in Australia. Our national manager for research, design and innovation Jess Cocks worked alongside FISH parent

leaders to ensure parent and family leadership characterises this groundbreaking project. This project has now been funded by the highly competitive Australian Research Council Linkage Grants program.

FISH partnered with us to assist in external CARE implementation. We also worked together on carer training, and our public affairs and advocacy team provided FISH parent leaders with media training.



# Impact for Future Generations



Children planting then watering a young plant.



## Impact for Future Generations

## Listening to young voices is key to our education strategy's success

The Education and Learning Strategy is guided by four important focus areas: Lifelong Learning, Confident Caregivers, Purposeful Partnerships and Responsive Organisation. The Strategy is a roadmap to uphold the fundamental right of access to education, so that all children and young people can meet their learning potential.

Hearing the voice of children about their lived experience of education successes and complexities is fundamental to our work. Our education consultants engage with carers and young people to hear their voices and support their journey of learning and education pathways. The Strategy is making important inroads to understand the education non-

attendance of children, which informs the development of strategies and supports to build our community capacity to advocate for full access to learning, more trauma-informed responses and less punitive disciplinary action such as suspension and exclusion.

Our significant research agenda progresses in partnership with the Australia Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child, and the Australian Research Council Linkage Project: *Fostering School Attendance for Students in Out-of-home Care* which is on track for completion in 2026. These projects are significant lighthouse opportunities to support school attendance for our community.

## Over the year...



Enrolment numbers have increased to over **90%** for compulsory school-age children



Over **80%** for our 3–5-year-old children enrolled in Early Education and Learning



We've seen **stronger education** plans guiding the learning of our children.

## Impact for Future Generations

## Lived Experience

## Finding the right environment transformed Liam's education experience

School, for some young people, is not the easiest place to be. Liam, 16, was at a mainstream school where his attendance was, on average, less than one day a week. When he and his education support worker delved a bit further, the cause of Liam's reluctance to attend school was discovered: Liam found noisy and crowded schools too overwhelming.

Supported by his Life Without Barriers care team, including Liam's residential home and education workers, Liam tried different strategies to remain in school. However, it soon became clear that a bigger change was necessary. Liam and his care team planned a transition to a smaller, flexible school at Liam's pace, so he could feel supported and set up for success.

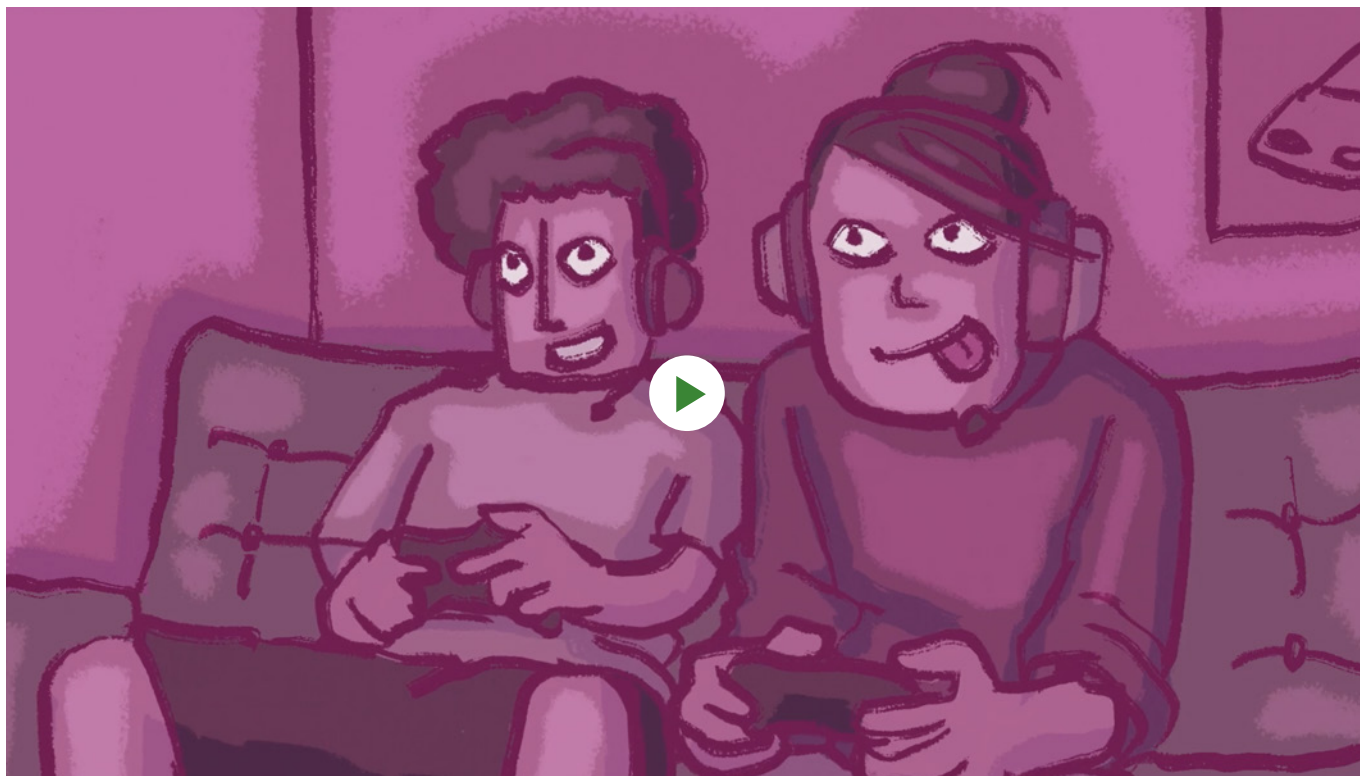
The change in Liam's experience of school is astounding. His confidence grew throughout last year and this year, he was named school captain. He won a prestigious education award, acknowledging great endeavours exercised by a student. Now, not only does he attend school regularly, Liam is also a role model for his peers.

Beyond the school gate, Liam is engaged at home (where he proudly displays his awards around the house) and he likes going to museums and cafes. Liam has enrolled in a school-based apprenticeship and is working towards transitioning back to his family.



A young person works on a computer at his bedroom's desk as his youth worker watches on.

## Impact for Future Generations



Young people in out-of-home care share their experiences of what has been working well at school in this video, *Hear My Voice*.

[Click here for the audio description version of \*Hear My Voice\*.](#)

## Impact for Future Generations

## Hook into Books™



Three people sit outdoors with books covering their faces, and a building with the word 'Library' is behind them.

Hook into Books™ provides the most wonderful vehicle to hear the voices and experiences of children and young people. Our activities, including book distribution through book backpacks, are evaluated and shaped each year based on the voice of our community to recognise and celebrate the diverse literacy experiences of children and young people.

Incredibly, 59% of carers say that after Hook into Books™ they have more access to books to share with the children and young people in their care, and an additional 18% reported that the children/young people in their care seek more opportunities to read.



Four people stand behind a table, with books displayed on the table and floor.

“

Each night we snuggle down and make reading together a priority, this has been a new experience for our children. We all relish this time, with many cries of just one more story! Hook into Books™ is such a wonderful way to highlight how important reading is for our children.

– Life Without Barriers carer

”



# Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan



'Empowered Voices' artwork created by Keisha Leon (Waanyi and Kalkadoon), Lisa Sorbie Martin (Moa and Murray Islands, Torres Strait Islands), and Gilimbaa.

## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

### Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan – 2022-2025

As an organisation, we knew our Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) would require us to be more resolute in our commitment to Reconciliation. This year, we learnt a great deal; we took some steps forward, and whilst it has not always been easy, our organisation has made strides in our journey towards reconciliation. There have been innumerable learnings and some deeply reflective moments.

This year, with the full support of the Board and leadership, we made a strong investment in the nation's Referendum for a Voice to Parliament. We created what became one of the largest national projects in creating accessible information on the Voice for the people of Australia – we believed that access to information that was accurate and factual was key. Many of our employees, people we support and partners across Australia required information in accessible forms and so we worked in partnership with advocates, peer organisations, Reconciliation Australia, corporates and peak bodies to translate material in over 52 languages including First Nations languages. Together we created the first easy English version of the Uluru Statement of the Heart, endorsed by Professor Megan Wright.

Our organisation independently took a strong position in support of the Voice to Parliament – believing, as we still do, it is an important path to true self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The outcome of the Referendum weighed heavily, and this continues. We saw the substantial impact the outcome had on our colleagues and First Nations people in our care, community and society. We have listened deeply to the views of First Nations people across the country. Since the Referendum we have focussed intently on learning within our organisation and external reforms we know will have substantial impact now and in the long term. The past year has taught us that our sights must stretch beyond addressing barriers faced by First Peoples to supporting the wisdom and strength of First Nations leadership and decision making. We remain steadfast that our Reconciliation Action Plan, the idea of Reconciliation and the partnership we have with Reconciliation Australia are crucial in the courage and commitment we take forward.

## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

## Forging new ways towards self-determination – cultural governance and two way cultural governance

Power structures built over time can be hard to reshape and dismantle. We acknowledge that as a non-Indigenous organisation, the systems and governance we have established over 30 years need to change if we are to truly be good partners in reconciliation.

Over the past year, we took steps towards a new way of governing in our organisation, with our RAP providing a solid framework for integrating two-way and cultural governance. We established an Aboriginal-led Cultural Justice and Reform Unit and a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice and Partnership Team, and appointed a dedicated Director of Cultural Governance to drive our commitments. An interim Cultural Governance Group now acts

as a structured cultural facilitator, integrating feedback from broader cultural governance mechanisms including advisory groups and monthly yarning circles with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. To support our journey, we have engaged h the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute to help us define our framework and track our progress in cultural governance and two-way governance. Our Board have held in-depth discussions with senior Aboriginal leadership on two-way cultural governance and how the Board is key in supporting a new way of shared governance. Cultural immersion opportunities have continued to deepen board learning and understanding, and our RAP is being strengthened by a genuine belief we must be the change we wish to see.

### Our progress



\* A partial completion refers to completing elements of complex works that are perpetual or multifaceted.

## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

## Transformation through relationships

There are powerful partnerships we value greatly. Our relationship with SNAICC has extended beyond the parameters of transition to become a partnership of a shared, deeply held commitment to children. We value it more than we can describe. We have been able to observe and support SNAICC's efforts to go from strength to strength under the considered leadership of Catherine Liddle and her exceptional team. SNAICC have offered counsel and invaluable recommendations when we have encountered challenges, and they have been a tremendous positive force on opportunities.

We have worked hard to partner with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) across the country to guide our transition commitments and extended sector reform through partnerships like Allies for Children and the First Nations NGO Alliance.

We have engaged with First Nations Commissioners, research partners, advocacy partners and corporates. These relationships

are pivotal to the impact we are seeking to have and have offered us such rich learning and development with access to different ideas and things we can advance within our current RAP and beyond.

Our partners in the Allies for Children and The Possibility Project are incredibly invested in modelling change within their organisations towards reconciliation and crucially, addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. The establishment of the First Nations NGO Alliance on its own accord has sharpened the focus, strengthened capacity, and contributed to a more robust agenda for the Allies. We are navigating complex territory yet the humility of these organisations and their steadfast integrity will enable generational reform. We take this opportunity to sincerely thank every partner this year who has joined in our reconciliation journey. Together we go from strength to strength.





Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

## Cultural safety

We know we have continued work to do to create consistent and vibrant cultural safety in our organisation. This year we have implemented a range of initiatives that has resulted in stronger cultural capability with 98% of our staff who support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people completing training programs under our Cultural Capability Learning Framework.

We have advanced yarning circles that create safe spaces for First Nations staff to share what cultural safety actually looks like for them and what barriers there are in our organisation now to experiencing that. We are becoming better at facing what we don't do well and what we need to do to change.



## Creating a culturally safe workplace



## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

## Advocacy that works – establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner

Advocacy for change can take time and patience. Since 2022, Life Without Barriers has joined calls for a dedicated National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children with many organisations under the leadership of SNAICC, the National Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC, said, “Our sector has consistently said the most effective and immediate action Government can take to make children safe and protect their human rights is to stand up a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner, with the legislated power to investigate and make recommendations on issues impacting our children.”

Life Without Barriers threw its support behind the calls for the Commissioner and rallied partner organisations and sector colleagues to follow suit (see our [statement](#)).

A dedicated Commissioner for First Nations Children is essential to gather strong legislated power to tackle the over-representation of young people in out-of-home care and youth detention. In February 2024, Life Without Barriers applauded the appointment of a **dedicated Commissioner by the Federal Government**.

More than 22,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are now 11.5 times more likely to be placed in care than non-Indigenous children. The appointment of the National Commissioner is a step towards changing this trajectory. Our advocacy continues for dedicated Commissioners for First Nations Children in the remaining states.



Aboriginal Children’s Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates stand in a line with Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC. They are outside under a tree.



## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

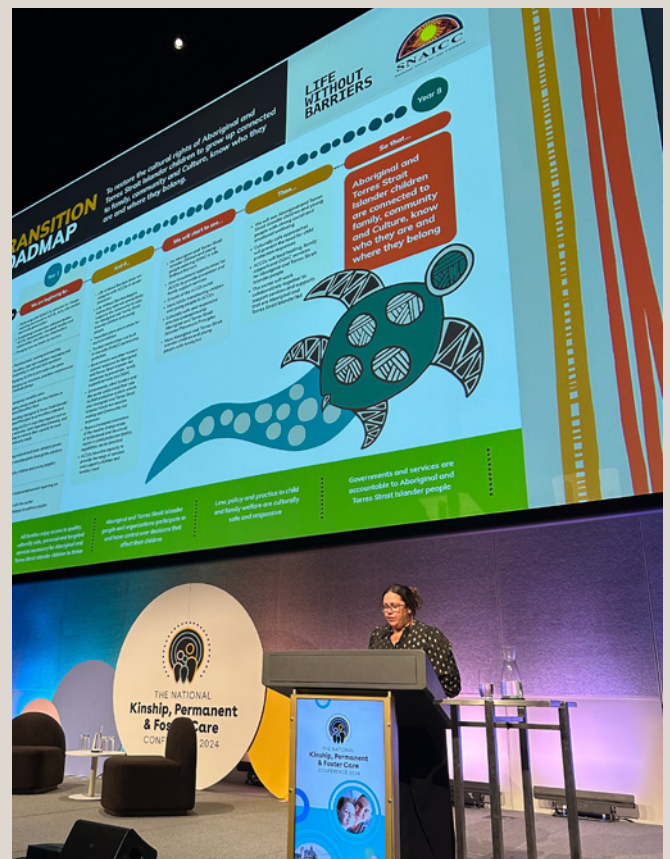
### Our Transition Roadmap

Our journey towards the full transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in our care continues. Over the past two years we have learned a great deal and become more understanding of the skill, knowledge and patience that is needed to transition children at a national scale.

Mid-year, we realised that a national transition team would enable us to really focus on the relationships with ACCOs, and we needed cultural expertise to help us on this journey. The National Transition team was established in May 2024, and the team are invaluable in the relationships being forged with community-controlled organisations and local communities and families. Our team have found it is taking roughly 6 months on average for a transition to occur if everything goes smoothly. At times we have made missteps, in some areas we have tried to go too fast and at other times we have not been as ready as we needed to be. What has been clear is that transparency in the relationships is a critical factor and we have taken this to heart.

The compass we are using to navigate our journey is the National Transition Roadmap. The **Transition Roadmap** outlines how we will transition our children and young people into the care of ACCOs, in partnership with SNAICC. The Roadmap pinpoints the steps for a successful transition, including co-designing transition plans with ACCOs, providing ACCOs with tools, training, and resources, and advocating for systemic

change. We are working to implement culturally safe practices, guided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principle and the voices of families, communities and children. Our goal is to support the growth of ACCOs, foster partnerships, and create structural changes within that lead to a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain connected to family, Culture, and community.



Shannon Mackie, Director NSW, discussing the Transition Roadmap at a conference.



## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan



The Transformation Project is Life Without Barriers' commitment to contribute towards reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by working in partnership with SNAICC- National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) and other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can grow in culture and with kin. Our transformation project is founded upon the Family Matters Building Blocks. These Building Blocks are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led framework for co-design, led by SNAICC and spearheaded by a group of eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from across the country.

[Click here for the audio description version of the Transformation Project.](#)





## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

### Lived Experience

## Bringing Hudson home

Life Without Barriers demonstrated a strong commitment to two-way cultural governance and partnership. Hudson's story reflects the voices of the child, his family and the advocating and collaborative practices between the carers, and both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and leadership at Life Without Barriers and the Department.

Hudson, a proud Adnyamanthanha boy, expressed, "I want to live with my family on my Yarta (homeland)." We listened. Initially, Hudson was placed with a non-Indigenous foster carer who was not a family member. This decision was made due to concerns about the lack of schools and services near his Auntie Lou's home.

To support Hudson's return home, Auntie Lou organised for therapists to visit him, arranged remote schooling so he could continue his education, and demonstrated the availability of nearby medical and dental services. She also explored hiring a governess to assist with his schooling.

To support Auntie Lou and Hudson, Life Without Barriers requested a meeting with the Department's leadership, the Principal Aboriginal Consultant, and the Aboriginal Lead Practitioner. We advocated that the current care arrangement did not align with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles, and that Hudson's family was both willing and capable of caring for him.



Hudson on his homeland with his Cultural Grandfather.

## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

## Lived Experience

**Bringing Hudson home** continued

“We expressed our concern for Hudson’s social and emotional wellbeing. He is truly happy and content when he is home on Country, surrounded by family, community, and immersed in his culture. However, he becomes distressed and withdrawn when placed with non-Aboriginal carers. He grieves for his family, Culture, and Country,” said Lisa Woods, Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice & Partnerships at Life Without Barriers.

Hudson shared, “My Aunty and Life Without Barriers told them all about my story. Even my carer spoke up for me to go home to my family. They showed pictures of me with my family and explained why I should be with them. They also talked about my rights and the laws.”

As a result of this advocacy, partnership, and collaborative practice, the Department agreed to re-evaluate their decision. Hudson is now living and thriving with his family on Country.

“I went home in March!” Hudson shared.

“So, I don’t have to cry anymore. I hugged Aunty so hard. I stayed with Aunty for a while, and she did a great job connecting me with culture, family and community.”

“Aunty showed me cultural sites, she taught me bush medicine, she showed me how to cook and prepare kangaroo tail in the fire,” Hudson said.

“Aunty showed me sites and taught me my Language, Yura Ngarwala! Adnyamathanha language, these are the things I didn’t know living in the city and away from my family, but now I’m learning more every day. Yura Muda! My culture, language and ways.”

“My grandparents, my kin, are able to look after me. So now I am living with them and I am so happy and having the best time being taught by my elders and standing strong and proud in my culture.”

“

**I want to live with my family on my Yarta (homeland).**

– Hudson

”

## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

## Returning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children home in South Australia

As part of our commitment to transition Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), the South Australian team worked in partnership with Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS), Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corporation (KWY) and InComPro Aboriginal Association to design a transition plan.

We met individually with each ACCO. All three were open to collaborate, so all further meetings have now been with all agencies together.

Underpinned by the principle of self-determination and acknowledging that the ACCOs hold the knowledge and wisdom to know what is best for their children, the agencies worked to build mutual trust and respect, and to develop an authentic partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at the centre. The proposed approach will create greater opportunities for people's choice through the expansion of ACCOs in the out-of-home care sector.

Through the partnership, we have been able to identify broader opportunities to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. One of the examples of this includes the decision to transfer a regional Stronger Families Stronger Communities (early intervention) contract in regional South Australia to an ACCO in recognition that the predominantly Aboriginal families serviced by this program would be better supported through an Aboriginal specific service.



An Aboriginal child looks directly at the camera.

“

The partnership approach has been a great example of best practice between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies working together to achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal children.

– Dan Mitchell, Acting Chief Executive Aboriginal Family Support Services.

”





## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

### Celebrating Culture

We recognised and celebrated culture in many ways during the 2023-2024 financial year, including NAIDOC Week 'For Our Elders', Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week 'Now More Than Ever'. Teams from each state and territory hosted, attended, participated in or assisted people we support in attending a variety of events for each significant date, including marches, breakfasts, community events, webinars, storytelling and cultural walks.



Our South Australian team during National Reconciliation Week.



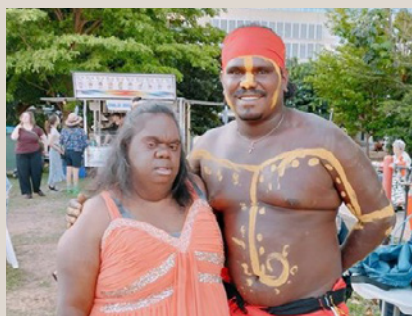
Two Life Without Barriers staff standing behind a cutout with NAIDOC23 theme, For Our Elders.



Uncle Russel telling stories at our Child, Youth and Family team's cultural training.



Our staff at Wanarinyinmanha National Reconciliation Week Walk WA.



Supporting people to attend the Northern Land Council's 50th Year celebrations.



Children's cultural activities at the NAIDOC Week 2023 celebrations in Logan.





## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

# Purposeful partnerships

## Allies for Children

It has been a busy year for Allies for Children. The collaboration established its four key policy areas and a work plan to advance commitments under Policy Priority 1 – addressing the over-representation of First Nations children in care. Allies for Children is a partnership of several organisations, including Life Without Barriers, Act for Kids, Barnardos, OzChild, The Benevolent Society, Key Assets and Mackillop Family Services.

## Allies Policy Priorities

1. Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in care.
2. Advocacy to raise the age of criminal responsibility for children.
3. Workforce Development.
4. Child protection reform through early intervention and investment.

Over the year, the Allies for Children has engaged in consultation with the newly established First Nations non-government organisation Alliance (First Nations NGO Alliance) to explore and understand how partners can make changes in their organisations to enable two-way cultural governance and ensure the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples informs activities. Allies also invested in a range of advocacy activities, including a united public commitment for all founding partners to transition Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Children in care to community control. Allies for Children partnered with SNAICC, the National Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, to advocate for the establishment of a dedicated National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children, advocacy which paid off when the Federal Government announced the establishment in February 2024.

The Allies also established a thriving national resource hub to share learnings, research and insights, free for the Child Youth and Family Sector and undertook several submissions on various topics, including online safety for children, Close the Gap targets and State budget submissions.

**Learn more about the Allies for Children at [www.alliesforchildren.org.au](http://www.alliesforchildren.org.au)**



From left to right: Dierdre Cheers, CEO Barnardos Australia; Dr Katrina Lines, CEO Act 4 Kids; Maree Walk, Chair Allies for Children; Kelly Bruce, Executive Director, The Benevolent Society delegate of CEO ; Dr Lisa Griffiths, CEO OzChild; Dr Robyn Miller, CEO Mackillop; Claire Robbs, CE Life Without Barriers; Dr Dianne Jackson, CEO Key Assets.



## Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

## Purposeful partnerships

### The Possibility Partnership

The Possibility Partnership was formed by a group of motivated CEOs who believe that by challenging the design of traditional community services systems through collaboration, we can ignite long-term change for people and communities across Australia – disrupting engrained and long-standing social justice issues on the way. Life Without Barriers is a founding partner of The Possibility Partnership, and this year, the partnership went from strength to strength. A central theme of the partnership is to learn from lived experience and ensure communities can have influence and control over the sources people need and how they experience them. Over the year, we established our focus areas and cross-organisational working groups, driven by learning from lived experience.

The Possibility Partnership priorities:

- Working on ourselves – we know we need to model the change we are striving to see realised in our own organisations first.
- Meeting in the middle – we are openly learning from great examples of communities that are taking control of their own futures, where organisations and community members are coming together and working in different ways to put people first.
- Learning together – we can achieve more than we can alone, and by sharing our learnings, we can extend shared knowledge and collective wisdom for social change.

**Learn more about our collaboration here**  
[www.thepossibilitypartnership.org.au](http://www.thepossibilitypartnership.org.au)



This picture was taken at the Possibility Partnership meeting in Taree, where opportunities to work together and improve human systems were discussed.

### Founding and contributing members

54 reasons

Brotherhood of St Laurence  
Working for an Australia free of poverty

foyerfoundation

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

MISSION  
AUSTRALIA

benevolent  
SOCIETY

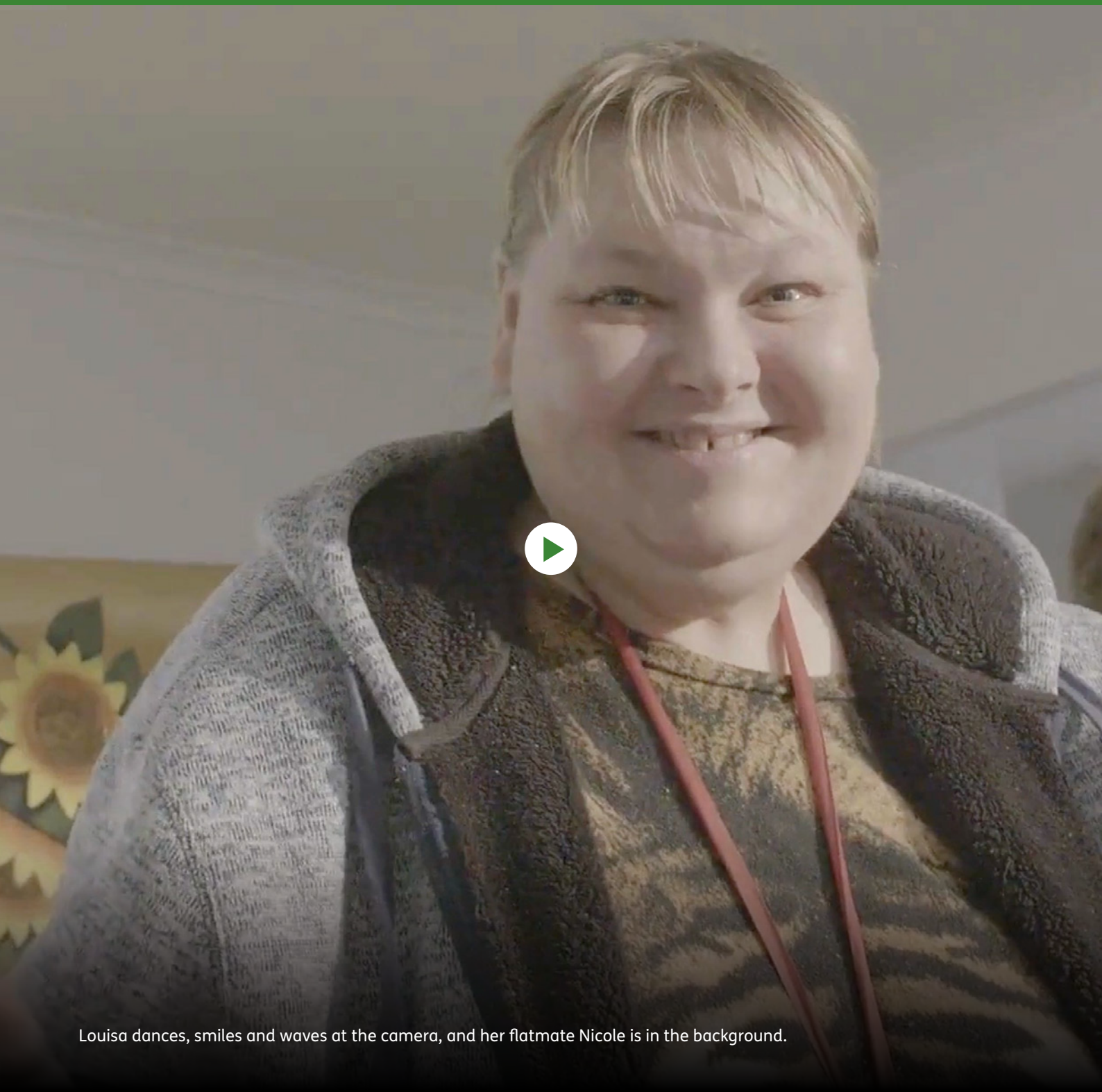
The Smith  
Family  
Learn today, change tomorrow.

Uniting

Wesley  
MISSION



# Governance



Louisa dances, smiles and waves at the camera, and her flatmate Nicole is in the background.

Governance

Financial snapshot

Audited Financial Statements for the year ending 30 June 2024

This financial year, we achieved a modest surplus in a challenging economic environment. This included prudent cost management and the establishment of a financially resilient framework for the organisation. In the next financial year, we will continue to embed and operationalise our model for financial resilience, ensuring that we can continue to deliver outstanding services to the people we support, sustainably and for the long-term. This model will enable us to improve the experiences of people who use our services, carers and staff through uplifting our technology infrastructure and investing in items aligned to our strategy and values.

2-year summary \$'000	2023-2024 \$'000	2022-2023 \$'000
Revenue and Expenditure		
Total Revenue and other income	845,173	804,853
Total Expenditure	844,780	801,132
Operating (Deficit)/ Surplus	1,635	3,721

Services offered	Program funding 24
Disability	452,077
Child, Youth and Family	283,022
Aged Care (home and community)	54,201
Mental Health, Youth Justice, Homelessness, and Refugee and Asylum Seeker services	40,561
Other income	15,312
Total	845,173

Assets and Liabilities		
Total Assets	273,150	259,001
Total Liabilities	223,521	214,583
Net Assets	49,629	44,418

Direct investment  
of funds into  
service delivery  
**89%**

Total Revenue and  
other income  
**\$845,173,000**



## Governance

## Board Members



**Greg Ridder**  
**Chair of the Board**

Special Responsibilities:

- Member of the Finance and Audit Committee
- Member of the Remuneration, Nomination and Succession Committee
- Member of the Risk Management Committee
- Member of the Practice Governance Committee
- Member of the Board Technology Advisory Group



**Cathy Taylor**  
**Director**

Special Responsibilities:

- Chair of the Practice Governance Committee
- Member of the Risk Management Committee



**Dr Elizabeth McEntyre**  
**Director**

Special Responsibilities:

- Member of the Practice Governance Committee



**Dr Helen Szoke AO**  
**Director**

Special Responsibilities:

- Chair of the Risk Management Committee
- Member of the Remuneration, Nomination and Succession Committee



**Karen Knight**  
**Director**

Special Responsibilities:

- Member of the Practice Governance Committee
- Member of the Board Technology Advisory Group



**Natalie Walker**  
**Director**

Special Responsibilities:

- Chair of the Remuneration, Nomination and Succession Committee
- Member of the Finance and Audit Committee
- Member of the Board Technology Advisory Group



**Rajiv Viswanathan**  
**Director**

Special Responsibilities:

- Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee
- Member of the Risk Management Committee



**Shannon Tobolov**  
**Director**

Special Responsibilities:

- Chair of the Board Technology Advisory Group
- Member of the Risk Management Committee
- Member of the Practice Governance Committee

## Governance

## Executive Team



**Claire Robbs**  
Chief Executive



**Emma Bennison**  
Chief Innovation Officer



**Paula Head**  
Chief Strategy and  
Governance Officer



**Leanne Johnson**  
Deputy Chief Executive,  
Disability and Mental  
Health



**Carly Jacobitz**  
A/Deputy Chief Executive,  
Child, Youth and Family



**Jeevani Korathota**  
General Counsel



**Mark Leigh**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Servena McIntyre**  
Chief Transformation  
Officer, Cultural Justice  
& Reform Unit



**Mary McKinnon**  
Chief Risk and Assurance  
Officer



**Michael Robinson**  
Deputy Chief Executive,  
Emerging Business



**Brad Swan**  
Executive Director of  
Strategy and Engagement



## Paying our respects

We wish to acknowledge the lives of people in our community who have passed away this year. We extend our sympathy and respect to their family, friends and loved ones.

**LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS**

# Lived Experience Guides Us

Annual Report 2023-24

In all we do, Life Without Barriers recognises the human rights of each and every person we support.



A woman and a girl are walking together on a pier while a boy looks down at the water.