

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

Annual Report 2024-25

30
years



Acknowledgement of Country

Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this country and their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures and customs, and to their Elders, past and present, and the continuation of knowledge and culture.



Then. Now. Next.

Celebrating 30 years of partnering with people to change lives for the better, guided by our values of respect, responsiveness, courage, imagination and relationships.



Welcome

Celebrating 30 years. A message from our Chief Executive and Chair. Strategy 2025 and its impact.

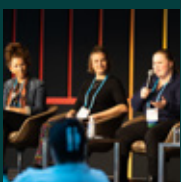
[> See page 4](#)



Delivering Great Services

How we delivered on our most important commitment to people with disability and mental health needs, children, young people and families, refugees and asylum seekers, people impacted by forced marriages and older Australians.

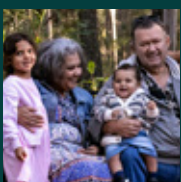
[> See page 12](#)



Influencing Systemic Change

Our partnerships and progress towards dismantling barriers faced by the communities in which we live and work.

[> See page 41](#)



Impact for Future Generations

How we make the right decisions now that have the greatest impact for generations now and in the future, including upholding the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

[> See page 54](#)



Governance

Our Board, Executive team and financial snapshot.

[> See page 71](#)



Jason, or [‘Tex’ as he prefers to be called](#), recently starred in our ‘This is Me’ campaign sharing what he loves: playing music.

Welcome

30 Years of Life Without Barriers

Life Without Barriers began in 1995 around a Newcastle pub table, when community members and families with lived experience of disability asked a simple but radical question: what if we said yes to working together to remove barriers that prevent people from living with dignity, choice, and opportunity? This purpose transformed us from a grassroots disruptor into a national, purpose-led collective. Our local beginnings keep community at the heart of everything we do, allowing us to connect, act, and partner at scale.

Over thirty years, people have joined in our values and beliefs nationwide. Relationships have and continue to come first with every person

we support and the communities and systems that shape their lives. Most importantly though, we stay deeply committed to hearing, elevating, and learning from the voices of people with lived experience so they may continue to shape our services the way they have from the beginning. We will continue to ensure housing, education, employment, and belonging are within reach for all.

As we celebrate this 30 year milestone, we recommit to what lies ahead. Life Without Barriers is more than a name. It’s a call to action that will define our next thirty years, just as it has our first.

Click on the links to learn more about our [history](#) and [stories of our beginnings](#).

30 Years of Life Without Barriers



Watch our highlights from the last 30 years as we reflect on then, now and next.



Greg Ridder
Chair



Claire Robbs
Chief Executive

CEO and Chair Message

Thirty years of relationships and service to the people of Australia.

We dedicate this Annual Report to the thousands of people, carers, staff and communities whose journey we have been a part of and contributed to our organisation and journey over the past 30 years.

From our earliest days, when a small group of people came together in Newcastle to challenge barriers in the local community to the national organisation we are today, our story has always been about people.

In this report, we reflect on our journey to now, the impact achieved under our Strategy 2025 and the incredible stories we have witnessed over the year. Strategy 2025 has guided us through a period of transformation, incredible relationships and deep listening and learning.

It emerged as the pandemic was dominating our nation and offered us a strong compass to continue to think boldly about the essential nature of our organisation and our responsibility for positive social change.

As we acknowledge and celebrate the past and present, we have also invested time this year in the future. Australia has, and continues to, navigate complex social and environmental challenges occurring in parallel with the explosion of digitisation and Artificial Intelligence. All these factors have an impact on the communities we serve. The past thirty years have given us the experience and knowledge we need to be led by the same values that have carried us this far—relationships, imagination, courage, responsiveness, and respect. Together, our name will continue to be our calling for the future.

Fireflies 30 years performance



The Fireflies dedicated this performance to celebrate Life Without Barriers' 30 years. The band formed at our historic Broadmeadows Centre and can often be found busking at Hunter Street or at Nobbys Beach in Newcastle.



From left to right: Chairman (previous) Terry Lawler, LWB employees & carers at the 2019 Reconciliation March, Chairman Mike Chapman, Governor-General Sir William Deane – Centre Opening (1997); Life Without Barriers Senior Leadership Team 2006; Life Theatre group performing at Centre Opening (1997); Return to Country – Land, Sea and Sky Stretch RAP (2016); 2014 National Carer Awards winners; one of the people we support receiving the COVID-19 vaccine (2021).

Thank you

As we reflect on 30 years of service and partnerships, we acknowledge everyone who has been a part of our journey.

To all the people and their loved ones who allowed us into their lives, trusted us to support them and who we learnt from, our deepest gratitude. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to all the employees, carers, volunteers, sector partners, government colleagues, funders and sponsors who have walked alongside us: thank you.



A man in a blue button-up shirt resting his hand on a chair, smiling.

Strategy 2025

Our Strategy 2025 was designed to ignite thinking and ask the questions we can solve together. It remains progressive, hopeful and offered us a platform for significant impact as an organisation for tens of thousands of people across Australia.

Our commitments:

Deliver great services – truly knowing and appreciating each person we have a relationship with, led by our values, and honouring our commitments.

Influence systemic barriers – partnering in positive and constructive discussions to improve the systems that impact people across a range of circumstances and communities in which we live and work.

Impact for future generations – challenging ourselves on the decisions we make and the impact they have for generations now and into the future.

Strategy 2025 Impacts

Deliver Great Services

Our commitment to delivering great services was reflected in the deepening of trusted relationships with the people and communities we support.

Foundational work in our Lived Experience strategy has guided service design and delivery and supported the strengthening of our service quality. We established key advisory groups including the National Youth Advisory Group, Carer Advisory Group, Aged Care Client Advisory Body and Quality Care Advisory Body, and local governance groups across disability and mental health service. We have laid the foundations to implement other innovative and progressive partnership approaches that will elevate lived expertise, help shape how we work, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for the people and communities we support.

We have made significant strides in improving the quality, reach, and responsiveness of our services. Our Aged Care services strengthened significantly, enabling older Australians to live with dignity at home for longer, supported by strong engagement in our Aged Care Client Voice Survey. Feedback from our Aged Care clients was overwhelmingly positive, with 88.5% saying they felt treated with dignity and respect. Mental health services received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with increased community support in key regions.

Through our partnership with La Trobe University, we delivered Active Support training across our workforce, enhancing choice and engagement for people with disability. When we asked people with a disability we support about their experience of our services, 91% told us they feel respected all or most of the time and 93% feel safe all the time.

Our Carer Strategy introduced wraparound supports and more child- and carer-centric experiences, encouraging more Australians to take on caring roles.

We led the sector in emergency preparedness with the development of a National Emergency Management Approach, shaped by learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Practice Governance Framework and Impact Measurement Framework were developed to ensure consistent, evidence-informed practice across all services. Our commitment to quality and safety was recognised through national NDIS accreditation and CARE Certification across all states and territories.

We also advanced digital transformation through our Technology Roadmap, enabling more responsive and person-centred service delivery.

Influence Systemic Barriers

We took bold steps to influence systemic barriers that prevent equitable access and outcomes, partnering in constructive dialogue and driving change where it was needed most.

Our Accessibility and Inclusion Employment Plan (AIEP) exceeded its target, with over 15% of our staff identifying as living with disability by 2025. We invested in policy areas that disrupt employment barriers, including the Disability Employment Catalyst, and supported the careers of 70 young jobseekers with disability through training, volunteering, and work experience. We championed policy innovation through initiatives like the Disability Employment Catalyst, disrupting entrenched barriers to employment.

To empower choice and control, we continued the separation of disability housing and support services, allowing people to make independent decisions about their living arrangements.

Strategy 2025 Impacts (continued)

We established a dedicated unit to improve educational outcomes for children in out-of-home care. Today, over 90% of our compulsory school-age children are enrolled in school, and more than 80% are engaged in early education and learning.

We provided more support for refugees and asylum seekers nationally. This year alone, over 300 asylum seekers found jobs and stable homes, and 295 culturally sensitive book packs were distributed to children to support literacy and learning. We launched a new Forced Marriage Support Program, which has already supported people from over 27 countries and prevented forced marriages for half of those supported.

We continued to strengthen alliances and leadership in key collaborations such as the A20, CYF CEO Alliance, Allies for Children and The Possibility Partnership, amplifying our influence on national policy and sector reform.

Impact for Future Generations

Our work is grounded in a long-term vision for generational change. Our commitment to future generations has been woven into every part of our work.

Our Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) marked a significant milestone in our reconciliation journey, embedding cultural safety and accountability across our organisation. As part of our Elevate RAP, we began the

progressive transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), with a commitment to complete this transition by 2031.

We launched our Environmental Sustainability and Climate Justice Statement, reinforcing our responsibility to future generations and embedding sustainability into our operations and decision-making. Our fleet began transitioning to hybrid vehicles, reflecting our commitment to sustainable operations.

Our organisational culture and values continued to be embedded across all levels, ensuring they are lived and felt in every interaction. Governance structures were strengthened to remain contemporary, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of the people and communities we serve.

Looking forward

As we design the next strategy, the views and leadership of people with lived experience will be central to the design of how we shape our services, governance, workforce, opportunities and partnerships. We will strengthen efforts to measure and demonstrate our impact to continue to be compelling. A key feature will be innovation, to propel us forwards into new solutions, populations and places where we can bring value.

Delivering Great Services



LingLu with her community rehab support worker Alicia. [LingLu speaks her story](#) from the heart; see our Mental Health Services section.

Delivering great services means understanding and responding to each person trusting us into their lives. By listening, adapting, and being led by our values, we've supported people to live with dignity and choice.

Delivering Great Services



Care leavers Tara, left, and Toby, spoke with Deputy Chief Executive for Child, Youth and Family Carly Jacobitz about bringing lived experience into the work that we do in Child, Youth and Family. [Watch their video](#) in the Influencing Systemic Barriers section of this Annual Report.

Child, Youth and Family Services

Our dedication to making a positive difference in the lives of children, young people, and families remains unchanged. Listening to and supporting children, young people and families is the cornerstone of our approach, with over 6,000 children and young people, and their families, across Australia.

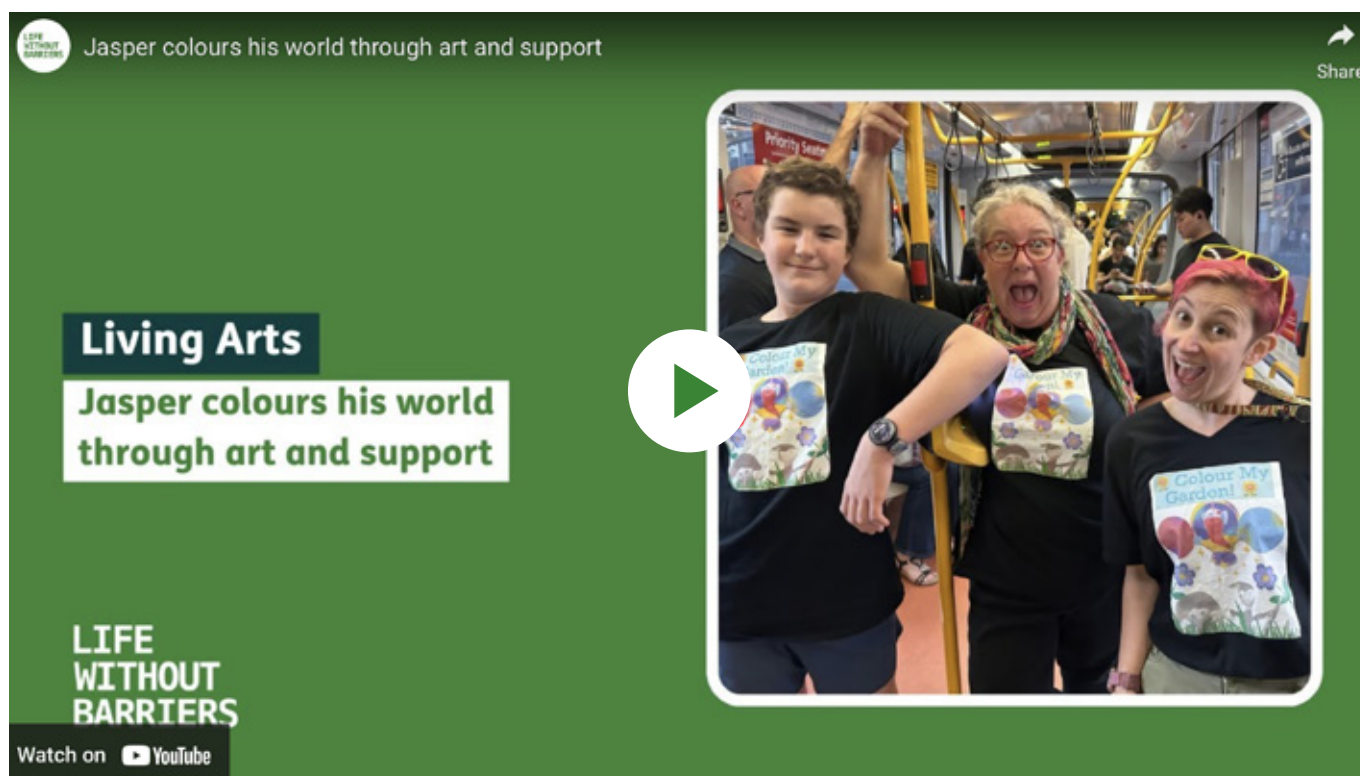
Key milestones:

- We established the **National Youth Advisory Group** led by young people with experience in out-of-home care
- We introduced our **Carer Strategy 2025–2026** to value and strengthen our carers nationwide.
- We launched **MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™** in WA to support carers and children through stronger community connections.
- Our commitment to evidence-based, trauma-informed care was recognised with **CARE accreditation** in Victoria.

Delivering Great Services

Child, Youth and Family Services

Jasper's Story



Jasper, 13, attends Life Without Barriers Living Arts program. His short animation film, *Colour My Garden*, was selected for SA Youth Week and was screened at Adelaide Festival Centre in April. In this video, he speaks about the power of art and how Living Arts exposed him to new possibilities in life. The background music in this video, the original work of Jasper and Living Arts Resident Artist Phi, was created for the film.

Delivering Great Services

Child, Youth and Family Services

Bringing Ben back home to family

Being with and connected to family is so important for children and young people. Wiradjuri young man, Ben, entered care in 2020 and had moved between places and people. What helped Ben feel seen and supported through this time was the way people showed up for him – from teachers, his Life Without Barriers team, family members to community.

This year, a connection to his late father's side of the family was confirmed. Relatives who had not known he existed welcomed him with open arms. Soon Ben met his paternal grandmother, wider extended family and discovered a younger brother. Growing up with five sisters, this new connection meant a lot.

Ben's mother remains central to Ben's life. Her support for Ben's relationships on both sides of his family made these connections possible.

Ben now lives with his grandmother, her partner and two aunties. Their home is full of warmth and support, and Ben is quickly finding his place among them. He is getting closer to his younger brother, who visits often during school holidays.



An image of a man and woman smiling.

Delivering Great Services

Child, Youth and Family Services

In a school that sees his worth, Nate's future now looks very different

Nate is neurodiverse and his repeated suspensions throughout his early schooling disrupted his learning and deeply eroded his confidence. His school was struggling to understand him, and Nate disengaged further.

Nate and his support network, led by his Education Consultant, recognised the need for a different approach and explored alternative pathways. With the proper advocacy and guidance, Nate transitioned to a new educational setting. This environment, designed to nurture curiosity, celebrate difference, and foster deep engagement in STEM, proved to be a turning point.

At his new school, Nate found not only academic opportunity – but he also found his tribe. Surrounded by peers and educators who valued his unique perspective and learning style, Nate began to thrive. His confidence returned, his passion for learning reignited, and he is now on track to complete Year 12 with aspirations of pursuing a career in engineering.

Among people who saw his potential where others saw problems, Nate has become the best version of himself. His experience highlights why we champion inclusive education, guided by the needs and strengths of each learner.



A group of young people walking on the grounds of the University of Sydney.



Two young people stand on the grounds of the University of Sydney.

Making a difference to children, young people and their families

- Over 90% of our compulsory school-age children enrolled in school and over 80% of children in Early Education and Learning.
- Our National After-Hours Service received over 120,000 calls, ensuring children, young people, carers and staff could rely on support at any time, every day.

Delivering Great Services

Child, Youth and Family Services

Wrapping support around children, families and carers

Children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) and carers consistently tell us that having meaningful relationships and high-quality support makes a difference in their lives. We are proactively innovating, finding better ways to wrap support around children, families and carers.

Our Carer Strategy 2025–26, informed by carers and young people in care, outlines ways to encourage more people to become carers and to provide exceptional support for carers to increase family-based care options.

Through our [Voices of Innovation project](#), we asked people with lived experience, carers, parents, staff and sector partners how we might strengthen family based care options and empower young people.

MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ links foster and kinship carers in supportive ‘constellations’ – extended family-like communities that support, develop and retain quality carers to meet the needs of children and young people. Launching in WA, we also have constellations in SA and support external constellations in Victoria.

Care 2 Thrive, a specialised foster care option for children with complex needs, pairs trained carers with intensive wrap-around supports and currently assists 23 children and young people in four states.



[Gareth and Andi](#) found that having good support enables them to provide a home where their whole family thrive.

MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ carer experiences



Carers have responded with resounding optimism for MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™. Here some constellation members speak about how the program has helped them feel supported and built communities that care for each other. MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ launched in WA in November 2024.

Delivering Great Services**Child, Youth and Family Services**

Andrew's story

Andrew was receiving YouthARCH mental health support at school in rural Tasmania. A sudden traumatic event required Andrew and his brother to relocate to a different region, with almost no support networks or family. Andrew's YouthARCH team continued supporting him, his sibling, and carer until he transitioned to the iConnect community mental health program. This much-needed stability anchored Andrew as he adjusted to a new home, carer, school, and clinical and child safety services.

Later, support from iConnect and Child Youth Mental Health Services helped Andrew build resilience and coping skills. Andrew enjoys the community aspect of iConnect, saying, "I like being able to get out and do things, not just sit in a room and talk." His carer praised the program as "the best thing that's happened to Andrew since being in my care." She said, "He is not frightened to talk about his troubles now."

A year on, Andrew, now 16, is thriving at home and school. He has made close friends and is working towards a future in mechanics or engineering.

Andrew is one of the 149 young people we supported through our YouthArch, Synergy and iConnect mental health services this year.



A sunset in rural Tasmania.

Delivering Great Services

Child, Youth and Family Services

Matilda's story: "I'm doing this for Jade and for myself."

Our Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Program supports people through recovery and in doing so, helps strengthen families – often walking alongside parents in their reunification journey.

When Matilda first engaged our service, she was navigating domestic violence, cannabis use, and the uncertainty of new motherhood. With her daughter Jade just weeks old and Child Protection involvement, Matilda courageously left an unhealthy relationship and focused on building a safer, more stable life.

Determined to change, Matilda gave up cannabis and developed a relapse prevention plan with our support. Working with her counsellor, she identified triggers and replaced them with healthy routines—walking, cleaning, and spending time with supportive people.

Matilda's family relationships improved, and she obtained her Ps, giving her greater freedom and confidence. She is exploring career pathways including a diesel mechanic apprenticeship. Most significantly, Matilda has been reunited with Aria. "Now, I get to be there for her every day, and I'm doing everything I can to make sure she feels safe and loved." As Matilda continues to build a bright future for Jade and herself, she is backed by ongoing support from her AOD team.



Matilda in a library with her daughter Jade on her lap.

- This year, our AOD programs across metro and regional South Australia supported over 3,000 people.
- The *Next Steps* Assertive Outreach program achieved a 90 per cent reduction in substance use, a 40 per cent drop in emergency department visits and won Runner-Up in SANDAS Awards' First Nations and Treatment Excellence.
- AOD education workshops taught harm minimisation and recovery-focused practices to our and the SA Department for Child Protection staff.

Delivering Great Services



Stephen gained confidence and more control over his life with support from his Case Worker, Heidi. [Read Stephen's story and watch his video here.](#)

Mental Health Services

Over the past year, demand for mental health services at Life Without Barriers has continued to grow. By listening to and learning from people with lived experience, we have strengthened the way our services are designed, delivered, and evaluated – ensuring our supports are grounded in compassion, trust, and human connection.

Key highlights:

- **Enhanced practice quality** through a tailored national induction and learning program aligned with the RELATE framework, supported by a Mental Health Community of Practice to share knowledge and expertise across the organisation.
- **Developed mental health practice guides** that integrate our RELATE National Mental Health Framework with new accreditation standards, while embedding our lived experience philosophy at the core of practice.
- **Advanced practice innovation** by refining assessment and planning tools, strengthening exit and transition planning, and designing a national evaluation framework grounded in evidence-based, fit-for-purpose mental health tools.
- **Reinvigorated the Mental Health Lived Experience Working Group**, amplifying voices of lived experience and strengthening their influence across our workforce.
- **Strengthened governance and reporting structures** for mental health programs, with a strong focus on safety and dedicated specialist expertise.
- **Expanded our lived experience workforce**, embedding new roles supported by clear policy guidelines and career pathways to ensure sustainability and growth.
- **Launched the first national client voice survey for mental health services**, providing an important platform for the voices of people we support to guide service design and improvement.

Delivering Great Services

Mental Health Services

Lived experience in mental health

Our mental health services are guided by a simple principle: the people we support know best what recovery and wellbeing mean in their own lives. This year, we strengthened our Lived Experience Working Group to ensure those perspectives continue to shape our services and keep recovery-oriented practice at the heart of everything we do.

Lee appreciated being involved in shaping her support and her team's responsive approach, saying, "They are understanding if they trigger an emotional response when discussing sensitive topics or seeking to address them. They ask my opinion and feedback as well." Stories like Lee's are echoed across our services and reflected in the overwhelmingly positive results of this year's mental health client voice survey. The results showed that when lived experience shapes service design, supports are more responsive, effective and truly centred on people's needs and choices.

At Ngatti House in Western Australia and through our outreach psychosocial programs in South Australia, participants worked alongside staff to review activities and improve feedback processes. Their contributions led to meaningful program changes, encouraged consistent engagement, and strengthened a culture of listening and responding – showing the transformative power of lived experience in shaping our mental health supports.

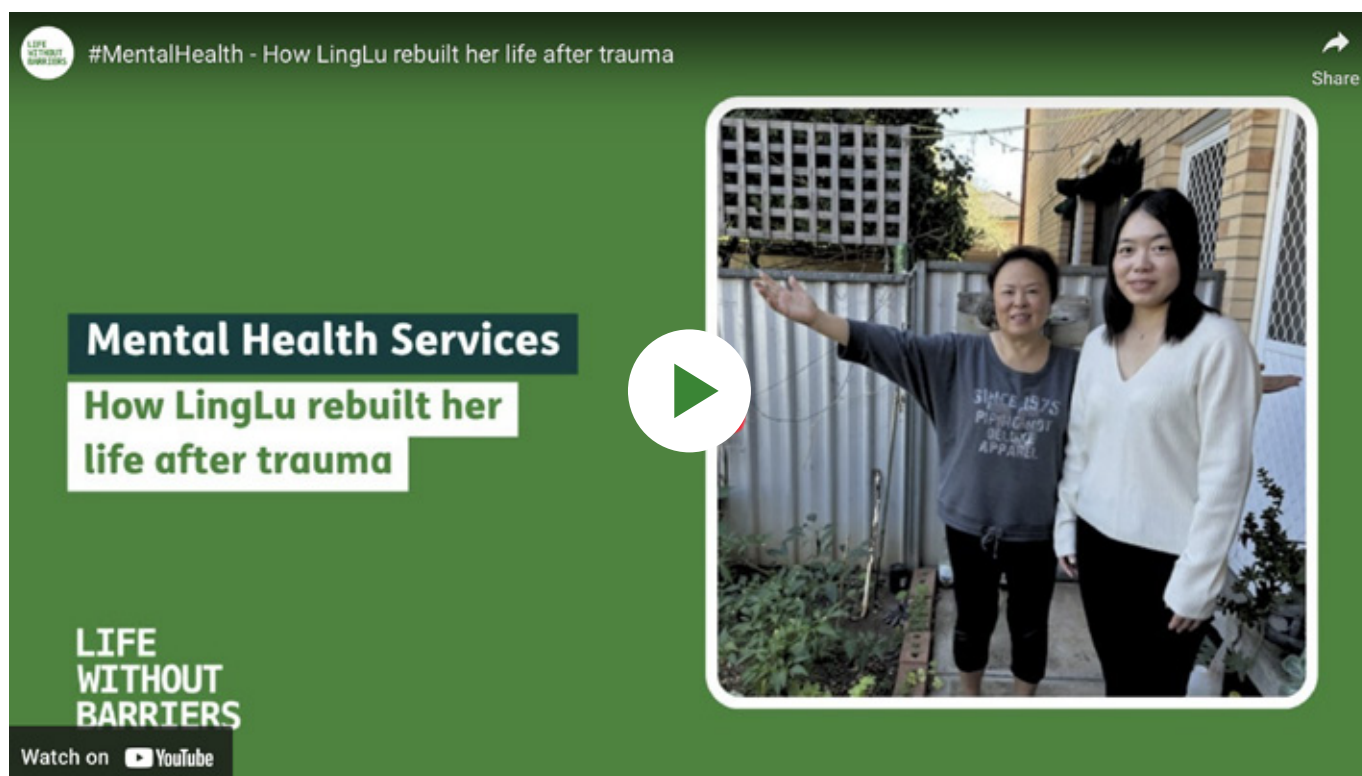
Our peer support team draw on their own lived experience and play a unique role in supporting people's recovery journey. [Peer Support Worker Ashleigh](#) advocates to ensure the voice of the person supported remains at the centre, saying, "We need to follow the lead of the person at the heart of it all."

Through these efforts, recovery-oriented care is more than just a principle, it is sharing power, sharing decisions and authentic demonstrations of centring lived expertise.

Delivering Great Services

Mental Health Services

LingLu's Story



LingLu rebuilds her life after trauma and values Life Without Barriers' confidential and professional support. In this video, she bravely shares her story. (Note: If the video's captions are obscured, please ensure your mouse/pointer is not on the video.)

Delivering Great Services

Mental Health Services

Key insights

What people told us: Positive experiences in mental health support

Our first national Client Voice Survey in Mental Health highlighted strong outcomes for the people we support.

- 92 per cent said they would recommend Life Without Barriers, and more than eight in ten reported feeling happy.
- 97 per cent of people told us they feel respected, and 95 per cent said they feel safe all the time.
- Almost everyone also reported that their privacy is respected (95 per cent) and that services are improving their lives in ways that matter to them (91 per cent).
- The survey also showed that 94 per cent of people said staff talk about their rights in ways they understand and 86 per cent reported consistent connection.

We recognise extremely high satisfaction ratings should be treated with caution, as they often reflect the power dynamics and stigma felt by the people receiving services. This can lead people who rely on services to report gratitude instead of honesty. We are addressing this by improving survey design, strengthening feedback culture, and applying evidence-based practices that make it safer for people to speak truthfully about their experiences.

Delivering Great Services



Damien, Jules and Joey, who choose our disability support services, took part in our recent video and photoshoot.

Disability Services

This year, around 6,460 people with disability chose Life Without Barriers as their trusted partner in support. The purpose that first inspired our organisation 30 years ago still guides us today and is embedded in our Strategy 2025, where we remain focused on delivering high-quality services that truly reflect the aspirations of the people we support.

One story that shows this in action is of Norfolk Island artist Sacha, who shaped her creative future by developing her own unique layered-art style, designing a shopfront, and turning her passion into a source of income, with support from Life Without Barriers.

Key highlights:

- **People shaped our services through partnerships.**
Through peer worker programs, co-design initiatives, and feedback from client voice surveys, people with disability played a central role in guiding our Rights education, policies, and practice.

- **People experienced improved, more personalised support through the Advancing Active Support Plan.**
Delivered in partnership with La Trobe University, this initiative fosters deeper engagement, strengthens relationships, and enhances quality of life for the people we support.
- **People benefited from safer, higher-quality services.**
We strengthened safety and quality practices and improved our responses to issues, creating systems that are safer, more responsive, and better tailored to the needs of the people we support.
- **People were supported by a skilled and values driven workforce.**
Our people and values set us apart. We have fostered a transparent and innovative culture that attracts, supports and retains exceptional staff.

Delivering Great Services

Disability Services

Dianne's story: Connection through advocacy

Dianne is vibrant, nurturing, and known for her loving personality. She has lived in care since she was four, a time when disability services were very different. Since the introduction of the NDIS and supported independent living services, Dianne has embraced her independence, enjoyed meaningful friendships, and been actively involved in her community.

Yet there was one missing piece in her active life – connection with her family. Patricia, Dianne's Life Without Barriers House Manager, understood how deeply Dianne wanted to reconnect. Guided by compassion and empathy, Patricia reached out to Dianne's sister, Eyleen. Dianne's family did not know where she was, and Eyleen was overjoyed to learn her sister was safe and well.

Within days, Dianne and her family were speaking regularly for the first time in nearly 30 years. A reunion was arranged, and Dianne joyfully reunited with her sisters and extended family, recognising grown nephews and nieces she had last seen as toddlers.

Since then, Dianne has flourished with renewed energy, confidence, and purpose. She looks forward to hosting her family, sharing stories, and creating new memories together.

Dianne's journey highlights the transformational power of advocacy and relationships – and why we are committed to providing support that truly makes a difference in people's lives.



Dianne at the reunion, sitting with her family member.



Dianne with her baby doll, Anna.

Delivering Great Services

Disability Services

Every moment has potential – Supporting meaningful lives through Active Support

For more than 80 per cent of the people we support with an intellectual disability, we know that using Active Support is the single greatest influence on improving their quality of life.

We have been laying the foundations for this through frontline practice leadership training, monthly webinars, and celebrating stories of the power of everyday engagement through team meetings, forums and newsletters.

By launching our Advancing Active Support Plan in May, we strengthened our partnership with Professor Chris Bigby and the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University. Together, we are working towards our vision of making Active Support part of everything we do, so the people we support can live engaged, meaningful, and independent lives.

Active Support is most powerful when it moves beyond training and becomes part of everyday practice. In Toowoomba, Disability Support Leader Carrie has done exactly that, embedding the Active Support Conversation Cards into her team's daily routines. Her intentional approach is helping support workers focus on meaningful engagement, choice, and quality of life, while fostering collaboration, reflection, and continuous improvement.

66

We know piecemeal training doesn't work, which means there is much that will be learned over time from Life Without Barriers' comprehensive whole of organisation approach to embedding Active Support and Frontline Practice Leadership.

Professor Chris Bigby

99



When housemates at Ludstone Street got more involved around the kitchen, mealtimes became some of the best times of the day.



Supported to take greater control of her life, this year Nicolette planned her holiday from start to finish herself.



Dom turned his passion for gardening into a thriving local business, with the right amount of support from his team to help him succeed.

Delivering Great Services

Disability Services

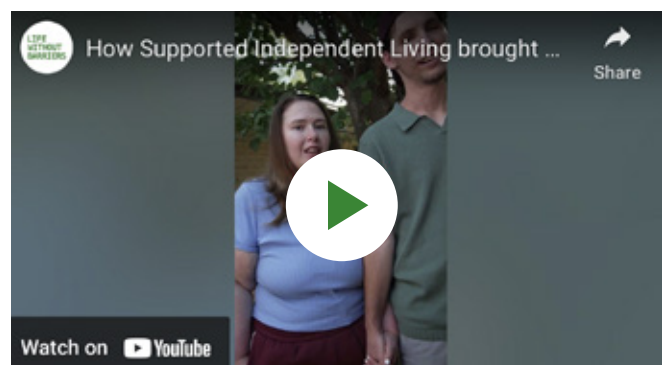
Rights in focus

We believe the rights of people with disability should be embedded into everyday practice and over the past year, we have taken meaningful steps to further strengthen and uphold this commitment:

- Piloting foundational learning; for our disability and mental health staff, giving them the confidence and skills to put rights into everyday practice.
- Delivering lived experience-led sessions on relationships, intimacy & sexuality; this series challenged bias and stigma, and equipped staff to better support people's rights to connections, choice and sexual expression.
- Welcoming student placements; including students with lived experience, who helped shape educational content and surveys.
- Sharing knowledge through our 'Hot Topics' sessions and newsletters; keeping staff supported to deliver services that respect each person's rights and choices.
- Developing a practical learning module with SECCA; providing guidance on [supporting rights, relationships, intimacy, and sexuality](#), and helping staff bring these principles to life in everyday practice.

These efforts go beyond initiatives – they reflect our belief that the people we support should shape the way we work. By listening to their experiences, honouring their choices, and being guided by their voices in everything that we do, we are creating disability services that are not only responsive and meaningful but also centred on what matters most to each person.

In our Relationships, Intimacy & Sexuality lived experience sessions, Daniel, who uses our services, spoke to our staff about his friendships, social groups, and experiences with relationships and romance, including his future plans for marriage and how he is supported to navigate these vital aspects of his life. [Daniel's story](#) spotlights how relationships are a fundamental human need and right of the people we support, and the importance of creating enabling and supportive environments where love and connection can thrive.



Joey and Daniel's friendship has grown into a meaningful and lasting connection. Here they share how they met and what their companionship means to them.

Delivering Great Services

Disability Services

At the heart of support: Country, kin and culture

Partnering with our Cultural Justice and Reform Unit, we launched the Voices of the Land and Lore pilot program to grow cultural confidence across our services. This program is about listening, speaking with respect, and creating spaces where Aboriginal people feel culturally safe, seen and connected.

The first pilot took place in a home in South Australia where the residents speak four Aboriginal languages. With guidance from our National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leads and the South Australian disability and mental health leadership team, staff explored how cultural principles connect with their practice.

The impact has been stronger trust between staff and the people they support, improved communication across languages, and renewed connections with family and kin. This Walanbaa (strong) Gayaa (proud) Yulanbay (spirit) training will continue to be rolled out across our disability and mental health teams.

In Alice Springs, we partnered with Spirit of the Gumtree to propose a First Nations Disability Network Group, aiming to amplify the voices of First Nations NDIS providers and foster community collaboration – ensuring culturally responsive practice is embedded in the design and delivery of services, not treated as an add-on.



In Darwin, [Warren and Jermaine are thriving together](#) in their home, where culture, language, and community connection are central to how they are supported.

Delivering Great Services

Disability Services

Myhorizon: Expanding employment pathways through partnership

We proudly welcomed Myhorizon into our organisation, bringing together two values-driven organisations to partner with more people with disability to secure meaningful work, pursue their goals, and thrive with independence and dignity.

Myhorizon contributes a wealth of expertise, including thriving social enterprises, such as the Bush Pantry Café and horticultural operations, and its Registered Training Organisation. Together, we are supporting more people with disability at every stage of their employment journey.



Myhorizon's main office, Capalaba, Queensland, where the Bush Pantry Café is located.

Delivering Great Services

Disability Services

Empowering young people with disability through Employment Pathways

In the past year, we expanded our employment pathways services with a special focus on supporting young people with disability to enter and succeed in the workforce.

Our approach centres on building skills, confidence, and resilience, ensuring each young person receives the proper support at the right time. This year, we enhanced our work readiness programs by partnering internally with our Behaviour Support Practitioners to deliver tailored Employment-Related Counselling, Advice, and Guidance. This integration means participants are not only better prepared for work, but also supported in overcoming barriers such as anxiety, confidence, or social skills—equipping them for long-term success.

At the same time, we continued to strengthen relationships with local businesses, broadening opportunities for meaningful work experience and sustainable job placements.

Some great outcomes include:

- Sam, who secured a part-time role at Bunnings with our guidance and encouragement.
- Jenny, who achieved her Certificate II in Animal Care despite multiple personal challenges.
- Quinn, who commenced a chef apprenticeship after he completed a cookery course with support from our Employment Coaches.



Quinn with Employment Pathways Coach Rebecca at his Oz Harvest Graduation.



Sam working at Bunnings, a job he worked hard to secure.

We celebrated the outcomes of over 70 young job seekers we worked with this year:

- Over 30 people completed study or courses
- Worked in 25 volunteering placements
- Gained skills through 30 work experience placements

Delivering Great Services



Team members of the Dynamo Melbourne FC, which runs dedicated social football sessions to give people from diverse backgrounds the chance to play, connect, and feel at home in Melbourne.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers Services

From first supporting unaccompanied children seeking asylum in 2009, this year our National Immigration Support Service programs served 1398 [people seeking asylum](#). By listening deeply to the needs of the communities we serve, we continued to deliver tailored and culturally sensitive programs including:

- In December 2024, we became the first settlement provider globally to achieve [CARE certification](#) and helped evolve the model's global use to support diverse communities beyond children.
- Provided 295 curated and culturally sensitive book packs to asylum seeker children (aged 0-15) to drive language, literacy, and learning skills.
- As lead sponsor of [Dynamo Melbourne FC](#), we partnered to offer dedicated social football sessions for people from diverse backgrounds, enhancing wellbeing and providing more opportunities for community interaction.
- Our one-year Employment Mentor Program, in partnership with Palestinian-Australian and Muslim communities, generated employment at TOLL, Australia Post and Sydney Airport, fostering participants' socio-emotional safety.

Delivering Great Services

Refugees and Asylum Seekers Services

Working together builds a pathway to a new future

When Sha was referred to our Housing and Employment team in November 2024, his determination and drive were obvious.

“After spending two years in limbo without the right to work or even volunteer, I felt stuck and uncertain about my future,” said Sha. Despite these barriers, he stayed focused on building stability and purpose in his life.

Sha and his team explored pathways to long-term employment that matched his strengths and aspirations and accommodated his lack of Australian work experience. Sha identified an Excavator Operations Course aligned with his goals.

“With the support of my team, I was able to build my first résumé, find a career path I’m passionate about, and enrol in a training course that finally gave me hope. Their guidance has been life changing,” he said.

Sha’s case coordinator also secured suitable funding, ensuring financial access was not a barrier. Equipped with the right tools and opportunities, Sha completed vocational training and moved into secure employment as a form worker. Today, Sha has financial stability and purpose as he takes part fully in his community.

- Over 300 asylum seekers with complex trauma found jobs and stable homes with individualised support from our newly established Housing and Employment team.



Sha with his training certificate. [Read Sha's full story here.](#)



Sha gained skills during his training.

Delivering Great Services



A silhouette of a woman looking out a window.

Forced Marriage Support Services

In January 2025, we launched the Forced Marriage Specialist Support Program to support to people at risk of and impacted by forced marriage. In this first year, we've supported men, women and transgender people from ages 15 to 63, in almost every state across Australia.

Delivering Great Services

Forced Marriage Support Services

Alisha's story: Finding independence after preventing a forced marriage

Alisha was studying in Australia, supported by her family, until she was asked to return home due to an ill relative. Upon arrival, she discovered the real reason: her family were trying to force her to marry. With a history of family violence, Alisha fled back to Australia, but her family withdrew all financial support, leaving her without housing, tuition, or income.

"I felt helpless. I felt really low. I blamed myself," she said. Alisha was referred to us and her case manager quickly developed a safety plan and helped her secure financial support and safe housing. She was connected to a financial counsellor, found part-time work, and was supported to gain humanitarian access to Medicare.

"When this program came along – there are no words to describe how much I appreciated it. I've never felt so protected or safe."

Today, Alisha has stable housing, employment, and is working with her university to resume her studies. "I'm finally feeling in control of my own life, like I can truly make decisions for myself," she said.

[Read Alisha's full story here.](#)



Sha with his training certificate.

Delivering Great Services

Forced Marriage Support Services

First of its kind support and prevention

Forced marriage is the most prevalent and reported form of modern slavery in Australia. We launched the Forced Marriage Specialist Support Program (FMSSP) in partnership with the Federal Government. The first of its kind program, funded by the Department of Social Services, provides tailored support to people impacted by and at risk of forced marriage. Through tailored assessments, support, counselling, referrals and linkages to housing, education and employment, the FMSSP is empowering people to take control of their lives and make choices for themselves, whether that's finding new homes or reconnecting with their families.

Beyond this, we're playing a key role in raising community awareness of this often misunderstood and hidden issue. From interviews with national news publications, to speaking with university students, doctors and nurses and community legal centres, we've been front and centre in vital and sometimes, life-saving conversations about forced marriage risk factors and getting support.

What's clear is that there is no single experience of forced marriage in Australia. In fact, experiences of forced marriage in Australia are varied and nuanced.

Over half the people we've supported were deemed at risk of forced marriage, which means we're playing a vital role in preventing forced marriages from occurring and enabling people to lead the free lives they wish to.



Two people hugging, one is facing the camera.

Delivering Great Services



An LWB aged care client smiling and sitting in a chair.

Aged Care Services

We partnered with 7,288 older Australians to support their independence and enjoyment of life at home through our in-home and community support services.

Key Milestones

- Responded to lived experience through the annual Client Voice Survey and quarterly Client Advisory Group and bi-annual Quality Care Advisory Body meetings.
- Realigned the Practice and Assurance team to support a greater focus on clinical governance and improved practice.
- Supported an additional 179 people to access Home Care Package services across Australia.
- Expanded support for older people in communities where demand for services is growing, including Newcastle, NSW and Geelong, Victoria.

Delivering Great Services

Aged Care Services

Thomas's Story



[Thomas Batho](#) has engaged our services to get the most out of life and live independently for nearly three years. Thomas receives community support for essential and social engagements and attends the Capalaba Day Centre for social interaction. His domestic, gardening, home maintenance and meal support help him live independently at home. He also gets allied health support, including podiatry and an occupational therapist for mobility equipment and independence aids. In this video, he talks about some of his life experiences and shares some pearls of wisdom.

Delivering Great Services

Aged Care Services

Using technology to build trust and improve relationships

Technology is helping us deliver more open and accountable person-centred care.

We enhanced the care experience for people we support with the national rollout of AlayaCare, a modern care management platform. Home and Community Assistants can now easily view personalised care plans and receive real-time care updates through the AlayaCare app, which led to improved continuity of care, more responsiveness to changing health needs, and better care for people.

We prepared to launch the Checked In Care mobile app, giving people we support and families direct access to care information for greater transparency and real-time information.



Improving the experiences of people including John, who uses our Home Support Program's services. [Read more about how Life Without Barriers is supporting John in his creative pursuits.](#)

Delivering Great Services

Aged Care Services

Leaning on the wisdom of experience

Members of our Aged Care Quality Care Advisory Body played a key role in shaping service quality. Their experience continues to strengthen transparency and accountability and improve the experiences of people accessing our services.

This year, the Aged Care Quality Care Advisory Body helped us improve our services by reviewing data on clinical governance, feedback, complaints, and staff development. Their insights led to improvements in how we report and monitor practice quality, ensuring we are focused on metrics that matter most.

These valuable insights are having a positive impact. In our latest Client Voice Survey, 88.5 per cent of people who used our services said they are treated with dignity and respect, 84 per cent said their support workers have appropriate skills, understand and respect their needs, goals, and preferences, and 84.4 per cent said that staff communicate clearly in a way they understand.



[Nellie](#) shared that Life Without Barriers' supports catered to her needs, helping her to get back on her feet and regain her independence.

Influencing Systemic Barriers



Tara, Lived Experience Youth Participation Advocate and Lara, person with lived experience with Life Without Barriers, speak with Carly Jacobitz, Deputy CE Child Youth Families at the Building Better Communities Conference.

We are an organisation founded in advocacy and recognition of lived expertise – a collaboration of people knowing barriers many people experience and building solutions in partnership to address them.

This year, we released our Social Strategy and Policy and Advocacy Agenda to enable a strategic movement that challenges systemic disadvantage. We focused on key priorities in Strategy 2025 through positive and constructive advocacy to improve social policies that impact people in the communities in which we live and work.

Influencing Systemic Barriers



Partnering with Louisa, above, and others to break barriers that stop them from leading life how they want to.

Advocacy through partnerships and collaboration

Our social policy and advocacy agenda is founded on key partnerships and collaborations and understanding our sphere of influence – that being where our expertise and knowledge may be of value, and where the knowledge and insight of others continue to be central.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Alliance20 – Driving bold, collective change

The Alliance20 (A20), a coalition of 25 disability organisations including Life Without Barriers, works in partnership with people with disability, government and other key stakeholders to strengthen the NDIS for participants nationwide.

Key issues that A20 pursued in the last year include:

- development of a Roadmap of NDIS Reforms to facilitate pathways for advocacy
- collaboration with peak bodies and disability advocates to develop proposals for government to overcome key NDIS challenges
- initiation of a review of home and living services and development of evidenced based principles to guide future service delivery of member organisations
- preparation of several submissions in response to the governments reform agenda – including registration of providers, independent and differential pricing and the proposed regulatory arrangements
- advocacy for improved client focussed responses in emergencies/disasters
- continued support and promotion of the Disability Dialogue
- exploration of the potential of artificial intelligence to assist in delivering more responsive disability services.



A group photo of people who use our disability support services, taken at a Darwin day program event.

Disability Dialogue

A major milestone this year was the launch of the Disability Dialogue, created in partnership with Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA), Alliance20 and the Melbourne Disability Institute. The Disability Dialogue is a new way to approach reform – through conversations and collaboration that can deliver real solutions and meaningful change for people with disability.

The Disability Dialogue is a new approach to reform – one that fosters conversations and collaboration to deliver real solutions and meaningful change for people with disability.



“Some people don’t understand what I’m saying, which can make me feel left out,” said Matt, who attends our Goodwood Lifestyle supports. [Through conversations, the Disability Dialogue aims to ensure voices like Matt’s are included.](#)

Influencing Systemic Barriers

The Possibility Partnership: Creating change together

The Possibility Partnership (TPP) is a collaborative alliance of leaders committed to reimagining how community services are designed and delivered. Life Without Barriers is proud to be a founding partner of the TPP, and we recognise that to create meaningful change, we must first model it within our own organisation. The TPP partnership shares key principles, which this year we began integrating into our organisational design, including systems and approaches. We also advanced key conversations on relational contracting and the power of community-led solutions, and how we can support place-based initiatives. Together, we are exploring how communities can have greater influence over the resources they need and the ways they experience support. By “meeting in the middle”, we are learning new ways to put people first.



Annie Moors, in a white T-shirt, who uses our services, dances with Disability Support Leader Faith Mlalazi.

National partnership with SNAICC – Transformation Project

This year, we continued our 10-year investment and national partnership with SNAICC, the national peak body representing the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Together, we advanced the Transformation Project with a focus on transitioning children back to their community, restoring and reconnecting them to their kin and community,

and implementing social policy and advocacy efforts to improve the trajectory towards Closing the Gap. This work requires time, trust and patience, but each transition represents a child returning to kin and/or community – the foundation for strong identity and social and emotional wellbeing.

SNAICC’s leadership has also been instrumental in shaping national sector wide advocacy, including the successful call for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner, appointed in 2024.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Informed by lived experience

Guided by Strategy 2025, we took meaningful steps to make lived experience a driver of cultural, strategic, and operational change.

In all our services, we've started building the foundations and structures that will enable purposeful partnership with lived expertise. These structures will enable the people that receive our services to drive and shape these services and the policies that impact them. We are only on the beginning of this journey.

We established a Lived Experience Strategy Steering Group and have dedicated roles guiding our organisation on embedding lived experience. Together with KPMG, we created a Vision for integrating lived expertise at Life Without Barriers and Guiding Principles to serve as the philosophical foundations for this program. We are now in the exciting phase of developing a powerful strategy for integrating lived expertise, supported by a robust implementation framework, operational processes, and practice enablers.

Listening Circles, led by people with lived experience, created space for honest conversations about inclusion, shaping our understanding and actions and revealing key themes around culture, visibility, recruitment, allyship, and leadership. From this, a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy has emerged that will guide the integration of lived expertise internally.



Listening to the voices of the diverse communities we live and work in. Pictured above, some of our staff at a Pride March in Adelaide.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Board Observer Chloe

Chloe Mackallah, a global climate data expert specialising in data governance, joined our board this year as an Observer. “My ambition is to bring together my work in community and in governance, and to build empowering organisational structures for the communities that I care about,” said Chloe, who is also a *QueersInScience* national leader.

She believes inclusive employment is “absolutely critical to be an organisation where its staff can exist authentically and are empowered to do their best work.” Chloe, who transitioned gender after her PhD in astrophysics, has experienced every day and career-limiting discrimination: from consistent assumptions that she has little experience or qualifications, to missing an important conference because being transgender is illegal in the country where the conference was held.

Chloe said,

“

I am so inspired by how consistently and intentionally Life Without Barriers’ values and culture are brought into every conversation and Board agenda item. I have learned that building and running an organisation with an extremely high level of commitment to their values, a consistent and empowering culture, and sustainability despite constant external pressures is actually possible – something that I wasn’t sure of before.

”



Chloe (right) takes a selfie with Chair Greg Ridder (top left) and Strategy and Governance Chief Paula Head.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Care sector employment opportunities for people with disability

As a lead partner and driver of the [Disability Employment Catalyst](#), we partnered with The Achieve Foundation to work together to improve employment outcomes for people with disability.

Through the Catalyst, we drove change in our own recruitment practices and established mechanisms for our employees to connect and build inclusive teams. Through in-depth conversations, we shaped practical solutions now being piloted across the organisation—such as accessibility-focused webinars, e-learning modules, team charters, and collaboration with our [Disability Accessibility Wellbeing Network](#) (DAWN) Committee.

This work is also guiding the next phase of our [Access Inclusion and Employment Plan](#) (AIEP), ensuring our strategy is grounded in real experiences and meaningful action.



Improving opportunities for people including Farian, who wants to work in an organisation that supports people with disabilities.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Invigorating living choices for people with disability

One of the greatest systemic barriers people with disability face is exercising choice about their home: where, how, and with whom they live. In Strategy 2025 we committed to continuing to invigorate the choice and control people with disability have over every aspect of their lives, including decisions about their home and the supports they receive.

In 2023, we publicly committed to being the first provider to no longer offer both supported independent living and specialist disability accommodation services, as we recognised that it limits choice for people with disability. We have continued our commitment to separate our services without disruption for the people we currently support.

In January 2025, we took an important step by partnering with Hume Community Housing Ltd to transfer the property management of 28 Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) homes across regional NSW.

With extensive experience supporting people with disability and a great alignment of values, Hume was a natural partner for this transition.

We worked closely with Hume to ensure the process was smooth and people and families had lots of information and were engaged along the way. This partnership means residents now have a specialist housing provider as their landlord, while we continue to provide support to people to help them live life and receive supports how they choose.



David (left) and Steven (right) take pride in their beautiful garden.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Empowering young voices – National Youth Advisory Group

This year we established the Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) and National Youth Advisory Group (NYAG) which is a youth led forum to help children and young people engage in the decisions that affect them. With representation from diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, [Youth Advocates help connect theory and practice](#) and shape the future of care.

Youth Participation Advocates, aged 15–25, are employed from each jurisdiction to represent the youth voice on the National Youth Advisory Group. This year, they:

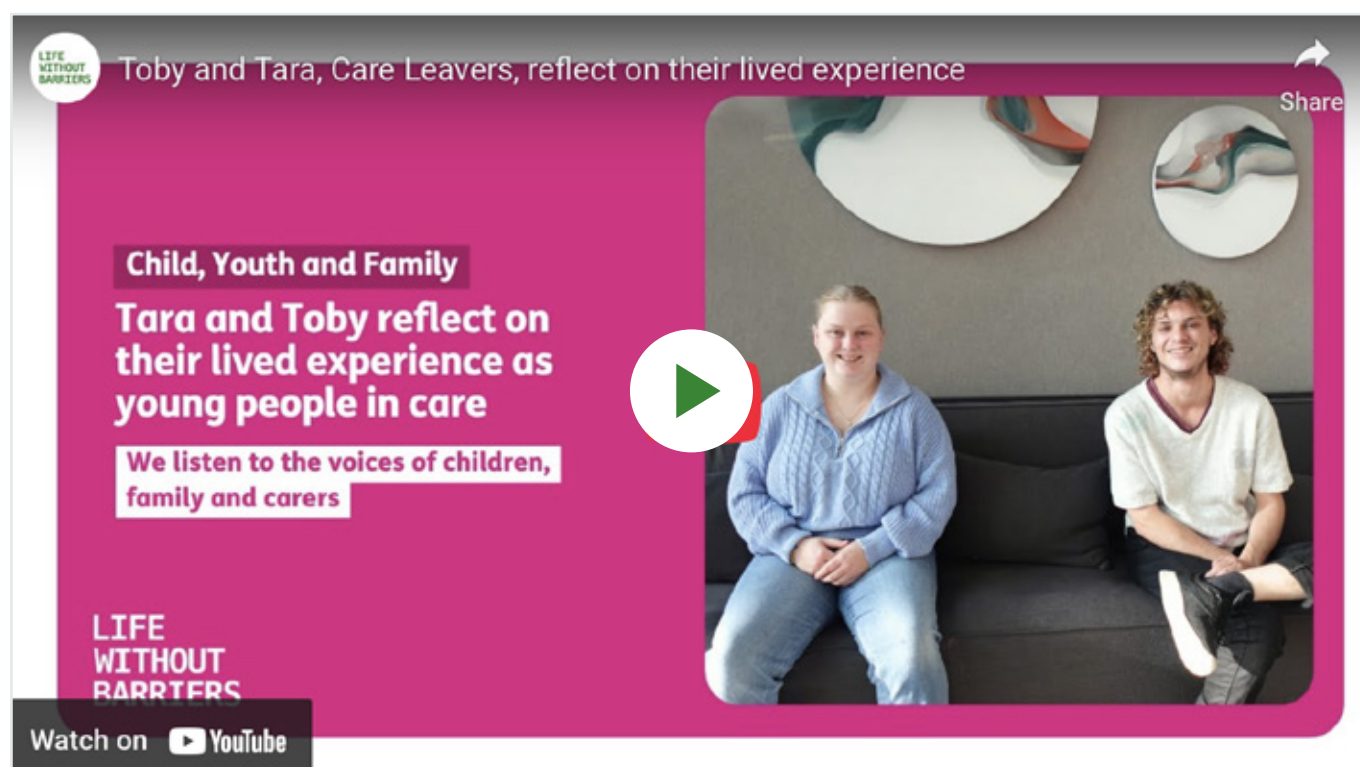
- Participated in interview panels for new staff, offering critical insights into what young people value in support workers, operations managers and other positions. Their involvement ensures services are guided by those who access them.
- Contributed to innovation workshops aimed at radically reshaping care models, co-authoring service designs alongside staff and stakeholders.
- Commenced work on our Youth Accountability statement.



Tara, a Lived Experience Youth Participation Advocate, and Lara, a person with lived experience at Life Without Barriers, joined a panel with Deputy Chief Executive for Child, Youth and Family Carly Jacobitz.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Toby and Tara from YAG



Tara and Toby, two young people with care experience and members of our Youth Advisory Group, participated in the Child Youth and Family strategy workshop in April. In this video they reflect on their lived experience as young people in care and share insights into their advocacy efforts.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Young voices offer depth to youth justice system inquiry

Young people's lived experiences directly informed our advocacy and reform work. In 2025, we asked youth in our care to help with our submission to the Commonwealth Senate's Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System. Through the NT Youth Advisory Group and targeted interviews, they shared candid insights into their experiences with police, courts, detention, and electronic monitoring devices (EMDs). They exposed the emotional toll of constant surveillance, lack of trust in enforcement agencies, and the stigma EMDs create in everyday life. They suggested regular check-ins and strengths-based approaches as alternatives. Our submission included an easy-read snapshot showing how their voices shaped it.



A young woman is in front of iron bars and a dark background.

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Levelling the education playing field to give children in out-of-home care a fairer start in life

Children and young people in care face hurdles in education that their peers do not. Through Strategy 2025, we sought to change this through collaboration, advocacy and tailored support.

Our Education and Learning Strategy builds this vision with localised education roadmaps. It included training for staff and carers, resources, and data-driven insights on performance.

We co-designed a series of monthly webinars with our partners to enhance the education toolkit for carers and staff. We are proud to be part of the ARC funded Linkage Project, [‘Fostering School Attendance for Students in Out of Home Care’](#), which involves listening directly to young people to better understand the barriers they face in attending school. We also partnered with the University of Sydney to improve access to higher education for young people in care, and with the [Western Sydney Wanderers](#) to create opportunities for connection, belonging and celebration.

In 2024, our Strategy was featured at the [Doing School Differently](#) conference, where our team shared their innovative approaches and contributed to national conversations on inclusive education through their participation in panels, presentations and yarning spaces.

Our signature [Hook into Books™ campaign](#), now in its fourth year, engages children in reading to support their language, literacy, and learning. We partnered with 27 Australian author supporters delivering some great results. “The gift of books tells our children, you matter, you are loved, believe in yourself,” said one carer.



The Sydney Wanderers Football Club, a passionate supporter of Life Without Barriers for many years, opened doors for our young people, providing them with access to exclusive training sessions, matchday experiences, events, and even club merchandise. One highlight was when [young people had a rare opportunity to interview star players](#) Brandon Borello, Lawrence Thomas, and Thomas Beadling and get to know them beyond their roles on the field.

“

I had the privilege to watch a young person light up with joy when he saw his book pack that included books about his Aboriginal culture. The books have become his favourites.

”

Influencing Systemic Barriers

The impact of the Learning Without Barriers Strategy

Learning Without Barriers Strategy 2023-2025

outlined our targets and roadmap to supporting young people in our care to reach their potential through education pathways that are right for them. This is our impact so far:

Pre-school

- Over 85 per cent of three- to five-year-olds are enrolled in early childhood learning and care programs.
- To support school readiness, we implemented the BRIGANCE® Screens III (3–5 years), providing our workforce and carers with a reliable, evidence-based tool to assess developmental milestones and guide timely, tailored learning support.
- To leverage the vital learning potential of the first 1000 days in a child's life, Hook into Books™ provided books and resources to support caregivers with children under two years, which is about 30 per cent (1000 books) of all book requests.

School age

- We are increasing the visibility of education plans to support the student learning journey (over 50 per cent visibility).
- Over 90 per cent of compulsory school-aged students are enrolled in learning.
- Addressing non-attendance has been a strategic focus, recognising its link to wellbeing, placement stability, and learning. Two Business Intelligence (BI) reports now provide daily and national visibility, enabling timely interventions, strengthening our proactive support for educational outcomes.

Transition from school

- Over 90 per cent of post school-aged students are enrolled in activities promoting further education or employment.



Three children reading books take part in our Hook into Books™ campaign.

Impact for Future Generations



A family of two adults and three children in the outdoors.

Shaping tomorrow, together

We have always believed the future shouldn't be left to chance. Strategy 2025 has guided us to lean on our values of responsiveness, imagination and courage to challenge barriers that remain engrained for far too many people. Guided by simple questions, the decisions we have made over the past five years have future generations at their heart;

- What will the world look like for those we support in 10, 20, or 30 years?
- How can we advance equity in health and wellbeing for people facing systemic barriers?
- What actions today will shape a better tomorrow?

Impact for Future Generations

Shaping tomorrow: Progress on our Access Inclusion and Employment Plan

As our Access Inclusion and Employment Plan 2022–2025 reaches its final year, we're proud to share the [progress we've made](#) in building a more inclusive and accessible organisation.

This year, we focused on actions that shape a better tomorrow. We raised awareness about accessible communication—recognising that literacy, disability and language background can all impact how people engage with information. By promoting plain language and inclusive formats, we've supported greater independence and dignity.

We strengthened our commitment to accessibility by embedding lived experience into everyday practice. Through co-designed team charters, employees are supported in sharing how they work best, shifting access from individual responsibility to a shared, proactive approach.

Looking ahead, we've laid strong foundations for the future. Our [Disability Accessibility Wellbeing Network](#) (DAWN) entered a new phase, inviting members to co-design the network's future through workshops and surveys. This participatory approach ensures the network reflects the voices of those it serves.

Finally, our people leader survey provided valuable insights into confidence, barriers, and opportunities in supporting employees with disability—laying the groundwork for future improvements.



Dominic (left) and Breearna from our Marketing Team, at an event in our Newcastle head office.

Impact for Future Generations

Building caring communities

We co-hosted the [Building Caring Communities International Conference](#) with the Residential Childcare Project, Allambi Care and UnitingCare Qld. Practitioners, people with lived experience, and researchers united to challenge systemic issues and improve the futures of children and families impacted by the child protection system. Youth advocates and parents with experience in out-of-home care, central to the discussions, reminded us that lasting change happens when those most affected are involved in shaping practice and decisions. Attendees consistently recognised that relationships, keeping families safely together, and placing children's best interests at the heart of policy and practice, were the key to reimagining services.



This video of the event, produced by Allambi Care, captures highlights of the Building Caring Communities Conference and features interviews with attendees.

Impact for Future Generations

Building a just and environmentally sustainable future for everyone

Climate change is impacting the people we support and the communities in which we live and work.

This year, we shared our environmental sustainability and climate justice vision. It sets out our goals to lower emissions and advocate—both alongside and on behalf of the people we support—to address the real, everyday effects of climate change. We're taking action, such as supporting clients, carers and staff during extreme weather events and switching to hybrid vehicles across our fleet. We also engaged clients, carers and staff to take part in sustainability challenges to make small and big changes. At Grandview, a home for people receiving independent living support, residents and staff are leading the way by growing their own food and making eco-friendly choices part of daily life.

Grandview House Supervisor Kara said,

“

Hot days, poor air quality, the rising cost of essentials like food and limited transport access all affects the people we support. This is why climate justice needs to be part of our work. It's about fairness, access and safety.

”



Sustainability has become second nature at the Grandview Street residence, thanks to the team members and residents who bring their care for the environment into everyday practice.

Impact for Future Generations



Left to right – Maurice Karpany, Major (Uncle Moogy) Sumner, Talera Gollan-Davey, (granddaughter of Uncle Malcolm Gollan) and Lisa Coulthard, Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice and Partnerships.

Reconciliation

We embarked on our Reconciliation journey in 2009, and this year marked the final stage of our first ever Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan. Our Elevate RAP demonstrates our commitment to meaningful change and walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Impact for Future Generations

Reconciliation

Our reconciliation journey

This year marked an important milestone in our reconciliation journey. Through our current Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan, we have been able to achieve:

- A historic partnership with SNAICC to transfer out-of-home care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Establishment of our Interim Cultural Governance Group.
- Advocacy on reform, racism, Reconciliation, Voice to Parliament and a National First Nations Commissioner for First Nations children.
- Creation of the Cultural Justice and Reform Unit and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice and Partnerships team.

As we near the end of our current Elevate RAP commitments, we have been invited to submit our second RAP, which aims to build on our existing transformation commitments. Over a three-month period, we undertook an intensive co-design process with almost 300 staff from across Life Without Barriers and key stakeholders. The process included consultation sessions, open forums, surveys and workshops to shape the commitments that will guide our reconciliation journey over the next five years.

The co-design process highlighted the importance of reconciliation in action, , and accountability to the people and communities we work alongside. It also informed changes to RAP governance, designed to share and strengthen reconciliation leadership across the breadth and depth of Life Without Barriers, and the cultural load.



Claire Robbs takes a group selfie with Life Without Barriers staff at the NAIDOC March in Newcastle.

Impact for Future Generations

Reconciliation

Cultural and two-way governance

Over the past year, cultural governance at Life Without Barriers has continued to mature. The Interim Cultural Governance Group met regularly, providing cultural guidance and leadership across the organisation, whilst promoting local cultural authority and practices. Shared leadership remained a strong focus, with monthly yarn ups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff creating culturally safe spaces for truth-telling and dialogue, and quarterly reporting reinforcing transparency and accountability as fundamentals of cultural governance.

With strong sponsorship of our Board and Executive, a co-design process involving more than 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff was undertaken to articulate the processes for embedding cultural governance across our organisation. This work has laid the foundation for two-way governance, which is about shared decision-making, shared practices and shared ways of working that bring together cultural and corporate authority together. Cultural and two-way governance will be a central commitment in our next Elevate RAP, guided by a living roadmap designed to measure both our commitment and our maturity.



Disability leaders came together for a consultation session in Brisbane earlier this year.

Impact for Future Generations

Reconciliation

Coming together to celebrate culture

Celebrating culture together is one of the simplest yet most powerful things we can all do towards Reconciliation. Attending cultural events allowed our staff and community to learn, encouraged deeper cultural understanding and empathy, built respect, and allowed everyone to show solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by acknowledging their resilience and contributions.

NAIDOC Week 2024

In 2024, Life Without Barriers proudly celebrated NAIDOC Week under the theme “Keep the Fire Burning: Blak, Loud and Proud.” Across every state and territory, our staff joined community-led events including flag raisings, marches, family fun days, awards, cultural walks and storytelling. Wherever possible, we ensured the people we support could participate, reflecting our commitment to inclusion and cultural connection. A highlight was at our Newcastle office, where the Winanga-y Dreaming Dancers performed and Life Without Barrier’s Lo Roberts and Grant Williams debuted ‘We Are Fire’, a song they wrote for NAIDOC Week.



Grant Williams and Lo Roberts performing 'We Are Fire'.



Winanga-y Dreaming Dancers.

Impact for Future Generations

Reconciliation

National Reconciliation Week 2025

In 2025, Life Without Barriers marked National Reconciliation Week under the theme “Bridging Now to Next” with a national truth-telling exhibition. Simultaneously launched across 11 offices and on the intranet, the exhibition reflected the challenges and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since colonisation. This initiative created space for reflection, dialogue and learning, and strengthened our commitment to truth-telling as a foundation for reconciliation through our Elevate RAP.



Winnellie, NT.



Box Hill, VIC.

Impact for Future Generations

Reconciliation

NRW 2025 exhibition



You can watch our exhibition virtually in this video above.

Impact for Future Generations

Reconciliation

Honouring Uncle Malcolm Gollan

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this post contains the name and image of an Indigenous person who is deceased, used with the permission of their family.

Uncle Malcolm Gollan was a proud Ngarrindjeri Elder, a humble, powerful presence whose life was devoted to culture, community, and truth. He brought people together not with force, but with wisdom, respect, and unwavering integrity.

He didn't just speak about reconciliation, he lived it. His voice helped shape a national journey, as he shared knowledge with openness, stood firm in truth-telling, and built relationships grounded in respect and accountability. His legacy is one of courage, connection, and cultural strength. This year, that legacy was formally recognised with one of the highest honours, as Uncle Mal was posthumously awarded the 2025 NAIDOC SA Lifetime Achievement Award, a tribute to his lifelong commitment to justice, community, and cultural leadership.

Today, his impact, his legacy, lives on in his family, in community, and in all who were changed by walking alongside him. And now, in all of us who are willing to carry the work forward with the same strength, humility, and hope. It started with Uncle Mal. Now, it's in our hands. [Read more about Uncle Mal's legacy, including his instrumental work within Life Without Barriers.](#)



Uncle Mal wearing a Life Without Barriers jacket and cap, and a blue polo shirt.

Impact for Future Generations



Two girls at the beach smiling.

Transformation Project

The Transformation Project is our commitment and actions to restore the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through community informed child protection reform. It is founded on the commitments in our Elevate RAP which are underpinned by the four Family Matters Building Blocks.

In our Policy, we commit to:

1. Uphold the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, ensuring they grow up safe with kin, community and know who they are and where they belong.
2. Embed culturally safe and responsive practices to ensure greater accountability and transparency to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.
3. Support Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and uphold their cultural authority in designing and delivering family preservation and early intervention services.

Impact for Future Generations

Transformation Project

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children belong with community, culture, family and kin

We are progressively transitioning the care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children back to their communities. This work is grounded in meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ATSICCOs) and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC).

In August 2024, we launched the National Transition Roadmap, co-designed with SNAICC. This Roadmap provides a clear pathway for restoring the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The leadership of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice and Partnerships team has fostered purposeful collaborations with ATSICCOs, peak bodies, and community leaders across the country. Together, we are advancing culturally responsive practice and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain deeply connected to family, community, and culture; knowing who they are, where they come from, and where they belong.

Throughout the year, our national team of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have

brought their lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing to everything we do.

By weaving cultural knowledge alongside academic and professional practice, the team has strengthened our ability to centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views in strategy, policy, and practice.

Forming and nurturing both formal and informal relationships with dozens of ATSICCOs across the country, the Practice and Partnerships team worked alongside local care teams to support the return to family, kin and community for dozens of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. In addition, they have walked alongside carers, families, other Life Without Barriers teams and community partners to see the transition to ATSICCO-led out-of-home care support for children and young people since making our transformation commitments in the Elevate RAP.

By delivering on our Roadmap commitments, we hope to have a positive impact on future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and communities.



This panel illustrates the journey of our jarjums transitioning from Life Without Barriers to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations. It celebrates the champions advocating for children to grow up safe in culture and community, highlights Life Without Barriers' role in supporting sector reform, and shows the Community Circle representing ATSICCOs' ongoing care. The journey lines symbolise this transition and the support provided along the way.

Impact for Future Generations

Transformation Project

Walking together for future generations

Since 2023, we have partnered with Winanga-Li to transition Aboriginal children living with non-Indigenous carers into their care. The transitions, which focus on building trust and not rushing change, are guided by trust and open conversations. Throughout the process, carers have been open and keen to understand more.

Two households have already made the move, with more in progress. The children are happy, carers feel supported, and for Winanga-Li and Life Without Barriers, the collaboration has been smooth and rewarding.

Madi Ellis, Permanency Support Program Manager, Winanga-Li, commended the process, saying, “There’s clear communication, strong relationships, and a real commitment to working together. It’s made things smoother for carers and better for the kids, and that’s what matters most.”

Wayne Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer of Winanga-Li, said the transitions represented more than just a service handover. “It reflects what’s possible when Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are empowered to lead care grounded in culture, trust and local relationships,” he said. “The future of this work relies on genuine, sustained collaboration and an approach that

values the expertise held within community. We’re proud to work alongside Life Without Barriers, and we hope this partnership sets a tone for how the broader sector engages with ATSICCOs in the years ahead.”

As more and more in our sector recognise the need to transition Aboriginal children into the care of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, we are committed to walking that path with them, community by community, with care, consistency and courage.



Madi Ellis (left), Permanency Support Program Manager, Winanga-Li, and Lucinda Porter (right), Life Without Barriers’ Acting Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice and Partnerships.

Impact for Future Generations

Transformation Project

HIPPY finds its new home in community

When the Brotherhood of St Laurence, who fund HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters), advised their intention to work with us to transfer two HIPPY programs in Brisbane and Central Queensland to ATSICCOs, everyone agreed – the program belonged in community hands.

HIPPY is a free, two-year, home-based early learning program that helps parents become their child's first teacher. It builds strong foundations for school, along with confidence and a love of learning.

The transfer was not simply changing providers; it brought Aboriginal leadership, cultural knowledge and local decision-making to the heart of the program. Families could now engage in HIPPY in ways that reflected their community's strengths and priorities.

After community consultation, local ATSICCOs emerged as the natural fit in both regions. With trusted relationships and experience running playgroups with us, the ATSICCOs' knew the community's needs and families, and understood how to make HIPPY resonate locally.

By walking alongside ATSICCOs' and community broadly, sharing resources, knowledge and hands-on help, HIPPY in the local areas could grow with confidence, knowing support was always close by as we completed the transition to community control.

Today, HIPPY in these two regions is delivered by community, for community – preparing children for school and strengthening the whole community for the future.



A child reading a book.

Impact for Future Generations**Transformation Project**

Allies for Children: A collaborative alliance for change

Allies for Children is a collaborative of leading child and family organisations working together to ignite positive change for children and young people across Australia. Founding partners include Life Without Barriers, Act for Kids, Barnardos, OzChild, The Benevolent Society, Key Assets and MacKillop Family Services.

This year, the partnership made a historic public commitment pledging collective action on the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care, and to drive reform across the child and family sector. The commitment includes:

- The effective transition and reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in their care to community control.
- Not to compete in tendering and commissioning where ATSICCOs should be providing services.
- Working with Peaks, ATSICCOs and state governments on referrals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care to ensure they are supported by ACCOs and not mainstream services where possible.

The partnership lobbied in partnership with SNAICC for the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and made several submissions related to the futures of First Nations children. Allies for Children works collaboratively with the First Nations NGO Alliance on a shared agenda for First Nations children.



A family of four pictured outside a house.

Impact for Future Generations

Transformation Project

First Nations NGO Alliance

The First Nations NGO Alliance was established to share cultural leadership across the Allies for Children partnership. The Alliance meets regularly to exchange learnings and harness the collective effort needed to address the disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection. It champions Aboriginal-led responses and strengthens collaboration across our workforce and beyond. Membership mirrors the Allies partnership and currently includes Key Assets, Barnardos, The Benevolent Society, Act for Kids, OzChild and Life Without Barriers, plus Uniting NSW/ACT.

Over the past year, the Alliance completed a baseline cultural governance maturity assessment and launched a website featuring the Knowledge Hub. The site provides practical, culturally safe resources for practitioners and creates a platform to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from within and beyond member agencies. In addition, members advanced sustainable resourcing models and contributed shared thought leadership on sector reform.

Looking ahead, the Alliance will deepen two-way governance, expand workforce pathways, and continue efforts to ensure children remain connected to culture, kin and community while driving long-term change across the child protection sector.



The First Nations NGO Alliance logo.

Governance

Board Members



Greg Ridder AM
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.
- Observer of the Practice Governance Committee.



Cathy Taylor
Non-Executive Director

Special Responsibilities:

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



Dr Elizabeth McEntyre
Non-Executive Director

Special Responsibilities:

- Member of the Practice Governance Committee.



Dr Helen Szoke AO
Non-Executive Director

Special Responsibilities:

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



Karen Knight
Non-Executive Director

Special Responsibilities:

- Member of the Practice Governance Committee



Natalie Walker
Non-Executive Director

Special Responsibilities:

- Chair of the Remuneration, Nomination and Succession Committee
- Member of the Finance and Audit Committee



Rajiv Viswanathan
Non-Executive Director

Special Responsibilities:

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



Shannon Tobolov
Non-Executive Director

Special Responsibilities:

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

Governance

Executive Team



Claire Robbs
Chief Executive Officer



Paula Head
Chief Strategy and
Governance Officer



Mark Leigh
Chief Operating Officer



Mary McKinnon
Chief Risk and
Assurance Officer



Leanne Johnson
Deputy Chief Executive,
Disability and Mental
Health



Carly Jacobitz
Deputy Chief Executive,
Child, Youth and Family



Michael Robinson
Deputy Chief Executive,
Aged Care and Emerging
Business



Jeevani Korathota
General Counsel



Emma Bennison
Chief Innovation Officer



Servena McIntyre
Chief Transformation
Officer, Cultural Justice &
Reform Unit

Governance

Safeguarding and quality assurance

Upholding our values with strong person-centred systems

Guided by our values, we have continuously improved the safeguarding measures which underpin the delivery of great services.

Our National Safeguarding Unit works in partnership with our direct care teams to ensure people we support are safe and feel respected.

This year we:

- Uplifted feedback and complaints practices so people we support and engage with experience a responsive and respectful process when they have feedback.
- Formed the Safeguarding Incident Team to strengthen reporting to the NDIS Commission, and build a more consistent, transparent response system.
- Upgraded iReport, which now securely manages more than 360,000 records, enabling data to inform proactive safeguarding.

Keeping people safe through emergencies

Our dedicated Risk and Resilience Unit leads service continuity planning and emergency response support for our teams across the country. During this year's emergencies, including NSW mid-east coast floods, continuity of care, safety and supporting the local community were our priorities.

Regional Operations Manager Kira Howe said, "In recent years, Lismore has experienced a series of severe weather events, including ex-Cyclone Alfred.

Our employees and the people we support in the Lismore community wish to express their gratitude to one another, our staff, our Senior Leadership, and our Risk and Resilience unit for their unwavering support during these challenging times. It was truly remarkable to observe the contrast between the two significant disasters, noting how prepared and supported individuals felt, and how the collective effort made a substantial difference in ensuring the safety of our community."

Governance, regulatory requirements and quality benchmarks

Strong collaboration across our organisation to deliver high-quality services that are person-centred whilst upholding accreditation standards in an environment of accountability and learning was a key milestone this year. Together we:

- Achieved National accreditation under the National Standards for Mental Health Services.
- Strengthened management of internal and external audits.
- Embedded continuous quality improvement across services.
- Strengthened the integrity of systems supporting accreditation and compliance.
- Ensured our governance systems continue to set the benchmark for sector practice.

Governance

Finance

Life Without Barriers is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. We work hard to ensure the resources entrusted to us are directed towards the people and communities we support. We are effective in our administration and leverage our national scale to create efficiencies in everything we do.

We maintain a moderate reserve to ensure we are financially secure to continue our essential services into the future. This is accessible via our [audited financials](#).

Life Without Barriers does not own or amass assets such as property or other capital. The financial resources trusted to us are used to deliver direct care services and frontline supports nationwide.

This year, Life Without Barriers was responsible for contributions to Australia's communities of the amount of \$858,111,000.

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. It has meant a great deal to us to be trusted to bear witness to your lives.

In this report, the names of some people who shared their stories have been changed



Then. Now. Next.

30 Years of Life Without Barriers
Annual Report 2024-25