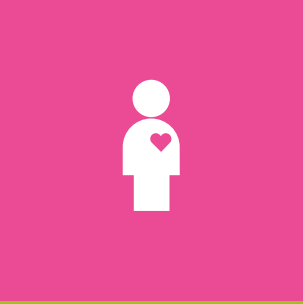
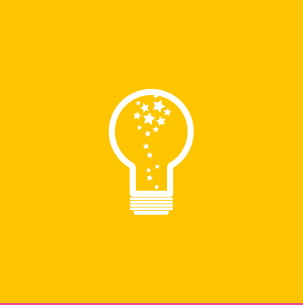


# Annual Report 2019-20

**LIFE  
WITHOUT  
BARRIERS**











## Acknowledgments

### **Our Commitment to Truth Telling and Reconciliation and Acknowledgement of First Nations Peoples**

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

We extend that acknowledgment to the local Awabakal people, on which our National Office is located. We pay our respect to them, their culture and customs and to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We believe that reconciliation must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians.

We are committed to an ongoing journey towards truth telling and reconciliation and pay our respect to all Elders past, present, and emerging. We also recognise and value the contribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, carers, people we support and communities to our continued reconciliation journey together.

# A message

from Chairman of the Board, Terry Lawler and  
Chief Executive, Claire Robbs



We share the Life Without Barriers Annual Report 2019-2020 with considerable gratitude to all the staff, carers and volunteers across our organisation who have been relentless in their actions to contribute to keeping people safe this year.

When we commenced the financial year in June 2019, we did not conceive of the difficulties Australians would experience for most of the year. At Life Without Barriers, we were focused on delivering quality services, striving to have positive impact and planning our new organisational strategy and commitments.

The summer megafires which began in late September were frightening and an early warning for a summer that ultimately turned to be devastating for so many people.

“

During 2019 to 2020 Australians have experienced several months of incomprehensible adversity. Australians have barely had time to catch their breath in between devastating bushfires, floods and a global pandemic. Yet humanity has been shown in all its glory in Australia and we have seen genuine kindness and dedication in caring for one another amidst the hardship.

”

Our Life Without Barriers community of people we support, staff, carers and families live all across Australia and many in the communities that were affected. In September, we established an emergency response team and emergency controller to make immediate and agile decisions to keep communication open and support people who needed to flee their homes. A large portion of our community along the eastern seaboard of Australia were significantly impacted however thankfully no staff, carers or people we support lost their lives. For staff and carers whose homes were damaged, we have offered ongoing support as they rebuild and repair for a new future.

We were still managing the impacts of the bushfires when COVID-19 began to show its potency. By early March we established a National Emergency Management Team and we ceased all non-essential operations and directed our energy to managing the pandemic and its potential impact. What aided our response was a clear purpose of continuity of care for people we support and protecting the health and safety of clients, carer families and staff. We have continued with this purpose in mind even

as COVID-19 is now appearing to lose its grasp in Australia. As a community we were devastated with the loss of a valued member of our team in Victoria. We immediately engaged with his family and continue to offer support as they come to terms with an incredible loss. In this report, we share some of the measures we have taken during the pandemic including initiatives of our staff to bring security and family connection during the Stay At Home directions.

We have continued to invest in our relationships with Government and peer agencies to improve the social systems that form the basis of community services in Australia. The Alliance20 and Children in Care Collective are examples of the importance of collaboration in our sector.

Throughout 2019 and 2020 we have increased our consultation and engagement with people we support and their families, in order to improve the quality of services people receive from us. We have also worked hard to bring a sense of normalcy for people in anything but normal times.

In June of 2020 we finalised our Vision 2020 Strategy and we encourage you, in addition to

reading the highlights on page 14 to also read our more detailed report of achievements. The past five years has gone by at speed and achievements we share in this report are the result of trusted relationships and solid partnerships.

We have emerged through the year as a sustainable and viable organisation that can offer confidence for people that we will continue to be offering services and partnerships well into the future.

The difficulties of the past year cannot supersede the accomplishments of people we support, carers and staff and for this reason we felt strongly that we should share these with our valued partners. In this report you will see highlights of great moments throughout the year of which we are humbled to have been a part of.



**Terry Lawler**  
Chair  
Life Without Barriers



**Claire Robbs**  
Chief Executive  
Life Without Barriers

## Year in Review

# Highlights



**23,282**

People supported



**4,573**

Children and young people supported



**8,467**

Older Australians supported with in home services



We lived and provided support in over

**500**

communities across Australia



**3,995**

People with disability supported through the NDIS

**7,373**

Staff at 30 June 2020



**1,809**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people supported



Partnered with

**84**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations



**800**

Phones and tablets were made available to people we support through our services during COVID



**2,911**

Foster and kinship carers are part of our Life Without Barriers Community



**\$337K**

spent with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses



**5,972**

People with disability supported



**94,711**

courses completed by staff through myLearning, our online learning platform



More than

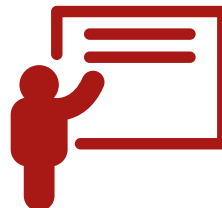
**120**

laptops were made available to children to help with home schooling during COVID-19



**2,666**

Asylum seekers supported to find safety in Australia



**4,188**

Staff participated in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural training



**1,229**

People supported through our mental health and alcohol and other drug services

**2.3%**

Of all staff now identify as living with disability

We acknowledge and respect that many of our employees choose not to disclose if they live with disability

**4.8%**

Of all new employees identified they live with disability

**95%**

Of people using our mental health and drug and alcohol services are happy with their relationship with us

**92%**

Of carers were positive about our support throughout COVID-19



# Partnering with people to change lives for the better

## CHOICE AND CONTROL FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

This year we deepened our relationship with the amazing team at the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID) to help us understand the experience of people in shared and supported living. VALID is the peak organisation in the Victorian disability sector and is run by and dedicated to people with disability and their family members.

VALID have joined with us to undertake engagement with staff and people we support so we can

listen to feedback and insights to inform our practice and improve the way we deliver our services. Representatives from VALID have met with staff and people with disability across two states so far and through informal meetings have engaged in invaluable conversations and shared fantastic observations about what is working really well and what we need to improve. For the majority of the houses that were visited, VALID commended our staff for the work they are doing and support they are providing to the residents in meeting their needs. The physical visits by the

VALID team were paused in early 2020 due to COVID19 however our work together continues to embed the recommendations the VALID team have shared so far. We are now partnering to design ways to increase the opportunity people with disability have to continue to share their preferences and choices about how they live and experience supports.

We are very grateful for this partnership with VALID and look forward to working along side the team long into the future.



## Tyson is kicking goals

As Tyson finished the 2018 Football season, he wasn't sure what the future held. He hadn't been able to play as many games as he had hoped, so when he was given the chance to join the Fremantle Integrated Football team in 2019, he jumped at the chance.

Through our partnership with Perth Football League, Integrated Football gives players of all abilities the chance to be part of a thriving football program, build and maintain fitness, and be part of a team in a family oriented mainstream club. Many young men supported by Life Without Barriers have had the chance to play thanks to the program.

"I enjoy playing for the club as I made friends in our team and we all support each other in good and bad turns in the games. I like playing and enjoying myself. My Life Without Barriers' carers stay with me at all games and trainings. They ensure that I am always on time for trainings and games, they encourage me and cheer for me," said Tyson.



“

Given many people would be in isolation, I wanted to be proactive in ensuring the people we support could still stay active from home.

”



### SUPPORTING OLDER AUSTRALIANS TO LIVE THE LIFE THEY CHOOSE

This year our team supported 8,467 older Australians to stay active and remain happy, healthy and as independent as possible in their own homes. Our first priority is to build and nurture relationships with people. These strong relationships ensure the people we support feel comfortable with their care team and that we are responsive to their needs and how they want to live and receive support.

In a survey conducted in February 2020, we asked older people we work with to give us feedback on their level of satisfaction with Life Without Barriers. More than 91% confirmed that our services improved their quality of life, allowing them to stay in their own home!



### SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH

Our team supported 1,229 people through our mental health and alcohol and other drug services. We conducted a Satisfaction Survey this year which was conducted to gain feedback from people using our Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Homelessness Programs to understand their experiences with Life Without Barriers in South Australia.

People provided an overwhelming response with more than 92% of people sharing they are happy with the services they receive. Many of the people we work with also told us that they appreciated the respectful, diligent and personalised services they received from their support workers. Many included personal messages of thanks to individual workers!

## Staying active from home

With older Australians at a higher risk during the pandemic, our Aged Care team in the ACT turned challenge into opportunity to launch an online exercise group over Zoom. “Given many people would be in isolation, I wanted to be proactive in ensuring the people we support could still stay active from home,” said Aged Care Operations Manager for ACT, Ric Cabrita.

Lead by a certified physiotherapist, the online exercise classes proved hugely popular with people not just exercising but connecting, sharing recipes, chatting and making friends.

Participant Anne shared that the online exercises have been vital in her recovery from surgery in early March. “Though initially I could not do all the exercises, I am pleased to report I am now able to do them all and my balance and overall strength and fitness have improved greatly.”





# Supporting children, young people and families

**Together with Life Without Barriers foster and kinship carers we have supported 4,573 children and young people living both in family based care and young people living in residential care homes.**

This year we strengthened our commitment to keeping children and young people safe through the launch of the next phase of our child safety strategy We Put Children First: Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviours. Staff and carers undertook specialised training to learn how to respond with care and sensitivity to inappropriate sexual behaviour. The feedback to the training was overwhelming, with many staff and carers recognising that being able to learn and have open conversations about topics that may typically be uncomfortable, are so important to keep children and young people safe.

We remain committed to implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by creating a formal supervision process for staff and carers allowing them to reflect, question and problem solve with their supervisor on a regular basis.

## **COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN IN CARE COLLECTIVE**

Life Without Barriers continues its advocacy for children and young people living in out-of-home care, as a founding member and current chair of the interagency think-tank, Children in Care Collective.

The Collective commissioned the CREATE Foundation in early 2020 to assist in running a youth forum focusing on health and wellbeing. CREATE's findings from the initial survey provides a useful insight into what is important to children and young people in care.

Overall, the responses indicated a good level of health and

wellbeing. Having positive/ respectful relationships and strong connections was seen as key to being healthy and well. Their biggest concerns were about mental and emotional health and getting access to services.

The results of this research will form the basis of a forum with children and young people to discuss their concerns in more depth and develop projects to support high levels of health and wellbeing. Discussions are underway about how to hold this forum online.

Life Without Barriers also worked in conjunction with the Collective and NSW Department of Education to revise student suspension practices that considered the challenges faced by children in out-of-home care. Additionally, the Collective worked with the Australian Taxation Office to create a simpler taxation process for payments to carers of children with complex needs.





### STACEY IS GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Stacey is 18 and studying at Newcastle University, with plans to complete a social work degree and work with young people, either in foster care or a health setting. She's living independently, bought a new car, and also holds down two casual jobs. Stacey has lived in out-of-home care for 11 years and her face lights up when she talks about her carers. "My carer's family took me in because they were a loving family and it was important to me because I needed love and support to help me grow. Without that, I wouldn't have a sense of identity of who I am as a person today." Even though she's out on her own now, Stacey still sees her carer regularly. "We still have our lunch get-togethers and she is always still caring for me. None of that has changed, I am just more independent now."



### CULTURAL CARE

This year Life Without Barriers was chosen to provide the new Intensive Therapeutic Residential Care (ITRC) program in the Northern Territory (NT). Across the NT approximately 90% of the children in care are Aboriginal. ITRC is a new model of care that ensures while children are living in a residential care home they remain connected to culture, identity, language, family and community. These values remain at the core of our work with Aboriginal children and we were pleased to have the opportunity partner with community to support children and young people.



### KINSHIP FOR KEEPS

When Al, aged 12, heard his name called out as 'student of the week' at his Mackay Queensland school, the ear to ear grin he sported belied the difficult journey he'd undertaken. After his first foster care family placement broke down, Al had been living in residential care. It wasn't an easy transition for him and his behaviour became increasingly challenging. "Al's care team worked closely with him as he was displaying significant pain-based behaviour," said Mackay Operations Manager Daniel Fluit. "Working with our Finding Kin program, we were able to locate Al's Auntie, right here in Mackay. Al's been living with his aunt and cousin for three months now. His behaviour has settled, he's in school every day and, yes, he's even pulling in student of the week awards."

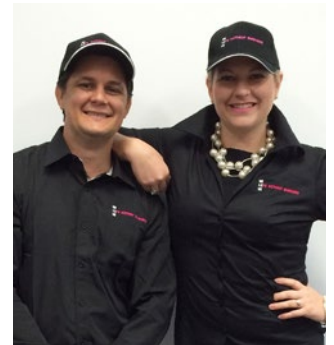


### SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS TO FIND SAFETY AND COMMUNITY

Our National Immigration Support Service (NISS) supported 2,666 asylum seekers while decisions were made around their immigration status. People seeking asylum in Australia have often experienced trauma and deal with ongoing anxiety about an uncertain future. Our team provides intensive support to help them with everyday needs such as housing, employment, financial services, case management and service coordination while a decision is made about their visa.



# Celebrating our people



We recognise and celebrate the dedication of our staff through our Employee Recognition Awards. In October 2019, over 200 of our staff came together to shine a light on the incredible achievements of our people. Each of the nominees and winners had gone above and beyond in their area of nomination and their stories reinforced why the work we do is so important.



The NISS Team pictured with Board Director Tracey McCosker (far right)

## OUR STAFF

### Our 2019 Employee Recognition Award Winners

**Reconciliation Award:**  
Leoni Lippitt, State Lead Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives

**Values Champion Award (Team):**  
National Immigration Support Services (NISS) Team

**Values Champion Award (Individual):**  
Rebecca Reed, Case Manager

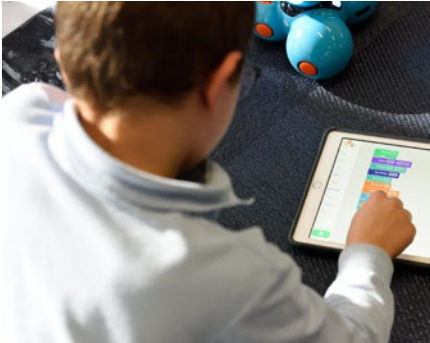
**Innovation Award:**  
Southern Tas Disability Support Team

**Safety Leadership Award:**  
Anne Wall and Naomi Holland, Riverland Team

**Carol Peltola Practice Leader Award:**  
Jo Cameron, Manager Casework

**Leadership Award:**  
Michelle Edmondson, AOD Team Leader

**People's Choice Award:**  
Kaylene Christie, Service Delivery Coordinator Aged Care



## Supporting our people

### OUR LEADERS

At Life Without Barriers, we are dedicated to building the capability of our leaders. As part of our Leadership Engagement Program we held our third annual Leadership Conference in October. The conference brought together talented and dedicated leaders along with our Board to hear from internal and external speakers, build relationships and work together to create impact for people in the future.

### LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

When carers are supported, they have the best ability to embrace and care for the children in their home. This year we strengthened our support for carers in a number of ways.

In February 2020, we invested in carer training by extending our myLearning platform to carers.

The online platform allows carers to undertake specialised training in their home, at their convenience, empowering them to better support children with complex needs. We met with carers in a series of 'Lightbulb Sessions' across NSW, VIC and SA with carers sharing areas in which they felt supported and areas that needed improvement. These learnings informed our support moving forward.

In June 2020 we launched a national Carer Induction program to strengthen how new carers are welcomed and supported across Australia as they transition into their caring role with Life Without Barriers.

### CARING IS IN HER NATURE

Nicole Long epitomises what being a carer means. "I'd always dreamed of adopting a child. As I got older, I realised being a carer wasn't a fairy tale, but a very real responsibility," said Nicole, a single mother from Queensland who is part of Life Without Barriers foster care family. How much of a responsibility came when, just a year after taking on her first foster son, Nicole was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"I was terrified we would have to give him up," she said. But with the help of her two biological daughters, then aged 11 and 14, Nicole's family stayed in tact. Happily, she's beaten the cancer as well as getting through the year home schooling through COVID-19. She's currently fostering three children aged 3, 7 and 9.





## OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE

As an essential service, we continue to provide services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with two priorities driving our work; continuity of care for the people we support and promoting and protecting the health and safety of clients, staff, foster carers, children and families.

In March 2020, Life Without Barriers enacted its COVID-19 Pandemic Plan. Our Chief Executive assumed the role of the National Emergency Management Controller, supported by the National Emergency Management Team (NEMT). The NEMT prioritised our response through 9 focus areas that included health and safety, wellbeing and morale, leadership, financial and technology.

We adapted our services over time, in line with Public Health Orders and Care Directions. The Life Without Barriers COVID-19 Response Call Centre was established to provide a central point of authoritative information and support.

We also communicated through multiple channels including phone, online, personalised letters, staff Alerts, sms messages, Chief Executive videos, and Easy English resources. Additionally, we provided a digital COVID-19 Intranet as a library of resources and information.

Our aim from the beginning was to ensure everyone was as informed as possible about changes that might affect them, bringing stability to our community during uncertain times.

Over the past 10 months, Life Without Barriers deployed many initiatives to ensure our community felt as safe, confident and supported as possible. We not



“

This year has been historic. We have been required to be agile and responsive more than ever before. Our partnerships with people have been a great source of collaboration and shared experiences.

”



Our team packing care and PPE packs for residential homes



Physical distancing in action in Disability Services

only focussed on physical safety, but on wellbeing and morale.

With social isolation a significant concern, our case managers conducted regular check-ins with carers. When schools closed, we provided an additional payment of \$300 to carers to assist with the costs of home schooling and sent computers and tablets to children so they could engage in online learning.

We also ensured our disability clients in residential homes had access to technology that allowed them to stay in touch with their support networks and families, and offered lifestyle supports through virtual options including trivia, reading, cooking and exercise classes.

Our team distributed regular care packs to our residential services filled with activities for clients and staff.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including gloves, masks and cleaning products were supplied to all services, and specialist positive PPE kits located in homes in preparation for any positive cases.

All direct-care staff completed mandatory training on infection control. While to date we have had very low infection rates among our Life Without Barriers community, where positive cases occurred, these were case managed and led by an allocated incident controller from the Covid Response Unit.

Over 1,600 non-client facing staff have been supported to work remotely and managers have been upskilled in how to assist geographically diverse teams. This included providing the technology they needed to successfully work from home.

We also provided access to an additional two weeks paid special leave for staff, including our casuals, who were required to self-isolate due to Covid testing.

Some jurisdictions were targeted for extra supports since June, particularly Victoria, which experienced the impact of a second wave and extended lock downs. These have included wellbeing and resilience sessions delivered by consultant psychologists, care phone calls, and additional recognition for both front line and office base staff.

Overall, the results from national pulse surveys, and other feedback mechanisms suggest that our staff feel very well supported by Life Without Barriers.

# Reflecting on our impact through **Vision 2020**

**Vision 2020 steered Life Without Barriers through a time of significant change. Through its guiding principles, we supported thousands of people to transition to the NDIS, encouraging them to be self determined and have control over their disability supports.**



Our evidence-informed practices were expended to increase safety and stability for children and young people in out-of-home care. We remained committed to supporting the rights, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, clients, carers and families through the launch of our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.

Breaking down the barriers to employment for people with disability remained a focus for us

with the launch and implementation of two Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plans (2016 and 2019). Through a strong relationship with Angus Knight we partnered to create Joblife, a Disability Employment Service. We then encouraged the wider sector to join us in creating more employment opportunities for people with disability through our Employment Without Barriers campaign and our Ideas Without Barriers events.

**To view a full report on our impact through our Vision 2020 Strategy, please refer to *Vision 2020 Reflection*.**

## Board governance

### OUR BOARD AS AT 30 JUNE 2020



**Terry Lawler AO**  
Chair of the Board



**Anthony Deegan**  
Director



**Tracey McCosker**  
Director



**Gillian Calvert AO**  
Director



**Jan Lowe**  
Director



**Dr Helen Szoke AO**  
Director  
*Appointed to the Board  
November 2019*



**Doug Dean AM**  
Director



**Graeme Innes AM**  
Director



**Natalie Walker**  
Director



**Paula Head**  
Secretary

For full details about the Board, their qualifications and their responsibilities, please view page 4 of the *Life Without Barriers Annual Financial Report*.



# Financial Summary

2-year summary, \$000's	2019/20	2018/19
<b>Revenue &amp; Expenditure</b>		
Total Revenue & other income	702,687	556,032
Total Expenditure	696,547	554,672
Operating Surplus	6,140	1,360
<b>Assets &amp; Liabilities</b>		
Total Assets	289,233	214,254
Total Liabilities	235,588	161,122
Net Assets	53,645	53,132
<b>Cash balance</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents at 30 June	136,988	97,190

## SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

Through careful financial management, Life Without Barriers is returning a surplus of \$6m. These funds are reinvested back into our programs and people to ensure long term sustainability of our services.

### SERVICE DELIVERY

**91.3%** of income invested in services and supports for clients

## INCREASING ACCESS TO SERVICES

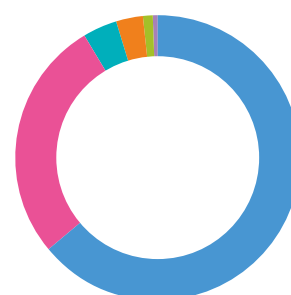
During 2019-2020, Life Without Barriers has increased our service offering by 26% (\$146m) from the previous financial year. The transfer of disability services from the Department of Health and Human Services in Victoria to Life Without Barriers has allowed us to expand our reach to support more people to live the life they want to live.

## ASSURANCE AND RISK

KPMG were appointed as our new auditors in 2020 to further strengthen our control and governance capability. We value their independent assessment and fresh perspective on our internal financial controls and were pleased that they issued an unqualified audit opinion on the Group's financial statements.

## TOTAL INCOME

**\$702.6M**



● Disability	63.3%
● Child, youth and family	27.3%
● Home and Community Care	3.8%
● Asylum seeker support	3.1%
● Mental health	1.9%
● Youth justice	0.6%

## Paying our respects

Life Without Barriers wishes to acknowledge the lives of people we have been honoured to support over the year who have passed away. When a person becomes a member of our Life Without Barriers community, they are like family and the loss of them is felt deeply by us all. They stay forever in our hearts.

We also wish to extend our acknowledgement for all persons impacted by COVID-19 across Australia. We have been brought to our knees by a pandemic that has taken many lives far too early. Our love, and thoughts are with everyone who is grieving the loss of a loved one and whose lives we recognise, will never be the same.





# LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

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