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WELCOME TO WE LIVE LIFE

In *We Live Life* we shine the spotlight on individuals who are making a difference.

We hope you enjoy reading about our volunteers and staff who, through their passion and commitment, are helping people to change their lives for the better.

In each edition we publish articles about our work with the people we support and our services, and share inspirational stories from around the country. We also profile our Life Without Barriers teams, innovations and successes.



Did you know, Life Without Barriers is also on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram? Connect with us @LWBAustralia



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE CLAUDE ROBBS

It has been a big year for Life Without Barriers helping thousands of people across the country. I am delighted therefore to share with you not only the final edition of 'We Live Life' for 2017 but also our Annual Reports Highlights (2017 Annual Report Officially Launched – Page 4) for the financial year.

In the Summer edition of *We Live Life* you will meet Nick and Alex, who with the help of the NDIS and Life Without Barriers are living independently, working, and flourishing (The Most Neat & Tidy House on the Block – Page 2); and meet foster carers Gaz and Chel from Tasmania who have opened up their home to four children in long-term placement and one in respite care (Meet Gaz & Chel – Page 15) and dynamo Sarah Fox from Queensland who dispels the myths about being a single foster carer (What Sort of Person Would I be if I said NO to these Kids – Page 16). We also say thank you and celebrate all of our foster carers with a full wrap-up of Foster Care Week on Pages 5 and 6, and highlight an exciting and innovative partnership between Ashgrove Cheeses and LWB to help recruit foster carers in Tasmania (Foster Care Movement Campaign – Page 3).

This edition also features three recent major events at Life Without Barriers – the Waves for All partnership and launch

with Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club to build a more accessible and better beach community by increasing the ease of access for people with a disability to the beach (Waves for All – Pages 9 and 10); the closing celebrations around Life Without Barriers spiritual home in Parry Street, Newcastle (One Door Closes, Another Door Opens – Pages 13 and 14); and all of the colour, anticipation and excitement at the 2017 Life Without Barriers Employee Recognition Awards (And the Winner Is – Pages 11 and 12).

It has been another big year in the inclusion and diversity portfolio and so we also feature stories in this edition about our Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan on Page 7; Next Step After Care's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artwork Project on Page 8; and Welcome Dinners for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and international students on Page 18.

And finally, we applaud and welcome results of the recent Marriage Law Survey which saw more than 60% of Australians voting 'Yes' for marriage equality. This result was rejoiced by our staff throughout Australia, with many attending 'Yes' parties to hear the results and celebrate.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of *We Live Life* and the Annual Report Highlights and look forward to sharing many more stories with you in 2018.

My best wishes also for happy holidays and a joyful and safe festive season.

Claire Robbs

THE MOST NEAT & TIDY HOUSE ON THE BLOCK



Pictured – (left to right): Nick Heames, Jess Baker, Alex Walker. Photo Credit: Bec Lewis – www.blimaging.com.au

On a sunny Launceston morning we visited the beautiful modern (and neat as a pin) home of two Life Without Barriers clients. We were told that two young men lived there – I couldn't believe my eyes! Surely they were wrong... [Meet Nick and Alex!](#)

Nick and Alex met at The Hub (a social meeting space for young men with a disability) and soon realised they had similar interests. They developed a fast friendship, and this resulted in them exploring accommodation options and eventually moving into together. Prior to the big move, Nick was living with his parents and Alex was in a group house with another service.

One of Nick and Alex's Life Without Barriers mentors, Jess, says "This opportunity for the guys originated from a blossoming friendship and strong connection. It works because their personalities really complement one another."

With the support of their families and Life Without Barriers mentors, the transition into independent living has been a great success and relatively smooth sailing. When you met these two lovely guys you can see why.

Alex and Nick have a roster of domestic tasks, cooking duties, and fun activities all planned out and stuck on the fridge. They also have a lot of their own time to go to work and pursue their individual interests.

Nick, the quiet achiever, is a keen sportsman and has won numerous trophies for basketball, soccer and tennis. He didn't miss a single hoop in the backyard while I was watching. Nick also

works a few days a week in a local bakery as a kitchen hand and loves it.

Alex is the more outgoing and cheeky! He has a keen interest in all things music and movies, and when in conversation can be quite the poet. He also possesses impressive chef skills – as demonstrated during our visit. Alex also works a couple of days a week at Bluegum, which he really enjoys as he loves being outdoors.

When you ask Nick about living with Alex he says, "We get along really well and we have bonded. I have really liked getting to know more about him."

Nick also loves food and says he enjoys "penne sausage pasta and shepherd's pie" the most. He says that he and Alex also love watching movies and enjoying adventures outdoors as housemates.

When you ask Alex about living with Nick he says, "Nick is really sporty and I love how he brings so much energy to life. He encourages me. He is an inspiration to me and everyone around him. We are the perfect match as housemates."

In their spare time Alex says, "We love going out with Jess and other mentors and doing social activities."

When you ask them both about their Life Without Barriers mentor Jess they say, "She is fun, has heaps of energy, helps us with some chores, listens to us, and is... LOUD!" ;)

When Jess talks about Nick and Alex she beams, "They are two very strong characters who love to have fun, but they are also striving for goals. They are now living independently and are ambitious young men – which is my favourite part of working with them. Both the guys are very different which brings great balance and harmony to the house."

This is a living example of the NDIS, and associated support agencies like Life Without Barriers, giving independence and choice to young people living with a disability.

Moving into the future, I asked Nick and Alex what they hoped for. Nick said, "I hope to still be living here in 12 months' time, get more independent, and improve my cooking skills."

Alex said, "I would like to continue to live independently and reduce the need for mentors and support. Life Without Barriers and our parents have been so supportive and great, but the aim is to definitely live completely independently."

Jess finishes by saying, "The guys both have really exciting and bright futures. They already have better social lives than me, they're flourishing, and doing an amazing job. At the moment their future is anything they want it to be."

I think that says it all.



Photo Credits: Rob Burnett and Roy Thomas

FOSTER CARE MOO-VEMENT CAMPAIGN

An exciting partnership to drive Foster Care recruitment in Tasmania between Life Without Barriers and Ashgrove Tasmanian Farms

Demonstrating an uncanny knack for recognising a good thing, Life Without Barriers staff in Northern Tasmania have developed one of the most original and unusual foster carer recruitment campaigns in the organisation's history.

Joining with Tasmanian dairy and cheese-making icon – Ashgrove, the Northern Tasmanian team developed and delivered their highly successful “Foster Care Moo-vement” campaign with milk bottles wearing neck ties coinciding with this year's Foster Care Week.

Regional Manager, Northern Tasmania, Melinda Ferrier said the concept for the campaign came from the minds and enthusiasm of her close team. “Foster care recruitment is an ongoing challenge for the Out-of-Home Care team in Northern Tasmania,” Melinda said.

“One of our disability team members, Gaylene Connell, Practice Leader presented the idea of advertising on milk cartons.

“Gaylene's rationale was that everyone buys milk, in particular families and carers, and what better way to get the message out in to the community. Her proposal even came complete with a sample product!”

Working together, Case Work Manager, Sarah Pyka led the project – developing and managing a partnership with Ashgrove, who were very passionate about supporting the community that supports them.

The dairy producer also found the initiative was very much in line with their ethos.

Melinda said the original concept was for labels to be placed on the milk bottles; however with only a week before foster care week it became evident the label concept was not workable on the production line.

“Quick thinking was required with a brain storming session conducted with the Out-of-Home Care team,” Melinda said.



“Ashgrove proposed the neck tie concept and Case Manager, Chris Steele, proposed the Foster Care Moo-vement slogan. Our marketing team responded quickly and ran with this idea.”

Looking very dapper, 10,000 necktie-wearing Ashgrove milk bottles went out into shops state wide as part of the 2-week “Moo-vement” drive as part of Foster Care Week in September.

The end result for Life Without Barriers and Ashgrove was a hugely successful Foster Care campaign with a significant peak in enquiries during this time, as those contemplating becoming foster carers did something about it. It's a partnership Life Without Barriers in Northern Tasmania hope to continue with Ashgrove annually, to continue to generate interest and discussion about Foster Care in the community.

2017 ANNUAL REPORT OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED



Envisioning Lives Without Barriers

This year's annual report provides a snapshot of the life-changing work we undertake. From the children and young people supported through out-of-home care to the disability lifestyle supports and housing and medical services for asylum seekers, our Annual Report highlights just how instrumental Life Without Barriers is in supporting people to reach their goals and change lives for the better. Our model of care is centred on building positive relationships and the stories in our Annual Report reflect this.

Throughout the report, you'll read first-hand accounts of what life looks like for our foster carers, hear about the experiences of our youth justice clients and how they got back on track, and learn about how older people are embracing real-life changes. These stories show how we seek first and foremost to understand the needs and goals of clients, and then use our initiative, skills, and innovation to meet those needs.

The 2016/17 financial year saw exciting changes and opportunities for growth throughout Australia for our organisation. The Multisystemic Therapy Program aimed at curbing youth re-offending expanded to Western Australia and Queensland, the #synergy Mental Health Program launched in Tasmania and the new We Put Children First: Understanding Child Sexual Abuse training module was completed by over 1500 staff and foster carers.

Some of the key programs we have implemented to address how we deliver greater value for our clients are the Disability Reform Program, the Foster Care Redesign, Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter (FISH) and the Abecedarian approach. You can read more about these programs in the report itself.

Our future is looking bright as we embrace opportunities to expand our services ever wider. We are working with the NSW Government to transfer the management of services for more than 260 people living in group homes in NSW to Life Without Barriers, and in the ACT the aged care and disability provider DUO joined the Life Without Barriers family in July 2017.

We would like to thank the volunteers, foster carers, employees and community partners for their ongoing support over the past 12 months. While we can't include everyone's story in our Annual Report, we hope we have provided a snapshot of the amazing achievements of our 4000 staff and the 14,000 lives we support through our services.

Read our '2017 Annual Report – Envisioning Lives Without Barriers' here: <http://www.lwb.org.au>



440+

locations across Australia

14,177

clients supported



Caring homes for

4,057

children and young people



Supporting

2,872

people with disability

FOSTER CARE WEEK

Life Without Barriers Celebrates Foster Carers

Foster and Kinship Care Week is not just about celebrating and recognising our amazing carers, it is about reaching out and finding as many compassionate individuals, couples and families to become Foster Carers by providing long and short-term care or weekend respite Foster Care for children and young people who are unable to live with their families.

When you become a Foster Carer, the children who come into your home will present both challenges and wonderful opportunities. The challenge is caring for children who may have experienced difficult circumstances in their life and may be insecure, frightened and

sometimes angry. The opportunity is the love, understanding and patience they receive from you and the huge difference this can make in their life, as well as yours. If you can provide a safe, stable and nurturing home the foster and kinship care state teams at Life Without Barriers would love to hear from you.

“Our children come from a range of circumstances and reflect the diversity of our communities. We need carers who reflect that diversity to support children to remain connected to culture and community. This is especially important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who may need support to return home or be cared for by members

of their own community,” says Life Without Barriers Manager of Carer Recruitment Deanne Carroll.

“Some children will go home and we need supportive restoration carers to help make this happen. Other children will need carers, guardians or adoptive parents for life. Whether you provide short term care or commit for life, all carers make a significant difference in the lives of children,” reinforces Life Without Barriers Chief Executive, Claire Robbs.

Life Without Barriers has over 2600 Foster Carers across Australia and this week we thank and celebrate them.



MEET JACINTHA AND EDDIE AND THEIR RESPITE CARER RAECHEL FROM NEW SOUTH WALES

“Being a foster carer is the hardest and the most rewarding job you will ever have and it comes with huge responsibilities,” shares Jacinta.

Having started as foster carers in 2009 with the support of Life Without Barriers, Jacinta and Eddie love the idea of having a large family around them. Now with a sibling group of four foster children in their home, they say the experience has been thoroughly rewarding for them on many levels.

“The activities I do are driven by the children. I am keen to stay consistent with how they are raised with their foster family; which is with measured and thoughtful choices; to give them the right blend of guidance and empowerment. Their weekend with me is time to have fun and relax,” says Raechel.



MEET GEORGIE AND MITCH FROM TASMANIA

Georgie and Mitch are the dynamic duo from Launceston. They are the awesome foster carers of a teenager who is a big part of their world.

Mitch also said that as foster carers it is important to remain agile and responsive, “There are good days and hard days, and being flexible is a huge part of that. Teenagers can be very spontaneous and not always the best communicators or organisers so sometimes we have to take a breath, support each other and try not to sweat the small stuff. Adapting and thinking of the bigger picture always helps progress if we ever take a step back. It’s also important that the carers are a team.”

For Foster Care Week in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia in September this year it was all about thanking and celebrating our magnificent carers with a distinct media campaign that centred around bespoke postcards, video vignettes, social media and some of our carers taking to the radio airwaves and pages of print to be champions, recruiters and advocates for foster care.

You have already been introduced to a few of these foster carers in previous editions of We Live Life and the story of two more of them are in this edition. We will continue to share all of their moving and amazing journeys to becoming foster carers.

If you are interested in becoming a Foster Carer you should be familiar with the selection criteria.

- You can be from any cultural background;
- You can be single; defacto, married or same sex couples; with or without children;
- You have a spare room in your home or apartment – you can be renters or owners;
- You are healthy and have the emotional capacity to deal with the challenges of foster caring; and
- You are over 18, with relevant life experience (some States require foster carers to be over 25 years). Upper age limits may apply for some types of care.
- Everyone in the household needs to be an active and willing participant in fostering vulnerable children.
- Mandatory checks are also completed as part of the assessment process, these include: Working with Children, Criminal Record, Reference, Health and Medical, and Home and Safety checks. All potential carers also undergo training prior to commencing as carers.

“It is also vital that you have the right motivation to become a foster carer, where the child is at the centre rather than fostering because you might be lonely or for your own benefit. We are also looking for carers to take on children of all ages – from babies to primary school and teenage children all looking for a secure and safe environment to call home. You will also have plenty of training and support from your local Life Without Barriers foster care team,” concludes Life Without Barriers Manager of Carer Recruitment Deanne Carroll.

If you are interested in becoming a foster or respite carer with Life Without Barriers please contact:

T. 1300 592 227 | E. carers@lwb.org.au | www.fostercare.lwb.org.au



MEET GWEN FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Gwen is the biological mother of five grown-up children and a grandmother to seven children. She has a big and growing family with two teenage foster children who are siblings. They have called Gwen's house a home for the last 6 years.

Gwen decided to become a full time foster carer after providing respite care for good friends who were existing foster carers. “I love children and it just went from there,” she said.

When asked about how to form a relationship with a new foster child coming into your home Gwen says, “Love and communication is the key with an abundance of patience, commitment, respect and honesty thrown in.”



MEET AARON AND JACQUI FROM VICTORIA

Melbourne couple, Aaron and Jacqui are relatively new foster carers with Life Without Barriers. Since September 2016 they have been the carer of a 16-year-old boy.

Aaron says, “It has brought a new element to our small and young family. Our 5-year-old has enjoyed having an older child in the house and it has been a new experience having a teenager around. Our foster child loves music, is full of life and is always singing. We love hearing the joy coming from him, as this hasn't always been the case in his life.”

“The traumas and hurts of the past can cause some foster children to have various ups and downs. Just like the rest of us though, all it takes is a little extra love and care to get through,” says Jacqui.



NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Kelvin Giles

CONGRATULATIONS KELVIN!

Four Gold Medals at World Master Games

Life Without Barriers would like to congratulate Kelvin Giles, who recently won four gold medals in the 9th World Masters Games held in Auckland. Kelvin is one of the clients we provide lifestyle and disability support for in Forster, NSW.

The avid swimmer took the first place in the 50 and 100 meters freestyle, and 50 and 100 meters backstroke. This meet was Kelvin's first international competition but second time at the Masters, which is open to sportspeople of all abilities. At the 2009 Masters he took home one silver and two bronze.

Kelvin competed as one of 56 swimmers in his para-sports discipline of swimming, with his discipline being for swimmers who do not kick their legs. The Auckland games offered 11 para-sport disciplines, offering the broadest range of para-sports in its history.

Kelvin's sporting achievements are also being noticed in his local community. He was recently recognised as a finalist for Sportsperson of the Year in the 2017 Myall Lakes Community Awards, which awards the quiet achievers across the community.

Kelvin was born with cerebral palsy and began swimming as a form of physical therapy, but his talent and love for the sport have seen him take it to a competitive level, with local and interstate competitions throughout the year. He trains three times a week, all year round, at his local Forster pool, always accompanied by his Life Without Barriers support worker.

We are so proud of Kelvin's hard work and his sporting achievements.

ACCESSIBILITY, INCLUSION AND EMPLOYMENT PLAN

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Life Without Barriers has long been a champion of equality, diversity and inclusion, and we now support and promote inclusion in our internal hiring practices just as much as we support it in the community. Life Without Barriers' Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP) includes a year on year employment target that ensures a dedicated percentage of new business appointments are people with disability. The 2017 target of 4% was achieved and in 2018 the target increases to 10%.

Life Without Barriers Manager of Diversity and Inclusion Fiona Davies said that while it is best practice for organisations to have an Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan, it is less common for businesses to set employment targets that they can be held accountable to. "I am proud that Life Without Barriers has set these targets. It has driven us to lay strong foundations in the first year of our plan to make sure that our recruitment practices are accessible, as well as ensuring that other areas of our organisation such as property, information and technology are too," Fiona said. "We are committed to creating an inclusive culture for all employees and part of that is checking whether a workplace adjustment is required at every stage of the recruitment process."

The most recent figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that there are 110,000 people with disability currently looking for work. The Australian Human Rights and



Equal Opportunities Commission identifies the employment barriers for people with disability include discrimination during recruitment, lack of jobs, lack of assistance in applying, and difficulty accessing skills training.

In order to make the recruitment and employment process smoother for people with disability, we work with Disability Employment Services who submit suitable candidates for advertised roles. In addition, we invite all candidates to identify whether they have a disability in the recruitment process, including ways in which we can help to accommodate them in our office space should they be the successful candidate. From recruitment to on-boarding, we aim to let new employees know they are a welcomed, accommodated and a valued part of the Life Without Barriers team.

"As Gold Member of the Australian Network on Disability (AND), Life Without Barriers is making excellent progress on their journey to become accessible and inclusive. A well-communicated AIEP shows they have a high level of commitment in this space. And, by setting targets and measuring their progress using our annual Access and Inclusion Index, they will continue to grow their ability to welcome people with disability. It's a really positive story and we look forward to continuing our partnership with LWB," said Amy Whalley, Deputy CEO, Australian Network on Disability.

THE NEXT STEP

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artwork Project

Next Step After Care service provides young people between the ages of 15 and 21 who have been in foster care or other out of home care arrangements, with support to build independent lives.

More than 1,500 young people have used Next Step After Care services since its inception, benefiting from the quick access to practical advice and support with things like:

- Accommodation and food
- Home furnishings and household basics
- Reconnecting with family, friends, community and building relationships
- Education, resumes, training and job-readiness
- Counselling and other referrals

The Next Step Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy aims to increase the awareness, accessibility and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people through Next Step After Care and ensures the service is available to eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in communities throughout Queensland.

“Young people accessing Next Step After Care services can seek one-off assistance, or ask for tailored advice and information, set-up ongoing or one-on-one support when they need and we can even help organise identification documents, Medicare, birth certificates and driver’s licences. But most importantly it provides an ear to listen to young people,” Life Without Barriers, Next Step After Care Community Facilitator Nicole Muller said.

This year, an artwork project was undertaken to further engage and connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations across Queensland with the service. The team knew that targeted marketing material would attract the attention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people,



Pictured (left to right) – Niccy Muller, Muriel Jacobs, Leonie Lippitt, Taz Clay, Demi Law, Silvia Jones-Terare and Adam McMurray

and encourage them to pick up the material and read what the service offers.

Drawing on a co-design approach, Life Without Barriers wanted young people who would potentially use the service to be part of the creation of an artwork to be used in all Next Step After Care flyers and brochures.

The development of this artwork required a commitment from the whole team to ensure that correct cultural protocols were followed, and that all who were involved in the project gained an experience unique to our destination of Stradbroke Island – home to the Quandamooka people. After gaining permission from the Quandamooka Elders, the project team invited six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island young people from across the state to take part in a cultural and artistic retreat.

For three days, under the watchful and guiding love of the Quandamooka Elders and the LWB facilitators Silvia Jones-Terare, Nicole Muller, Leonie Lippitt and Grant Williams, the young people immersed themselves and connected with nature, formed friendships and embraced the culture on the island to take on their own spiritual journey.

This retreat informed a wonderful piece of art titled *Creation*, that speaks of a sense of identity, a sense of place, a sense of being, and a sense of how Next Step was a part of that journey for each of the young people involved.

An official launch of the artwork to coincide with NAIDOC Week, was held at Jagera Hall at Musgrave Park in Brisbane, a cultural epicentre fitting

for this celebration. The program was welcomed and celebrated by Traditional Owners the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul people who performed along with a Torres Strait Islander dance troupe who proudly provided cultural entertainment for this launch. The artwork was unveiled by Life Without Barriers Chief Executive, Claire Robbs, showcasing the young people’s journey through a reflective video of the experience on Stradbroke Island.

The video of the Stradbroke experience is at the following link: <https://youtube/mFGHefEA1e0>

In October, Life Without Barriers staff and one of the young artists, Melay Jacob, presented *Creation* to The Hon. Shannon Fentiman, Minister for Child Protection, Communities, Youth, Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence and the Next Step After Care artwork is now displayed in Queensland’s Parliament House.

The team involved in the artwork project also won this year’s Reconciliation Team Award at Life Without Barriers 2017 Employee Recognition Awards.

Next Step After Care services are available through Uniting Care Community’s 24 hour call or text line on 1800 639 878 or you can email info@nextstepaftercare.com.au

There are Next Step offices in Beenleigh, Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Sunshine Coast, Kingaroy, Mackay, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns.

For all of the information and more go to the Next Step website: www.nextstepaftercare.com.au

WAVES FOR ALL

New accessible facilities at the Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club



On Saturday 23rd September the sun was out, Life Without Barriers clients were excited, and families and children packed the beautiful Bar Beach shoreline for the launch of the new accessible facilities at the Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club – which was celebrated with the “Waves for All” event.

Life Without Barriers (LWB) partnered with Cooks Hill Surf Life Saving Club and the Newcastle City Council to build a more accessible and better beach community by increasing the ease of access for people with a disability to the Surf Club and the beach. The new accessibility infrastructure includes a lift and toilet to be located in the Clubhouse, a ramp from the clubhouse to the beach, and ramp from street level on Memorial Drive to the clubhouse.

This upgrade to the clubhouse is the first stage of a \$4.5 million project that will be accomplished by the Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club after identifying that they had outgrown the council-owned 1930s building.

The launch event also coincided with the launch of the new season and a raising of the flags, and boasted a number of special guests to help celebrate the special occasion. Popular Paralympians Kurt Fearnley, Andrew Edmondson and Maddie Elliott were joined by local politicians Taylor Martin (Member of the New South Wales Legislative Council) and Tim Crakanthorp (Member for Newcastle).

After delivering motivational talks to the crowd Kurt, Andrew and Maddie were kings and queen of the kids and disabled guests as they signed autographs, posed for selfies, and participated in

games of tug-o-war, beach volleyball and beach wheelchair races. The LWB external relations and marketing and communications team would have had some sore legs the next day after participating in all the activities as well.

Also a big hit on the day was the bespoke cake from ‘The Quirky Cake Society’, face painting, KOFM giveaways, surf lifesaving demonstrations, and of course the sausage sizzle and bacon and egg rolls.

Richard Hermens, President of the Cooks Hill Surf Life Saving Club, believed that this was an important move to make, and that everyone deserves easy access to the beaches of Newcastle and the Hunter, as well as the necessary facilities.

“This being the first of a two-stage project that was delivered by a team of volunteers, Life Without Barriers and other community minded partners designed



to meet the growing and greater needs of the community. With determination and against the odds, a small group of us dared to step up and gave up thankless hours to design, cook sausages and more sausages – a lot of sausages went into this building – chase grants, attend endless meetings, negotiate and manage the construction of this building. Together we have delivered this building which offers not only disabled and female amenities, full disabled access to the beach and surf, but most importantly an inclusive community facility.”

This building allows Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club to continue delivering their amazing disability outreach programs, education and leadership programs, and refugee, immigrant and Indigenous outreach programs that have set this surf club apart and make them leaders in the inclusive space.

“We are two organisations that service and support our community in different ways. What we share in common though is a commitment to improve the lives of people for the better and make our community more inclusive and equal,” said Life Without Barriers Chair Terry Lawler.

Cooks Hill Surf Life Saving Club through its “Same Waves” and disability access programs, has been working to reduce barriers limiting young people and people with a disability from accessing a range of surf and beach-side activities for a number of years.

Chief Executive of Life Without Barriers Claire Robbs said, “Funding this increased accessibility infrastructure at Cooks Hill Surf Life Saving Club reinforces our commitment to providing disability support and accessibility assistance so that EVERYONE has access to and can

enjoy life at the beach – which is such an important part of our culture and brings to much joy.”

“Disabilities come in many forms, some we see others we don’t. This building addition is the first step in creating a truly dedicated facility that delivers a beach that is accessible to the whole community. In partnership with Life Without Barriers and through community collaboration we have delivered a building that is the first of its kind in the Hunter. Our aim and our ethos is to break down the barriers that surround disabilities and make Newcastle and the Hunter the leaders in the future of inclusion,” concludes President of Cooks Hill Surf Life Saving Club Richard Hermens.

With further community support, Cooks Hill Surf Life Saving Club now hopes to begin planning for the second stage of the rebuilding project for the clubhouse.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Life Without Barriers Employee Recognition Awards

On Wednesday 18th October everyone dressed-up in their finest to attend the 2017 Life Without Barriers Employee Recognition Awards.

At The Primus Hotel in the heart of Sydney's beautiful city, the nominators, finalists, LWB Executive, Board and State Directors all enjoyed a wonderful meal, entertainment from Aboriginal RnB trio Women of Soul and magician Liam Power, and the anticipation of the winner's announcement.

The tone of the evening was set by our poised and popular MC – award-winning journalist and TV personality Indira Naidoo.

But the night really belonged to all of the finalists who looked amazing and excited, even though they were no doubt feeling quite nervous.

These awards are designed to recognise and celebrate individual and team efforts and achievements within Life Without Barriers. From support and innovation to delivery and frontline services, all nominees, finalists and winners are to be congratulated.

However, there always has to be a winner and here they are:

CAROL PELTOLA AWARD FOR AN INDIVIDUAL

WINNER: Emily Boxhall – Program Manager Out of Home Care, TAS

This award honours the late Life Without Barriers Board Member Carol Peltola, who dedicated more than 30 years to improving child safety in Australia. Nominees for this award are people who listen to client and staff needs, are respectful, and encourage the participation and inclusion of others.

THE VALUES CHAMPION AWARD FOR AN INDIVIDUAL

WINNER: Nicky Osborne – Program Manager Mental Health, TAS

This award recognises individuals whose behaviours and actions reflect and embody the Life Without Barriers values above and beyond their normal work activity. They exemplify the values of Relationships, Imagination, Respect, Responsiveness and Courage. These individuals demonstrate Life Without Barriers values in action when working with clients and internal/external stakeholders.

THE VALUES CHAMPION AWARD FOR A TEAM

WINNER: The Placement Support Team (Foster Care) Mt Barker, SA

This award recognises a team whose behaviours and actions reflect and embody the Life Without Barriers values above and beyond their normal work activity. They exemplify the values of Relationships, Imagination, Respect, Responsiveness and Courage. These teams demonstrate Life Without Barriers values in action when working with clients and internal/external stakeholders.

THE RECONCILIATION AWARD FOR A TEAM

WINNER: Next Step Aftercare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artwork Project Team, QLD

This award recognises a team that demonstrates the spirit of reconciliation; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people coming together as one. United, they work to achieve greater respect, understanding, and equity for all Australians through a multitude of programs and actions. This team embodies reconciliation being everyone's business.

THE SAFETY IMPROVEMENT AWARD FOR A TEAM

WINNER: Central Coast Client Services Team, NSW/ACT

This new award recognises a team who has worked in partnership with clients, Life Without Barriers colleagues and other stakeholders to ensure the safety of Life Without Barriers people (clients and employees). This team has developed and implemented a new practice or process. They have challenged the status quo and created a holistic solution that showcases an improvement in safety.

THE INNOVATION AWARD

WINNER: National Immigration Support Service Team, VIC

This award recognises an individual or team who has developed and implemented a creative, compelling or unique solution to a challenge. The winning project or approach was identified as one that stands out from the crowd. Further, it demonstrated an organisational capacity to think holistically and venture beyond the usual expectations for the benefit of Life Without Barriers clients.

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

WINNER: Kim Nguyen – Program Manager NISS, VIC

This award recognises an individual who is broadly admired and helps in a crisis, or someone who others go to for information or leadership. It may be a colleague who keeps things running smoothly, or one who has achieved something remarkable. This award is determined, from a shortlist of nominees, by popular vote. It is a tribute to the individual whose contribution to the organisation is most widely acknowledged by their peers.

Congratulations again to all nominees, finalists and winners!





ONE DOOR CLOSSES, ANOTHER DOOR OPENS

Community celebration at closing of Parry Street

On Friday 7th July, it seemed fitting that on a day of celebration at Parry Street the sun was out, (and so were the smiles), the smell of a sizzling BBQ filled the air, and everyone openly and happily shared their Parry Street stories whilst saying goodbye to the spiritual home of Life Without Barriers. It was quite the party!

“Parry Street was where it really all started,” said Life Without Barriers Chief Executive Claire Robbs. “It grew from the grassroots of our community and the family and friends of our Chairman who saw the need for services in Newcastle for people with a disability.”

Parry Street began with a group of local community members addressing a need for disability programs and services for their relatives in 1997. Throughout that time, Life Without Barriers received fantastic support from Newcastle City Council allowing LWB to be tenants at Parry Street for the last 20 years and providing a beautiful space and garden for clients. LWB survived the 2007 June floods in Parry Street that caused significant damage, but staff rallied and rebuilt. In a nostalgic and reflective farewell it was suddenly time for the LWB team depart Parry Street, but this moment was shared by the excitement and anticipation of opening Union Street.



“Parry Street will forever hold a place in our hearts as the founding home of Life Without Barriers that provided us with the firm footing to become the national organisation servicing and supporting many vulnerable populations that we are today. When we first opened the LWB office at Parry Street we paid \$1 per week – how times have changed. Parry Street will remain a cherished place not just in the hearts and minds of current LWB staff and clients, but past members of Life Without Barriers. Although this chapter has come to an end, we look forward to our new space in Union Street and looking back with fond memories of our humble beginnings. I’m excited for the

future, the opportunities of the NDIS and our disability services in Newcastle,” said Life Without Barriers Chair Terry Lawler.

The new facilities at 32 Union Street, Newcastle NSW will provide a contemporary space for disability clients to participate in range of meaningful programs. These programs will compliment those which are offered in the community such as fitness, health and wellbeing, and arts and craft just to name a few. Union Street will encourage members of the community and businesses to work together to enhance inclusion in the community. Life Without Barriers clients will also benefit from the purpose built

change room facilities supporting them to have their personal care needs attended to, in the most dignified way.

Life Without Barriers has grown from its humble beginnings in Parry Street to a national organisation in 300 communities across the country, who still retains its head office in Newcastle.

So as they say – when one door closes another door opens. Life Without Barriers bids a fond and memorable farewell to 55 Parry Street and welcome a new and exciting chapter at 32 Union Street, Newcastle West.



MEET GAZ & CHEL

“ We receive the absolute joy of being able to steer the kids on a safe and loving path that can sometimes lead to reconciliation.”

When you walk into the magnificent, tranquil and picturesque home of Gary and Michelle you are immediately greeted by Heather Trott, (the family pig), six horses, five dogs, the sound of singing birds, and the smell of an apple pie and scones baking in the oven. This is truly a home bathed in warmth and love.

Gaz and Chel (as they prefer to be called) have been Foster Carers for Life Without Barriers since 2014.

Currently in their care they have four children in long-term placement and one in respite care – who range in age from 3-years-old to 12-years-old. They also have three grown-up boys of their own.

When the Gaz and Chel were asked why they decided to be Foster Carers they responded, “We have always been unofficial carers. It was just right the time in our lives when we could give our all as official carers, with the goal of keeping the whole family together and involved.”

It is clear that as a family unit they value honesty, authentic love and the approach of both an open heart and mind above all else. Gary says that as a foster carer you should, “Never say anything you are not going to do! Even little things will make the difference.”

The couple also believe that respect is paramount as experienced foster carers and they adhere to the old saying ‘you only get back what you are willing to put in’ when it comes to being effective and loving carers.

When asked about the happiest moments they have shared with their foster kids, their response is unanimous and simple, “Everyday! Like the simple times we spend in our little boat catching flatheads, go swimming at the beach or feeding the animals on our little farm. We love to share adventures and experiences that bring us all together as often as possible.”

When asked what advice they would offer to others wanting to become foster carers they said, “It is very educational. We thought that we had it all covered, but NO! There is a lot to learn and that is ok because looking after these vulnerable little angels and giving them stability is all that really matters at the end of the day. If you have ever thought about fostering, and have the time and patience, it will be the best thing you ever do for yourself and the lives of these little ones.”



“WHAT SORT OF PERSON WOULD I BE IF I SAID NO TO THESE KIDS?”

Meet Sarah

“I had a lot of tough times as an adolescent. I struggled to make it through my teen years emotionally. However, I was fortunate to have people around me at school, extra-curricular activities, and positive role models that provided me with what I needed to make it through. This helped me see the need for a network of people around me at rough times. This helped me come to the decision to also become a foster carer. Both resilience and support are really important.”

Sarah knew from a young age she wanted to help children less fortunate than herself.

“I have always had a heart for those kids in need of a loving home. As a kid I remember finding out that friends of our family’s children were foster kids and being amazed that there were kids out there who didn’t have a home like mine – one where they were loved and safe. As the years progressed and I discovered more about the world, I became even more committed to giving back to the community by helping provide a home for those in need. I have always had the philosophy of why bring more children into the world when there are already so many who need a home.”

Two years ago Sarah felt the time was right. She was financially stable with a good job and a secure home with room for a child. It was time to make the move toward fostering. She was nervous at first, but eventually worked out the best way to be a breakthrough foster carer, “I think the best thing to do is start with a smile

– let them know they are welcome. Give them their own space, even if it’s just for a night. It’s so important for them to have something to claim and control and, most importantly, take your cues from them.”

Today, at 27, she is in her element, teaching high school in the Queensland public education system whilst caring for her ten-year-old foster child. She may be a single foster parent, but she’s not alone.

“I have always felt supported,” she says. “Life Without Barriers (LWB) is there with help, training, advice and practical support when I need it. They were the ones I wanted to do this through right from the start. They were a really accepting, really supportive organisation.”

As Life Without Barriers supports children with intensive needs, Sarah was aware she could have been taking on a child requiring greater levels of care than most. That often means a background of trauma resulting in frequent, violent meltdowns, anxiety, depression, anger and destruction.

Even still, Sarah is a qualified teacher. She has the training and drive to provide the levels of safety, love and support required.

“The kids that really make my heart sing are the ones with the worst stories,” she said. “Kids don’t act out in these ways without a reason. When you get to the heart of that reason you see this vulnerable little child and all they need is someone to love and support them. You become the person that little child needs. I would say the biggest thing that brings me joy is watching kids overcome

issues that have been stopping them from succeeding. The kids I take generally have some significant behavioural difficulties, and seeing them learn better coping behaviours, engaging at school and developing strong friendships are definite highlights.”

Sarah currently cares for an eleven-year-old foster child who has been in and out of care most of his life.

This placement could be long term, Sarah says. But if her foster child’s circumstances change and he returns to his family, that’s okay too.

“That’s part of being a foster parent,” she says. “The years you invest aren’t wasted just because they go home. Everything I do is about helping a child become a better, happier person. It makes them better able to manage the challenges they face.”

While most people accept and respect Sarah’s life as a single, working foster parent, a few say they could never choose that path.

“I just reply: Why not?” she says. “I have the capability, the love in my heart and a spare room. What sort of person would I be if I said no to these kids? I am a single person who works full time and if I can make it work then so can you.

Being a Foster Carer completes my life. Not only has it brought some wonderful children into my life, but I’ve also met a community of people who genuinely care about children and want to make a difference in the world. This will be the most rewarding thing you will ever do.”



Pictured (left to right): Chantal Campbell-Tonks, Amy Markham, Jana Henderson

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Having a 'Grande' time

For Jana Henderson and Amy Markham, a trip to Sydney to see Ariana Grande live in concert seemed like wishful thinking, but with the help of their Life Without Barriers Support Worker, Chantal Campbell-Tonks and funding through their NDIS packages, it recently became a reality

Jana and Amy receive lifestyle support from Life Without Barriers in their home town of Taree, NSW. They both worked with Chantal to save their money, purchase their concert tickets online and finally travel to Sydney for the big night, where they dressed to impress, and had a spectacular night seeing Ariana Grande live on stage. As well as enjoying the concert, the trio shopped at the DFO (Direct Factory Outlet) and Paddy's Markets, stayed at the Holiday Inn, and indulged in breakfast at World Square. They had such a fantastic time plans are already in place for the next big concert.

Life Without Barriers offers community and lifestyle support for people living with disability in many areas of Australia. For more information visit www.lwb.org.au

SYDNEY ADVENTURE

From the Harbour Bridge to Summer Bay

With adventure in mind, a small group from the Life Without Barriers Day Program in Forster, NSW set out for a two day trip to Sydney. This trip is one of the many activities organised by Life Without Barriers for people living with disability.

Kelvin Giles and Vivian Hoare, along with their Life Without Barriers Support Workers Melinda Mills and Donna Yarnold, had a fantastic weekend away. The group enjoyed a trip to the Manly Aquarium taking in the sea life demonstrations – with plenty of happy snaps taken along the way. The afternoon was filled with Sydney sights including the Harbour Bridge, Opera House, and Circular Quay from the Manly Ferry.



Kelvin Giles and Vivian Hoare

Once back in Manly, the group found their accommodation and enjoyed dinner at the Manly Wharf, where the topic of conversation centred on the excited anticipation of the next day's activities.

Day two held a big surprise for Kelvin and Vivian with a trip to 'Summer Bay' from the TV show Home and Away. With both Kelvin and Vivian being huge Home and Away fans they were extremely excited. After a few wrong turns, the group found their way to the Palm Beach filming location, where they could see the TV cameras and crew trucks when they arrived. They visited the Boat House and the Summer Bay Surf Life Saving Club. It was a day to remember!



A RETURN TO COUNTRY TRIP

Far North Queensland

In August, our Cairns team facilitated a return to country trip to the remote Community of Kowanyama on the western side of Cape York, Far North Queensland. The team took four clients back home to reunite with kin and country. Our Executive Director Corporate Services and Finance, John O'Connor also joined the group and is pictured here, being baptised in the Topsy Creek by Vivienne Bernard, an Elder and family member.

One of our clients returned home to celebrate her 21st birthday and spent a few days fishing with her family, who were very happy to see her. We are proud to facilitate return to country visits with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because they ensure spirit, mind and body are connected with their ancestors and The Dreaming.



WELCOME DINNER HELPS CONNECTIONS

Food is the great connector

Welcome Dinners connect newly arrived people including migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and international students with established Australians over a potluck-style meal in a family home or a trusted community space. Life Without Barriers and 'joiningthedots' hosted a special Community Welcome Dinner to launch the Welcome Dinner Project in the Greater City of Dandenong on Fri 14th July.

At the Dandenong Centre over 70 people attended – people seeking asylum from Rohingya, Tamil, Hazara communities. Volunteers and facilitators gathered from a cross section of the community to bring the event together and celebrate the beautiful food from different cultures and cuisines – Mauritian soup, chicken biryani, moussaka, curries of every colour and spice, egg cups, chocolate cake, Madeira cake and the list goes on.

The positive energy and buzz in the room was catching and people wrote down one word about how they felt on the night – “Happy,” “Hopeful,” “Nostalgic,” “United,” “Oneness,” and “Joyful” were some of the words that came up the most.

In the majority, people seeking asylum risk their lives to escape from their homeland and the families they cherish to take a precarious journey on an often leaky and ramshackle boat packed with people fleeing for their freedom. People leave because they are seeking political

and /or religious freedom and a “better life for their children.” People have always sought asylum and the countries they flee from depends on the situation in their country. Currently, at Life Without Barriers, the people who we assist the most are Hazaragi of Afghanistan, the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the Rohingyans of Burma and the Iranians from Iran.

Food is the great ‘connector.’ On the night, people proudly brought their favourite or a traditional dish to celebrate their culture and share, “pot luck style”, with the other people at their table. They were all asked to tell a short story about their dish as a way of introducing themselves to their table mates and new friends. The Community Welcome Dinner provides an opportunity for people from all walks of life and different cultures to share great food, make new connections in their own neighbourhood and to celebrate inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging.

People seeking asylum often transition from a country such as Malaysia or Indonesia. From there they can wait for many, many years in the hope that they will be assessed as ‘asylum seekers’ and re-settled to a host country such as Australia. This can become what seems like an eternal wait, often given very little to survive on, in terms of food and shelter. This sense of desperation can often force people to make the decision to once again risk their lives and embark on an ‘unseaworthy boat’ to Australia.

If people are granted visas to remain in Australia, the thing they prize the most is “a sense of belonging.” As they can often feel socially-isolated and may have suffered great emotional, financial, physical upheaval, the feeling of ‘social connectedness’ that sharing simple meal together can help people to feel that they are not alone and experience a greater sense of community.

Since the official launch of The Welcome Dinner Project by joiningthedots in March 2013, over 200 Welcome Dinners have been held in homes and community spaces across Australia. There are many challenges in our society for newly arrived people and the popularity of this project demonstrates that there is endless goodwill out there to create a different kind of story – one that represents the true “fair go” Australia!

The final word should go to our special guests for the night:

“Tonight I feel just like I am with my family.”

And

“After three years in a detention centre so beautiful to hear the sounds of children laughing and playing.”

Please look at the Welcome Dinner website if you would like further information: www.joiningthedots.org/the-welcome-dinner-project





YES FOR LOVE

Australia Votes 'Yes' for Marriage Equality

Life Without Barriers welcomed the results of the Marriage Law Survey which saw more than 60% of Australians voting 'Yes' for marriage equality. As an organisation, we are an advocate for fairness and equality on all fronts. Our organisation is built on a belief that the world is richer because of our diversity and at our core we strive for equality for all Australians. This result was especially welcomed by our staff around Australia, with some staff attending 'Yes' parties to hear the results and celebrate.



Tasmanian State Director Rhonda McLaughlin and her team celebrate the 'Yes' announcement in Hobart



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