



Partnering for the future

Annual Report 2021-22



LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

Acknowledgement of Country

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

We pay our respects to them, their culture and customs and to their Elders past, 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.

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



Our Purpose:

To partner with people and change lives for the better

We are led by our values of respect, responsiveness, courage, imagination and a steadfast commitment to authentic relationships.

Our purpose means we are guided by the people we support and the communities we serve. No matter how many thousands of people we partner with, no two people are alike. Through relationships we offer services that are personalised and informed by each individual and their support network.

We strive to act in a way that is responsive to our communities now, while also understanding the needs people may have in the future. We offer our sincere thanks to everyone who partnered with us this year. It is these partnerships that have made the achievements outlined in this report possible.

Our Values



We are Courageous



We are Respectful



We are Responsive



We build Relationships



We are Imaginative

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

Board and Chief Executive message

The essence of Life Without Barriers has always been the importance we place on our values and relationships. As we embarked on the first year of our Strategy 2025, it is the people we partner with who have enabled us to extend the impact we are having across Australia.

The Financial Year 21-22 offered challenges and opportunities in equal measure. Our country endured the pandemic and communities on the east coast, including our staff, carers and people we support, were battered by flooding. At the peak of these devastating events we have seen the best of our people and the community. Our Life Without Barriers network responded swiftly by partnering to secure housing for carers and worked in partnership with government and other non-government organisations to protect vulnerable people and families.

Australia will continue to experience extreme weather and this year the Board began in-depth discussions about our future climate justice strategy. We partnered with external experts to build our understanding of what we can do to have a positive effect towards climate change and we expect to release our climate justice strategy in early 2023.

Life Without Barriers also maintained a strong COVID-19 response with our COVID Response Unit working in partnership with our staff and the community to streamline information and support effective COVID safe measures.

COVID and the weather were not the only risks we faced this year. Life Without Barriers is not immune to the volatile global environment and significant pressures on the Australian economy, however strong financial stewardship has ensured Life Without Barriers will continue as a sustainable organisation now and into the future.

As a values-led organisation, we seek continuous improvement and self-reflection. We supported the efforts of the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) and in December, Life Without Barriers formally apologised to the people and families for whom we failed to meet our promise of quality

support and care. The DRC provided Life Without Barriers an opportunity to reflect on feedback and learn from these insights to improve our services. We will continue to support the DRC and support the Commission's understanding of disability services in Australia.

In May the country elected a new Government and it was encouraging to see a commitment by the Prime Minister to implement the Uluru Statement in full. Life Without Barriers supports the Uluru Statement and this year Reconciliation Australia endorsed our future commitments with an Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The RAP shows learnings from our journey since 2009 and outlines key actions we believe will help us make giant strides towards reconciliation. A key component of the RAP is the Transformation Project which commits Life Without Barriers to step away from providing



Greg Ridder
Chair



Claire Robbs
Chief Executive

out-of-home care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children over the next ten years. This commitment is only possible because of our partnership with SNAICC – Voice for our children and Reconciliation Australia. We are deeply grateful for their support and welcome their guidance through our journey.

In 2021-22 the organisation completed the first year towards our Strategy 2025 commitments. Delivering great services is what we have done for nearly three decades and a values-led culture is central to what we offer as an organisation. We invested in initiatives that encourage a deepening of the relationships we have with carers, people we support and their families, as well as how we listen and respond to people's choices. Through this report you will read stories from across the country and of the lives we have been fortunate enough to be a part of this year.

Within our social policy commitments we sought to influence the systemic barriers far too many people across our country experience. Our efforts focussed on improving educational outcomes for children in care, disrupting barriers faced by people with disability in accessing meaningful employment and invigorating living choices for people with disability. Collaborations including the Alliance20 and Children in Care Collective, enabled us to examine ingrained issues and collaborate on responses that can affect real change.

In June, we concluded our Access Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP) for the period 2019-2022 and we began working on our new AIEP for 2022-2025.

Our AIEP is a powerful driver of our inclusive culture. In this report we share some of the highlights of our AIEP outcomes

and learnings that are informing our future workplace commitments.

Retirements from the Board in 2021 gave rise to new positions and we are delighted that Rajiv Viswanathan and Kurt Fearnley AO, joined as non-executive Directors in November of 2021. Their skill and experience provide so much value to the work of our organisation.

On behalf of the Board and Executive Team at Life Without Barriers, we extend our sincere thanks for the opportunity to be a part of the journey of tens of thousands of people and we thank our staff and carers for their commitment through what has been an extraordinary year.

Partnering with SNAICC for the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

This year, Life Without Barriers announced a partnership with SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, which commits our organisation to progressively step away from providing out-of-home care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by 2031.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are vastly over-represented in the child protection system and that number has continued to rise. The National Close the Gap targets are striving to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% in 2031. Without radical change, this target is not on track to be met.

Our commitment to transfer out-of-home care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-control within 10 years, in conjunction with a paradigm shift in policy design and delivery to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples, is the focus of the Transformation Project. We believe this significant national commitment is critical in beginning to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the out-of-home care system.

The drive and advocacy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their leaders over many years, have created a clear roadmap for Life Without Barriers and the child and family service sectors to advocate for systems reform. Our commitment includes taking a leadership position in the child, youth, family and human services sectors, through our planned transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to community control. We want our journey to encourage others to follow.

The Transformation Project is founded upon the building blocks identified by Family Matters, the national campaign to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. The Transformation Project will also focus on changing bias in legislation, policy and systems which result in increased interactions with the child protection system.

We believe our Elevate RAP demonstrates our belief that we can change outcomes for emerging generations through contributing to something that has never been achieved before and has the capacity to positively influence the lives of generations of children in the future.



Life Without Barriers has recognised the cycles of trauma that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people face, and the disproportionately high rates of First Nations children in the child protection system. It acknowledges its own role in this system, and consequently its ambitious Transformation Project aims to drastically reduce this over-representation in out-of-home care.



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



“

The future of decision-making about the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is community-controlled. Our communities are the experts. We know that culturally appropriate services designed, led and delivered by our services, get better outcomes.

”

*Catherine Liddle, Chief Executive Officer SNAICC
– National Voice for our Children*





Life Without Barriers employees and carers join with community to put our commitment to reconciliation into action and learn by doing, 2019.

Reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is a nation where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children, young people and families, prioritising self-determination to strengthen connection to culture, community, and country.

Life Without Barriers has been deeply involved with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities for 25 years through the provision of services Australia-wide.

Our reconciliation journey over 12 years has culminated in cultural highlights and continuous learning-by-doing. Our Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) have provided clear road maps for increasing staff and stakeholder engagement, deep reflection, and accountability which has not just been about what we could achieve, but about our reconciliation journey as an organisation.

Our future leadership in reconciliation through our Elevate RAP will actively champion initiatives to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and create societal change.

Our people are deeply committed to reconciliation. We have a team of advocates from the Board, Executive and Leadership who continue to reflect on our commitment with honesty and humility. We recognise that together we can build on our visionary and collaborative intentions and develop collective actions for impact so reconciliation can be realised.



Participants at the Waltja Aged and Disability Festival presenting an exquisite artwork they created for Life Without Barriers.

Our journey so far

Reflect RAP

We established our first RAP in 2009, which set out steps that prepared our organisation for reconciliation initiatives in our future RAPs. This Reflect RAP committed to scoping and developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, deciding on our vision for reconciliation and exploring our sphere of influence.

The RAP provided the foundation for our reconciliation journey and continues to influence our journey today. For the RAP to be truly meaningful, we addressed

our history and truth, as much as what we would do in the future – and this took time and is a continuing journey.

Innovate and Stretch RAP

Over the next 10 years we invested in our Innovate and Stretch RAP's. Our Innovate RAP allowed our organisation to gain a deeper understanding of our sphere of influence and establish the best approach to advance reconciliation.

We focused on developing and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and developing

and piloting innovative strategies to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our Stretch RAP enabled us to develop strategies and establish a strong approach towards advancing reconciliation internally and within our sphere of influence.

We focused on long term initiatives and worked towards defined measurable targets and goals. The Stretch RAP required us to embed reconciliation initiatives into business strategies, so they became 'business as usual.'



The journey ahead

Elevate RAP

The Elevate RAP 2022-2025 demonstrates our commitment to reconciliation where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children, young people and families, prioritising self-determination to strengthen connection to culture, community, and country.

To achieve the Elevate RAP and during the term of the Stretch RAP, we invested time to consult and engage across our organisation and with partners and stakeholders about what more we could do to contribute to reconciliation. The learnings from our Stretch RAP led us to think broadly in relation to our scale, reach and influence and

how we should use our voice to advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and self-determination.

The decision to make a commitment to be accountable through an Elevate RAP was born from a deeply held belief that our organisation should assume a leadership position to advance national reconciliation.

The Elevate RAP confirms our intention across key actions and deliverables that we will affect change within our organisation and nationally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and leadership. This is articulated through the Transformation Project where we commit over the next ten years to progressively step away from providing out-of-home care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The Elevate RAP is a call to action and allyship. In partnering with SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, we are seeking to do our part to address the structural drivers of systemic inequality in child protection systems by contributing to large scale reform and a paradigm shift in policy design and delivery necessary to truly empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples, their leaders and organisations. At its heart, it is much more than transformation. It is a reinstatement of what works for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that which has worked for our country for millennia.

The Elevate RAP also details our commitment to relationships, respect, opportunities all of which stem from strong governance.



Possum Skin Cloak

The possum skin cloak was crafted by the Life Without Barriers National Cultural Respect Steering Committee members. It symbolises our reconciliation journey including governance of two Reconciliation Action Plans. The cloak’s central motif is the sun – ‘the giver of life’ – with the sunrays representing the states. Each member of the National Cultural Respect Steering Committee chose their totem or symbol to represent themselves and their experience with the Committee. Mitch Mahoney, a Boonwurrung and Barkindji artist, guided the making of the cloak.

Transformation, allyship, justice and equality are key themes in the Elevate RAP and integral components of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ ability to exercise power, agency, and responsibility – the living expression of self-determination.

The Elevate RAP invites each of us to cede control, recognise and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and change our ways through resolute and sustained action at all levels of local and national systems.



Life Without Barriers’ South Australian teams came together during National Reconciliation Week to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Reconciliation in the West. The event celebrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture and Identity to support reconciliation in South Australia.



Life Without Barriers named the training room in the Beenleigh office, Queensland in honour of Uncle Boomi – Boomi Hegarty, Wakka Wakka Elder – to celebrate 10 years of the Gittaba Cultural Program – reconnecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with culture.

Delivering great services

Life Without Barriers provides services by partnering with people across Australia, to change lives for the better. This year, our dedicated team of 13,000 carers and staff have supported more than 23,000 people, including: children, young people and families; people with disability; people with mental health and drug and alcohol issues; older Australians; and refugees and people seeking asylum.

We recognise and respect that people are the experts in their own lives. Our support is shaped by their needs and preferences, so they can participate as they choose in their community.

This year we have forged new partnerships, collaborated to co-design services and have implemented new evidence informed models of practice. We have remained responsive to ensuring the people we support, our carers and staff remain safe through the COVID-19 pandemic and the distressing weather events that impacted Australia in 2022.

There are more than **23,000** stories to tell, we have included a small selection to highlight the year that was.





Delivering great services

Assisting our people in the wake of floods along the east coast of Australia

In February and March 2022, tens of thousands of people, including people we support, our carers and staff, were impacted by severe storms and floods in Queensland and New South Wales.

As the community responded, Life Without Barriers rallied together. Often impacted themselves, dedicated staff ensured the people we support were safe and that essential services continued to be delivered.

We enacted our Emergency Response Protocol, providing centralised oversight and support for local teams. We tracked damage to homes, and available staff were re-directed to relieve those who had worked long hours. We partnered with the Red Cross to ensure a consistent food supply was available. Everyday essentials including medications were sent to those who had significant losses or who were unable to return home.

The prolonged and repeated nature of storm patterns in 2022 meant the wellbeing of our community quickly became the focus after the immediate flood response. A few of the measures we took included:

- Implementing a buddy system to check in with carers who had significant losses.
- Assisting carers to secure rentals where accommodation was needed, and sourcing financial support given the immediate housing supply crisis.
- Working in partnership with various government departments to ensure funding for carer relocation was secured.
- Working with Specialist Disability Accommodation housing partners for urgent repairs.
- Providing disaster leave payments to staff.
- Establishing a Life Without Barriers fundraising campaign to support people impacted by floods.



Keeping people safe and well through COVID-19

We continued to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the people we support, our carers and staff during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic through our COVID-19 Response Unit.

The Unit co-ordinated information and communication about public health orders and guidance from the Department of Health, provided support to staff via a 24 hour hotline, co-ordinated safety and infection control measures and distributed personal protective equipment to more than 300 locations across Australia. Our Executive and Board maintained strong oversight of our COVID response and we adapted our approach to ensure stringent

infection control was maintained. We continued an emphasis on safety and protection of staff and the people we support by providing up to date and relevant information including materials and resources for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This year we partnered with other organisations to improve sector-wide responses to COVID-19, by sharing our resources, learnings, experience, and knowledge.

While COVID-19 continues to impact the lives of so many people, we will continue to respond effectively, placing the health and wellbeing of the people we support front and centre in all that we do.



Delivering great services



Since moving into his home in NT over two years ago, Warren has become a popular member of the community.

Disability and mental health services

This year we supported more than 5,700 people with disability and mental health issues. The central element of delivering great disability and mental health services is the relationships we strive to form and nurture with people we support, their families and networks.

People's needs change, as do their choices and preferences. Our services are adaptive whilst also protecting and promoting people's fundamental rights. This year we focussed on exploring specific areas within our services with people with disability and families to embed continual improvements in the experience people have with us. These improvements centred on how we can support people to exercise choice and control over their services and how they want to live and how they engage in the community. These improvements were:

- Increasing our family engagement through various family and supporters groups
- Engaging people with disability in discussions about their rights and how we can support them to exercise those rights

- Strengthening our values-based approach with our workforce
- Supporting our workforce, people with disability and families to continually mitigate the risks of COVID-19

Centre for Practice Excellence

Underpinning the commitment to delivering great service and ensuring that Life Without Barriers is focused on not just meeting standards but striving to deliver services that exceed expectations, the Centre for Practice Excellence – Disability and Mental Health was established in May 2022 to further this vision. The Centre for Practice Excellence consolidated and integrated the existing pillars of practice into a multidisciplinary unit which, alongside partnerships with Client Services and Group Risk Impact and Performance, will define, embed, drive and monitor great services through great practice.

Active Support

Life Without Barriers commenced a partnership with the La Trobe University's Living with Disability Research Centre to embed Active Support and Frontline Practice Leadership across our disability services. Active Support enables



Residents we support have turned their backyard into a thriving garden.

relationships between staff and the people they support that offers both principles and skills to guide staff practice. It has been demonstrated to improve engagement of people with intellectual disabilities and improve their overall quality of life. The Centre for Practice Excellence – Disability and Mental Health started laying the foundational work for Active Support. We are partnering with Professor Christine Bigby in her continued research in this arena.

National Behaviour Intervention Support Team

A new National Behaviour Intervention Support (BIS) Team combines the behaviour support practitioners within Life Without Barriers into one team, helping us further avoid, reduce, and eliminate restrictive practices wherever possible.

Applying principles of the Positive Behaviour Support framework, the BIS team delivered independent expert behaviour support and therapy services to improve the quality of life for people with disability, both within and outside our organisation.

National Safeguarding Unit

To proactively protect the wellbeing and human rights of the people we support, this year our National Safeguarding Unit reviewed and enhanced our response to complaints and incidents, piloted an Active Apology project to guide our response for people who had incidents that caused harm, and established better systems to manage and respond to Community Visitor reports.

Our commitment to practice and quality services

Following the launch of Strategy 2025, the Life Without Barriers Practice Governance Committee endorsed a review of the Practice Governance Framework.

This year we partnered with the Parenting Research Centre (PRC) to review and develop a contemporary Practice Governance Framework which explains the fundamental principles, elements, processes, and systems that support quality in practice across the whole organisation. It will be implemented across the organisation in 2023.

Delivering great services

Supporting Kenny to live the life he wants

Kenny, pictured at a park in South Australia, has discovered his hidden talents.

Kenny wished to experience more connectedness and purpose. He has started creating the life he wants – with a helping hand from his support worker and discovered a hidden talent too.

Kenny, 25, has an extensive knowledge about nature and wildlife and loves birds in particular. Kenny lives with physical pain that impacts his mental health and quality of life. When Kenny's support worker Mark met him, Kenny was withdrawn, isolated and not engaging in life.

Mark assisted Kenny with appointments and shopping. They also went for walks and drives, and Mark observed that Kenny came alive when he heard or saw birds.

Over time a trusted relationship formed. "I am very lonely," Kenny confided during one of their walks. Mark told Kenny about a mental health program

that offered social support. Kenny took the brave step of attending the induction with Mark, then joined its two photography groups and an art group. Kenny was dedicated and never missed a session – he looked forward to them even when he was in pain.

Kenny was using his iPhone to take pictures for the photography group. Mark asked Kenny for permission to apply for a small grant for him to purchase a camera. At first Kenny thought the grant should go to others. After talking with Mark, Kenny realised that a camera would help him use his wildlife knowledge productively, increase his wellbeing, and possibly steer him toward a career one day.

The grant was quickly approved, and Kenny chose a camera that accommodated his accessibility needs. Kenny can now capture even better images, empowering him to realise his talent for photography.

Our team of Community Rehab Support Workers support people who are experiencing some extremely difficult circumstances. We hold hope for others until they have hope for themselves.

*Deb Milford,
Mental Health and
Lifestyle Programs*

Mental Health Services

- Nearly 44% of Australians aged 16–85 have experienced a mental health issue during their lifetime.
- This year we supported more than 537 people with our mental health services across SA, WA, TAS and QLD.

Support to access the community through mentoring



Freddy was a Life Without Barriers Hub services participant. He now uses his lived experience to help others.

Freddy lives in Launceston, Tasmania and at age 17 he started visiting the Life Without Barriers Hub.

The Hub is a gathering place for people with disability to make connections and access mentoring as well as services to help people engage in the community through activities they choose.

“I was fortunate with the NDIS rollout to access some supports and to access services including the Hub. I found it a really great place to be and it helped me move outside my comfort zone and do more things socially which I really liked,” Freddy said.

Freddy loves sports and the arts and enjoyed accessing the Hub so he could be supported to explore his interests and develop friendships. Last year

one of the Life Without Barriers team suggested to Freddy he would be a great mentor for other people. Freddy applied and was successful in securing a position as a Life Without Barriers mentor at the Hub services.

Freddy is now employed with Life Without Barriers and working in partnership with people with disability to help them make choices about their life and how they want to be part of their community.

“I enjoy the work because of the connection I make with people and how I can support people with their different wants and needs. I pride myself on being consistent and understanding what a person is seeking from me,” Freddy said.

“

I have the experience of being a participant of the Hub and this has helped me appreciate that people have challenges in different ways and helped me be present and relate to participants I am working with and help them achieve what they want.

”

Freddy

Delivering great services

Responding to choice and creating opportunity



Yerilama invests time and energy in creating a garden in their home in Darwin.

There is a thriving garden in Yerilama and John’s home in Darwin that has grown from listening, learning and appreciating the value of relationships.

Yerilama and John both have disabilities and share a home in Darwin. Yerilama is an Aboriginal man from Maningrida country. Yerilama does not communicate through speech but excels at communicating his thoughts and choices to his support team in other ways.

John is reserved and private. In previous years, John required intensive support (24/7) due to mental health issues, however after working closely with his support team and building trust, this has progressively reduced to between 4-6 hours per day.

Sameer Mohammed, Regional Operations Manager with Life Without Barriers has known John and Yerilama for over 8 years. Prior to becoming a Regional Operations Manager, Sameer was a disability support worker, working directly with

John and Yerilama. When asked about his relationship with John and Yerilama, Sameer’s dedication to both men is palpable. “The team and I feel very committed to the relationship we have with John and Yerilama. I can see the positive experiences Yerilama and John have in their home and connecting with the community and this has been a team effort.”

The idea for a garden at John and Yerilama’s home came from a simple Woolworths delivery that included a free packet of vegetable seeds. Yerilama

showed lots of curiosity about the seeds and communicated that he wanted to plant them. His support team took Yerilama and John to Bunnings where they selected more seeds and the tools they would need to grow a garden.

Yerilama and John take a lot of pride in the garden and have worked hard to nurture it. Sameer says when John talks about the garden, he puts his hand on his heart and says, “We build this”. The garden is part of a positive routine for John and Yerilama and has cultivated their friendship as well.

Supported Independent Living

- We supported 1,249 people with Supported Independent Living.
- We focus on delivering services that enable people to connect with their community.
- This year we began engaging with each person we support to understand how and where they want to live.
- We signed up to support changing the National Construction Codes so that more homes are accessible for people with disability.



“We love being rock stars – we just want to have fun,” said Hoori from Sound Barriers, seen here playing at Hobart Town Hall.

Sound Barriers can't stop the music – connecting with community

Supporting people to participate in the community is one of the main goals of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). A group of local musicians in Tasmania are a great example of how access to the NDIS and support from Life Without Barriers enabled them to do the thing they love.

Sound Barriers is a Hobart-based rock band, formed in 2015 at a Life Without Barriers Community Program for people with disabilities. The six-member band got their name from being too loud. Before they converted an unused tool

shed into their sound-proof studio, they had to put sound barriers on the drums when they practiced at the shared community program centre.

“We got our first gig after I convinced our local pub, the Longley Pub, to give us a shot and we have grown from there,” said Hoori, one of the band members. Since then, the band has performed various gigs in Hobart, including playing at Hobart’s International Day of People with Disability events for the last four years and as part of the Ability to Create Exhibition.

They play crowd favourites, including music from The Beastie Boys, Troy Cassar-Daley, Ronan Keating, Twisted Sister, AC/DC and The Wiggles. The band have also written five original songs, including their Sound Barriers Anthem.

“Being a part of the band keeps us all stimulated and engaged,” said Life Without Barriers support worker Andy Whitaker. What would they like to happen next for Sound Barriers? “We want to do more gigs and make an album” said Hoori.

Delivering great services

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Cassie was suffering anxiety attacks. With support and regular driving lessons from the Aboriginal Driver Training Program, Cassie gained confidence and a sense of personal achievement. After gaining her license, Cassie was able to successfully pursue her dream job of becoming a translator for elderly Aboriginal community members needing to access Medical Services.

Partnering with communities in remote areas to support access to driver training

Life Without Barriers' Aboriginal Driver Training Program supports people in remote areas of Western Australia to overcome challenges they may face obtaining a license, so they can experience independence.

Over 700 drivers have gained their full motor vehicle license since the commencement of the program in 2013. The program won the Regional Safety Award at the 2021 Western Australian Community Achievement Awards.

Damien works on a remote cattle station but had lost his licence due to unpaid fines. The Aboriginal Driver Training Program team resolved his fines and gave intensive assistance for him to redo his Practical Driving Assessment. Not only did Damien keep his job, but he is also now able to visit his young children and wife on his breaks.

Our people and our values are the difference

A diverse workforce strengthens our ability to deliver great services to the people we support.

We acknowledge the guidance and contributions of our employee networks, Disability Ability Wellness Network (DAWN) and Pride Without Barriers, and our partnerships with Australian Network on Disability (AND) and Pride in Diversity.

This year we completed our fourth Access, Inclusion and Employment Plan and achieved some great results

- Our 2021 anonymous employee survey showed 14% of employees shared their lived experience of disability; an increase from 9% in 2018
- Achieved 4th place in AND's 2019 and 2021 Access and Inclusion Index (AWEI) and earned the top score in the Premises category of the Index in 2021
- Welcomed 224 new employees who shared a lived experience of disability (July 2019 to June 2022)
- Welcomed nine interns in 2019, six in 2020, and six in 2021 through the AND's Stepping Into Internship program. 81% (17) of our Stepping Into interns secured permanent employment with us
- Redesigned our Intranet Accessibility Hub and developed new accessibility training modules
- Maintained Disability Confident Recruiter Status
- Achieved AWEI's Bronze Employer Recognition for the second time
- Established a Disability Employment Unit, to improve employment outcomes for the people who choose our services
- Released our Inclusive Language Guide
- Endorsed the Australian Government's Employ My Ability strategy and the #WeThe15 campaign
- Participated in several forums, including the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS following our submission to the Committee's Workforce Inquiry (2020)
- Supported Woolworths in developing its Quiet Hour initiative
- Partnered with Community Services Industry Alliance, Queenslanders with Disability Network and Joblife on an NDIS Economic and Community Participation grant



Life Without Barriers is committed to creating change for people with disability, by people with disability.



Emily Reaper, Executive Officer and DAWN Co-Chair



Delivering great services



Child, Youth and Family services

Our priority is to deliver great Child, Youth and Family services so we can have the biggest impact possible in the lives of the children, young people, and families we support.

Great service is driven by great practice. We embed the six principles of the evidence-informed CARE model in everything we do and we are also guided by children's voices, ensuring they have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

This year we made significant progress in strengthening our services, supporting nearly 5,000 children, young people and families nation-wide. Our collective impact includes:

- Establishing a national Carer Advisory Group, running our first Virtual Carer Conference and implementing our Carer Assessment Client Relationship Management system to improve the care experience
- Creating the Children's Outcomes Dashboard and ensuring we are accountable to children for key measures including maintaining regular contact
- Implementing three new MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Hubs in South Australia
- Co-designing the service experience with young people through a Youth Advisory Group
- Rolling out the CARE model to our National Immigration Support teams
- Implementing our National After-Hours Service in QLD and NT
- Implementing National Child, Youth and Family Induction Training for all new team members
- Achieving CARE certification in QLD



Heartfelt thanks to all our foster and kinship carers

**In Australia today there
are over 45,000 children
in the child protection
system.**

Many children and families face the trauma of separation and that is why foster and kinship carers are so critical. Carers offer love, compassion and support to children, young people and families and a secure home for as long as it is needed. Carers are an important part of the fabric of Life Without Barriers and with 2,703 carers in our network, we are immensely grateful to each and every one.

Delivering great services



Robyn, pictured, has cared for over 20 children since becoming a carer.

Relationships – the active ingredient in changing lives

The active ingredient in any Child, Youth and Family intervention is the relationship that is formed between a child and the adults that surround them. These aren't just any sort of relationships – they are developmental relationships.

When carers build developmental relationships with a child, it means the child can feel connected, cared for and have a sense of power and choice in their lives. They then have the courage to take risks, try new things and build relationships to the world around them. Robyn and Cody's story is an example of what is possible when there is a developmental relationship.

Robyn's foster care journey began in 2006. Inspired by her parents, who were also carers, she wanted to provide a safe, nurturing environment for children to thrive. And according to Paula Moore, Child and Family Practitioner at Life Without Barriers, that is precisely what she's done for Cody!

Robyn opened her home and heart to seven-year-old Cody in 2016. Drawing on her experience and training, she helped establish a network of supports for Cody to meet his developmental, social and educational needs.

"Robyn is an amazing carer who just takes up any training I send to her. She's just straight into it," said Paula.

Robyn has worked with the Child and Family Care team to connect Cody with a psychologist to help better understand Cody's developmental needs and how the interactions and home environment can help him continue to find his strengths.

She has also helped Cody make vital social connections with his community through a tennis program.

"Joining tennis has been such a good outlet for Cody. His confidence and self-belief has grown so much," said Paula.

Keeping children connected with their families and community and having families involved in the care of the child is very significant for the child's identity. Cody has regular contact with his mother and he also enjoys the support of Brent, his youth mentor from Connect Kids.

Last year, Cody transferred to a high school that provides a developmentally focused approach to supporting students through alternative educational and vocational pathways. Cody is now making significant progress in developing positive relationships with his peers and teachers.

“

With the right mix of therapeutic and trauma-informed support around him, Cody is truly flourishing in all aspects of his life.

”

Paula



The launch of Life Without Barriers' second MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ constellation in Adelaide's north-eastern suburbs.

An innovative way to connect carers, children and families in community – MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ spreads wings in South Australia

MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Constellations are an innovative way to support foster families.

It works like an extended family or micro-community, empowering members to put children first, provide respite care, peer support, joint planning, training and social activities.

It improves the connections, relationships and the social and emotional well-being of children and their carers through the development of the micro-community.

North east Adelaide is one of three new MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Constellations formed in South Australia, in partnership with The Mockingbird Society, the Department for Child Protection and Flinders University.

When the north east Adelaide Constellation was formed in April, 12 year old Andy had never held a birthday party where he had friends to invite.

Birthday parties are an integral part of childhood, but many children in care, like Andy, struggle to form close friendships due to placement movements and are overlooked when invitations are being sent out.

Since the Constellation formed, Andy is now thriving and making new friends. He has even received his first invitation to join a birthday party!

One of the Carers in the constellation said, "We feel like we have found our 'village' to surround us and help raise our kids. We have made some amazing friends who we know will always be there for us and our kids. Recently when we were in crisis, it was so reassuring to know we had someone to ring who understood and was willing to be there for us by taking the kids for a few hours to give us time to debrief and just breathe.

I have made friends for the first time through Mockingbird

Andy

"Together we celebrate each other's special moments and support each other through the difficult times. The children have become great friends and have an amazing time when we all get together socially".

Key benefits of MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™:

- Children thrive socially, emotionally and academically
- Children and carers develop supportive peer relationships
- Carers receive support through respite, peer support, training and information
- Children remain connected to their community and culture
- Increased placement stability



Supporting young people to achieve their goals

Shannon showing her client different design options.

Young people need support and opportunities to forge a sense of purpose. Our Youth Advocate Program supports young people to embrace the future and how they want to live it.

Shannon is a proud Aboriginal woman and graduate from the Youth Advocate Program (YAP).

YAP is a relationship-focused program where advocates provide intensive support to young people with complex needs and their families. It can also help young people who have interactions with the criminal justice system to break the cycle of offending and pursue positive personal goals.

Shannon is a keen artist and worked with her Life Without Barriers advocate on a number of goals including developing her artwork and knowledge of marketing and business management. With support from the YAP team and other partners, Shannon had the opportunity to design a logo for an international company as part of their Reconciliation Action Plan. The company was so impressed with Shannon's talent that they are supporting her to develop her online art business. Payment for her artwork has allowed Shannon to buy a car and is paving the way for her economic independence.

More about the Youth Advocate Program

- Around 90% of participants in the Sydney program this year achieved their accommodation goals.
- By the end of the program, 90% of participants had a job and they all had no further contact with the criminal justice system.



Evidenced based and successful Multisystemic Therapy for child abuse and neglect

Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN®) addresses underlying trauma that results in harm to children, young people and families who have come to the attention of Child Protective Services.

It is a home-based treatment model that offers holistic support to all family members to address the multiple factors known to be related to physical abuse and/or neglect and seeks to promote behavioural change within the family. MST-CAN® has a focus on empowering the family by using identified strengths to address

the family's needs and build upon family and community support networks.

Life Without Barriers has been delivering MST-CAN® in Tamworth, NSW since 2017. At discharge this year, 82% of families had successfully completed the program and 55% of families were Aboriginal. All young people were living at home, 90% were in school or working and 90% of caregivers had no new reports of maltreatment. No caregivers or young people had been arrested.

Life Without Barriers is the Australasian Network Partner for Multisystemic Therapy (MST®) Services and in that role, provides support to other agencies to implement and deliver the standard MST® program across Australia and New Zealand as well as delivering MST® ourselves.

Mel was facing the possibility of losing her two kids because of her difficulties with substance use and subsequent neglect of her parental responsibilities.

As a result of Mel's seven months of hard effort and commitment to work through the MST-CAN® program, she had accomplished the life changing goals she set at the beginning of the program: getting clean of all substances and maintaining a safe and secure environment for her children.

Mel's most significant 'win' was "being there, as in present for [her] children" due to getting clean. She has developed new strategies to manage emotions and cope with challenges without involving drugs. She has a permanent job at a local hotel, regained her drivers' licence, and saved to buy a car – making her less reliant on her parents for transport and financial support. She has started a new relationship that is free from violence. Mel now actively parents her children, set rules and routines, and is enjoying watching each of them mature and achieve in all facets of their lives.

At the program's concluding 'healing ceremony', Mel wrote a letter to her children, apologising to them for everything they had endured during her drug use and violent relationship. Mel has a written plan and is excited to be moving into her own home with her children.



Hellen finds fulltime employment after her apprenticeship as a baker.

Supporting refugees and people seeking asylum

Our National Immigration Support Service team partnered this year with over 1,200 people seeking asylum in Australia and provided supports including help with mental health, accommodation, employment, medical and physical support as well as financial hardship. Positive impact has been achieved through:

- The commencement of Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHM) services in Victoria from September 2021
- Supporting asylum seekers and refugees who exited long term detention
- Supporting asylum seekers and refugees' resettlement journey to the US, Canada and NZ, Tasmania, and South Australia
- Providing COVID support through extensive communication and initiatives, including education, refugee health support sessions, and emergency relief for people experiencing financial hardship
- The establishment of the Employment Mentor Program to support job readiness, education, resourcing, networking, one-on-one support and workshop trainings.



The Queensland Child, Youth and Family team celebrated being awarded CARE Certification.

First Australian organisation to receive CARE Certification

In an Australian first, the Life Without Barriers Queensland Child, Youth and Family team was awarded CARE Certification.

Developed by the Residential Child Care Project at Cornell University, CARE is an evidence-based, trauma-informed model. CARE has been implemented by 50 agencies internationally. It is made up of a worldwide network of practitioners that contribute to research and evaluation of the CARE program and share and learn from each other. The Queensland Child, Youth and Family team started its journey towards CARE implementation with a CARE Leadership retreat in 2017. Since then, they have undertaken a rigorous implementation process that has included training hundreds of staff, and aligning their processes, practices and systems with the CARE principles.

The overarching purpose of this work is to ensure that Life Without Barriers offers the best trauma-informed practice supports to the children and families we support.

Martha Holden, Director, Residential Child Care Project, Cornell University, congratulated Life Without Barriers on being awarded Australia's

first CARE Certification, "The Life Without Barriers National and Queensland leadership team have diligently worked to fully implement CARE and serve the best interests of children and families. Even during the challenging and difficult last two years, they maintained their focus and continued to embed CARE into their practices and programs. The commitment of the Queensland leadership group has been an inspiration to us at Cornell as well as other organisations and a positive force for children and families."

Life Without Barriers is partnering with other organisations to implement the CARE model into their operations.

“

This is a really important milestone for Life Without Barriers. We have a responsibility to collaborate and bring the best models, ideas and practices to inform the services we provide for children who come into care. We can only achieve that by partnering, sharing resources and creating an eagerness for positive impact in the area of child protection.

”

Claire Robbs, CEO, Life Without Barriers



The Alcohol and Other Drug’s support team acknowledge National Sorry Day with people from the community.

Changing lives for people affected by alcohol and other drugs

The Assertive Outreach Next Steps Pilot Program has recorded impressive results in changing lives of people affected by alcohol and other drug related issues who have previously been resistant to getting help.

The Next Steps program has a heavy emphasis on relationships and uses a holistic approach to recovery. The program provides the opportunity to build rapport so people can engage in treatment when they are ready and able. Participants are then actively supported to engage in mainstream treatment and support.

While traditional programs have one worker supporting many people, Next Steps has many specialists supporting the individual and the person chooses whether they want to work with one, some or all of the team. In the Next Steps program, the team make consistent and regular contact so the process is easier for the person dealing with dependency.

Results of the Next Steps pilot program

- 97% of people referred actively engaged in Next Steps program
- 90% reduction in use of alcohol and other drugs
- 40% reduction in use of hospital emergency departments

Tom, 27, was first incarcerated from a young age and had an extensive correctional background due to childhood trauma. He has significant brain impairment and learning difficulties. Supported by Next Steps, he has been able to abstain from alcohol and has started a job at the local Meat Works. “This is the first time I can remember my heart feels happy,” Tom told his support worker.



When I look back on that time in my life I was nearly dead – I was trapped in needing hospitals and drinking but my life is not like that today. No other service would have stuck around. I’d been to other services and they were useless because I could not help being angry because I was either drunk or hungover. Life Without Barriers was willing to talk and work with me when I was intoxicated...it saved my life. Their patience was next level.



Tom, a Next Steps participant



Most people who took part in our Aged Care Participant Survey said they used our services to continue to live independently and to have additional support at home for daily living.

Aged care services

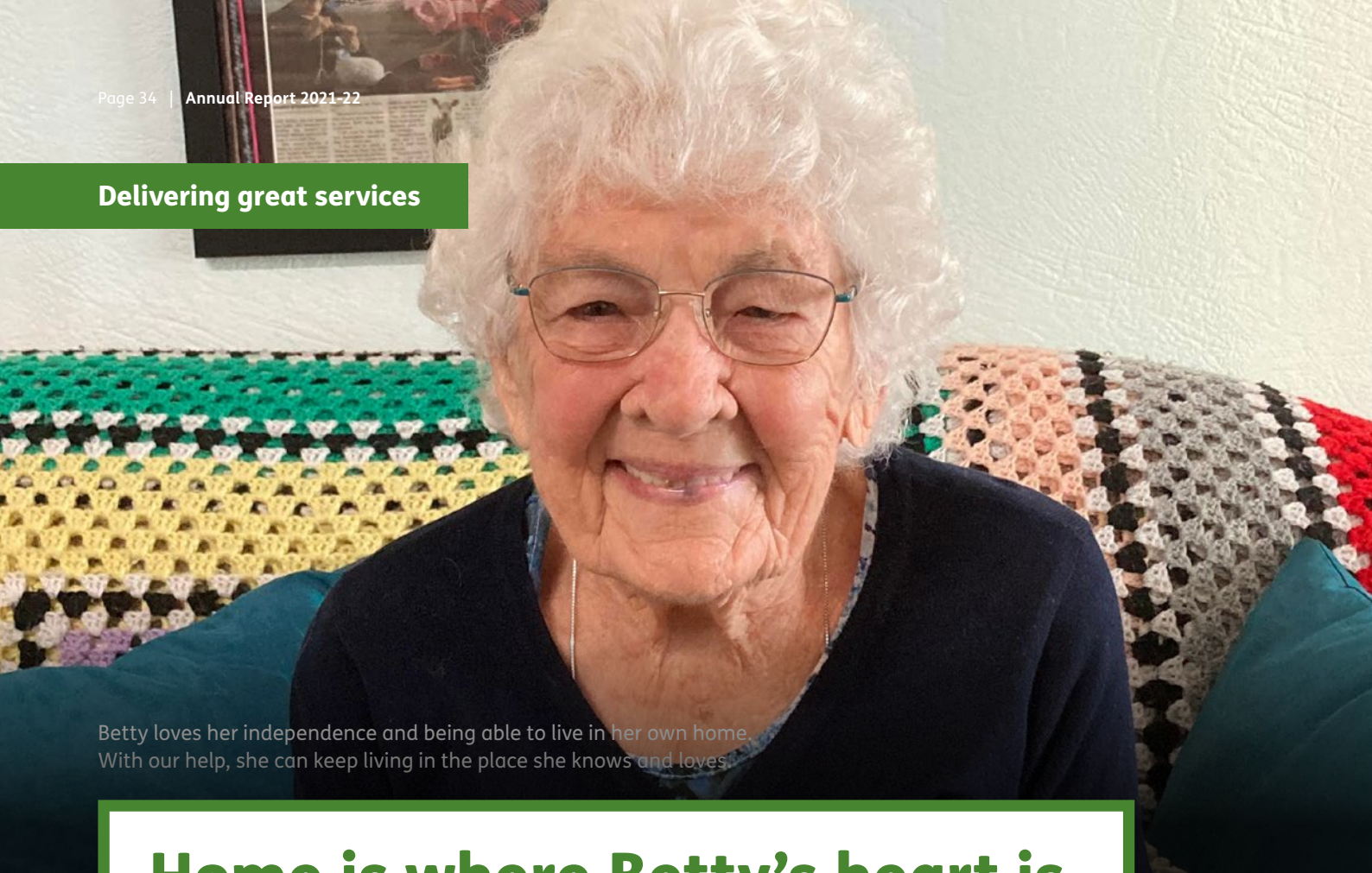
Our aged care team supported 8,261 older Australians with in-home services that were guided by them.

Our objective is to increase the independence of the people we support and assist them to live a quality life in their own home for as long as possible. We protect the dignity of seniors while making positive contributions to their wellness and reablement, ensuring they have maximum participation in the planning of their own care.

We strive for continuous improvement and this year we:

- **Surveyed 1,830 people who choose our aged care services. The feedback was positive and will help us continue what we do well and respond better in areas where people have provided feedback**
- **Improved assessment and planning practices so people have more choice to personalise services**
- **Made our feedback processes more accessible for people we support**
- **Implemented learning pathways for staff with a focus on how to listen and respond to the preferences of people choosing our services**
- **Partnered with experts to enhance our service offering**
- **Undertook significant consultation on technology solutions to improve delivery of services and supports for daily living**

Delivering great services



Betty loves her independence and being able to live in her own home. With our help, she can keep living in the place she knows and loves.

Home is where Betty's heart is

Meet Betty, one of the people choosing Life Without Barriers' home care services. At 95, Betty has an infectious zest for life and enjoys spending time with the people she loves.

Betty first engaged our home care services nine years ago, when she needed some extra help with caring for her late husband. She now uses our services under a home care package to maintain her own independence.

When looking at different support services, it was important to Betty that she was able to remain at home. She has lived in her house for many years, and she cherishes the fond memories of her life there. She wanted to stay in the place that she knows and loves, surrounded by her creature comforts.

"I've always known that I want to stay at home, if I'm well enough. I am very grateful that I have the extra help from Life Without Barriers to help make this possible," Betty said.

"The home care team come and help me with all of the things around the house that I can't manage myself.

"I always enjoy seeing the home care workers – they are all lovely. Pam has been one of my carers for about six years. We get along really well, and I always look forward to having a coffee and some morning tea with her."

“

I would recommend Life Without Barriers to anyone considering home care services. The team have been incredibly helpful to me.

”

Betty

Influencing systemic barriers

People across Australia face barriers in their lives that are complex and often so deeply ingrained that no one individual, organisation or group can solve them alone. Our Strategy 2025 recognises that real and lasting change requires partnering with purpose. It requires being generous with our knowledge and resources while also contributing to new approaches to systemic barriers that impact the lives of people we support.

This year we have challenged ourselves to think differently about the way we influence policies and service responses, by partnering with the people we support, their families and other stakeholders. We have focussed on three key areas in Strategy 2025, they are:

- Revitalising educational outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care
- Improving employment opportunities for people with disability
- Invigorating living choices for people with disability.







Education pathways

Positive education has the potential to improve children’s lives and social experiences now, and enhance opportunities as they emerge into adulthood. Children in out-of-home care can face substantial barriers to consistent and enjoyable learning.

Over the year we have invested in activities that build the confidence of our carers and care teams in their critical role in engaging with the education system and advocating for the children and young people in out-of-home care. We have also leveraged our partnerships with governments, academics, other organisations to better support children and young people and influence policy.

We have continued our effective Hook into Books campaign which elevates awareness and understanding of the importance of literacy support for children and families in child protection. For three weeks, authors, parents, staff, Carers, families and children became “hooked” through a range of activities. These included Australian authors sharing stories about their own journey with reading, virtual story times, a Hook Into Books podcast with information about how to support children with literacy, and a ‘Members Only Club’ to encourage young people to join their local libraries.

We published our Policy Statement on Education, linked with the #ThrivebyFive campaign to support universal access to high quality, accessible early learning and consulted with young people for a submission to the Victorian Children’s Commissioner’s inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care.

All children have a right to a consistent education however some children in out-of-home care have more disruptions in their education and learning pathways, which may lead to poorer educational outcomes than their peers.

Education is the pathway from disadvantage. Life Without Barriers is supporting children and young people in our care to reach their potential through access to educational pathways that are right for them. We are creating supports so that children and young people succeed in their education and enjoy a future filled with opportunity.

Influencing Systemic Barriers



Engaging and inspiring children and young people to participate in education



Mitchell’s pictures of the car show he attended with Emma

Mitchell is a 14-year-old boy who has moved from home to home and has struggled to experience much security in his life and because of this, he finds school incredibly challenging. Mitchell tends to withdraw and can refuse to attend school, a common behaviour amongst young people in care who are struggling in education.

Life Without Barriers Education Consultants work with care teams, carers and youth residential services, offering support to children and young people who are vulnerable to disengaging from school. The approach allows them to work one to one with young people and schools throughout the year and during school holidays.

Emma, Mitchell’s education consultant, is determined to get him back on track.

“Mitchell doesn’t love school. He finds it incredibly challenging. I am sure at times he has felt out of

place and there has been so much going on for him that is so much bigger than the day to day of homework and tasks in the classroom,” said Emma.

During the school holidays, Mitchell chose to go to a car show with Emma. “At the car show, this boy, who can experience such unhappiness and struggle in school, just came to life. He knew every car and he could rattle off heaps of specs about each one. Mitchell was able to teach me and that felt incredibly special,” said Emma.

Having this insight, Emma bought Mitchell a book on cars. She uses the book as a way to talk with Mitchell about the bigger issues in his life by forming trust around something he is really interested in.

Our education team is continuing to support Mitchell.

Sector Partnership and Advocacy

Collaboration across the community services sector is vital if we are to achieve the systemic change needed to substantially improve policies that impact the lives of millions of people across Australia. Life Without Barriers values relationships that stem from trusted and collaborative partnerships and this year we have invested further in our Strategy 2025 commitments including existing and new collaborations to positively affect: children in care who are at risk of disengaging from school; the employment of people with disability; and home and living choices for people with disability.



Raise the Age

Children who receive child protection services are nine times more likely to encounter the youth justice system, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 17 times more likely to be involved in both child protection and youth justice. Life Without Barriers joined the #RaiseTheAge campaign to encourage state and territory governments to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years.



Home Stretch

We signed up to the Home Stretch Campaign and joined calls encouraging the Queensland government to extend support for young people in out of home care to the age of 21.

As young people continue their journey to adulthood, extending care to 21 can provide the support they need to learn the skills they need to transition into adulthood. Our Queensland team worked with young people to develop a series of videos featuring young people from the Next Steps Plus speaking about the difficulties in leaving care at 18 years of age.



Alliance20

We continued work with our Alliance20 partners to improve the functioning of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Life Without Barriers representatives took part in nine Working Groups established by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) on pricing reforms. We presented to the NDIA and government on reforming Supported Independent Living services for people with intellectual disability.

In the lead up to the 2022 Federal Election, we invited all political parties to visit our service to discuss Alliance20 priority issues. Then Shadow Minister, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, met with a range of staff and engaged in discussion about our services and the successes of the NDIS. In June 2022, as the Minister for the NDIS, Mr Shorten addressed his priorities for the NDIS and the disability sector to a meeting of Alliance20 CEOs in Canberra. Over the last year, Life Without Barriers has also represented Alliance20 on the Federal Government's COVID-19 Disability Taskforce.

Influencing Systemic Barriers



Children in Care
Collective

Children in Care Collective

The Children in Care Collective are out-of-home care providers and academics who work together to advocate for improving the experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care. The Collective uses evidence-based practice, practitioner knowledge, research and knowledge of children and young people themselves to address systemic issues for children and young people with complex needs living in out-of-home care.

This year, the Collective's achievements included:

- Contributing to policy discussions through submissions to legislative reviews
- Publishing research on existing and recent plans for care-leavers in New South Wales: 'More Care Required – Research Report, July 2021'
- Building practice capabilities at each meeting by sharing information on a range of topics including working with CALD children and young people, finding family and evaluations that centre on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's perspectives, priorities, knowledge and health.

Impacts of Poverty and Inequality

We forged a new partnership with the Poverty & Inequality Partnership with ACOSS, UNSW and a consortium of large NGOs to generate insights and evidence into trends and the extent of poverty and inequality in Australia, with a focus on vulnerable Australians.

Sharing the responsibility for child safety

We continued to prioritise the safety of the children and young people we support.

The Life Without Barriers' We Put Children First child sexual abuse strategy won an award at the 2021 Queensland Child Protection Week Awards in the Media and Communications category.

We are partnering with the broader child, youth and family sector and sharing our resources and expertise, so that we can help to ensure the safety of children across Australia. Our team participates in the Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group, hosted by the National Office of Child Safety. This provides us with an important opportunity to work with and support the Australian Government as they implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.



A YPEP participant gives working at the Tuncurry Waste Management Centre a thumbs up.

Creating access to meaningful employment for people with disability

Improving employment opportunities for people with disability

People with disability continue to experience more barriers to employment than people without and, unconscious bias remains an entrenched aspect of Australian workplace cultures.

During 2021-2022, our commitment to improving the employment opportunities for people with disability focussed on cultivating a diverse workforce within our organisation and encouraging other employers and state and federal governments to do the same. This work included:

- Working in partnership with Joblife, a National Disability Employment Service to assist people with disability find employment.
- Further developing the Young People's Employment Pathways (YPEP) program by expanding services in Newcastle/Hunter/Central Coast and Perth Metro.
- Engaging in public policy opportunities including: submissions to the National Disability Employment Strategy Consultation Paper; the Royal Commission into Violence Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability; and the Australian Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme – NDIS Workforce Inquiry and responding to Transition to Work and Disability Employment Services consultations.
- Working with other employers, sharing our learnings and experiences in fostering an inclusive workplace. Our Disability Engagement team met with several large organisations to offer advice and guidance about how to assess whether their workplace is accessible for people with disability.

More than 20% of Australians live with disability. Yet only half of those, who are of working age, have secured employment. This year we extended our impact by forging more opportunities towards meaningful employment.

- Launched our Young People Employment Pathways program in 3 locations with 47 participants
- Completed our 2019-2022 Access, Inclusion and Employment plan and prepared our next 3-year plan
- Continued sharing resources through our Employment Without Barriers campaign

Influencing Systemic Barriers

Alex explores pathways to employment with the support of Young People's Employment Pathways



Alex, pictured, explores his many talents through YPEP.

Young people with disability can experience more barriers to employment than those without. In fact, young people with disability remain out of the workforce up to seven years longer than their peers without disability.

When Alex first connected with Young People's Employment Pathways (YPEP), he was looking for support to plan his next career steps and needed help to overcome a range of barriers.

YPEP works with young people to build their life skills, strengthen their confidence and assists them consider their pathway to employment including thinking about which jobs, training and work experience they are keen to engage in. Alex and his Employment Pathways Coach Eduardo, worked together to develop Alex's communication,

social and problem-solving skills, and explore potential employment options. Through this process Alex had identified an interest in finding out job pathways in the entertainment industry.

Performing The Wiggles Cover of Tame Impala's "Elephant" at this year's Hunter Disability Expo was one of Alex's major achievements. Patrick, another participant in YPEP, filmed Alex's performance, and the video was shared on Life Without Barriers' social media channels. When Alex saw the positive response to his performance, it gave him the confidence to start his own Social Media account.

"Anthony from The Wiggles shared the video to his Instagram story, which was a pretty surreal moment. I look up to The Wiggles, they are my music inspiration," said Alex.

Alex and Patrick now meet each week to collaborate. They have been making a music video, with Alex as the video director and Patrick as the editor. Both enjoy working together and a firm friendship has grown between the two.

Since starting his YPEP journey, Alex's confidence has grown, he has developed new skills, and he now feels he has found the direction for his career.

For anyone thinking about employment, Alex says, "Do it. If you want to do what you love, get a coach, and they will help you choose the right pathway. You will learn how to get jobs, how to make a resume and how to communicate with people."



A father and son enjoy time together with Supported Independent Living assistance in Victoria.

Invigorating living choices for people with disability

Housing choices for people with disability has been limited. We recognise that people with disability living in supported settings may have never had an opportunity to communicate how they would like their home to be and if they would like to live with anyone else.

This year we began a journey to invigorate living choices through our Home and Living initiative and communicating with people we support about their preferences in how and where they want to live.

Over the year we have:

- Worked in partnership with people with disability to capture their views about the choices they want to have in housing and support options
- Partnered with housing providers to explore contemporary housing design
- Identified innovative support options and co-designed with people with disability and their families
- Engaged in policy discussions around the future model of supported independent living
- Shared our insights with the National Disability Insurance Agency via the Home and Living consultations
- Contributed a detailed submission in the development of the Australian Disability Strategy 2021-2031
- Supported the campaign to change the National Construction Codes so that more homes are accessible for people with disability

Influencing Systemic Barriers



Bruce, a resident at a Supported Independent Living home, learns to cook his favourite meals.

Asking people with disability how and where they want to live

“This is the first time I’ve ever been asked about where I want to live” – Joseph, a participant in Life Without Barrier’s Home and Living initiative.

A co-design project which engages people we support to share information about home and living options, access information about housing, and express how they would like to live in the future commenced this year.

Tools to guide these discussions were developed by Emeritus Professor Lesley Chenoweth of Griffith University, a recognised leader in disability. They help people think “outside the box” about their home as part of their wider life, and contemplate opportunities they might never have considered. For Joseph, it was the first time in his life he had the chance for such a conversation.

Over one hundred discussions have already been initiated, led by an independent member of staff who is not involved in the participant’s daily supports. Our goal is to offer every person that Life Without Barriers supports in more than 450 residential settings the opportunity to participate in this process.

These conversations are already changing lives. Participants in the Hunter Region, Alice Springs, Darwin, Hobart, and Broken Hill are being supported by Life Without Barriers’ National Disability Housing Unit to connect with leading Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Providers, and are involved in planning the location and design of their future homes.

People with disability have a right to access greater choice in housing. This year we shared our commitment to disrupt challenges people with disability experience in where they live, and who they live with.

So far, we have engaged people with disability in more than 100 conversations about their future housing and lifestyle choices.

Impact for Future Generations

The decisions we make today will impact generations long into the future. Led by our Strategy 2025, our goal this year has been to grow and share knowledge and practice to build equitable and sustainable change for the people and communities we support. We know we will only achieve impact for the future through our commitment to partnerships and collaborations.

This year we have collaborated with:

- SNAICC – National Voice for our Children to establish our 10 year commitment to step away from providing out-of-home care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Carers, people we support and their families through various co-design activities that have focussed on “doing things differently”
- Experts, our Board, Executive and our staff to explore our current environmental impact and our contribution towards climate justice
- Government, corporate Australia and sector colleagues to consider our collective contribution to influencing long term policy, practice and the impact on people and communities in the long term
- Universities and other experts to align our practice with contemporary research and to continuously improve the services we deliver.







Collaborating with families to find solutions now and for the future

Life Without Barriers supports children, young people and families who experience engagements in the child protection system.

We know the best outcome for families and children is to be supported to be together when possible. While our interventions have an immediate impact on the child, young person and family we are working with, there is potential to impact intergenerational cycles of abuse, removal and disconnection from family and culture.

This year we continued our longstanding partnership with Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter (FISH).

FISH is led by parents and family with lived experiences of out-of-home care, child removal and reunification. FISH and other family inclusion organisations are leading Australia in the development of family inclusive initiatives such as peer parent and family advocacy.

Life Without Barriers has contributed to FISH in a range of ways including governance, research initiatives and supporting parents and family peer advocates to participate in advocacy that can affect systemic change. FISH parent advocates are examples of courage and resilience in the face of adversity and demonstrate how challenging it is to be a parent of children in care. Parent advocates have helped Life Without Barriers to challenge negative stereotypes about families in the child protection system and continue to

teach society that families are the solution to our child protection problems. Some projects in our partnership over the year have included:

- Contributing to the design of our foster care processes and helping us to be family-inclusive
- Carer and staff training in family inclusion
- Participating in research projects
- Assisting in our family strengthening strategy work

Supporting trauma informed approaches for emerging generations

CARE is an evidence-based, trauma-informed model adopted by Life Without Barriers across our child, youth and family programs.

Developed by the Bronfenbrenner Translational Research Centre at Cornell University, evidence supports that CARE creates the conditions for positive change in children's lives. Through our shared learnings and knowledge of applying CARE in our services, this year we have been able to support other organisations to prepare and invest in embedding CARE principles into their current operations.

CARE has led to more inclusive approaches to working with families. This is in turn leading to stronger connections with family and culture, and over time more children being safely reunified. For young people who find themselves becoming parents, CARE based practice has also successfully

Impact for Future Generations



prevented removals of their newborns through targeted skill development, and supporting young people into stable accommodation with outreach support available to them. These are key indicators that CARE is impacting on future generations by breaking intergenerational cycles of abuse, removal and disconnection from family and culture.

Young people designing the future

Listening to the voice of the future generation is one way we can learn , grow and collectively take action.

Our Youth Advisory Group (YAG) is a partnership where young people directly contribute to and shape the way we provide support and co-design of how services are delivered. Members of the group talk directly to Life Without Barriers Board Directors and senior leaders and give direct insight about their experiences and views on ways to change and improve support to young people. This year, the YAG facilitated the development of a dedicated guide for engaging children and young people in decision making and over 45 young people joined in the process.

Jasmin, a YAG member who has a passion for advocacy and youth empowerment, was involved in the making of the guide. She said being involved in its development showed her and other young people that they had “a really big leadership role” and it gave them the opportunity to show how they are “more capable than what people think of us being in care”.

Speaking at the 2022 CREATE Voices in Action Conference where she co-presented with Executive Director Jane French, Jasmin said, “It’s important for adults to listen to children because you need to listen to a child to learn how to help them, how to advise them in the right path. If they need your assistance, then you’re there and you understand. The child trusts you to help them. If you don’t know how to help a child, they will lose trust in you and the system.”

Jasmin continues to engage in discussion with Jane French about her lived experience in care, and is interested in generating ideas that could impact and improve services to children and young people provided by Life Without Barriers and the out-of-home care system.



ELEVATE RAP

In June 2022, Life Without Barriers was entrusted with Elevate Status for our next Reconciliation Action Plan.

The plan is our most courageous yet and determines numerous actions and deliverables that will guide our contribution toward reconciliation.

Shared earlier in this report is the detail regarding our partnership with SNAICC and our transformation project to reduce the over-representation of children in care. The Elevate RAP also recognises continued commitment to our reconciliation journey under the three pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities which are founded upon strong governance. The RAP outlines activities we are investing in now to address systemic racism, including in our own organisation, and taking steps to publicly advocate against racism and discrimination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Life Without Barriers reaffirmed our public support for the Uluru Statement of the Heart this year and has commenced plans to support efforts by the Federal Government for a referendum to enshrine an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

The RAP commits us to change the course for emerging generations by listening to the voices and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Justice

When developing Strategy 2025, the climate and environmental sustainability was a high priority for people within the Life Without Barriers community.

This year the Board commenced in-depth conversations and analysis about the scope of a climate justice strategy for Life Without Barriers. With a presence in over 800 locations across Australia, a fleet of over 1200 vehicles, we recognise there are immediate opportunities to contribute to environmental sustainability.

The board has committed to consider opportunities to strengthen our role in reducing our environmental impact and the journey to develop our three-year strategy is now in train. Initial explorations with the Board, executives and staff indicate that our workforce wants to actively reduce our carbon footprint and look for immediate measures we can take that make a positive contribution towards climate change. As the first step in this journey, we have engaged experts to assist us with measuring our carbon emissions and this year, we facilitated workshops and presentations with staff and board members to explore opportunities we can contribute to in our climate justice commitments.

Impact for Future Generations



Collectively growing and learning to influence the future

For sustainable impact for the future, the collective effort of the people we support, their communities, sector partners and all levels of government will be necessary.

Building on the strength of our existing partnerships, this year we initiated forums to generate momentum and explore potential solutions for the future.

One such forum was held in conjunction with Possability, a Tasmanian based disability service provider. The topic explored was how the disability sector can better partner with people with disability, the community, government and other stakeholders to redefine and develop new home and living options for people with disability, especially people with intellectual disability.

A wide range of attendees from all parts of the community and the sector discussed how the historical progression of support, from institutional 'care' to community-based models of support, must continue under the NDIS to ensure that people with disability have real choice

and control over their living circumstances. This forum informed the development of Life Without Barriers' own Home and Living Strategy and our ongoing advocacy and partnerships in this area. We are continuing our work in this area, as a leader in the sector, and working alongside people with disability and others to ensure the ongoing development of new and empowering options for future generations.

Measuring our impact

This year we began the process to reform our Impact Measurement Framework and evaluate the way we offer support.

The framework will make us more accountable and transparent in demonstrating the impact of the work we do, identifying specific indicators and how we measure those. The first phase involved extensive staff consultation to identify the impact areas that we are collectively working towards. People we support will be consulted next to better understand these areas, including listening to their experience about when and how our work has changed lives.

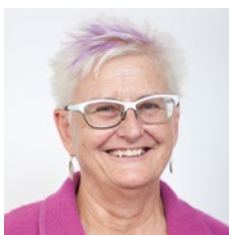
Board and Governance



Greg Ridder

Chair of the Board

Special Responsibilities: Chair. Member of the Finance and Audit Committee. Member of the Remuneration, Nomination and Succession Committee. Member of the Risk Management Committee. Chair of LWB QLD SBB Limited.



Gillian Calvert AO

Deputy Chair of the Board

Special Responsibilities: Chair of the Practice Governance Committee. Member of the Risk Management Committee. Chair of LWB Disability Services South Limited. Chair of LWB Disability Services Central Limited. Member of the Board of LWB QLD SBB Ltd.



Graeme Innes AM

Director

Special Responsibilities: Chair of the Remuneration, Nomination and Succession Committee. Retired from the Board September 2022.



Helen Szoke AO

Director

Special Responsibilities: Chair of the Risk Management Committee. Member of the Practice Governance Committee.



Jan Lowe

Director

Special Responsibilities: Member of the Remuneration, Nomination and Succession Committee. Member of the Board of LWB QLD SBB Ltd.

Risk Appetite Statement

The Board utilised external expertise to assist with the future considerations of the Risk Framework. This resulted in a joint Executive and Board refresh of the Risk Appetite Statement. The Statement sets the parameters for which the organisation expresses its appetite for risk and alignment with decisions informed by ethical considerations. The statement is reviewed annually to ensure it is contemporary to the organisation's needs and strategic objectives



Natalie Walker

Director

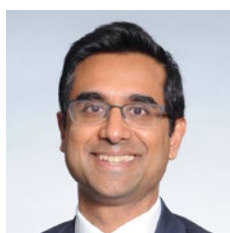
Special Responsibilities: Member of the Practice Governance Committee (to September 2022).
Chair of the Remuneration, Nomination and Succession Committee (from September 2022).



Tracey McCosker PSM

Director

Special Responsibilities: Member of the Finance and Audit Committee.



Rajiv Viswanathan

Director (commenced October 2021)

Special Responsibilities: Member of the Finance and Audit Committee (October 2021 to May 2022).
Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee (from May 2022).
Member of the Risk Management Committee.
Chair of the Board Housing Working Group (commenced February 2022).



Kurt Fearnley AO

Director (commenced November 2021)

Special Responsibilities: Member of the Practice Governance Committee (February 2022 to September 2022).

Retired from the Board September 2022.



Paula Head

Company Secretary and Director Corporate Administration

Financial snapshot

Audited Financial Statements for the year ending 30 June 2022

2-year summary \$'000	2021-2022 \$'000	2020-2021 \$'000
Revenue & Expenditure		
Total Revenue and other income	793,280	755,640
Total Expenditure	801,543	755,589
Operating (Deficit)/ Surplus	(8,263)	51

Funds directed
into direct
service delivery
90.9%

Services offered	Program funding 22
Disability	471,881
Child Youth and Family	222,936
Home and Community Care	40,480
Mental Health, Youth Justice, Homelessness, and Asylum Seeker services	33,361
Other income	24,622
Total	793,280

Total Revenue and
other income
\$793.28m

Assets and Liabilities		
Total Assets	261,588	282,716
Total Liabilities	222,366	229,493
Net Assets	39,222	53,223

Additional cost pressures have been prevalent throughout FY21/22 resulting from rising inflation and higher costs of service provision through the sustained response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Service adjustments have also had to be made in response to reduced client funding packages for people choosing Supported Independent Living with Life Without Barriers. Life Without Barriers continued to direct over 90.9% of funds into direct care services to ensure that people supported by Life Without Barriers continued to benefit from the delivery of great services. We welcome the Governments price increase of 8.8% for many services from July 2022.

Paying our respects

Life Without Barriers acknowledges 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 any person in our community is felt deeply by us all.

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 LWBAustralia

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