

connect ABILITY AUSTRALIA

Annual Report 2026

Areas We **Service**



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Acknowledgement Of Country

At ConnectAbility, we have the honour to support people on the traditional lands of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples in Newcastle, Warabrook and Port Stephens; the Worimi, Wonnarua and Darkinjung peoples in the Hunter and Upper Hunter regions, including Kurri Kurri; the Darkinjung, Wonnarua and Awabakal peoples in Muswellbrook and Ashtonfield; the Wonnarua and Awabakal peoples in Cessnock; and the GuriNgai and Darkinjung peoples on the Central Coast.

We acknowledge the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to these lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise their strength, resilience and enduring custodianship.

We celebrate diversity and welcome all people, regardless of ethnicity, faith, orientation or gender identity.

(Front cover) ConnectAbility customer Tysun; (Left) Handmade artwork at our ConnectAbility's Warabrook Hub; (This page) Chair Nathan Franks and CEO David Carey.



Welcome from the CEO and Chairman

In a year marked by sector reform, uncertainty and significant foreshadowed changes to the NDIS, ConnectAbility has remained focused on sustainable growth, service excellence and delivering outcomes that matter.

As we approach the final year of the NDIS in its current form, we note the challenges ahead, and reflect on the achievements of our customers, staff and organisation over the past 12 months.

Our Community Living team supported 93 customers across 24 Supported Independent Living homes throughout the Hunter region, delivered by a dedicated workforce of 263 staff who remain committed to supporting customers to live independently and achieve their goals. Our Capacity and Therapy Services team continued to improve outcomes for children, customers and families through collaborative allied health and education services that help people build skills, achieve goals and participate more fully in their communities. Our Community Supports staff continued to create innovative and inclusive opportunities for customers to connect, develop skills and participate in community life, with many new initiatives emerging directly from the ideas and passion of frontline employees.

Throughout this Annual Report I am pleased to share inspiring stories from customers and families across our services. These stories remind us why we do what we do and demonstrate the life-changing impact that quality disability supports can have when delivered by dedicated and passionate people. This year hasn't been without its challenges though – and there is a lot more to come for the sector.

In the Support Coordination sector, the NDIA has not applied indexation to pricing for seven consecutive years. Therapy has faced similar challenges, with funding increases failing to keep pace with rising costs. The result has been a real-term reduction in funding value of more than 25%, at a time when wages, compliance requirements and operating costs have continued to increase.



ConnectAbility CEO David Carey with Dan and staff from Sweet Valley Baby Animals at our annual ConnectAbility Fun Day.

Frontline support has received CPI increases, but using the usual annual calculation magic the NDIA never passes on the full price, which leaves us and the sector picking up the gap for the better part of a decade.

A cut to non-registered organisations rather than an increase to registered organisations may have a catastrophic impact. There are 16,000 registered organisations (of which we are one) and over 250,000 unregistered organisations. Most of these only started since NDIA started, and a large portion appear only there to make money. These new changes could see thousands close their doors, among them various SIL, Community Supports, Allied Health and Support Coordination providers. Not when the NDIA says so, but when their accountant says they must. If this occurs, we may see thousands of people with significant disabilities left without support and thousands more staff out of a job.

The government has been forced to delay major change for several months, with large concerns for people with a disability voiced by political parties, the public, peak bodies and law firms. By the time this is published the fate of 700,000 vulnerable Australians will be known. If there is no negotiated change to the publicly announced timeframe for change, then:

- Community participation will have budget cuts of 50% from 1 October 2026.
- Plan management will be shrunk from 900 to five providers by October 2027.
- Support Coordination will cease by July 2028
- Mild to moderate disability and autism will have moved to state government by October 2026, with far less money available than under the NDIS and therefore far less services being able to be offered.

By halving Community Participation, parents who were just coping will relinquish their child or adult child by leaving them at NDIS offices. This will cause the break-up of many relationships and the loss of tax revenue as parents leave the workforce to support their children. This occurred under NSW Ageing Disability and Homecare as it was a capped system, and will again occur here in large numbers as each family's stress increases and mental health struggles takes their toll.

In turn, this will then see customers put into Supported Independent Living at a cost that is five to eight times higher than funding Community Participation, blowing the NDIS budget once more. Is the government saying people with Disability cease being part of society and stay in their bedroom at home?

The 50% cut suggests this, as there is a direct cause and effect.

As you can see, the industry will dramatically shrink and change with less money available than its previous 10 years of growth. Genuine service providers and the people they support may feel they are being punished by government for government's failure to put financial safeguards in place in the NDIS. The price everyone in Australian society pays is what appears to be an unthought-through change that will put people with disability at risk of becoming either further disabled or at risk of death due to major cuts to essential funding and therefore staffing. We at ConnectAbility support complex health and behaviour, and this requires the right number of staff who are well trained and supported to deliver complex supports. This gutting of the system will see a 1970's version of support return where 30 people get to watch TV – no choice or control with only one staff member to support them.

For ConnectAbility to keep providing services, we need to be financially responsible as we and many others move into a period of uncertainty. I understand this is a grim picture, but I would rather be upfront with all our staff, families and community we serve. Personally, it is crushing to see how far we have come, the success and innovation we have implemented, the positive outcomes achieved by our customers, and the dedication of our staff placed at risk by ongoing uncertainty within the sector and mismanagement of the NDIS scheme since its inception. At the same time, however, I remain incredibly proud of what ConnectAbility continues to achieve. Across Community Living, Community Supports and Capacity and Therapy Services, our teams support hundreds of customers every day to build skills, strengthen relationships, increase independence and participate in their communities.

Whether through Supported Independent Living, community participation, early intervention teaching, plan management or allied health, our focus remains the same: empowering people to achieve.

We have faced significant change before and emerged stronger. With the support of our staff, customers, families, partners and community, we will continue to advocate for people with disability and remain focused on delivering the high-quality services for which ConnectAbility is known.

Financial **Performance**

For our full 2025/2026 Audited Statements please visit **connectability.org.au.**

About
Us

ConnectAbility is a NDIS Registered Provider, supporting 1,887+ people across Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, the Hunter and Central Coast for 34 years.

Our people are our purpose. We were founded by community members and families in Newcastle in 1992. We believe every person deserves to live a life of purpose, choice and dignity - and our vision is to empower you to achieve your goals, dreams and aspirations.

Over time, we have evolved to become a leading NSW-based not-for-profit organisation. Today, we are able to serve all ages, across all stages, all over the region with our range of services:

- Allied Health
- Community and Centre-Based Programs
- Early Intervention Teaching
- Plan Management
- Support Coordination
- Supported Independent Living
- Youth Services



ConnectAbility customer Colin, enjoying the Ferris Wheel at the Hunter Valley Gardens.

Our Purpose,
Vision & Values

Our Purpose:

We add value to you through everything we do

Our Vision:

Empowering people to achieve

Our Values:

- **R**elationships
- **E**xcellence
- **S**trength
- **P**assion
- **E**xperience
- **C**ommunity
- **T**rust

Cheers to 34 years: **ConnectAbility Fun Day**



In October 2025, ConnectAbility proudly celebrated 34 years of supporting people, families and communities across the Hunter, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and Central Coast.

The annual celebration brought together customers, families, staff, supporters and community partners for a day filled with connection, laughter and plenty of fun. Returning favourites included the ever-popular ice cream stall, along with a variety of activities, entertainment and community displays that showcased the vibrant spirit of ConnectAbility.

The day reflected how far the organisation has come since its beginnings in 1992. What started as a small community organisation has grown into a trusted provider supporting more than 1887 people across the region, while remaining true to its community roots.

Of course, no ConnectAbility celebration would be complete without a few memorable moments. One of the highlights of the day was seeing our CEO get up close and personal with one of the event's more enthusiastic four-legged visitors. While we can't confirm whether the pig was interviewing for a leadership position or simply inspecting our quality systems, it certainly attracted plenty of attention and smiles from the crowd!

As we celebrated 34 years of service, we also looked ahead with excitement. With continued growth, new opportunities and our 35th anniversary on the horizon, ConnectAbility remains committed to empowering people, strengthening communities and creating opportunities for future generations.



(From left) ConnectAbility staff Mary-Rose and Alex; customers Tony, Phil, Cindy, Adrian, Steven, Jenny and Kerry.

Key Achievements

1,887+
people worked with, of all ages across communities throughout NSW

86
new employees

524,676
kilometres travelled to support people right across NSW

12,327
hours frontline staff **participated in training**

432,318
hours of support delivered for the year

263
staff supporting 93 people in 24 community living homes

504
valued and trusted **employees**

2
new partnerships with SDA Housing providers to build new homes

468
dedicated **support workers**

7
offices, including brand new spaces at Muswellbrook and Maitland

84
experienced **allied health professionals and teachers**

2
loved therapy dogs named "Dash" and "Barney"

93%
customer satisfaction rate

Our 2026 Customer Survey recorded the Top 3 Reasons customers value us:

1. Trust in our staff
2. High-quality, skilled support
3. Genuine commitment to safety and wellbeing

Our Service Streams

Supported Independent Living

ADULTS

Suported Independent Living

NDIS: SIL / SDA

Community Disability

CHILDREN

Support Coordination
1:1 support

YOUTH

Youth Programs
Support Coordination
School Holiday Programs

ADULTS

Support Coordination
1:1 support
Community Access Groups

NDIS

Allied Health + Early Intervention Teaching

CHILDREN

Playgroup
All Allied Health Services
Early Intervention Teaching
School Holiday Programs

YOUTH

All Allied Health Services
Early Intervention Teaching
School Holiday Programs

ADULTS

Dietitian
Speech Pathology

NDIS MEDICARE SELF FUNDED



(Left) Two of our shining stars Zoe and Bruno at AJ's Manager to Leader Shift training; (Below) new signage at our Musswellbrook clinic.

Growing **Stronger Together**

Growth continued to shape ConnectAbility this year as we proudly welcomed Finding Yellow to the ConnectAbility family, bringing our services, teams and community presence together under one strong and recognisable brand.

Following the successful integration of Early Links in 2023, bringing together three trusted community organisations with a shared commitment to inclusion, independence and person-centred support has strengthened our ability to meet the evolving needs of customers and families across our region.

Today, ConnectAbility proudly supports more than 1887 customers across Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, the Hunter Valley, Central Coast and surrounding communities, delivering disability, allied health, early intervention and community services.

The integration of Finding Yellow has ensured continuity of support for customers while welcoming experienced staff into ConnectAbility. Together, we are building on more than a century of combined community service while preserving the relationships, trust and local connections at the heart of each organisation.

ConnectAbility was also proud to be named a finalist in the inaugural 2026 Fleet News Group Fleet Technology Award, recognising our innovative use of technology to reduce administration, strengthen safety and improve service delivery. Working with Leading Edge Innovations and implementing Geotab has transformed our fleet and transport processes.

Throughout the year, we continued our journey towards a more unified identity, with new signage installed at our Musswellbrook office, vibrant new branding across many of our buses and new staff uniforms providing a visible reflection of our shared ConnectAbility identity.

We also continued to invest in the Manager to Leader Shift™, facilitated by Alexandra Joy (AJ), Founder & CEO of Beside Leaders Global. With more than 25 years' experience and having coached and trained more than 25,000 leaders, AJ supported our managers to strengthen their leadership capability, communication and confidence. The program is helping our leaders support their teams more effectively and contribute to a connected, positive and people-focused workplace culture.

As we continue bringing our services and teams together under one brand, we are building a stronger, more sustainable organisation that is well positioned to navigate ongoing changes within the NDIS and broader service landscape. United by a common vision, we remain focused on delivering high-quality, local support and creating positive outcomes for the people, families and communities we serve.





Example new home in collaboration with Insitu Housing.

New Specialist Disability Accommodation **Homes Under Construction**

ConnectAbility is continuing to expand housing opportunities for people with disability through the development of two purpose-built Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) homes in Edgeworth. Delivered in partnership with Insitu and Thirdi Group, the project will provide high-quality, contemporary housing designed to support independence, accessibility and community inclusion.

Currently under construction and scheduled for completion in early 2027, the two three-bedroom homes will accommodate up to six residents. Located close to shops, public transport, healthcare services and community amenities, the homes have been thoughtfully designed to meet SDA requirements while providing comfortable, modern living environments.

Each residence will feature fully accessible design throughout, private bedrooms with accessible ensuites, shared living and outdoor spaces, and dedicated onsite staff facilities. Residents will also benefit from 24/7 onsite support, enabling them to live with greater choice, control and confidence.

This development represents another important step in ConnectAbility's commitment to increasing access to safe, inclusive and sustainable housing options across the Hunter region. Thank you to Insitu Housing and Thirdi for their continued support with ensuring our customers have accessible, comfortable homes that allow them to live their best life.

If you, a family member, or someone you support would like to learn more about these upcoming housing opportunities, please get in touch. Our team can provide further information about the homes, eligibility requirements and the application process.



(Left) Staff at our Gold Sponsor booth at the 2026 Hunter Disability Expo and Dash our therapy dog; (Top) Dave, Gordon and Bobby after taking the stage at the Expo.

2026 Hunter Disability Expo

ConnectAbility was proud to be a Gold Sponsor of the 2026 Hunter Disability Expo, one of the region's largest events connecting people with disability, families, carers, service providers and community organisations.

As a featured Gold Sponsor, ConnectAbility had a significant presence across the two-day event, providing an opportunity to showcase our expanding range of services and strengthen connections across the disability sector. The expo was a valuable platform to engage with participants, families, support coordinators, allied health professionals and community stakeholders, while raising awareness of ConnectAbility's broad service offering, including Early Links and Finding Yellow.

Over the course of the event, our team distributed more than 2,000 information flyers, connected with hundreds of attendees and developed new relationships with both potential customers and referral partners. It was also a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with existing customers, families and staff who stopped by to show their support.

A highlight of the expo was a live Q&A session featuring Community Living customer Gordon and Community Living Operations Lead Dave Coldicutt, who shared their experiences and insights on Supported Independent Living. Gordon spoke about the importance of independence, choice and community, providing a powerful reminder of the life-changing impact of quality, person-centred support.

Visitors to the stand also enjoyed meeting Dash, one of our therapy dogs, whose friendly presence sparked many conversations and helped create a warm and welcoming atmosphere throughout the event.

Beyond promoting services, the expo reinforced ConnectAbility's role as a trusted provider and sector leader. Meaningful conversations, new partnerships and valuable community connections made the event a tremendous success, reflecting our ongoing commitment to building inclusive communities and supporting people to live their best lives.

Phil's Story: Finding Security, Friendship and Independence



Phil and his rabbit Snowy at their ConnectAbility home.

When I think about what's changed the most in my life since moving to a ConnectAbility home, one word comes to mind: security.

After spending a long time in hospital, having a safe place to call my own and being able to joke around with people is amazing. I think life is better when you can share a joke and enjoy each other's company.

One of my greatest joys is spending time with my rabbit, Snowy. He always makes me smile.

My days are filled with things that keep my mind active. I enjoy watching game shows and quizzes, keeping up with current affairs and foreign news, and following the football - especially the Newcastle Knights. I like learning new things and staying informed about what's happening in the world.

Since moving into SIL, one of the things I'm most proud of is the relationships I've built with my support staff. They've taken the time to get to know me, and having consistent support has made a real difference in my life. Those relationships have helped me feel more confident and comfortable in my own home and out in the community.

One of the best things about living in my SIL home has been meeting genuinely caring people. The support I've received has helped me feel more connected and has given me opportunities to enjoy life with confidence.

If I had to describe myself, I'd say I'm resilient, honest and caring. Life hasn't always been easy, but I've learned to keep going through the challenges. I'm grateful for the people who've supported me along the way.

A perfect day for me is pretty simple - good food, good company and a couple of beers with friends while feeling physically well. Sometimes it's the simple things that make the biggest difference. People are often surprised to learn that I used to drive a black Ford Falcon ute. It always starts a good conversation.

If I could spend the day with someone, I'd take them to the Swansea Workers Club. We'd grab something to eat and simply sit and talk about anything and everything. I enjoy good conversation, and I think that's one of the best ways to get to know someone.

Looking ahead, I'll keep doing what I enjoy - following world events, cheering on the Knights, spending time with Snowy, and appreciating the friendships and support that have helped me build a life where I feel safe, connected and at home.

Credit: Text supplied by DSW Matt Palmer

In The Media:
CEO Shares Insights on the NDIS

In May 2026, ConnectAbility CEO David Carey joined former award-winning journalist Michael Cain on the Incredible Lives with Cainey podcast to discuss some of the most significant challenges and opportunities facing the NDIS sector.

Drawing on more than 11 years of experience in disability services, David shared his journey as CEO of an NDIS provider and outlined the importance of strengthening quality, safety and accountability across the sector. The conversation explored the impact of recent NDIS reforms, the ongoing challenges of fraud within the scheme and the uncertainty these changes can create for participants, families and providers.

The Incredible Lives with Cainey podcast highlights the experiences and stories of people from all walks of life, with Michael Cain taking a deeper look at the challenges, achievements and perspectives that shape their journeys.

David's participation provided an opportunity to advocate for the needs of people with disability and highlight the importance of evidence-based reforms that support positive outcomes for NDIS participants. Through conversations such as these, ConnectAbility continues to contribute to broader discussions about the future of disability services in Australia. To listen to the episode, go to the 'What's new' tab on our website to view the news item added on 16 September 2026.



Michael Cain and ConnectAbility CEO David Carey on his Incredible ***Lives with Cainey*** podcast.

National Recognition for Sector Leadership

ConnectAbility Executive Lead Community Living, Dr Karla Seaman, was awarded the Best Sector Impact Award at the 2025 Australian Disability Service Awards (ADSA), recognising her outstanding leadership, innovation and commitment to improving outcomes for people with disability.

Karla attended the awards in Melbourne with CEO David Carey, representing ConnectAbility at one of the disability sector's leading national events. The award acknowledges her evidence-based approach to driving meaningful change and her ability to bridge policy, research and practice to deliver real-world impact.

Accepting the award, Karla reflected on the collective effort behind the achievement, acknowledging the contribution of ConnectAbility's customers, staff and leadership team.

"Every success we achieve is shared with our incredible staff and customers. This award belongs to all of us at ConnectAbility," she said.

We congratulate Karla on this outstanding achievement and thank her for her ongoing dedication to creating positive, lasting change across the disability sector.



CEO David and Executive Lead Karla celebrate the win at the 2025 ADSA Awards.



ConnectAbility customer Nickie is all smiles.





(Right from back left) Mark Hardinge, Mary-Rose Bell; Natalie Ransom; Jade Pilgrim; Zoe Grant (Middle); Melissa Ayerst; Tanya Buchardt, (Below) Phil enjoying his time at a Knights game.

Community Disability:
How We Have Fun

Our Community Supports Team brings together Community Support Workers, Support Coordinators and Disability Youth Workers who deliver a wide range of supports, programs and transport services across Newcastle, the Hunter and the Central Coast.

Through community-based activities, Social Circles, group programs and our Warabrook Community Hub, the team creates opportunities for customers to build relationships, develop skills, increase independence and engage meaningfully in their local communities. The Warabrook Hub serves as a vibrant centre for many of our in-house activities, events and celebrations such as pyjama and star wars days, craft, cooking, pamper activities and the annual Fun Day, providing a welcoming space where customers can connect, participate and be recognised for their achievements throughout the year. Some of our other favourite activities are our annual trip to Snow Time at the Hunter Valley Gardens and our interagency discos.

Guided by a person-centred approach, the team is committed to creating inclusive experiences that support wellbeing, foster social connection and celebrate the unique strengths of every customer we support.

Throughout 2025-26, our Community Supports Team continued to support our customers to connect, have fun, build skills, develop independence and engage with their communities. A key contributor to this success was the establishment of the Community Team Working Group, led by Team Leader Natalie Ransom and made up of 10 frontline support workers. Meeting monthly, the group identified opportunities for new activities, shared ideas and helped shape programs that responded directly to customer interests and needs.

Community fundraising initiatives, including the Easter Raffle and Can Collection program, raised funds that were reinvested into activities and resources that directly benefited customers. The Easter Raffle raised $855, while local businesses generously donated prizes and gifts valued at approximately $300 throughout the year.

These efforts supported the gradual introduction of several successful Community Hub programs, including Music Movers, Pamper Fridays and Transport Mondays. Participation continued to grow throughout the year, with Music Movers increasing from three participants to 12-15 regular attendees each week, Pamper Fridays engaging up to 10 participants, and Transport Mondays supporting approximately eight customers, with numbers continuing to increase.

Funds raised were also used to purchase resources that enhanced customer experiences, including musical and sensory equipment for Music Movers, and self-care and wellbeing products for Pamper Fridays. Together, these initiatives strengthened social connection, community participation, confidence and wellbeing for our customers. The success of these initiatives demonstrates the value of empowering frontline staff and listening to customer feedback. Through the ongoing work of the Community Team Working Group, we look forward to continuing to develop innovative programs and meaningful experiences that promote inclusion, independence, wellbeing and lasting community connections.

Jacqueline and her mum Tracey; (Below) Lyn enjoys Mother's Day.



Mother's Day Morning Tea

Our annual Mother's Day Morning Tea celebrated its seventh year, bringing together our much cherished mothers, carers, family members, customers and staff for a special morning of appreciation and connection.

With support from local business donations and fundraising proceeds, gifts were provided to attendees to recognise the dedication of mothers, carers and family members who support their loved ones every day. Customers also worked alongside staff to create and paint personalised artworks, which were framed and presented as gifts. The event provided a meaningful opportunity to celebrate families, reconnect with friends and acknowledge the important role carers play in the lives of our customers.







Surfing Days

Customers embraced the opportunity to enjoy a supported surfing experience, promoting physical activity, confidence and community participation. The day encouraged customers to challenge themselves, learn new skills and experience the benefits of recreation in a fun, inclusive and supportive environment.



(From top) Janelle; Scott and Khiara; Lauren, Jacqueline and Ricky all enjoy one of our famous Surfing Days.







(From top) Joshy; Matty; Justin; James.

Music Movers, Pamper Fridays & Transport Mondays

New community programs introduced through the Community Team Working Group proved highly successful throughout the year.

Music Movers combined movement, music and sensory activities, growing from just three participants to 12-15 customers each week. Pamper Fridays provided a relaxing social environment focused on self-care and wellbeing, regularly attracting up to 10 participants. Transport Mondays supported approximately eight customers to build confidence and independence through community access opportunities.

These programs have become valuable additions to our activities calendar, creating opportunities for social connection, skill development and customer engagement.







Discos and Social Events

Regular discos and social events remained a highlight of the year, providing customers with opportunities to build friendships, express themselves and enjoy shared experiences in an inclusive environment. One of our favourites was a Star Wars-themed disco! These events continue to foster a strong sense of belonging and community across our customer group.



(From top) Jess and Suze; Nathan and Laura; Tysun; Jess all bust a groove at a ConnectAbility Interagency Disco.



Social Circles

The Social Circles group has been running for several years with Finding Yellow, the transition to ConnectAbility has seen minimal changes to support provided. Our Social Circles customers still get to input their ideas for activities and keep their wonderful support staff who they have known for years to which they have an amazing rapport.

There are plenty of fun activities available to enjoy and get involved in. Some popular options include attending Newcastle Knights games, enjoying live music at Weston Workers Club - Redback Country Music events, dancing the night away at Solid Gold Party Disco nights, going out for dinner with friends, and attending local community festivals - Steamfest, Luminous Maitland and shows at Performing Arts Centre - Roy Orbison Tribute.

These activities provide great opportunities to socialise, have fun, and connect with others in the community and maintain friendships.

Community Supports Worker Leah Jones explains:

"All I can say is, we have lots of fun, laughs and always enjoy a good dance when seeing bands. I love seeing the clients laughing, having fun together, chatting, enjoying good food and drinks. We often make the journey to and from events just as fun, spotting wildlife, singing in the vehicle, lots of joking and laughing."



(From top) Tony; Lucy, Michelle and Anne-Marie; Daniel and Leah.

Michael's Story: Journey to Health, Confidence and Independence

What began as a desire to improve his health soon became a life-changing journey for Michael. Motivated by personal goals and a commitment to his future, Michael decided it was time to prioritise his wellbeing. The start of a new relationship inspired him to embrace a healthier lifestyle, while a new medication regime helped reduce cravings and support his weight loss goals. Together, these changes became the catalyst for remarkable progress.

As Michael began noticing positive changes in both his health and energy levels, ConnectAbility staff worked alongside him to build on that momentum. With the support of Khiara, a dedicated support worker who is also a qualified fitness instructor, Michael was introduced to a local gym and a personalised exercise program tailored to his goals and abilities.

The early days were challenging. Michael was unsure about using the equipment and hesitant to step outside his comfort zone. Warm-ups lasted just a few minutes, and trying new exercises felt daunting. But week by week, Michael showed up.

Through encouragement, determination, and consistent effort, his confidence began to grow. Today, he comfortably completes 12-minute warm-ups, eagerly explores new equipment, and actively pushes himself to achieve more with every session. Along the way, he has gained valuable knowledge about fitness, from understanding how different muscle groups work to the importance of hydration and injury prevention.



Michael doing excercises at his local gym.



The transformation has extended far beyond physical fitness. The gym has become a place of connection and belonging, where Michael has built positive relationships with staff and fellow members. In a wonderful reflection of how far he has come, he is now often the one motivating and encouraging his support worker during workouts.

What started as a fitness program has evolved into something much bigger: a journey towards greater independence, confidence and ownership of his own health and wellbeing. Michael now approaches each workout with enthusiasm and a genuine commitment to maintaining an active lifestyle.

One of his most significant achievements has been his weight loss. Since beginning his journey, Michael has lost an impressive 19 kilograms, a milestone that reflects not only physical change but also his determination, resilience, and dedication to achieving his goals.

Michael's story is a reminder that meaningful change happens one step at a time. His commitment and positive attitude have been inspiring to everyone around him, and the ConnectAbility team is incredibly proud to have supported him on this journey.



Tyrone takes to watering the gardens.

Support Coordination

We have continued to support people to navigate and utilise their NDIS plans, engage service providers and plan for their futures via our Support Coordinators. The team have been critical in assisting multiple people to seek plan reviews when their funding did not meet their current or future support needs.





(Left) One of our play therapists Alex and a student indulge in messy sensory play; (Below) the playgroup water activities are always fun.

Youth Support

Throughout the autumn and summer school holidays, and in after-school programs through to January, our Youth Groups provided inclusive opportunities for young people with disability to participate in a range of social and recreational activities. These programs supported participants to develop new skills, foster meaningful relationships and build a strong sense of connection and belonging within their community.

Community disability

🎉 Fun, friendship & community connection.

🤝 Meaningful social connections & relationships.

🌟 Inclusive programs and community participation.

💪 Greater confidence, skills & independence.

🎵 Engaging activities, events & social circles.

❤️ Improved wellbeing, belonging & choice.

Community Living:
Strengthening Independence

Throughout 2025–26, ConnectAbility's Community Living team continued to provide high-quality Supported Independent Living (SIL) services across the Hunter region. We supported 93 customers across 24 active SIL homes throughout Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Maitland and Cessnock, with the support of 263 dedicated staff committed to empowering customers to live independently and achieve their goals.

This year was marked by growth, innovation and strong community engagement. From securing national recognition through a major NDIS grant, to enhancing staff training, strengthening customer and family feedback forums, investing in home improvements and introducing new safety technology, our focus remained firmly on delivering safe, person-centred support.

Key operational insights highlighted the scale of support provided across Community Living, including:

- **Approximately 912 shifts are worked per week across the homes**
- **Our average shift worked is 7.25 hours in duration**
- **The average staff tenure is 6.9 years**
- **We deliver 264 hours of unplanned support every four weeks**



Operations Leads: Bec, Ian, Nathan, Dave, Jacquie, Jordyne, Kelly.



Kerry enjoys to keep busy, whether she's making a meal or tending to her gardens.

Kerry's Story

Kerry has always been independent with making most of her breakfasts and lunches, since arriving at her ConnectAbility home in Speers Point in December 2022.

Although she does require support with more complicated things like pancakes, omelettes and toasted sandwiches, Kerry has a range of favourite breakfast options. She enjoys porridge, toast, raisin toast, crumpets - all of which she can prepare independently. She also prepares her tea and coffee whenever she likes. Kerry has two small vegetable gardens where she has grown veggies for the last 18 months. Some vegetables she grew last year include lettuce, spinach, tomatoes and carrots. This year she has planted some more spinach, broccoli, carrots and lettuce. In her down-time, Kerry enjoys quiet time where she writes letters to friends and family.



Vernon's Story:
More Than a House: Finding Home at ConnectAbility

For Vernon, moving to ConnectAbility's Prince Street home with 24-hour staffing has been life-changing. Before making the move, Vernon lived more independently, often spending long periods on his own and waiting for support staff to arrive. It was a time he describes as difficult, with many restless nights and feelings of uncertainty.

Today, life looks very different.

"The most important thing to me is having support 24 hours a day," Vernon says. "It makes me feel good. I'm going to live here until I'm 80."

Having round-the-clock support has given Vernon something he values deeply: peace of mind. He no longer worries about whether someone will arrive to support him, knowing there is always a friendly face nearby when he needs assistance.

His ConnectAbility home offers Vernon the best of both worlds. He enjoys the independence of having his own villa, complete with a kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and laundry, while also sharing meals and social time with other residents in the communal home.

"I like living here. Everyone makes me laugh and is helpful," he says. "All the staff are friendly and look after me very well."







Vernon enjoys his independence and peace of mind from having trusted support workers.

The move has also had a positive impact on Vernon's health and wellbeing. With support from staff, he now enjoys fresh home-cooked meals instead of relying on frozen dinners. His favourite is spaghetti bolognese. He has achieved healthy weight goals, no longer needs daily blood glucose monitoring and has been able to come off fluid restrictions.

Just as importantly, Vernon is living a busy and connected life. He attends the ConnectAbility Hub at Warabrook several days each week, catching up with friends, bowling and participating in community activities. His favourite day is Wednesday, when he heads out with support worker Justin for lunch and a massage.

A passionate music lover, Vernon regularly attends concerts and enjoys singing along to his favourite songs, often loud enough for staff to hear from outside his villa.

His cousin Peter has noticed a remarkable change.

"He's much more talkative and happy these days," Peter says.

The two regularly visit Vernon's hometown of Wingham, where they take flowers to the cemetery to honour his parents.

"Mum and Dad are with me in spirit," Vernon says. "I know they'd be happy I'm living here."

When asked what he would say to someone considering Supported Independent Living, Vernon's answer is simple:

"Take it. It's a good place. I do love life here."

If there is one thing his story demonstrates, it's that the right home can provide more than support. It can provide confidence, connection and a genuine sense of belonging.

Text supplied by DSW Michelle Corling

(Right) Executive Lead Karla at a Community Engagement Forum; (Below) Customers Nathan and Kimmy on R U OK? Day.



National SIL Pilot Grant

In August 2025, ConnectAbility was awarded a $500,000 grant to contribute to a national project examining what quality Supported Independent Living looks like in practice.

As one of only 44 providers selected across Australia, ConnectAbility is helping shape the future of SIL services and inform future NDIS policy and pricing. Our quality supports include a focus on staff induction, a strong training program, and the use of innovative technology. Insights from this grant will help inform future NDIS policy and pricing. The project recognises our strong reputation for person-centred support, workforce development, quality systems and innovation.



Community Engagement Forums

Our bi-annual Community Engagement Forums continued to provide valuable opportunities for customers, families and guardians to share feedback and shape service delivery.

In October 2025, two representatives from the NDIS SIL Pilot attended the forum, allowing customers and families to speak directly with the NDIA about the future of Supported Independent Living. Discussions highlighted the importance of skilled permanent staff, stronger understanding of individual communication needs and greater choice and control within shared living environments.

A follow-up forum in March 2026 highlighted positive feedback around improved person-centred practice, team consistency, communication and staff advocacy, while also identifying opportunities to further enhance technology, documentation and workforce stability.

Staff Forums & Workforce Development

Staff Forums continued to strengthen communication and collaboration across Community Living, with representatives from every SIL home participating in discussions about service delivery, workforce development and workplace culture.

In April 2026, the forum also welcomed staff from Finding Yellow following the merger, with positive feedback shared about the transition into ConnectAbility. Staff highlighted the value of face-to-face training, consistent leadership and support from Operations Leads.

Dedicated training opportunities remained a priority throughout the year. In November 2025, tailored mandatory training sessions were delivered specifically for casual staff, covering topics including structured inductions, quality documentation and Active Support principles to strengthen customer participation and choice.

Specialist Training & Safety Initiatives

A major focus this year was the rollout of Severe Dysphagia Management Training, recognising the significant health risks associated with swallowing difficulties for many customers.

More than 250 staff participated in the training, which included practical competency assessments and hands-on learning around texture-modified foods and fluid testing. Staff feedback was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the benefits of face-to-face learning delivered by registered nurses.

The introduction of a new Duress Safety System further enhanced the safety of both customers and staff. The technology provides discreet access to immediate assistance in high-risk situations, improving response times and supporting ConnectAbility's commitment to duty of care and wellbeing.



More than 250 ConnectAbility staff enjoy additional training on Severe Dysphagia Management.

(Right) Prince Street SIL renovations; (Below) Gordon puts the new ramp and gate installation at Unit 6 to the test.



Home Improvements

A number of upgrades were completed across Community Living homes to improve accessibility, comfort and safety for customers.

Projects included a new walkway at Prince Street, a ramp and gate installation at Crebert Street, villa repainting at Robb Street, shade cloth installation at Salix Drive, new air conditioning at Kitchener Parade, room modifications at Hutton Street and maintenance works at Alfred Street and Hutton Street.

These improvements are thanks to the Department of Communities & Justice (DCJ) and Evolve Housing for funding and supporting this work to be completed.



Community Chest: Ready for Customers

The Community Chest is now well-stocked with clothing requested by our customers, including elastic waist jeans, easy-to-wear separates, longer T-shirts and a large range of size 18+ clothing.

We're encouraging staff to let customers and families know they can visit the wardrobe in the **Warabrook Training Room, Monday to Friday,** and take home items that meet their needs.

This customer-led initiative is all about making clothing more accessible while supporting one another through community sharing. As items are taken, we'll continue to replenish stock.

If customers have feedback about sizes, styles or items they'd like to see added, please let us know. The more the wardrobe reflects customer needs, the greater its impact will be.

(From top) A very creative festive photo from our Unit 16 customers; Christmas cheer with Heather and Santa; and staff Suman, Solomon and Ollie.





Celebrating Community

The second annual Community Living Christmas Competition brought customers and staff together to celebrate the festive season through photos and videos showcasing Christmas spirit across our homes. The team at our Glendale property took home the top prize, earning a visit from Santa and special gifts for residents.



Community Living

🏠 Supporting independence at home.

🌟 Person-centred supported living.

💪 Greater independence, choice & confidence.

👩‍⚕️ Skilled staff & quality support services.

🔒 Enhanced safety, training & innovation.

❤️ Connected homes, stronger communities & better lives.

Capacity & **Therapy Services**

Our Capacity and Therapy Services team brings together allied health professionals, and early childhood educators who work collaboratively to support children, participants and families across Newcastle, the Hunter and surrounding regions.

Through early childhood, allied health, and education support services, the team delivers person-centred supports that help individuals build skills, achieve goals and participate more fully in their communities. Working closely with families, carers, schools and community partners, the team is committed to creating welcoming and inclusive environments where people feel understood, supported and empowered to thrive.

Throughout 2025-26, the Capacity and Therapy Services team continued to strengthen access to services and improve outcomes for children, participants and families. Improvements to intake and allocation processes, service agreements, waitlist management and referral pathways created a more consistent, efficient and accessible service experience.

Partnerships remained at the heart of our work. Strong relationships with schools, community organisations and local referral networks supported earlier engagement with families, more coordinated service delivery and improved community outcomes.

Our culture of recognition and support was a standout achievement this year. Across Capacity and Therapy Services, staff submitted 131 formal compliments through CAZoom, celebrating teamwork, leadership, innovation, compassion and the everyday actions that make a positive difference for clients, families and colleagues.

These achievements reflect the dedication and professionalism of our clinicians, educators, behaviour support practitioners, leaders, administration teams and support staff. Together, they continue to bring ConnectAbility's mission, "Empowering people to achieve," to life by improving access to services, strengthening community connections and creating opportunities for people to thrive.



Having a ball at playgroup, where learning and fun go hand in hand.

Building Stronger Communities

- 🤗 Community connection.
- 🎈 Inclusive early childhood programs.
- 🤝 Partnerships with schools & community organisations.
- 🌱 Improved access and support pathways.
- ⭐ Better outcomes for children, participants and families.



Giuseppe is thrilled to share his journey towards meeting his goals.

Giuseppe's **Journey to Independence**

Giuseppe is proving that with the right support, determination, and community, goals can become reality.

Giuseppe lives with Joubert syndrome, a rare genetic condition that affects coordination, balance, speech, vision and motor planning. Giuseppe has worked consistently towards building greater independence and communication skills. Since commencing speech pathology and occupational therapy supports with ConnectAbility Encompassing Early Links in 2019, he has achieved significant milestones in daily living, technology use and social participation.

The team worked to understand what was important to Giuseppe. Giuseppe has become more independent with everyday tasks, learned to use assistive communication technology and developed fine motor skills by doing things that are fun and interesting. His creativity has also flourished, with his artwork recognised and displayed in community exhibitions.

One of Giuseppe's long-term goals was to gain employment. The team helped with practical workplace strategies and Giuseppe found work as a volunteer at the library. Giuseppe quickly became a valued member of the team, enjoying greeting library goers, processing book loans and helping keep the library running smoothly.

A highlight of the year came when several Newcastle Knights players visited the library. An avid rugby league fan, Giuseppe was thrilled to meet the players, particularly one who had previously attended the same school. The experience was a memorable and exciting moment of community connection.

Building on the success of his volunteer role, Giuseppe has continued to reach new milestones and now works two mornings each week at a local business, where he is further developing his confidence, independence and verbal communication skills through customer interaction.

Giuseppe's achievements are a powerful example of how determination, and person-centred support can create new opportunities and community.



Building Inclusive Practices in Community Preschools

The $2.1M Sector Capacity Building (SCB) Program is funded by the NSW Department of Education and delivered by ConnectAbility Australia and its consortium partners (FirstChance, Prelude Australia), and sub-contractors. This program has been renewed for another 12 months, continuing its vital work supporting more than 220 preschools across Hunter New England, Mid North Coast and the Northern Rivers Regions.

Our dedicated SCB early childhood intervention teachers, Katie, Gen and Jo, work alongside educators to build their capacity to create learning environments that support every child to flourish. Through funded training, mentoring, and practical on-the-floor support, the SCB team is helping preschools design strategies that make a lasting difference for children, families, and staff.

The team recently supported a local mobile preschool. The service was navigating staff and management changes while also supporting children with complex needs. At the time, the preschool team reported limited confidence in recognising and responding to behaviours, engaging with families in conversations about developmental needs, and understanding early intervention pathways.

Through targeted coaching and in-person support, the SCB team worked alongside the team to develop their skills and confidence.

Educators built a deeper understanding of what children's behaviours may be communicating, implemented inclusive practices such as sensory tools and calming spaces, and confidently engaged with families in meaningful conversations about their child's development.

The outcomes have been transformative. The preschool now has a calmer, more engaged learning environment, educators are working proactively with families, and several children are already on the pathway to receiving NDIS Early Intervention Funding. The nominated supervisor is confidently gathering the right information at enrolment to meet each child's needs from day one.

This success story is just one example of how the SCB Program is equipping community-based preschool staff with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to create inclusive environments where all children are supported, included, and given every opportunity to thrive.



Little readers, big imaginations. Making time for stories and learning.

(Right) ConnectAbility facilitators Amy and Robyn join the fun at playgroup; (below) bubbles always proving a firm favourite with our customers.



Connecting Families Through Play and Community

More than 30 children, families and friends, including the Maitland Mayor, Philip Penfold, joined ConnectAbility's Early Links Playgroup for a special Easter 2026 celebration.

The playgroup is run weekly at Maitland Presbyterian Church. For the past eight years it has been a valued community gathering place welcoming hundreds of families from across the Maitland Local Government Area. Led by our experienced Early Childhood Teachers and Allied Health Therapists, the program provides a safe, inclusive and engaging environment where children of all abilities can learn, play and develop important social skills.

Beyond supporting children's development, the playgroup plays an important role in fostering social connection and reducing isolation for parents and carers. Many families have formed lasting friendships and support networks through the program, strengthening their sense of belonging within the local community.

The Easter celebration highlighted the positive impact of the playgroup, bringing families together through shared activities and fun. The continued success of the program reflects ConnectAbility's commitment to creating welcoming spaces where children and families build community and connection.



(From top) ConnectAbility Speech Pathologist Claudia takes customers through hearing screening; (Below) our Muswellbrook clinic receives some enhancements of its own.



Early Identification Supporting Better Outcomes

When Imrie attended a hearing screening with ConnectAbility Speech Pathologist Claudia, it was an important step in supporting ongoing communication and developmental goals.

Hearing plays a vital role in how children learn, communicate and engage with the world around them. Even mild or intermittent hearing difficulties can impact communication development and participation in every day activities.

As part of our commitment to early intervention and person-centered care, hearing screenings are available when needed helping families access timely support and informed pathways for ongoing care.

By identifying concerns early, children like Imrie are better supported to develop the communication skills, confidence and foundations they need to thrive at home, in education settings and within their communities.

Strengthening Services in Muswellbrook Through Community Partnership

ConnectAbility Australia was delighted to receive grant funding through the 2025 Ravensworth Open Cut Community Investment Program, establishing a valued ongoing partnership with Glencore Ravensworth Operations.

The funding supported enhancements to our Muswellbrook Clinic, including new equipment and facility improvements that enrich the experiences of people accessing our allied health, early intervention and youth services.

During the year, we were pleased to welcome Klay Marchant, Environment and Community Manager, Glencore Ravensworth Operations, to our Warabrook Hub, providing an opportunity to showcase the impact of ConnectAbility's services across the region and discuss the benefits the grant will deliver for the Muswellbrook community.

We extend our sincere thanks to Glencore Ravensworth Operations for their support and investment in the wellbeing and development of local children and families. This partnership reflects the importance of community collaboration in creating opportunities for people to achieve and thrive.



Using play-based activities helps our customers connect and our allied health therapists gain valuable insights into each child's unique strengths, communication style and support needs.



A Neurodiversity-Affirming Approach to Autism Assessment

Throughout 2025-26, ConnectAbility continued to provide autism assessments that support children and families to better understand their unique strengths, ways of thinking and support needs.

Delivered by an experienced Psychologist and Speech Pathologist, our assessments follow best-practice, neurodiversity-affirming guidelines, recognising autism as a part of human diversity rather than something to be changed or "fixed". The assessment process focuses on understanding each child's individual profile, celebrating strengths while identifying areas where additional support may help them thrive.

Importantly, no referral is required to access an autism assessment through ConnectAbility. Families, schools, community organisations and other professionals can contact our team directly to discuss concerns and explore assessment options.

Following assessment, families receive a comprehensive report and practical recommendations to help guide support at home, school and in the community. For many families, the process provides greater understanding, clarity and confidence when planning the next steps for their child.

As demand for autism assessments continues to grow, ConnectAbility remains committed to providing accessible, respectful and evidence-based assessment services that empower children, families and support networks through greater understanding and informed decision-making.

Supporting Early Intervention Through Community Partnership

ConnectAbility was delighted to receive a $10,000 ClubGRANTS award from East Maitland Bowling Club and Club Maitland City to support the ongoing delivery of our inclusive Early Links playgroup program.

The funding recognises the important role early intervention plays in supporting children's development and ensuring families can access welcoming, inclusive and community-based supports. Delivered by an experienced Early Intervention Teacher, the playgroup provides children with opportunities to learn, explore and connect, while parents and carers receive practical advice, tailored strategies and guidance to support their child's development. We extend our sincere thanks to East Maitland Bowling Club and Club Maitland City for their investment in local children and families. Their support will help ensure this much-loved program continues to create positive outcomes for families across the Maitland community.

Things are heating up in the kitchen as ConnectAbility's Little Chefs Club cooks up a storm.



Building Skills and Confidence Through Little Chefs Club

Throughout 2025-26, children participating in ConnectAbility's Little Chefs Club developed practical cooking skills, confidence and independence through a range of engaging, hands-on food experiences.

Guided by our paediatric Dietitians, participants explored new foods and learnt valuable life skills while preparing healthy recipes, including fruit and vegetable smoothies, beef nachos and other nutritious meals. Each session was designed to create positive experiences with food while supporting skill development in areas such as following instructions, food preparation, kitchen safety, fine motor skills and social interaction.

The program also provided opportunities for children to build confidence, develop teamwork skills and increase their willingness to engage with a variety of foods in a supportive and encouraging environment. Whether blending ingredients, preparing vegetables or assembling meals, participants were empowered to take pride in their achievements and celebrate their growing independence.

Little Chefs Club continues to be a valued capacity-building program, supporting children to develop lifelong food, nutrition and daily living skills while having fun and connecting with their peers.



Quality & **Safeguarding**

In a sector defined by continual change, it is important to pause and recognise the progress, resilience and dedication that have shaped the past financial year. This report celebrates the collective efforts of the Quality and Safeguarding team and the meaningful contribution we have made to strengthening safe, high-quality supports for the people and communities we serve.

Although the Quality and Safeguarding team is small, its organisational reach and impact are significant. The team brings together specialist quality and safeguarding, operational support and clinical expertise to support more than 1887 customers and 500+ staff, with a shared focus on safety, dignity, service quality and continuous improvement.

Guided by our values, we have continued to strengthen a safeguarding culture that supports compliance, promotes accountability and ensures people are heard, respected and protected in the delivery of services.



Aaron takes out ConnectAbility customer Tony to catch some waves at one of our exciting ConnectAbility surfing days

Strategic Priorities and Key Initiatives

SafetyCulture – The organisation-wide rollout of SafetyCulture has strengthened our proactive approach to safety assurance. Refined inspection workflows and improved reporting of hazards, near misses, maintenance matters and property issues have enabled faster responses, greater visibility of operational risks and improved oversight across the organisation. Real-time reporting and notifications are supporting earlier intervention, organisational learning and safer environments for customers and staff.

CAZoom customer forms upgrade – Delivered over five months in partnership with Zoom Apps, this project has improved the way key customer information is captured, managed and used. Refreshed incident reports, complaint forms, and compliment and feedback forms are simpler for staff to navigate and easier to understand. The bespoke system strengthens our ability to identify trends, respond to emerging risks and use data to support proactive safeguarding, service improvement and better outcomes.

Surveillance audit – Preparation for our 18-month NDIS Registration surveillance audit, conducted in February 2026, was a significant organisational assurance priority and demonstrated our commitment to quality, accountability and continuous improvement. Following provisional registration after the acquisition of Early Links in 2024, the audit focused on the following areas:

- Core Module
- Module 1 – High Intensity Support
- Module 2 – Specialist Behaviour Support
- Module 3 – Early Childhood Support

The audit was completed over two busy days and resulted in a favourable outcome for the organisation. Auditors acknowledged our robust governance and quality systems, with service delivery identified as a strength across all assessed areas. Feedback from customers interviewed was extremely positive, recognising the care, professionalism and commitment of staff who support them every day.

These achievements reflect strong cross-organisational collaboration and a shared commitment to quality, safeguarding and compliance. Teams have continued to deliver high-quality, person-centred services while upholding the NDIS Practice Standards and fostering a culture of accountability, learning and shared responsibility. Key strategic milestones this year included:

- Successfully completing our 18-month NDIS Registration surveillance audit.
- Strengthening the coordination, management and oversight of internal and external audits.
- Embedding continuous quality improvement as a core discipline across services.
- Strengthening the integrity of systems that support accreditation, compliance and evidence-based assurance.
- Ensuring governance systems continue to adapt, strengthen and respond to ongoing legislative change.

Looking ahead, the Quality and Safeguarding team will continue to strengthen systems, practices and relationships that protect people's rights, elevate customer voice and support staff to deliver services with confidence and care. The achievements of this year provide a strong platform for continued maturity in quality, safeguarding, governance and service excellence.



A cuppa, a chat and good company as one of our ConnectAbility customers Dan connects with fellow customers.

People & Culture

Over the past 12 months, ConnectAbility's People & Culture team made strong progress in strengthening our workforce capability, enhancing employee experience and supporting organisational performance. We successfully delivered several key projects that have improved our people systems, streamlined processes, and reinforced our commitment to a safe, inclusive, and high-performing workplace.

A major focus was on business-critical initiatives, including enhancements to our Human Resources Information System (HRIS), updated policies and processes and strengthened onboarding and professional development pathways. These projects have provided clearer structure and consistency, enabling leaders and teams to operate more effectively.

We launched a range of initiatives designed to enhance engagement, wellbeing and culture. These included a probity management system, new communication tools and systems, and an Employee Benefits program that celebrate our people and foster a stronger sense of engagement across the organisation.

"Together, these achievements reflect a proactive and values-driven approach to People & Culture, positioning ConnectAbility for continued growth and impact as we face a changing and challenging time ahead in NDIS."

Projects Delivered

- **HRIS Development:** In June 2026 we launched the Reflection & Support module in CAZoom, aligning it to industry best practice standards post NDIS audit review. We also successfully redeveloped several digital forms to support an improved user experience.
- **Streamlined Compliance:** Launched a new probity management and Learning Management System (LMS) called Wyzed. This system has reduced administrative time by 15% and improved reporting capability across the business. Employees also have direct visibility of their probity documents and training records with access to live data.
- **Employee Engagement:** Conducted several employee surveys throughout 2025-26, including the Employee Engagement Survey, Psychological Safety at Work, and Staff Safety Survey. Survey data is being used to support the development of employee engagement initiatives across training, safety, resourcing and employee rewards.
- **Digital Enhancements:** Embraced digital technology to support efficiency practices through AI and digital communication systems. We engaged with Note it!, a digital platform that supports leaders with real-time record keeping, reducing administrative burden. We also introduced AI recording tool, Plaude, that allows for streamlined reporting with a 60% improved accuracy rate (compared with manual note-taking methods).
- **Employee Benefits:** Launched our Employee Benefits Program (EVP) last year, partnering with local providers of services that benefit employees whilst employed with ConnectAbility. Partners include Medibank, CommBank, Acacia, and Genesis Fitness. Since the launch in late 2025, we have seen an increased employee engagement in all service offerings.

Investing in Our People

🧑‍💼 Stronger workforce capability.

💻 Improved systems & digital tools.

📚 Better learning & compliance processes.

❤️ Enhanced wellbeing & employee benefits.

🌟 A more connected, supported and engaged workforce.

Our Workforce:
Quick Stats



Our total workforce increased by 15 between July 2025 and June 2026 (504 total).



We have 24 SIL Homes with 248 employees working across one or multiple homes. This makes up 54% of the total workforce at ConnectAbility.

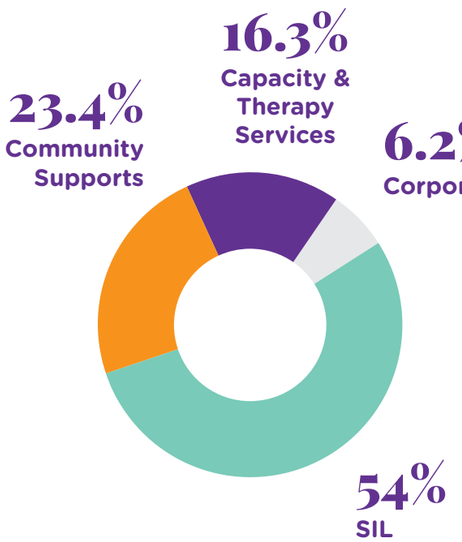


We have onboarded 86 new workers this year, of which 82.2% are frontline workers, 12% are Allied Health Professionals, and 5.8% are support staff.



A total of 142 employees successfully completed probation in 2025-26.

Staff Breakdown by Division





72.4% of our workforce identify as female, on par with the National care and support workforce statistics (75.2% female)



The 2025-26 average years of service was 6.11 years. Well above the National average of less than 5 years' service in the human services sector.

Our
Board



Nathan Franks
Chairman
2014 – Present



Luke Sessions
Board Member
2017 – Present



Bernie Garrett
Deputy Chair
2015 - Present



Joan Gatt
Board Member
2008 – Present



Dr Susan Carter
Board Member
2022 – Present



Elechia Jones
Board Member
2024 – Present



Sean McCann
Board Member
2026 – Present

Our Executive
Leadership Team



David Carey
Chief Executive Officer



Margaret Taylor
Executive Officer



Leigh Tull
Chief Financial Officer



Samantha Watts
Executive Leader
People & Culture



Donna Vallette
Executive Leader
Quality & Safeguarding



Tammie Lawler
Executive Leader
Community Supports



Karla Seaman
Executive Leader
Community Living



Austin Smith
Executive Leader
Capacity & Therapy Services

The 10th anniversary golf day was a huge hit! Here's some of our major sponsors including NOI, DABs plumbing, Andersen Pest Services and JD Electrical.

Annual Charity Golf Day:
Celebrating 10 years!

More than 110 golfers came together for the 10th anniversary of 2026 Newcastle Office Interiors (NOI) Charity Golf Day, **raising an outstanding $20,000 for ConnectAbility**. Supported by local businesses, sponsors and donors, the event combined friendly competition, networking and community spirit to raise funds that will enhance kitchen facilities and support skill-building and independence for ConnectAbility's customers.

The ongoing support of Newcastle Office Interiors and the wider business community continues to make a lasting impact, helping ConnectAbility create meaningful opportunities for the people we support. Here's to our eleventh year in 2027!







Mackenzie and Phil celebrate at the Warabrook Hub.

Thank you to **Our Supporters**

Thank you to all the individuals and businesses who continue to support us. The year wouldn't have been made possible without you!

Adam Lewis
Adept IT
Advance Sweepers Newcastle (James & Annette)
Altapac
Andersen Pest Services
Andrew Taylor
ANZ Bank
BBQs Galore Kotara
BCF
Beside Leaders Global (AJ)
Board Volunteer – Rebecca Lau
Bunnings Kotara + Bennetts Green
Carpe Diem
Cheeky Bikes
Chris Ryan Legal
Clarke & Co – Ryan Nichols & Nick Clarke
Club City Maitland
Club Macquarie Argenton
Crema Coffee
DABS Plumbing
Department Health, Disability and Ageing
Doyle Property Management
Dynamic Business Technologies
Earp Distilling Co.
East Maitland Bowling Club
Evolve Housing
Fire & Rescue North
Futuristic Digital
George Hamilton
Glencore Ravensworth Operations
Greg Logue
Harvey Norman Bennetts Green
HUB Advisory Group
Insitu Housing
Jake McCluskey – JSM Air & Electrical
JD Electrical
JezWeb Team
Kmart Waratah
Leading Edge Innovations
Lewis Wines
Lion Brewery
Magnus Property Management
Mayfield Blooms
Mitch Revs
Mortgage Choice Warners Bay
National Disability Support Agency
Nesbitt Hair
NSW Department of Communities & Justice
NSW Department of Education
NewVo Communications
Newcastle Office Interiors
Novotel Newcastle
Novo Car Detailing
Playgroup NSW
Prosperity Salary Packaging
QT Hotels
Rippit Golf
Reece Newman
Smallman Security
Supply First Aid
Surfest Team
Susan Roskell Toy Drive
TAFE Newcastle
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