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WELCOME TO WE LIVE LIFE

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

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

In each edition we publish articles about our work with the people we support and our services, and share inspirational stories from around the country.



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE CLAIRE ROBBS

As I reflect on the year that has been, I feel truly inspired to lead an organisation that works every day to change lives, and to do this work guided by our values.

I see and hear our values in the many stories that are shared with me from across the organisation, and I am pleased to be able to share some of those stories here with you in *We Live Life*.

In this edition we meet three of our foster carers who each have a unique story to tell (page 5 and 6). Belinda is a single carer providing respite care Terrie is a solo mum to four children who provides short term care and is dedicated to working with families to see children return home. Margaret is 81 years young and has been caring with Life Without Barriers for close to 20 years!

We also hear about an innovative early intervention program in Tasmania that is seeing promising results. Our Intensive Family Engagement Service works in the home with parents at risk of having children removed into care to teach parenting skills and build capacity and emotional resilience (page 9).

We feature a beautiful story about Rhondie Koolatah, from the Cairns region in Queensland who we supported to return home to Kowanyama Country where he was welcomed with a special water blessing and ochre ceremony (page 11).

In 2019 we launched our Annual Report which celebrates the ways in which we have partnered with thousands of people to help them achieve their goals (page 4). In FY 18/19 we supported more than 23,600 people and welcomed over 600 people to our services through the Victorian Government's divestment of disability services.

I am conscious that the end of 2019 brought devastating bushfires that destroyed countless homes, flora, fauna and tragically, human lives. My thoughts are with all the communities currently affected. I am immensely proud of how our Life Without Barriers staff have worked together to support clients and families affected by the fires and I encourage you all to keep up the good work as we continue to help communities to recover and get back on their feet.

Claire Robbs

READ ABOUT HOW OUR VALUES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Visit www.lwb.org.au to read the report



To coincide with International Day of People with Disability celebrations (3 December) we launched our Employment Without Barriers campaign aimed at encouraging a national conversation about making more inclusive and accessible workplaces for people with disability.

Life Without Barriers is not afraid of being bold in our commitment to breaking down employment barriers for people with disability. We want to encourage other employers to do the same. By 2022 we've set a target of 12% of all new recruits being people with disability. Here we share some stories from our current staff with disability about their experiences of being part of the Life Without Barriers team.



ALLAN BUNYAN
NDIS Support Coordinator,
Life Without Barriers

In his role as an NDIS Support Coordinator Allan loves seeing other people achieve their potential. "My favourite part of my role is linking people to services, such as assistive technology or community support. I help people navigate funding streams and processes and then see them get the things they need. It's a great feeling."

Allan, who was born with congenital condition phocomelia, has worked at Life Without Barriers' Cairns office for over a year. For him, the support of his manager has been an integral part of his positive workplace experience. "[My manager] Asher has been a massive advocate for me and the things I need. For example, I have a heightened desk, a smaller keyboard and various other adjustments that enable me to do the job in the way I need to."

Allan uses a wheelchair and says he has experienced barriers to employment in the past. He believes that in order to make real and lasting change to the employment rate for people with disability, employers must be willing to look beyond someone's disability. "Management often see, or focus on, people's disability first. I think organisations need to look at what people with disability can bring as opposed to what they can't. Sometimes they only see the wheelchair, and what they're ignoring is everything else. Yeah, I might need a few adjustments to do my job, but when I have them, I'm good as gold and I can meet all my targets."



NADIA ABDEL-HAMID
Communications Officer,
Life Without Barriers

Like many others, Nadia lives with an invisible disability. She has a significant visual impairment that can't be identified just by looking at her.

Though statistically she's less likely to experience unconscious discrimination, having an invisible disability presents its own challenges. Before working at Life Without Barriers, it was something she was often hesitant to disclose to employers.

"As a writer I guess the expectation is that someone will have full vision. It's for this reason I've struggled to tell my employers about my eyesight – because it doesn't really impact my day to day work and performance, and I don't want them to assume it will."

"It appears that I can see and that everything is OK. But in actual fact, I have no left visual field in both my eyes. I see everything smack bang, dead in half."

Since starting at Life Without Barriers, Nadia says she has felt more relaxed when it comes to talking about her disability. "It's part of our daily bread, here at Life Without Barriers, so it feels more 'normal' to talk about it."

"People here are definitely more open-minded – they realise it's just part of who we are as human, so it's not classified as being 'not normal or abnormal'. It's the human condition."



JOANNE WELCH
Disability Support Worker,
Life Without Barriers

Before joining Life Without Barriers, Joanne had been out of the paid workforce for 10 years, working hard at home to raise her children. Joanne also has a mild intellectual disability which means she struggles with some reading and writing tasks. After completing a Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) and completing her 120 hours of practicum placement at a Life Without Barriers Day Program, the manager of the program encouraged her to apply for a vacant position and she got the job!

"Now I'm working and I love it. Working at Life Without Barriers, it's actually brought me out of my shell. I'm more confident, talk a lot more and I dance – they have a Dancing Day at the centre – and I wouldn't normally dance but now I dance all the time! Getting up and dancing with the clients, showing them that you can do it is fun, but also rewarding."

"Life Without Barriers have been very supportive of my disability. They know I still struggle at times with some aspects of reading and writing. They've told me 'don't worry about it, just take your time and if you have any questions or not sure of anything, don't hesitate to ask.'"

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN!

Visit lwb.org.au/social-policy/employment-without-barriers/ for tools and resources on how to make your workplace more inclusive of people with disability.

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

As we come to the end of another year, we are proud to highlight the ways in which we have partnered with people to change lives for the better. Throughout FY18/19 we were trusted to support over 23,000 people in more than 500 communities.

We are committed to providing the best possible services for the people we support. This means we are not afraid to try new things and we are constantly learning about how we can strengthen our approach and make our high-quality services even better. Here is a snapshot of what we've achieved this year:

- We expanded our evidence-informed practices, including CARE, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, and MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™.
- We partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services in Victoria to facilitate the smooth transfer of disability services in three regions to our organisation. This transfer saw us welcome 679 new participants and 1,216 new staff.
- Joblife, our joint venture with Angus Knight, supported over 350 people with disability to participate in meaningful, ongoing employment or education this year.
- We championed diversity and inclusion across our organisation by launching our next three-year Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP) which aims to increase the number of people with disability in our organisation to 8% of new staff and 4.5% of our workforce by June 2020.
- We strengthened our values-based culture and commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by making strong progress towards the targets set out in our Reconciliation Action Plan. This included supporting young people in care and people with disability to attend numerous cultural events and facilitating many Return to Country trips. These trips offer our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients that chance to return to the land of their birth or kin and camp on Country with their families.
- We championed safety across all levels of our organisation through our Livesafe: Clients first, safety always campaign. Thanks to these efforts and the work of our Health, Safety and Environment teams we saw a 31% decrease in staff requiring time off due to injury.
- We remained committed to being a respectful and responsive partner in the social sector. Through collectives such as Alliance20 and Children in Care, we shared our learnings to influence positive change. Through our work with Alliance20 we provided input into the NDIS price increases announced in July 2019 which came as welcome news for both providers and participants in regional and remote areas.

You can learn more about the many ways we partnered with people to change lives for the better this year through our Annual Report 2019 found at www.lwb.org.au/about-us/annual-reports/



Annual Report 2019

**OUR VALUES
MAKE THE
DIFFERENCE**

WE
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS
WE

23,648

People supported

Partnered with

2,980

foster and kinship carers

7,037

total staff at 30 June 2019

4,673

children in foster care supported

6,098

people with disability supported

4,043

people supported through the NDIS this year

Welcomed

679

participants as part of the transfer of services from the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria

DRIVING CHANGE

A driver's licence is often the first step towards independence and opportunity and Life Without Barriers' Driver Training Program is helping people to take that step.

Our Driver Training Program operates across remote parts of WA including Broome and the Dampier Peninsula and helps participants gain the necessary driving hours and skills needed to secure their licence. For people living in these regional areas, a licence is the key to employment – without one, it is almost impossible to work. When the region's large employers run recruitment drives for Aboriginal personnel, the team prioritise people looking for mining work, as a licence is required to get one of these jobs. This has helped hundreds of young people secure sustainable, enjoyable work and helped them to turn their lives around.

Upon release from prison in Broome, Cassie* was suffering from extreme agoraphobia, as well as experiencing



Instructor Max Pedlar, participants Sakura Ishiguchi, Hoshiko Ishiguchi and Instructor Russell Edmunds

anxiety attacks. She was very shy and quiet and had taken to locking herself in her bedroom all day, every day. With gentle persuasion, motivational talks and regular driving lessons, Cassie gained confidence, a sense of personal achievement and once she found her voice, turns out she was not shy or quiet at all! With her licence gained, she was able to successfully pursue her dream job of becoming a translator for elderly Aboriginal community members needing to access medical services.

Another client of the service, Damien* works on a remote cattle station but had lost his licence due to unpaid fines. Unfortunately, Damien didn't know the fines existed due to his limited literacy skills and working remotely. Because he required a licence for his job, his

employment was now in danger too. His manager worked with the Driver Training Program to schedule times he could come to Broome, where the 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 was also now able to visit his young children and wife on his limited breaks. Since losing his licence he had not been able to travel to their community and it had been many months since he had seen them.

Life Without Barriers is proud to deliver this program through funding from the Department of Justice in WA.

*Names changes for privacy reasons

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

Diversity and inclusion are part of our DNA at Life Without Barriers and we're thrilled to have been awarded Disability Confident Recruiter (DCR) status by the Australian Network on Disability (AND).

Obtaining DCR status shows that we are an organisation that is committed to ensuring people with disability are actively recruited in our organisation.

Our new Disability Ability Wellness Network (DAWN) is off the ground and forging ahead with an agenda to foster a culture of inclusion. The creation of this network aligns with a key commitment made in our Accessibility Inclusion

Employment Plan (AIEP) that we launched in June 2019.

Many of our staff around Australia also celebrated Wear It Purple Day in their workplaces in August. Wear It Purple Day is important to us because it's about celebrating and supporting young LGBTIQ people, and we provide services to many of these young people. Sadly, LGBTIQ young people experience



Adelaide PRIDE March

higher rates of bullying, mental illness and suicide and Wear It Purple Day is working to address this. We have also been busy attending Pride Parades around the country and showing our support for the LGBTIQ community. Recently we attended Newcastle Fair Day to recruit foster carers, walked in the Adelaide Pride March and participated in many events as part of PRIDEfest in Perth.

COULD YOU BE A CARER?



MEET BELINDA SINGLE, RESPITE CARER WORKING FULL TIME

Working full-time in a demanding job hasn't stopped Belinda from living out her dream of being a carer. She manages to make it fit with her lifestyle by doing weekend respite and emergency care. She represents a 'new age' of young professional carers from single-headed households looking to give back to the community.

With a good job and happy home, Belinda felt she was at the right stage of her life to start fostering. "I was happy, secure and had the right work/life balance," Belinda said. "But I couldn't shake the feeling that something was missing. I wasn't sure what it was. I had always been involved in community and charity work and when I heard a friend of mine had signed up to be a foster carer I thought, that's it!" That began Belinda's now three-year journey with Life Without Barriers, providing regular care for more than ten children.

Every year in September we celebrate Foster and Kinship Carer Week. Throughout the week we thank carers through many locally run events, but we also take the opportunity to shine a light on their stories. Here you'll meet Belinda, Terrie and Margaret, whose unique stories may encourage people to consider foster care when they previously thought they may not be eligible.

Her motivation to become a foster carer was to support children to just be children; to feel secure and to enjoy life, so they don't miss out on making the kind of cherished memories Belinda had growing up.

Thinking back on some of the memorable activities Belinda has organised for children in her care she recalls, "I took a 14-year-old boy out for a day trip once. It was a beautiful sunny Sunday morning. We walked along the Werribee River to the park, and when he got there, his eyes lit up and he stared in awe. It was like he'd never been out in nature before.

I remember him standing up on a rock, looking over the river, with the sun shining through the gum trees. He said to me, "This is really my thing. Thank you so much for bringing me here to this place." It's the simple things they often miss out on."

Her advice to anyone thinking about becoming a foster carer is, "do it!" She explains, "There's the personal reward of providing care for a child. But there's also a lot you learn about yourself as a person. You find strengths you never knew you had – like patience and resilience. And best of all,

you've got the full support of a Care Team to get you through if things get tough."

She continues, "I think there's a misconception that foster care means adoption and that all placements are permanent. People don't realise that there are different types of foster care and that there are different types of foster carers. Being a respite carer for school-age children suits my lifestyle. It means I can still manage a busy career and live out my dream of being a carer and helping children enjoy a full childhood."



MEET MARGARET LONG TERM CARER WHO BEGAN FOSTERING IN HER 60S

At 81 years young, Margaret is a proud Aboriginal woman who has devoted most of her life to caring for others. Growing up in a family of eleven children, Margaret began caring for her baby sisters and other children at 11 years old. "Becoming a foster carer seemed a logical step after I retired from the workforce," Margaret said.

Margaret has four children of her own and now boasts being a grandmother to 15 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren—what a woman! With this much on her plate you would think she wouldn't have a moment to spare. But Margaret likes to keep busy and it was this drive that made her take the leap to foster caring.

Since being approved to become a carer, Margaret hasn't looked back and now has devoted the past 15 years of her retirement to caring for approximately 60 children.

She also loved the idea of continuing to actively make a positive contribution to her local community in the Mid-north Coast of NSW where she has lived since 1959. "Becoming a foster carer seemed like an obvious thing I can do," she said.

At first, Margaret's main concern about becoming a foster carer was getting rejected because of her age. At her time of applying she was in her 60's. Soon after completing the foster carer application process, Margaret's fears were dismissed when she learned she was indeed eligible.

Margaret knows the ups and downs that come with growing up. She also understands the important role love and support play in a child's development. Above all, she is a firm believer the key ingredients of building trust and positive relationships with children in her care are based on instilling the value of respect. "It's pretty simple," she said. "If you give respect you will get it back."

Carers often report the most rewarding part of being a foster carer is when you get to see the children go on to live happy and

productive lives. Currently, Margaret has a 16-year-old boy who has been in her care since the age of nine and a 22-year-old who is about to move out and into his very own apartment.

When asked what she thinks the hardest part about being a foster carer is, she promptly replied by saying "Saying goodbye to the little ones".

With Margaret showing no signs of slowing down anytime soon, she is a shining example that age is not a barrier to foster caring.



MEET TERRIE SOLO MUM TO FOUR KIDS AND DEDICATED TO FAMILY INCLUSION

Raising four children and working as a mental health nurse would be enough to keep most people busy, but for superstar solo parent Terrie, she felt she still had an interest and capacity to give more.

"Foster caring was something I'd wanted to do for a long time, but I think it was the fear of the unknown that put me off," Terrie recalls. "Then a friend of mine became a foster carer and seeing her little girl flourish, that really got the ball rolling."

Five years on and Terrie has now provided care to eight children, ranging from three to 15 years old. Like most children she has looked after, her first was an emergency placement – a nine-year-old boy.

"He turned up with just two grey plastic bags of gear," said Terrie. "My eldest son was about 14 years old at the time and was looking for the little guy's stuff to bring it inside... I had to explain to him that buddy, that's it. He was just gobsmacked – it was a really big eye opener for him that not everyone has what we have." This experience helped her children to develop empathy that she had not seen in them before.

The positive influence on Terrie's biological children isn't the only surprise that foster caring has brought to her life. Terrie's approach to out-of-home care has increasingly involved working with the child's parents, with three of her eight placements now successfully restored to their families.

"If the circumstances are right, restoration is the primary purpose of why I'm doing this – to help get these children back home where they belong," explains Terrie.

Terrie's most recent placement was a 3-year-old boy who was restored to his mother, thanks to an excellent working relationship between the two.

"We were on the same page, we wanted the same outcome for the little fella, so we worked together by talking," says Terrie of the boy's mother. "She met my children and she was invited to dinner, just like she invited us to hers... keeping those lines of communication and trust open."

Eventually, it was time for him to go home. "I just knew it was time, his Mum had done a lot of work to get there and

it was the right thing to do. We're still in contact though, we dropped round just the other day" she adds.

Reflecting on the past five years since becoming a carer, Terrie remains thrilled she began her foster care journey, encouraging anyone else who is capable to also consider it. "Sure, there are challenging days where I question why I got into foster caring," said Terrie. "But I always go to bed knowing the answer – that I'm doing the right thing, that I'm making a real difference."

EQUINE AND ART THERAPY FOR FOSTER CARERS

Caitlin and Kay from our Out-of-Home-Care Team in Queensland have created a pilot program that is seeing strong results with our Specialist Intensive Foster Carers.

'Belonging Together' is a program that brings together foster carers once a month for group equine and art therapy allowing them to build upon their emotional resilience and be supported by others who have walked in their shoes.

Over a four hour workshop, the carers discuss their shared experience, learn new coping strategies, explore their feelings through art and interact with the horses at the property. The program is run by two qualified art therapists, an equine therapist and a counsellor.

The feedback from the carers involved has been overwhelmingly positive.

Janine* noted that while they started off as strangers, the group quickly changed to be so much more. "Over the months a very special bond has formed between us," said Janine. "We have seen and shared our vulnerabilities, fears, and joy, accompanied at times with laughter and tears. As a single woman foster carer sometimes I feel so alone but I am not alone here."

Another specialist foster carer Abbey found the group helped her to become more aware of how she responds to situations. "I am [now] aware of my own triggers and emotional responses



to life and my young person. Lately I have noticed I am more aware of the importance of taking a breath and scanning my own awareness before responding."

Carer David* really appreciated the trust built in the group. "What we do together is a big risk and everyone respects that," said David. "I am learning so much about my emotions and the effect they can have on others. I didn't think I could be writing poetry and doing art but it shows me things I didn't know."

*Names changed for privacy reasons.

SHARING CULTURE AT MURROOK

Every year in August, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Children's Day is celebrated around Australia.

This year participants from our Foster Day program in NSW went on a very special trip to celebrate the day. The group travelled to Murrook Culture Centre at Williamstown, at the invitation of Life Without Barriers' Waruparr committee, to learn more about Aboriginal culture



and customs. As part of our commitment to reconciliation, Life Without Barriers runs a number of locally based committees – Waruparr being one of them – who work to ensure the goals we have set in our Reconciliation Action Plan are met at a local level.

The participants, their families and staff were introduced to traditional art by painting Boomerangs using Aboriginal symbols and design. With this knowledge, they collaboratively created an artwork, that is now being displayed in the Forster Life Without Barriers office.

They were then challenged with learning how to throw a Boomerang, which the participants agreed was definitely the highlight of the day. There were some very enthusiastic Boomerang throwers out there!

The final activity of the day was to enjoy listening to the digeridoo and have faces painted to take part in some traditional dancing. Life Without Barriers would like to acknowledge and thank the Murrook Cultural Centre for welcoming the participants from the Foster Day program, the group loved the trip and learned so much about Australia's First Nations people.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO STAY TOGETHER

When parents have no one left to turn to, our family workers from the IFES team are there to help families stay together

The best place for a child is with their family. Life Without Barriers knows this isn't always possible but in Hobart, our Intensive Family Engagement Service (IFES) are doing all they can to keep families together.

Life Without Barriers' IFES team provides assertive support to parents who are at risk of having their children removed by Child Safety Services in Tasmania. In the past, these children would have entered the foster care system, but now the Tasmanian Government is piloting a new model of care. This new model brings agencies like Life Without Barriers into the home to provide practical support for up to 20 hours per week so that parents can make the changes necessary to keep their children in their care.

Will Skadden, the Team Leader for the IFES team recognises both the strengths and challenges of the service they provide. "Even though we are intervening before kids are removed, this intervention is still quite late in terms of the issues faced by the family," Skadden said. "Families often come into the service having dealt with a lot of different services, some that they didn't like, so they can be skeptical of us. So it is real point of emphasis for us to build positive relationships right from the start. A lot of the initial work is collaborative goal setting. The good thing about our service is we can be a bit flexible about what we work on."

The work is intensive, with each family worker carrying a case load of just four families and providing between 9 to 20 hours of assertive support for the families each week. The family workers follow the evidence-informed Parenting Under Pressure model developed by Griffith University which focusses on emotional regulation, nurturance and view of self. Often parents have limited support from extended family, some have issues with substance abuse and many have been victims of intergenerational trauma and

domestic violence. So the family workers have to wear many 'hats'.

Family workers help to solve some of the short and long term problems experienced by the parents. They teach parenting skills and provide mental health support. They organise activities to help the families build positive experiences together and provide respite by working one-on-one with the children too. Family workers organise mentors for the children and work with alternate education providers to get the kids re-engaged in school and spending time with the right kinds of peers. They are the problem solvers in what is often a very chaotic and volatile family environment. When there is a crisis, the family worker is the first one called and their support is practical and immediate.

Kate is a solo mother who has recently had her children restored to her care thanks to the support of the IFES team. She admits it was hard to have another unfamiliar service enter their lives, but after working with the team for a number of months, she can see how much has changed for the better. "My seven year old was out of school for the last year, but they've helped him get back in school and he's doing really well," Kate said. "The kids just think it's great. Because I've got no family here, it's really hard and it's been really hard for a long time now. I'd be lost without them." When Kate was unexpectedly admitted to hospital recently for a two day stay, it was her IFES family worker who came to stay with the children.

"They are my only support system at the moment. Anything I need or need help with they say just yell out and they sort it out for me. It's really great for people who don't have that family support. They've helped me and I appreciate everything they've done for me. I can't thank them enough. We still have a long way to go, but we'll get there, slow and steady."

Family worker David Taylor recognises the complexities faced by the families he



Will Skadden, Team Leader of the Intensive Family Engagement Service in Hobart

works with. "We find when we meet the families the issues we were told about are usually just the tip of the iceberg. It's quite a complex life," Taylor said. "There can be issues around safety in the home, nurturing and attachment, cleanliness, hygiene, domestic violence, sexual abuse. So in that initial stage of relationship building we get caught up in putting out a lot of spot fires." After a time though, he sees a shift in the parents and a strong willingness to change as they come to know him and understand he is there to support them and help them get on with their lives.

While it has its challenges, the rewards in helping create lasting change for children and families make it all worth it. "I love my job, I think it's the best job I've ever had in my life. Although it is only a short time we get to work with these families, I am confident that I can make a little bit of difference and hopefully turn things around for them."

When asked about success rates, Skadden notes that this can be hard to measure in this type of work. About 75% of the families they work with continue to keep their children at home. For those whose children are removed, it doesn't necessarily mean the team was unsuccessful, but that it was in the best interest of the child for them to be cared for elsewhere for a time. "Our hope is that any removals would be temporary and then this program will help parents take the steps they need to then get their children back," Skadden said.

The program is a pilot funded by the Child Safety Services in Tasmania. Life Without Barriers hopes to continue to deliver this service as we are committed to child first practices, which include children remaining with their biological parents wherever possible.

*Client name and image changed for privacy reasons

AND THE WINNER IS ...

Life Without Barriers Employee Recognition Awards 2019

In October, over 200 staff from across Australia came together in Melbourne to honour the winners and finalists of the Employee Recognition Awards for 2019. The theme of the night was undoubtedly courage. The way staff have gone above and beyond to support people to change their lives was truly outstanding. Here we share the winners stories with you:



RECONCILIATION AWARD

Leoni Lippitt,
State Lead Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives, QLD

Leoni works tirelessly and passionately in all aspects of reconciliation. Leoni has formed remarkable partnerships with Elders, community groups and organisations throughout Queensland and has given many weekends to lead 'Strong Women's Camps' and is generous in sharing her knowledge and culture.

VALUES CHAMPION, TEAM
National Immigration Support Services Team

NISS teams operate across Australia and in a dynamic and ever changing environment. Despite these challenges they are one, unified team, responsive to the needs of their complex clients. As a multi-cultural team, there is deep level of respect between all team members and they all have a 'can-do' attitude when it comes to supporting their clients.

VALUES CHAMPION, INDIVIDUAL

Rebecca Reed,
Case Manager, NSW

Rebecca is responsive, respectful and committed to the best interests of children in care, which mean family inclusion. When working with families, she is respectful of everyone's views and takes time to hear their stories. She makes space for families to be included in the lives of their children, and supports them in the often rocky re-introduction into their children's lives.

INNOVATION AWARD

Disability Support Team,
Southern Tasmania

This team have gone above and beyond in acting as the trial site for numerous pilot projects in the past 18 months. They were the first site to pilot the SACA app as well as Enrite and Lumary and the second site to pilot the Client Directed Teams model. It is a testament to the team how they have taken these pilots in their stride.

SAFETY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Anne Wall and Naomi Holland,
Riverland Team, South Australia

Anne and Naomi are committed to clients first, safety always, and demonstrate a strong working relationship to identify and address workplace risks. Anne and Naomi have been instrumental in putting policies in place to meet the newly introduced Gayle's Law in South Australia which puts additional safety measures in place for staff seeing clients in isolated areas.

CAROL PELTOLA,
PRACTICE LEADER AWARD

Jo Cameron,
Manager Casework, Tasmania

Jo is dedicated to leading the #iConnect youth mental health team in a way that gets the best outcome for clients, whilst supporting her clinicians to develop and grow. Her ability to reflect and think critically around the client and family's needs combined with her open, collaborative, playful and respectful nature has led to fantastic outcomes, even with the clients others say are hard to reach.

LEADERSHIP AWARD

Michelle Edmondson,
Alcohol and other Drugs Team Leader,
South Australia

Michelle is the epitome of commitment and passion. Michelle has created a values based culture in a team that is built of staff whose location means they often work in isolation. Michelle brings the team together via a variety of means – effectively creating a "cyber" team who feel connected to each other.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

Kaylene Christie,
Service Delivery Coordinator
for Aged Care

To Kaylene, the aged care clients she schedules are so much more than names on a page. Kaylene regularly stays at work late to reassure her clients about their next service or explain a change in staffing. Kaylene follows up with clients as to their wellbeing and always pitches in at short notice to help her clients. Nothing is too much for Kaylene.

And the winners were:

- 1 The winners of the 2019 Employee Recognition Awards
- 2 From our Queensland team (L to R) Julie McGlone, Reconciliation Award winner Leoni Lippitt and Silvia Jones-Terare
- 3 Award finalists from the South Australian HASP team with CE Claire Robbs (second from left).
- 4 People's Choice winner Kaylene Christie (centre) with Jackie Gallagher (L) and Ric Cabrita (R)
- 5 Values Champion (team) winners, the NISS Team
- 6 Safety Leadership winners Anne Hall (L) and Naomi Holland (R) from South Australia



Rhondie (centre) with Kowanyama Mayor Michael Yam (L) and Ernie Dingo (R) from Camping on Country



Rhondie sits by the Mitchell River in Kowanyama



A firestick workshop takes place

RHONDIE RETURNS TO COUNTRY

The sense of belonging is a powerful emotion and is fundamental to how humans understand concepts such as place, self, community and culture.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the sense of belonging goes beyond just a sense of place. Instead, there's a profound spiritual connection to 'Country.' This is an intimate, interdependent relationship between all aspects of existence – spirituality, culture, language, songlines, family, lore, identity and ancestors.

Here at Life Without Barriers we're deeply committed to reconciliation and improving outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. One of the ways we ensure

reconciliation doesn't just live in our hearts, but in our hands as well, is by supporting people with disability to return to Country.

Recently, we helped Rhondie Koolatah (a traditional owner of the Kowanyama community in Cairns) to return to his Country and camp on his homelands for the first time. Sadly, Rhondie had been removed from his family at a very young age due to his complex disabilities and when Life Without Barriers met him in 2013, we learned he had not returned to his family since then. From 2014 onwards

we have been supporting him to return to Country each year, and this year was the first time he was able to camp on the land of which he is a traditional owner.

Asher Meadows, Operations Manager from Cairns accompanied Rhondie on his trip home. "It was so rewarding to see Rhondie camp on traditional Okola Country for the first time," said Asher. "He was welcomed back to Country by Michael Yam, the Mayor of Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council and given a special water blessing and ochre ceremony. It was a profound experience for all those present, especially Rhondie."



NORFOLK ISLAND

Norfolk Island, located off the Queensland coast is an idyllic place to live and raise a family, but prior to 2018 there were no disability services on the island.

As the NDIS reached the island, families and people with disability in this small community gained access for the first time to tailored support that was designed by them, for them.

Life Without Barriers is proud to be one of the service providers now delivering NDIS Support Coordination to participants.

As each person with disability is different, so are the scope of services they receive. For some this has meant assistance with speech and behavioural therapy and for others it has meant supporting them with independent living skills such as emails, budgeting and community involvement.

Thanks to support from the NDIS families are growing stronger every day and people with disability are learning new skills and having more involvement in their communities.

Learn more about the NDIS coming to Norfolk at youtu.be/a7OPYG1u4NY



Gina Olivieri and Tracey Chesler at the Tasmania Mental Health Week launch

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Here at Life Without Barriers, we believe mental health matters. In October, we joined thousands of organisations around the country to celebrate Mental Health Week.

The focus of this significant event is to destigmatise mental health so people feel comfortable to check in with each other and seek professional help if they need it.

With one in five Australians (aged 16-85) experiencing mental illness any given year, we want to do all we can to create a better understanding of mental health issues and encourage our staff and the people we support to access help

In South Australia our mental health team took part in community events including the Mindshare Group Exhibition and our Living Arts team encouraged people to find their inner creativity at the Festival of Now in Adelaide. We deliver a number of mental health services in SA including

housing support and support for people with psychosocial disabilities through the NDIS.

Our Tasmania team also encouraged people to think about our contribution to 'the roles we play' by creating 500 badges to start conversations around mental health. They asked people a variety of questions such as are you a listener, carer, ally, activist, story teller, stigma breaker, elder or helper and the conversations flowed from there. Campaign creator, Gina Olivieri from the Mental Health team in Tasmania, made a particular effort to not choose roles that were too prescriptive. "I didn't include things like Parent for example," said Gina. "I

wanted to focus on roles that can apply to many different professions, cultures, communities, and stages of life.

I chose words that spoke to the actions we take – so for example a 'Leader' could be a CEO who role-models good work/life balance to their colleagues, or could be a kindergartner who makes an effort to be nice to the new kid in class and encourage others to play with them. Or anything in between!"

The badges were enthusiastically received by the Tasmania team, and even requested by Life Without Barriers staff in other states.

"The most popular badge has been 'Listener', by far," Gina said.

ARTISTS EXHIBIT NEW WORK

Tasmania is renowned for being a vibrant cultural and creative hub, so it's not surprising that there are many emerging artists within the Life Without Barriers' NDIS community in Southern Tasmania.

In October, a group of our artists featured their work in the exhibition 'It Begins With Drawing'. This exhibition was a visual expression of the progression of an idea from drawing to the final artistic format. The exhibition took place at Clarence Council's Rosny Schoolhouse Gallery in Tasmania.

Art tutors Jeannie Mooney and Jane Stanton, curated the exhibition that included paintings, prints and mixed media work by ten Life Without Barriers participants who are part of the art

program at Goodwood and our residential sites.

Participant Lawrence Dooley has been part of the art program for about four years and for the exhibition he turned a drawing of the America's Cup into a mosaic. "It is a way to express friendship and love and a great understanding of how things work," Mr Dooley said. "We as artists must have an idea of what we need to do and express it, so we need to imagine it in our head before we put our mind into doing our art."



Artist Lawrence Dooley working on his piece for the exhibit

The pieces on display were both mature artworks as well as experimental processes across many mediums. "We have an abundance of talent in our studio and we are grateful for this opportunity to showcase the work," said Art Tutor Jeannie.

Art is one of the many ways Life Without Barriers supports NDIS participants to develop new skills, meet new friends and get involved with their local community.

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