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Life Without Barriers' new graphic designer Dom with his nieces at The Colour Run.

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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

It has been a busy start to the year and I am delighted to share with you our Winter 2019 edition of 'We Live Life'.

This year already we've supported hundreds of new people as our service reach has grown significantly through the Victorian Transfer project (page 7) and we've continued to provide exceptional service to the people we support throughout Australia. *We Live Life* provides a snapshot of all the great work happening at the moment and it is packed full of inspiring stories from our clients, carers and staff about what can be achieved when we support people to remove the barriers in their lives.

In this edition of *We Live Life* we meet some of our fantastic Queensland foster carers, Gillian and Greg and Sherryn and Veijo. They share what brought them to foster care as well as the day-to-day joys and challenges that come with caring (Queensland Foster and Kinship Care Week, page 4). We head to far north Queensland to learn about a very special return to country trip for one of our clients who was able to reconnect with family he had not seen in over 20 years (Francis comes home, page 5).

We also meet Adele, one of our Joblife Employment clients who was able to literally come to the rescue after completing first aid training with Joblife just the day before a car accident occurred outside her home (Adele is no bystander, page 9). You'll also read about our Townsville team who supported their community to get back on their feet after destructive floods hit the region in February this year (Help is on the way, page 3).

I hope you are inspired and reinvigorated in your work after reading this edition of *We Live Life*. I look forward to sharing many more stories with you throughout the rest of 2019.

*Claire Robbs*

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Emily Brooker, Tamika Shaw, Laura Hill, Caitlin Murphy, Joel Semmens and local emergency services personnel at the free BBQ run by the Life Without Barriers Townsville team.

## HELP IS ON THE WAY

### Our Townsville Team rally to support residents during the February floods

In February 2019 you may recall a devastating flood hit Townsville in North Queensland. The floodwaters cut off access to the airport, the roads in and out of the city and inundated thousands of homes. Life Without Barriers' Townsville office became inaccessible during this time, but that didn't mean our team rested on their laurels. Throughout the flood the team contacted all of the people and families in the community they work with, including approximately 600 aged care clients to ensure they were safe. Operations Manager Catherine Russo reported that many of the clients were extremely stoic and resilient, with one person being evacuated from her home as the flood waters reached her shoulders.

Once the waters receded our Townsville Team went straight to work. They set up a free BBQ in the worst affected area of town, feeding hundreds of locals during

the clean-up. Many shared stories of how they had lost everything in their home and were surviving on tinned spaghetti and baked beans. Thanks to the donations of many Townsville businesses, tired residents were able to enjoy free sausages, scotch fillet steaks, drinks and salad.

As the team were packing up Chief Superintendent Guteridge of Townsville Police visited and told the team how much he appreciated their efforts. "I was just on my way home for the day when I saw what you were doing," Guteridge said. "I had to pull over so that I could personally thank you all and your organisation for the great work you are doing."

Our team reported feeling honoured to be able to support the people of Townsville during the clean-up and thankful to work for an organisation that is so dedicated to the communities we serve.



Program Manager, Caitlin Murphy manning the BBQ



The clean-up begins in Townsville after the February floods

# QUEENSLAND FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARE WEEK CELEBRATING OUR QUEENSLAND CARERS



## MEET GILLIAN AND GREG

Primary carers for a 10 year old girl Jane\*

Gillian, a paediatric nurse, and Greg, a fitter and turner and self-confessed 'blokey bloke', are a remarkable couple. They are 'intensive' foster carers with big hearts, for which 10 year old Jane is thankful.

Intensive foster care involves supporting a child with complex needs. They may have a disability or specific behaviours that requires a different, hand-on approach.

Every child in care has their own specific needs based on their age, life experiences, trauma or medical needs, and intensive foster carers – like all foster carers – need to be open to learning what they can do to help children reach their full potential. It can be really helpful for these carers if they have previous experience working with

kids, as Gillian does with her background in paediatric nursing.

"I've always had an interest in children and their behaviours and Jane\* has taught me a lot!" Gillian laughs.

Three and a half years ago, Jane, now 10 years old, came into Greg and Gillian's care. Jane needed carers who could spend a lot of one-on-one time with her and according to Greg "We knew we had love to give."

Although Gillian does have experience working with children who have complex behaviours, she and Greg believe the most important thing that they could give Jane was a lot simpler – spending time with her. "Really it was getting back to that basic raw stuff," Gillian said. "Just being there for Jane."

Greg added, "Being reliable – you'd put her to bed, you'd wake her up, you take her to school, you're there when she's upset, if she had questions to ask, you'd give her the best answer that you could." Gillian even made the decision to put work on hold for the first 18 months of their time with Jane.

Children in intensive foster care can present as angry and unable to regulate their emotions. This is a normal response

to trauma and pain and with the love and patience of carers like Gillian and Greg, supported by training and tools from Life Without Barriers, children's behaviour can change over time. "It's about learning those tools that you can implement to help, ways of de-escalating behaviours, understanding behaviours," Gillian said.

Gillian laughs as she tells the story of Jane having a meltdown in a shopping centre café on their first shopping trip – something a lot of parents could probably relate to!

"Jane would lose control and find it difficult to regulate. Slowly, by putting boundaries in place and working on communicating, and encouraging Jane to talk about difficult feelings she was having and where they were coming from, she was able to regulate her behaviour and express herself."

Greg said that knew what to expect. "We were well informed of the challenges, and we just rode that wave!"

Gillian added, "We support Jane by ensuring she feels safe and placing her needs at the forefront of decision making, discussing expectations with her, talking about feelings, and maintaining her usual routine."

\*Name changed



## ACCESSIBILITY, INCLUSION AND EMPLOYMENT PLAN

Our plan sets ambitious employment targets to see more staff with disability join Life Without Barriers

At Life Without Barriers we believe everyone deserves the chance to gain meaningful employment, including people with disability, so they can enjoy the social, financial and personal benefits it provides. That's why we launched our next three year Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP) in June.

People with disability have the same skills and capacity to contribute to the workforce as the rest of the population and we are all worse off if people with disability are not afforded the same opportunities as everyone else.

We were thrilled to celebrate Queensland Foster and Kinship Care week held in April, 2019. We took this opportunity to say thank you to the more than 400 foster carers volunteering with Life Without Barriers in Queensland. Our carers provide a safe, loving and stable home to children and young people, many of whom have been through trauma and require special care and dedication. With morning teas, award ceremonies and lunches, we were able to acknowledge the selfless work of our carers. We hope you are as inspired as we are by these stories of our fantastic Queensland carers.



## MEET SHERRYN AND VEIJO

**Primary carers for an 11 year old boy, and respite carers for two of his siblings**

Sherryn and Veijo have been married for over 20 years and until very recently, lived life in the fast lane. Veijo was an executive chef in a fine dining establishment, working very long hours including nights and weekends, and Sherryn had a successful career in management which required extensive travel.

However Sherryn and Veijo always knew in the back of their minds that when life slowed down a little, they would open their homes to children. Sherryn had grown up in a big family and her mum was a foster carer, so she was used to having lots of children around.

That opportunity came around five years ago when Veijo took a 9-5 job and Sherryn got a job in sales where she was able to work from home.

They now care for an 11 year old boy who has been with them for four years and are respite carers for his brother and sister.

“He was our very first [primary] placement and we’ve had him ever since,” Sherryn said.

“He came to us after having more than 10 homes. He had a lot of labels and diagnoses, but we’ve been able to work with his paediatrician very closely, and he’s gone from strength to strength!” Sherryn boasted. “He’s a school leader, he’s represented his school in sport, he’s in the school band – he’s incredible!” This young man is clearly destined for great things.

Sherryn and Veijo are particularly proud of how they have been able to bring the boy’s family together. They do respite care for his brother and sister, and arrange for them all to see their mother over and above the mandated contacted visits. “These children have a family and it’s important for them to remain connected and understand where they’re from... we strongly believe and support this.”

It’s just recently that the boy’s sister has had respite care from Sherryn and Veijo. “For his younger sister to join us this year has been a new thing and we’ve been able to watch him flourish...that has been a real highlight for us.”

Foster caring has been a huge change for Sherryn and Veijo. “Transitioning from a childless executive home...we are now a family with children and routine is very important. We can no longer just go on overseas holidays on a whim!” they said. “But that adjustment and challenge has been far outweighed by the rewards. We now do things that are just as fun, but include children.”

There have been a lot of highlights, but of course there have also been some tough times. “We’ve had a few challenges! We’ve learnt to be resilient and it helps that we are absolutely committed and persistent”

Our AIEP breaks down the barriers that people with disability face when obtaining employment by setting ambitious targets for us as an organisation. By June 2020, we are aiming for 8% of all new hires to be people with disability, and those targets increase to 10% and 12% in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

Our new plan builds on the impressive results of our last AIEP, where we significantly increased the number of new staff with disability we employed. Through our 2017-2018 plan, we employed 153

people with disability and met our target of 4% of new hires in 2017. In addition, in our 2018 Employee Survey, 9% of our existing staff indicated having disability.

This plan recognises the importance of creating a diverse workforce – that each person has unique insights, skills and experiences that they bring to the organisation. By harnessing this, we can be more innovative and strengthen our capacity to deliver services that change lives for the better.

To learn more about our action areas and targets, search for the AIEP on our website – [www.lwb.org.au](http://www.lwb.org.au)



# FRANCIS COMES HOME

A return to country trip with an extra special significance

Last month Francis, a man supported by Life Without Barriers in Cairns, Far North Queensland, travelled back to his community for the first time in 20 years for a very special return to country trip.

Francis is a proud Aboriginal man who comes from the Lockhart River community, about 800 km from Cairns on the eastern side of Cape York Peninsula.

Francis has complex health needs and wished to return home before he becomes too unwell to travel. Cairns Operations Manager Asher Meadows and Disability Support Worker Louis Harrison flew to Lockhart River with Francis, with additional nursing support from the Lockhart River Health Clinic to ensure Francis was comfortable on the journey.

Going back to Lockhart River was incredibly significant visit for Francis, as he hadn't been there since he was a teenager, and most of his family are still living there. Francis has requested to return to country to die when his time comes.

During the visit Francis reconnected with family and went to the house where he grew up. They went fishing at Lockhart River beach, where Francis could see his family's homelands and cooked dugong over the fire. They also travelled to some of the places in the area that are significant for the local people and in particular Francis family. "It was a wonderful chance to connect with kin and country, and we could not truly measure how significant this visit home was for Francis" Asher said.



Francis returns to his country, the Lockhart River, to visit family and see his childhood home.

Asher said that Francis was very emotional when it came time to leave. "On the way to the airport and whilst on the plane to Lockhart River tears were streaming down Francis' cheeks," said Asher. "The teams hopes that return trips home become a regular experience for Francis, so that he can continue to make vital connections with his kin and country."



Life Without Barriers' new graphic designer Dom with his nieces at The Colour Run

## INTERN DESIGNS A NEW LIFE

Graphic designer joins Life Without Barriers through Australian Network in Disability (AND) Stepping Into program

Life Without Barriers in Newcastle recently welcomed Dom Freestone to the Marketing and Communications team as an intern through the AND Stepping Into internship program. Dom studied visual communication at university, finishing in 2017. What makes Dom's story a little bit different is that Dom is a quadriplegic. Some people are surprised when he tells them this. "There is a misconception that quadriplegics can't move their arms," said Dom. "But it actually means you have impaired movement in all four limbs, not a complete loss of movement, some quadriplegics can't move their arms, but a lot can."

Since finishing university Dom had been looking for a job, but not just any job. He wanted to work for an organisation where he could contribute to something worthwhile, something that makes a real difference in the community and aligns with his core values. "Life Without Barriers values its ability to be responsive, something I feel I have truly embraced since obtaining my disability," said Dom. "Life Without Barriers also values imagination, being courageous, being respectful and they pride themselves on their ability to build relationships. I was so excited when I found out I was going to get an opportunity to work with a truly national company which aligned so closely with my value set."

It didn't take long for the team to recognise Dom's talent for design and offer him ongoing work at the completion of his internship. "Every week I have been working on a diverse range of jobs, from print based media, to animation and internal planning. I have loved the variety of work and the opportunity to work with others in my chosen field to work towards a better tomorrow."

AND's Stepping Into program is a paid internship program that matches talented university students with disability with roles in leading Australian businesses.

To learn more about our stepping into program visit [www.and.org.au](http://www.and.org.au)



# SUCCESSFUL TRANSFER OF SERVICES

As the National Disability Insurance Scheme rolls out across Victoria, Life Without Barriers is humbled to provide support to more than 600 participants across Greater Melbourne, whose services have now transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services.



Participants of Life Without Barriers' new self-advocacy group at the Epping office.

The end of May signalled the successful transfer of disability services from the Victorian Government's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to Life Without Barriers. The project began last year when the Victorian Government carefully selected Life Without Barriers as one of five service providers to deliver support across Greater Melbourne, as part of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

This momentous transfer means that Life Without Barriers is the new service provider of Supported Independent Living (group accommodation) and Short Term Accommodation Assistance (respite support) in selected locations across Melbourne, with a focus on individualised support.

Over 400 participants in group accommodation from North Eastern, Southern and South Eastern Melbourne transferred to Life Without Barriers on 31 March, while a further 200 from Eastern Melbourne transferred on 26 May. It also included 75 participants who access Short Term Accommodation Assistance in these areas.

As part of the transfer, Life Without Barriers also welcomed over 1000 staff members from DHHS, who bring with them in-depth

knowledge, skills and relationships with the people we now support.

Showcasing the great partnership between Life Without Barriers and DHHS, as well as months of incredible dedication and careful planning between internal teams, the transfer was a great success, with most houses already in a 'business as usual' rhythm.

"Our new senior leadership team for Victorian Disability Accommodation Supports has rapidly taken shape, while staff who have transferred have been open and welcoming in sharing their experiences of this significant change," said Helen Douglas, Life Without Barriers' Director of Victoria Disability Accommodation Supports (VDAS). "It's an exciting time as we increase the number of services we provide in Victoria and deliver more support for people across the state."

In keeping with the purpose of the NDIS to give people with disability more choice and control in the services they receive, Life Without Barriers has been working with participants and the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALiD) to form self-advocacy groups, empowering individuals to have a say in how their support is provided.

The first group meeting kicked off at the Life Without Barriers Epping office in May, involving transferred participants from North Eastern Melbourne.

With overwhelmingly positive feedback, group members such as Dennis Thorpe said that "they [Life Without Barriers staff] really listened to me and we have lots to talk about. I think we need to work on staff having too much paperwork to do."

Similarly, participant Cameron Noble asked, "when can I come again? I really enjoyed tonight."

Coordinating the meetings is Life Without Barriers' Program Lead for Participants, Families and Stakeholder Engagement, Justine Morris, who said the optimism from participants reflects a smooth transfer of services, and a promising outlook for their future support.

"There is a real sense of anticipation among participants as we partner with individuals, encouraging them to share their ideas, thoughts and concerns as people living with disability, now supported by Life Without Barriers."

# PAUL LANDS HIS DREAM JOB

Train enthusiast Paul joins Pacific National as a Strategic Planner after featuring in the ABC documentary *Employable Me*

Paul White was thrilled to receive the call from Pacific National, Australia's largest private rail freight operator, to see if he wanted to join their team. Paul is a client of Life Without Barriers and had been looking for a job that would suit his unique skill set for quite some time.

Paul was recently featured in the ABC documentary *Employable Me*, as one of nine jobseekers with disability. The program aimed to dispel many of the myths around the capabilities of people with disability and the barriers they can face in gaining employment. If you saw Paul in *Employable Me* you would know Paul loves trains. Trains have always been in Paul's family with his grandfather working on Sydney railways many years ago and his other grandfather's model train set igniting Paul's interest in trains while he was young.

Paul's passion for trains has now grown into a vocation, with both his new job at Pacific National as a Strategic Planner and in filming, editing and sharing his train videos

via his popular Youtube Channel Paul's Train Vlogs which has over 2000 subscribers.

Paul was thrilled to be featured on *Employable Me* as it led to many opportunities for him. "I did work experience with Sydney Trains in the lost property office and I sure did enjoy it," said Paul. "I got to see behind the scenes of two control rooms at Central Station in Sydney and now with my new job I'll be sending out the itinerary for coal movements each day for Pacific National." His new role is a perfect fit for Paul's skills as he has a meticulous memory and uncanny ability to recall train makes, models and timetables.

Appearing on the program also opened up Paul's world socially. He was able to meet the other participants and has since built lasting friendships with a number of them. He travels up to the Central Coast (via train of course!) regularly to attend a social group with some of his new friends.

The Life Without Barriers Communications and Media team organised some additional



Paul (far right) featured on the ABC documentary *Employable Me*. Photo courtesy of the ABC

work experience for Paul recently in the National office in Newcastle. Life Without Barriers Graphic Designer Dom Freestone, helped Paul with his train vlogs showing him how to create animated graphics he could add to his videos to take them to the next level.

Paul shared with the team how excited he is to be starting his new role shortly. When asked if he would like to work from home as some of his friends from *Employable Me* do, he said he doesn't think so. "I'm happy going into the office because I have a multi-million dollar fleet to oversee and I get to go to work every day on the train". We are delighted Paul has found the perfect job for him.

If you missed Paul in *Employable Me* you can catch up on ABC iView or check out 'Paul's Train Vlogs' on Youtube.



## With the support of the NDIS and Life Without Barriers, Matt takes a holiday of a lifetime

When Matt, who is supported by Life Without Barriers to live independently, found out his best friend was getting married in the USA, he was determined to make sure he was there in person to witness this momentous event. Through Matt's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) package, he was able to take his Life Without Barriers support worker with him so his dream could become a reality.

Matt and his support worker Chantel left Sydney, bound for LA. Their first stop was Santa Monica where they spent a few days enjoying the California sun, Santa Monica pier and touring Hollywood. The duo then drove to Anaheim and visited Disneyland

and California Adventure meeting up with some of Matt's childhood friends. From Los Angeles they flew to Lincoln, Nebraska where they enjoyed the little town and attended a beautiful wedding held in a rustic American styled barn. The next stop was Las Vegas, Nevada to see some incredible shows and make the 15 hour journey to the south rim of the Grand Canyon.

Their last stop saw them fly to San Francisco to see the famous Golden Gate Bridge and the seals at Pier 39. Overall it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Matt and now that the travel bug has bitten him he is already saving for his next trip.



Thanks to Adele's new First Aid skills she gained through her Joblife supported training, she was able to be a first responder when a serious car crash occurred near her home.

## ADELE IS NO BYSTANDER

### Adele finds her passion for helping others right on her doorstep

Adele Kelly was just heading to bed when she was startled by the sound of a car crash outside her home in Gorokan, NSW. The notorious corner near her home had become the scene of another accident with a car crashing into a neighbouring house, trapping a 26-year-old passenger in the backseat.

Coincidentally, just the day before Adele had completed a first aid training course through Joblife Employment. At the time she wasn't sure what her employment path would be, but felt the training would be beneficial in her job search.

"In the past I would have been a bystander, calling 000 and waiting for the ambulance to arrive," Adele said. "But I looked at the crash scene and thought 'You've got this Adele'". Thanks to her training and support from Joblife, for the first time Adele felt empowered to help.

Armed with her new-found knowledge she leapt into action, instructing a neighbour to direct traffic and another to call for an ambulance, before turning to the trapped passenger.

"He started coming in and out of consciousness and I was able to ask him questions such as if he had allergies and what injuries he had – anything to keep him awake and alert."

The ambulance officers arrived quickly on the scene and asked Adele to continue what she was doing while they worked on the injured man. She was there for two hours supporting the paramedics and contacting family and friends of the victims.

The incident, and her training has inspired the mother of four to now pursue a career as a nurse. "The course has given me clarity about what I want to do and has actually changed the path I was heading on. I have the confidence to chase my dreams that I didn't have before."

Adele has a lived experience of disability including dealing with Chrones's disease, anemia and endometriosis yet Adele has not let any of this impact on the way she lives her life. She is embracing every opportunity that comes her way, every day.

Adele is currently being supported by Joblife Employment to enter into enjoyable, sustainable work. Joblife Employment is a joint venture between Life Without Barriers and Angus Knight Group.

To learn more visit [www.joblifeemployment.com.au](http://www.joblifeemployment.com.au)





# WHAT DOES RECONCILIATION MEAN TO YOU?

Living Arts, Resident Artist Claire Wildish shares in her own words, why *nyinakati munu kulila* (Sit and Listen) is so important



When I came for my interview two years ago at Life Without Barriers, Malcom Gollan asked me unavoidably, “What is Reconciliation?” Interviews at the best of times are terrifying but here at Life Without Barriers, we weren’t messing about. We were straight up asking the big questions. In my interview panic, I didn’t know how to simply answer the question, so I started rambling. I told him about living in the desert and bringing up two small children there over five years. You see, my parents met in Gunbalanya, NT and when the opportunity came about to work on the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in remote Western Australia, my mother (who was dying at the time) made me go. It will change your life she said, and it did.



Like most white people, I arrived in community with ants in my pants, full of enthusiasm and wanting to do something. But the best advice I got was, “*kulila, nyinakati munu kulila*” – sit and listen. And so, I did. I baked bread and breathed in the desert air and watched and listened. And over six months the anangu women watched me and made a decision, but they didn’t tell me. You can’t keep a secret in the desert, and they had heard where I’d been before and decided I would help them reopen their art centre. But first they made me believe it was my idea. And so, we sat down together, shared stories and lived side by side. I was there for them and later when I needed them, they protected me and my family fiercely. It did indeed change my life.

Three years later I am now incredibly privileged to be part of the Living Arts team at Life Without Barriers and to bring with me that experience. In the last twelve months it has been exciting to be writing together and facilitating new Aboriginal programs for young kids in our Out of Home Care Program. But once a year I get to go back to the only place I have ever travelled that feels like home with the SA Museum Out of the Glass Case Roadshow Tour.

At the end of last year, I travelled for six days across the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands to five remote schools with scientists and educators from the Museum, SA Water and Keep South Australia Beautiful. The Out of the Glass Case program is all about bringing a little bit of the museum to remote and regional communities. The difference is on this particular trip, the anangu kids were leading the way. We were in their country, learning about their land, sitting by the rock hole and learning together.

So, what is Reconciliation? For me, this is where it can begin. Sitting down together and sharing stories, working side by side and learning from each other. You have to stop and listen.”

*By Claire Wildish*



Claire visited the APY lands as part of the Out of the Glass Case program

# CELEBRATING RECONCILIATION WEEK

Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community is at the core of our work.

It is an important time of year for us as we take the time to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia. This year's theme for National Reconciliation Week was Grounded in Truth Walk Together with Courage, highlighting the importance of telling the truth about Australia's colonial history.

Many of our staff took the opportunity to take part in organised activities as part of National Reconciliation Week. There are too many to mention in one article – so here are some highlights.

In Queensland, some of our team attended a Sorry Day event held at Orleigh Park, the site of Cranbrook Place Aboriginal Girls Home from 1900 to 1906. Our Queensland State Lead, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives, Leoni Lippitt was a guest speaker. The CEO of Link Up – one of our partners – Pat Thompson pointed out that we were lucky to have Leoni, one of the 'deadliest of deadly women'. We agree!

The Hobart team learned how to make rope and bracelets out of river reeds, to remind them of the importance of reconciliation and walking together with courage every day. Manager Casework Jo Cameron led the group and showed



Queensland State Lead, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives, Leoni Lippitt was a guest speaker at the Sorry Day event at Orleigh Park, Qld

her colleagues traditional shell necklaces made by her grandmother, mother and aunty, as well as a miniature water carrier made by Elder Aunty Netty Shaw.

And in Sydney, our Executive Team were joined by Northern Territory Lead for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives, Damien Mick, who led a conversation about unconscious biases and the indirect attitudes and behaviours many of us learnt during our upbringing. They spoke from the heart about how we must mature as a society to acknowledge intergenerational trauma, in order to become more inclusive and truly participate in reconciliation.

## NAIDOC WEEK

Voice. Treaty. Truth. Life Without Barriers partners with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work together for a shared future

NAIDOC Week is a significant week in July for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community.

One of the key elements of our Reconciliation Action Plan is to provide opportunities for all staff to engage with the community during NAIDOC week. Many of our teams used this opportunity to get out in the community, both by attending events and by representing Life Without Barriers with stalls at community events. We walked in marches, attended smoking ceremonies and flag raising ceremonies, ran a sports day, sponsored panel discussions and promoted becoming a foster carer at a number of the events we attended.

In line with this year's theme of 'Voice. Treaty. Truth. Let's work together for a shared future,' staff were also encouraged to learn about the true history of Australia's First Peoples including the need for the Uluru Statement from the Heart to be actioned. The statement seeks three key reforms; a voice enshrined in the constitution that would empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; introduction of a Makarrata Commission that would supervise agreement-making with the Australian Government and a process of truth-telling about Australia's true history and colonisation.



Life Without Barriers at the Newcastle NAIDOC March



Uluru Statement from the Heart



# WE CAME IN LIKE A WRECKING BALL

A real highlight this year was our participation in the 41st Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade in March.

The theme for our float was ‘Breaking Down Barriers’ – inspired by Miley Cyrus’ song Wrecking Ball – with a giant disco wrecking ball as the centrepiece. Life Without Barriers has for a long time been a strong supporter of the LGBTI community and we were excited to show our support on a national stage. Marching in Mardi Gras is also a great opportunity to recruit same-sex foster carers, and spread the word that we welcome foster carers from all walks of life.

Dressed in glittery construction-themed outfits, around 60 staff, clients, foster carers, board members, family members,

partners and friends marched and danced down Sydney’s Oxford Street.

Love and the celebration of diversity was in the air that night as the group coordinated a marriage proposal before the parade. People, Safety and Culture Business Partner Jo Bellison surprised her partner Alisha, with the Life Without Barriers gang holding ‘will you marry me?’ sign.

Loud applause erupted when Alisha said “yes!”

Victorian Recruitment Advisor Holly Gallan was dancing on the float and said

the atmosphere was electric, “being part of the Mardi Gras celebrations is such a special memory for me. I’m so proud to be part of such an inclusive organisation that celebrates all aspects of diversity.”

Life Without Barriers Chief Executive Claire Robbs said she was very proud to be part of one of the world’s biggest LGBTIQI celebrations.

“It is so important we participate because we want to represent the community that we serve. It’s about standing up for what you believe and standing up for your place in the society, and that is core to what Life Without Barriers believes.”

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[www.lwb.org.au](http://www.lwb.org.au)