



Our Year in Review 2024-25



Acknowledgement of Country

Ability Options acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands on which we operate across the state of New South Wales, and we pay our respects to the elders and peoples of all nations including Gumbaynggirr, Dhanggati, Biripi, Worimi, Darkinjung, Awabakal, Kuring-gai, Eora, Dharug, Bundjalung, Yaegl, and Tharawal.

Ability Options acknowledges that, no matter where you are in Australia, the land is, was, and always will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.

About the featured artist: Reuben

Reuben is a 75-year-old Aboriginal man, born in Pallamallawa, belonging to the Gamilaroi nation, also known as Kamilaroi or Gomeroi, and he currently resides on Darkinjung Country.

Reuben is surrounded by his caring support network and the participants he has lived alongside for many years. He spends his days embracing his passion for art, primarily creating Indigenous-based artworks using pens, pencils, coloured textures, and bingo dotters. His artworks are a great source of pride and joy for him.

A highlight of Reuben's day is delivering his artworks to the other houses within Casuarina Grove, gifting them to fellow participants he has built lifelong connections with.



Who we are

Ability Options' founding purpose was to support people who need assistance to achieve their aspirations and inclusion in the community. That mission remains as relevant today as it was in 1976.

We strive to ensure that people who live with any form of disability are visible, valued and fully included in their communities. Enabling our participants to advocate for their own human rights and supporting that work as a Provider is a key part of how we deliver our mission.

We're guided by our values of Trust, Inclusion, Respect, Lead and Courage, and by our Vision to inspire and lead communities by creating opportunities and delivering services that support people to fully participate in society.

Today, more than 7700 participants across our Disability, Employment, and Specialist Services choose Ability Options to support them on their journey. They trust us to stand beside them, advocate with them, and work together towards outcomes that matter—so they can live the lives they choose.



Our People and Services

We're proud to have a team of over 1200 dedicated staff working in communities across Greater Sydney, the Central Coast, Hunter, and the Mid North Coast. Each one of them shares a commitment to helping people achieve their goals and live more independently.

Our services are designed to:

- Support people to live in their own homes
- Provide active support for activities and to build the skills they choose
- Create real opportunities for connection and inclusion in local communities

- Offer employment pathways and work experience
- Help people access and navigate the NDIS

Since 1976, Ability Options has been a strong voice in the sector — a partner, advocate, and leader. Our history reflects decades of trust, respect, and a deep commitment to the people and families we support.

That commitment hasn't changed. Nearly 50 years on, our Vision, Mission, and Values continue to guide us as we plan for the future — ensuring we not only keep the trust placed in us but continue to earn it.



Our Impact - this year, we celebrate:

12,300 people supported across our services

290 people supported in Accommodation Services

550 people supported through Community Services

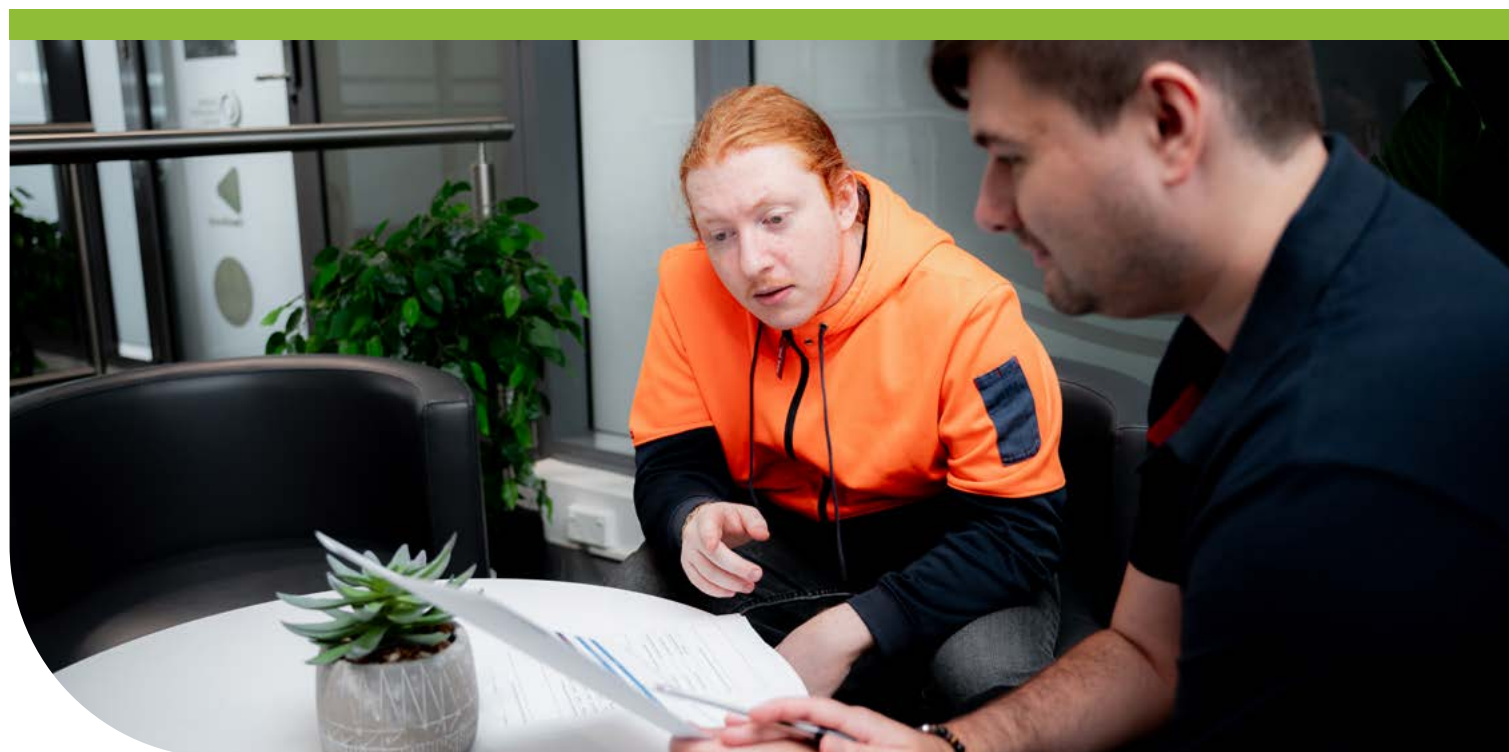
1500 participants guided through Support Coordination

9700 people guided through Employment Services

2100 participants placed into work

1500 employers supporting our participants

1100 dedicated team members





A message from our Chair and CEO

By: Dr Rob Lang, Chair, Ph.D., B.E (Hons), B.Sc., FAICD, FIE (Aust)

Julia Squire, Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the Ability Options Annual Report for 2024-25.

In late 2026, Ability Options will celebrate our 50th birthday. For our first almost 40 years, we provided support to people who needed our assistance to meet their aspirations and inclusion in the community before the inception of the NDIS.

The changes and benefits brought by having a national consensus to provide services under a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are undeniable. The establishment of the NDIS was a significant social reform, built upon principles of choice, control and inclusion – a ‘fair go’.

Over the years the Scheme has grown and become more unwieldy and costly than anticipated at its inception. The Ten Year Review identifies reform opportunities and

suggestions for the future, along with the outcome of the Disability Royal Commission.

Providers like Ability Options who are Mission driven, Values led and not-for-profit are experiencing significant challenges to their long-term futures. The costs of compliance, quality and to operate are significant and the funding available does not always meet those costs. Whilst the new Commonwealth Government, elected in May 2025, works on its NDIS Reform plans, Ability Options has continued to work to our Mission and Values by:

- Putting People First – getting the fundamentals right for existing and new participants and employees,

- Stabilising and Simplifying our work – ensuring that the money participants and the Government spend with Ability Options is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to deliver the best outcomes to our participants, to ensure our employees are well trained, supported, safe and happy and to meet our obligations and
- Being Future Facing – looking to partnerships, growing carefully and creating certainty where we can for our participants and employees, to ensure the sustainability of our organisation in the long term.

FY2024/25 saw the need to adapt continually to an operating environment in which:

- The future reform agenda for the NDIS remains unclear creating uncertainty for customers, employees and our sector,
- Funding is increasingly tight; inflationary pressures exceed funding available, and
- Broader societal demands and economic, environmental, and global challenges impact daily and increasingly.

Ability Options is both proactive and responsive to these factors and continues to provide services participants value and trust, and employment and career opportunities which attract the best people to work here. We have adapted, improved our services, grown carefully and supported our people. We are transforming our organisation for the next 50 years.

In this first of a three-year transformation, readying Ability Options for our next 50 years, we focused on:

- Listening to participants, their families and employees about what we do well and how we can improve and responding to that feedback,
- Ensuring that our Accommodation services are the best they can be, creating outcomes with our participants,
- Partnering with CoAct to respond to the Australian Government’s tender for a new program – Inclusive Employment Australia, to replace Disability Employment Services in FY26, and





- Being cost efficient and simplifying our systems and processes to focus our attention and resources on services, participants and employees.

We achieved best practice outcomes and good results in our external audits, reduced our overheads and supported employees in developing their practice.

Our Board and Executive teams have continued their work in leadership, governance and support for our Mission and implemented changes which have yielded benefits with service improvements, efficiency and a renewed focus on participants, outcomes and their families. We are grateful to our amazing participants, and their families who share their time, opinions and suggestions to support us to do more and better and to the 1100 employees who meet our Mission and live their values daily.

As well as making sure we offer high quality, customer centric services to ensure the outcomes from their supports and Employment Programs are the best possible, we grew our services extending to Forster and growing in Taree and

investing in new accommodation in the Hunter where a new home will be available in FY26. We also commenced a new Medium Term Accommodation Service at Hamlyn Terrace on the Central Coast.

The next couple of years see a renewed focus on direct support services, employment and community services, alongside reduced overheads and continued support on health, safety, wellbeing and education and development for employees.

The stories you will see in this Annual Report showcase the achievements of our participants and employees, along with the Mission and Values we hold dear, and which guide us every day.

In addition, there is a focus on services offered by region so that we can share our breadth, our community connections and our footprint up and down the coast of beautiful New South Wales.

We hope you enjoy the read.

Meet our team

Supporting our Chair is our Board of Directors and Executive Team.

[Click here to read more about our team.](#)

Our Board of Directors



Dr. Robert Lang
Chair of Ability
Options Board of
Directors



Heather Scheibenstock
Deputy Chair



Patricia Biszewski
Director



Claire Cavanaugh
Director



Elaine Fok
Director



Owen Gilbert
Director



Michael Maxwell
Director



Mark Twomey
Company Secretary
Director

Our Executive Team



Julia Squire
Chief Executive
Officer



Kathryn Key
Project Executive
– Transforming
Community Services



Michelle Hodge
Chief Quality,
Practice, Assurance
& Accommodation
Officer



Marina Korneeva
Chief Corporate
Services Officer



This year, our Sydney teams have been busy making a real difference across the region.

We're proud to have supported people through Disability Employment Services across sites in Central West, Northern, South West and Outer West Sydney this year.

We've also kept things moving for participants choosing Workforce Australia, Support Coordination, WorkReady (including School Leaver Employment Supports), Therapy, Vocational Counselling, Low Intensity Mental Health and both group and individual community supports.

Our accommodation services continue to provide safe, supportive homes, including both Supported Independent Living (SIL) and Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) and support participants to achieve their aspirations.

It's been a year of strong partnerships too. We've renewed our agreement with Hornsby Hospital Local Health District and are continuing to co-locate Disability Employment Services on-site each week. We're also the Provider of choice for six Headspace youth services

– from Castle Hill to Penrith – giving young people the employment support they need, close to home.

Our involvement in the Social Ventures Youth pilot has already helped nine young people land full-time jobs with big names like Transdev, Concept Engineering and Marley Spoon.

It's been a big year of growth, collaboration and new opportunities across Sydney – and there's more to come.

This year in Sydney, we celebrate:

- **49 participants supported through our Accommodation Services**
- **109 people accessing community supports**
- **711 people guided through Support Coordination**
- **1362 people placed into work through Disability Employment Services and Workforce Australia**

Renell's story: Beyond the disability



My name is Renell, and I work as an Administration Assistant at Ability Options. Living with a hearing impairment and mild cerebral palsy has shaped my life in many ways, teaching me resilience and adaptability.

Moving to Australia from Colorado during high school in 1985 was a big change. I had to quickly learn Auslan (Australian Sign Language) to communicate with new friends and navigate a world where hearing is the norm. This experience taught me how to adapt and find strength in embracing new challenges.

Finding a job has had its ups and downs. Even with my qualifications, I often sensed a shift when employers saw my hearing aids. Interviews would be brief, and I rarely heard back. These experiences

were tough but motivated me to seek out workplaces that truly value inclusion.

Joining Ability Options was a turning point. Here, I've received incredible support, like a left-handed keyboard to accommodate my mild cerebral palsy and captioning services during virtual meetings. These thoughtful adjustments have empowered me to excel in my role.

I've noticed that many people don't fully understand what living with a disability is like. Some avoid eye contact or seem unsure how to interact, which can be isolating. But I've learned to observe and understand others' behaviours, fostering empathy and connection.

The disability community is full of strength and resilience. I've seen individuals overcome challenges and support each other, creating a network of empowerment. Personally, I've embraced obstacles as opportunities to grow, refusing to let disappointment hold me back.

My role at Ability Options brings me immense satisfaction. I enjoy tasks like data entry and learning new systems, which help me enhance my skills. The inclusive culture here has allowed me to showcase my abilities, leading to a deep sense of accomplishment.

Looking back, I'm grateful for the support and opportunities I've found. I hope my story sheds light on the experiences of individuals with disabilities, emphasising the importance of understanding, inclusion, and celebrating our shared humanity.

Inclusive employment is a priority for Sydney businesses

In Australia, people with disability face significant challenges in the workforce, including lower employment rates, workplace discrimination, and a shift to part-time roles. However, businesses like Gusto's Home Hub and Chikanji are leading the charge in creating inclusive opportunities by partnering with Ability Options.

Gusto's Home Hub, a NDIS Cleaning and Gardening Service, and Chikanji, a family restaurant in South-West Sydney, are both committed to providing meaningful employment for people with disability.

Joshua, a CoAct/Ability Options Disability Employment Services (DES) participant, has become Gusto's "Lawn Mower Man". His role has not only boosted his confidence but also allowed him to give back to the community.

"I just wanted an opportunity," Joshua says. "Once I got into the swing of things, things improved." His dad always says, "If you're not having fun at work, why are you doing it?"

William, an Ability Options WorkReady participant, joined Gusto's with a similar goal—helping others.

"When I was younger, my mum had a stroke and I wanted to find a job where I could give back," he shares.

Chikanji owner Mike highlights the importance of inclusivity, saying their partnership with Ability Options has enabled them to offer meaningful roles to people with disability.



"Going to work and helping people who really need it—it does a lot for me."

William - WorkReady Participant

"It's never been about just filling a position for us. We want people who care about the work and are committed to growing with us," he says.

Mike also appreciates the ongoing support from Ability Options. "Christeen has been phenomenal—always there when we need her. We really appreciate her genuine care and support."

By embracing inclusive employment, both Gusto's Home Hub and Chikanji are fostering loyal, passionate teams and making a real difference in the community.

Ability Options delivered Disability Employment Services in partnership with CoAct.

Spotlight on the Hunter



Our team across the Hunter remains committed to our participants, their families and achieving meaningful outcomes.

Support Coordination remains a key part of our work in the Hunter, helping people navigate the NDIS, connect with services, and manage complex needs. This year, we expanded our local presence with a new office in Mayfield and welcomed new staff and participants, extending our reach into regional and remote communities interstate.

We also grew our capacity in Specialist Support Coordination, with more team members stepping into these roles,

including staff progressing from other areas of Ability Options.

Our teams continue to support participants in Accommodation Services across Stockton, Thornton, Nelson Bay, and Maitland, helping people to live more independently with tailored, high-quality support.

Several participants moved into new homes this year, and a new purpose-built SDA home in Wallsend is on track to open in 2026.

Our Short Term Accommodation in Raymond Terrace remains a flexible, welcoming option for children and adults to rest, recharge, and connect in a home-like environment.

Throughout the year, our team has adapted to NDIS changes, embraced system updates, and continued to put people first. The Hunter region remains a strong focus for continued growth and meaningful support in the year ahead.

This year in the Hunter, we celebrate:

- **338 participants in Support Coordination**
- **41 participants supported through Respite Services**
- **75 participants in Accommodation Services**
- **41 participants placed into work through Disability Employment Services**
- **1 new purpose-built home under construction in Wallsend**

From short stays to a place to call home: Jo's journey with Ability Options

It is always exciting to welcome a new resident, especially one who has been part of our community choosing other Ability Options services for many years. Jo has grown up with Ability Options, first connecting with our organisation as a young child.

Jo first accessed support through our Short Term Accommodation (STA) services, where she had the chance to build independence, social skills, and confidence in a supportive environment.

Jo's first stays in STA helped her become comfortable in supported environments, develop strong skills, and laid the foundations for her transition to her own Supported Independent Living (SIL) home.

"I've recently moved from home with Mum to a permanent, independent home," Jo shares, "It's been a big change, but a good one".

Jo's current home gives her the stability and space to grow while maintaining her independence. Each day is shaped by a routine that gives her confidence, including cooking and socialising with her housemates.

Staff support is a big part of Jo's daily life and development.

"They help me interact with my housemates, both at home and at the house down the back," Jo says.

"They listen when I talk and when I have concerns. The staff are so nice."

She's also made meaningful friendships in her home and the wider SIL community.

"I've made friends in the home and the house down the back," she says. "And I'm looking forward to making more when I start going out with the new day service."

Jo's working on a few personal goals—gaining more independence, building social confidence, and trying new things.

"I'm starting at my new day program, going to dancing with my new friends, and learning how to cook," she says.

With each step, Jo says she feels more capable and proud of how far she's come.

"Ability Options gave me my own home so I could have independence—and now I even make my own coffee," Jo laughs. "But what I'm really proud of is how my attitude has changed. I've got more confidence now to voice my needs and concerns. I can even run my own meetings at my house."

When asked what she'd say to someone thinking about joining Ability Options?

"I would tell them: go for it. Reach out and jump head-on in—they are great."



"... and now I can even make my own coffee! But what I'm really proud of is how my attitude has changed. I've got more confidence now to voice my needs ..."



Making the NDIS work: The power of Support Coordination



When the NDIS first rolled out, it came with big promises—more choice, more control, and better outcomes for people with disability. But getting the most out of a NDIS plan can be tricky. That’s where Support Coordination comes in.

At Ability Options, our Support Coordinators are the steady hands guiding people through the system. Matthew, one of our Support Coordination Managers in the Hunter, explains it best.

“Support Coordination is about helping people understand their plan, connect with the right supports, and reach their goals. We listen, build trust, and work with people to make sure their funding works for them—not the other way around.”

It’s not just about linking services—it’s about problem solving, advocacy, and making sure people feel heard. Whether it’s sorting out a therapy schedule, helping prepare for a plan review, or untangling red tape, no two days are the same.

One story that stands out for Matthew is of a woman who, after a stroke, was placed in aged care at just 45. She had limited supports and had given up hope for something better. With time, trust, and consistent support, Matthew helped her move into a more suitable home with the right services around her—completely changing her outlook and quality of life.

“That’s the kind of impact Support Coordination can have,” Matthew says.

And while the system isn’t perfect—support coordination isn’t always funded in every plan, and the rules can feel overwhelming—having someone walk beside you can make all the difference.



“Consistent effort is made to ensure the participants’ NDIS plan is well suited to each individual’s needs and to help them get the outcomes they want despite the inconsistency in decisions that can come from the agency.”

Matthew – Support Coordinator

Support Coordinators don’t manage money, do rosters, or provide personal care. What they do is empower people to take control of their plan and live the life they choose.

“The NDIS can be confusing and sometimes frustrating, but when you give people the time and space to be heard, you can start making real progress,” says Matthew.

As the NDIS keeps evolving, so does our role. And through it all, Ability Options remains focused on what matters most—supporting people to live their best life.

Spotlight on the Central Coast



The Central Coast team continues to grow, delivering positive outcomes across disability and employment services.

Since Casuarina Grove transferred to Ability Options in 2020, we have continued to deinstitutionalise the site, providing high-quality support through Supported Independent Living (SIL) and Medium Term Accommodation (MTA).

Elsewhere on the Central Coast, we provide Workforce Australia (WFA), and Support Coordination.

A key milestone for us on the Central Coast has been the launch of Medium Term Accommodation (MTA) in

partnership with the Central Coast Local Health District. This program supports people transitioning from long-term hospital care into safe, temporary housing while waiting for permanent SIL arrangements, helping them live more independently and easing pressure on the health system.

In April, we welcomed our first MTA participant at Casuarina Grove and look forward to supporting many more in the year ahead. Planning is already

underway to expand this offering to include additional NDIS and health-funded models.

This work reflects our ongoing commitment to delivering the right supports, in the right place, at the right time—through quality housing, strong community connections, and services that meet people where they are.

This year on the NSW Central Coast, we celebrate:

- **575 Workforce Australia participants placed into work**
- **The launch of Medium Term Accommodation in partnership with NSW Health**
- **34 participants living in supported homes**
- **84 participants guided through Support Coordination**



A fresh chapter for Sid and Rex



When Casuarina Grove transitioned into Ability Options in 2020, we set out to offer older participants who had lived in institutional settings most of their lives opportunities for life in community settings, while supporting those who prefer to continue their life in this familiar space.

This year, Ability Options found an opportunity for Casuarina Grove residents and brothers Sid and Rex to move together into a new home in a community setting. Having lived together on Peat Island in their younger years before moving to Casuarina Grove in 2010, the home in Stockton offered a new experience to the siblings.

To support the transition and ensure a comfortable experience, conversations and planning took place to understand their likes and dislikes. From food preferences to comfort items and hobbies, the support team got to know Sid and Rex ahead of their move. It also helped that Sid and Rex would be supported by a trusted, familiar person who had previously worked at Casuarina Grove and is now a Practice Manager in their new home.

Since their move to Stockton, Sid and Rex have continued to follow their interests and develop some new hobbies!

During their time at Casuarina Grove, shed activities were well enjoyed. Sid was able to move his tool shed with him, where he continues to spend time, and his toolbox is never far away.

When not in the shed, both Sid and Rex have taken a keen interest in the birdlife at their new home. They love to feed the birds and recently purchased a camera to take photos of them.

In addition to supporting their interests, staff at their home have provided active support to encourage new skills and independence. Sid has become active in the laundry, waiting patiently for the sheets and towels to complete their cleaning cycles so he can assist with folding and putting away of the linen. Rex is spending more time with his housemates and staff, which has had a positive impact on his vocabulary and social skills.

Perhaps one of the greatest differences in Sid and Rex's life at Stockton is their increased involvement in the local community. The brothers love to go shopping at the local supermarket, where staff now know and greet them. Rex was thrilled to buy a record-player on one of his recent shopping trips.

Sid and Rex's story shows the impact the right environment and person-centred care can make to wellbeing.

"Sid and Rex have become so much brighter and more independent since their move. The smaller home and relationships they share with their regular support team has improved their wellbeing and quality of life immeasurably," commented Yvette, Sid and Rex's niece.

"My uncles are living the lives they have always deserved."

"My uncles are living the lives they have always deserved."

Spotlight on the Mid North Coast



This year, our Mid North Coast team has been growing and making waves – both in size and impact.

We welcomed the team from Mid Coast Assist into the Ability Options family, which has boosted our reach and deepened our connection to the community. With them came new homes for participants, new opportunities for growth, and a crew of passionate staff committed to helping people live more independently, confidently, and actively.

Across the region, from Forster to Yamba, we've delivered a full range of services including Supported Independent Living (SIL), community participation, therapy supports, Support Coordination, direct supports and group

programs. Over the past year, the team welcomed five new SIL participants, supporting people both new and already accessing our services to transition into safe, supportive homes with the right setup for long-term independence.

Support Coordination continues to be a strength. Our qualified team – especially in psychosocial and Specialist Coordination of Supports (CoS) – have helped participants access critical supports, housing options, home modifications, and life-changing equipment. One young participant now has a custom-built push bike made

overseas and regular swimming lessons – giving her more confidence and the freedom to join in with her peers.

We've also supported several participants into volunteer work, opening up pathways for skill-building and future employment opportunities. These moments might seem small, but they're powerful steps towards a more independent life.

It has been a big year of growth, impact and fresh possibilities on the Mid North Coast – and the best is still to come.

This year on the Mid North Coast, we celebrate:

- **54 participants supported through our Accommodation Services**
- **450 people accessing community supports**
- **465 people guided through Support Coordination**
- **145 Disability Employment Services participants successfully placed into work**

Wraparound supports help Scotty step confidently into independence



When Anne and Phil moved to Coffs Harbour five years ago, it wasn't just for the lifestyle. They wanted the best environment for their son Scotty to grow.

"After high school, Scotty started to go backwards a bit," Anne says.

"We thought his NDIS funding could go further somewhere with more one-on-one support and stronger community connection. That's exactly what we found here."

Soon after arriving, they connected with Ability Options. A wraparound team—therapists, support workers, and program staff—began working with Scotty across all parts of his life. The results were quick to show.

"Before Ability Options, Scotty couldn't cross the road alone," Phil recalls.

"Now he's flagging buses, chatting with drivers, and getting himself where he needs to go."

With his therapist Sam, Scotty set seven personal goals, from improving

communication and self-care to learning money skills and travelling independently. These aren't just practised in sessions—they're built into everyday life. Cooking, for example, means planning meals, budgeting, shopping, and then serving dinner for the family.

"He's really taken to it," Anne says. "Every Sunday he bakes cakes—no eggshells in the mix anymore!"

Scotty's independence has boosted his confidence. He now gets ready for the day without prompting and enjoys a busy social life through his Day Program, from karaoke nights to pub dinners, where he practises his communication skills in relaxed, fun settings.

For Anne and Phil, this progress means peace of mind.

"The more independent he is now, the brighter his future will be," Anne says.

Scotty's story shows what's possible when person-centred supports work together helping him live with confidence, connection, and pride.

Lisa finds purpose in everyday moments



Lisa is the kind of person who's always been motivated and independent. A decades-long career at Woolworths, purchasing her own home, and living life on her own terms have all shaped her story. Now enjoying retirement, she brings that same energy and sense of purpose to her day-to-day.

Today, Lisa lives in shared accommodation with housemates and enjoys an active lifestyle.

As a NDIS participant, she chooses to stay busy and involved, volunteering in the community, shopping, cooking, and spending time with friends. One of the highlights of her week is attending the Ability Options Day Program in Taree.

For Lisa, the Day Program is much more than just 'something to do', it's where she catches up with mates, learns useful skills, and has a lot of laughs.

The friendly, group-based setting supports the development of communication skills, with participants provided with regular opportunities to connect, share, and grow in confidence.

Lisa especially enjoys the program's cooking sessions, where she whips up sweet treats to bring home to share. Karaoke Fridays with the group are also a favourite.

"I love Pearl Jam and sometimes I like to sneak in a song with a swearword," Lisa chuckles.

Outings with the group are another highlight. Whether it's trying new cafes, exploring the local area, or enjoying a plate of calamari at the bistro, Lisa embraces every moment.

Seafood is a favourite, and Lisa pays attention to healthy eating. With the Day Program's focus on practical life skills and wellness, everyone is encouraged to

balance their meals with salads or veggies when eating out.

Weekly ten-pin bowling trips are another popular social outing. Friendly competition with another Day Program close by in Forster adds a fun challenge and keeps everyone moving and motivated.

When asked what her favourite thing about Day Program was, Lisa had no doubts.

"Making friends and meeting new people is the best part of Day Program at Ability Options," she says.

Lisa's story shows how a good routine, great company, and the right supports can enrich the life of people with disability. She's independent, active, and always up for a chat – living proof that staying

connected to your community can make all the difference.

Ability Options' Day Programs and Social Activities are tailored for adults who live with disability and want to develop life skills, connect socially, and engage with their local community.

Programs are flexible and participant-led, designed to suit participant goals and interests.

Whether you're looking to build your confidence, meet new people, or try something new – there's a place for you at Ability Options. **Get in touch** to learn more about what programs, supports and facilities are available at your nearest location.



Our work on People's Rights

For our organisation, advocacy is about action. Whether it's through participant-led committees, partnerships with health networks and the communities we're a part of, or meaningful engagement with families, we're committed to ensuring that people with disability are heard, respected, and included — not just in their services, but in shaping broader systems.

People's Rights Committee: Advocacy by and for participants

The People's Rights Committee (PRC) is a participant-led group that plays a vital role in shaping our organisation from the inside out. Over the past year, the PRC — chaired by Amanda and Grant — has worked closely with staff and the Board to influence service improvements,

review policies, and co-design resources that help participants better understand their rights and the systems that support them.

A big highlight for the PRC this year was reviewing feedback from a participant survey and coming up with the idea for our Speak Up Campaign, which encourages participants to share their voices.

This year, the PRC:

- Revamped and contemporised Easy Read Policy templates
- Co-designed Easy Read newsletters and participant resources
- Reviewed internal policies to ensure they reflect participant perspectives
- Helped select inclusive imagery for communications

- Judged the Participant Choice Award for the STAR Awards
- Registered and contributed to NDIA Participant First Team initiatives

Their contributions reflect the core purpose of the committee: to amplify the voices of people with disability and make sure those voices are embedded in the decisions we make.

Advocacy in action: Civic participation and representation

As part of our focus on inclusion beyond services, the PRC also played a role in promoting civic participation during the 2025 Federal Election. Deputy Chair Grant helped lead internal communications encouraging staff to support participants in understanding their right to vote, and how to access tools and resources from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the NDIS.

"As a person living with disability, I know just how much it matters that we stand up for the rights of people living with disability," Grant shared with colleagues.

This initiative reflected our broader commitment to empowering participants not just in their daily lives, but as active citizens in their communities.

Sector leadership: Health pledge and family engagement

This year, the PRC also endorsed Ability Options becoming a signatory to the Disability Representative Organisations' Health Pledge — a national commitment to improving health outcomes for people with disability. By joining this pledge, we align ourselves with a wider movement to push for equity in health systems across Australia.



We actively seek feedback on our services and engage with families through Participant and Family Forums. These forums provide a safe and open space for families to share feedback, raise concerns, and help co-create better services.

Thank you to all members of the People's Rights Committee, our participants, families, and staff who continue to advocate for inclusion and progress. Your voices are helping us lead change — not just within our organisation, but in the broader systems that impact people with disability every day.



Celebrating our people: 2024 STAR Awards



On Friday, 22 November, teams from across Ability Options gathered on the sunny Coffs Coast for the 2024 STAR Awards, an evening dedicated to recognising the hard work and commitment of our staff. Supported by generous donations from our partners, this year's event celebrated the contributions of staff who support people across our communities, from frontline workers to those in support roles behind the scenes.

The STAR Awards included several categories designed to highlight the wide range of contributions that make Ability Options a strong and supportive organisation, including a new award category – the Participant Choice Award, which is nominated by our participants and families. With peer nominations as the foundation of the awards, the judging process was challenging due to the calibre of the nominees, who each demonstrated a deep commitment to our Mission, Vision, and Values.

Master of Ceremonies and CEO Julia Squire commented during the evening,

“Our team members consistently go above and beyond to deliver high-quality services and foster an inclusive environment. Their dedication is at the heart of what we do.”

Throughout the night, there was a strong sense of camaraderie and mutual respect as colleagues celebrated the achievements of their peers. Many shared meaningful moments during the acceptance speeches, where they spoke about the importance of their work and the impact it has on the people we support.

Dr Robert Lang highlighted the importance of the STAR Awards, saying, “These awards are about recognising the hard work of our

team members, regardless of their role. This year, your appreciation for each other was evident in every nomination.”

The Chair and CEO also thanked this year's STAR Awards **sponsors**, who's generosity made this celebration possible.

Our generous Gold Sponsors included Brennan, Speak Your Language, and ServiceFM. Our Silver Sponsors were CentroASSIST, CoAct, Maxxia, and Interleasing, and our Bronze Sponsors were HESTA and Canon. We are grateful for your support and contribution to our culture of recognition.



Our 2024 award winners

- **STAR Employee of the Year:** Orinthia
- **Ability Options Values Champion:** Melissa
- **Bright Ideas Award:** Alan
- **Emerging Leader Award:** Chantel-Louise
- **Participant Choice Award:** Nick
- **Standout Support Worker Award:** Oriana
- **Standout Specialist Services Award:** Marcus
- **Teamwork Award:** Daniela
- **Most Valuable Team Award:** Workforce Australia
- **Champion Employer Award:** Gusto's Home Hub



Jason's story about his life and journey to become a Support Worker



Jason is one of our Support Workers in Sydney and shares his experiences with us about growing up with a disability and his passion to give back.

I'm Jason, 40 years old, from Blacktown. While support for people with disabilities has improved over the years, my journey has been anything but easy. Growing up, I faced a lot of challenges including some I didn't fully understand at the time.

When I was born, I lost oxygen to the brain which left me with a life-long brain injury and intellectual disability. When I was four, I was not talking, and it took a long time for me to even learn how to walk. My parents had me assessed and I was diagnosed with Asperger's.

School was tough, with a mix of mainstream and support unit classes. I was constantly teased, misunderstood, and often found myself fighting to stand up for myself. My parents did their best, but with six kids to look after, I know it wasn't always easy for them.

By the time I was 16, I was placed on the Disability Support Pension, and while some people worked part-time jobs after school, I was already being told I wasn't cut out for that. I tried a few jobs after leaving school, but none of them felt right.

I was stuck in a cycle of failing and quitting and I found myself hanging out with the wrong crowd, spending too much time partying and avoiding real responsibility.

Everything changed when I met my girlfriend in 2011. She got me in a way no one else had. I told her about my Asperger's, and she didn't judge me, she just listened. Her family, especially her dad, were a huge influence. He asked me, "What do you do for a job?" and when I said

I was looking for one, he told me straight up, "Get a job." At first, I was intimidated, but his words stuck with me.

My partner really pushed me to start believing in myself. She knew I had potential and saw things in me that I didn't see. She introduced me to disability support, and for the first time, I felt like I could make a difference in someone's life. I enrolled in a Cert III in Disability in 2014, and even though a lot of people doubted me, I stuck with it. With her support, I finished the course, and it was one of my proudest moments.

After that, finding a job wasn't easy. I worked a few casual roles before finally landing a job as a Support Worker in 2020. This time, I found a provider who understood me, and I've been there ever since. The support I get from my managers and team has made all the difference. I've grown into my role, and now I'm proud to be a support worker who makes a real impact on people's lives every day.

On top of my professional life, I'm also a husband and a dad. Our daughter, Ava, was diagnosed with ASD level 2 and ADHD, just like me, and I've been honest with her about her diagnosis. I tell her that it's her superpower. Now, she wants to be a Support Worker too, which makes me incredibly proud.

I have learned how to be a husband, dad and support worker; all of which people thought that I would not be able to do. Being a Support Worker and truly understanding the participants I work with makes me feel successful. I look forward to going to work every day and making changes in other people's lives.

Financial Summary

The range of scale and services delivered by the Ability Options Ltd Group (the Group) in 2024/5 remains similar to the previous financial year, with a heavier share of disability service lines compared to employment service lines after the conclusion of the ParentsNext contract.

Our revenue declined by \$4.9 million year on year impacted by:

- the conclusion of the ParentsNext contract (\$2.3 million),
- rationalisation of some of our respite facilities during the year (\$1.5 million),
- decline in other employment services as the Disability Employment Services (DES) contract was nearing the end, and
- multiple weather events in the second half of the year, which further impacted adversely, particularly due to decisions to suspend mutual obligations in Employment services and community service closures for safety reasons.

Our DES contract concluded at the end of October, and we are pleased to have been granted a new contract under Inclusive Employment Australia, replacing DES, which commenced at the start of November 2025.

In FY25, the Group recorded the net deficit of \$8.2 million compared to FY24's net deficit of \$10.2 million — an improvement of \$2 million. The improvement is driven by a comprehensive change agenda, with key optimisation and growth initiatives delivered throughout FY25. This sets a

strong foundation for long-term financial sustainability and positions Ability Options for continued service to the community as it celebrates 50 years in 2026.

The escalating cost pressures felt by the whole industry continued from the previous years.

These included a Fair Work wages uplift of 3.75 per cent, a further increase in superannuation contributions of 0.5 percentage points, continued discrepancies between the cost of insurances and what's funded under the NDIS cost model and various CPI increases across services we procure, which cumulatively fell short of the price indexations by over \$1.9 million.

Various weather events were another challenge the staff combatted through the year.

Despite escalating cost pressures, through concerted efforts in optimising roster structures, consolidating homes with long term vacancies, and welcoming new services from the Mid Coast Council in August 2024, our accommodation and community support services recorded a bottom line improvement of \$1.4 million year on year.

As the business evolved over the last three years, we continued to review organisation structures to ensure they are fit for purpose and maintain a sharp focus on property and non-frontline costs.

The cumulative impact of all changes to the above-mentioned overheads to date resulted in a cost reduction of \$3.4 million year on year.

The gain on bargain purchase in FY24 through taking on Junction Works' Prospect Hwy, had no match in FY25, resulting in a negative \$1.0 million impact year on year.

Total comprehensive loss for the year was \$8.1 million, compared to \$9.5 million in the previous year, or \$1.4 million improvement.

Financial Statements

Consolidated Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income		
For the year ended 30 June 2025		
<i>in thousands</i>	2025	2024
Revenue and Income		
Revenue from ordinary activities	109,083	114,007
Finance Income	1,360	1,487
Total revenue and other income	110,443	115,494
Costs and Expenses		
Employee benefits	-99,302	-102,502
Depreciation and Impairment loss	-6,395	-6,007
Other expenses	-12,459	-17,705
Finance costs	-503	-497
Total expenses	-118,659	-126,711
Gain on bargain purchase	-	1,030
Net operating deficit	-8,216	-10,187
Other comprehensive income	138	706
Total comprehensive loss	-8,078	-9,481

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position		
For the year ended 30 June 2025		
<i>in thousands</i>	2025	2024
Assets		
Current assets	25,180	28,902
Non-current assets	28,741	35,801
Total Assets	53,921	64,703
Liabilities		
Current liabilities	21,579	23,954
Non-current liabilities	11,751	12,080
Total Liabilities	33,330	36,034
Net Assets	20,591	28,669





1300 422 454
abilityoptions.org.au

