

A photograph of two women in a garden. The woman on the right, wearing a pink and grey striped shirt, is laughing heartily with her mouth open and tongue slightly out. She is holding a bunch of green cucumbers in her hands. The woman on the left, wearing a grey t-shirt, is looking down at the cucumbers. The background shows green foliage and a wooden fence.

inclusionmelbourne
believing. living. belonging

in

2025 impact report

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our vision

For people with cognitive and intellectual disability and people who are socially isolated, to live within inclusive communities, where everyone's participation is of value.

our mission

To partner with people to live a good life!



chair and CEO's report

This year, Inclusion Melbourne has continued to grow as a values-driven organisation dedicated to supporting people with cognitive and intellectual disability and those who are socially isolated to live full, meaningful lives in their communities.

A major highlight was our relocation to new premises in Camberwell — a significant milestone after 77 years in Armadale. This move provides the space we need to expand our services, strengthen accessibility, and embed ourselves more deeply in a community setting that reflects our values of inclusion and belonging.

We are dedicated to empowering people to achieve their aspirations and live with independence, dignity, and connection. More individuals than ever are accessing personalised coaching, vocational training, and work experience to explore meaningful employment. Our tailored approach—including the WOPMAT skills assessment, employment readiness planning, and one-on-one support—helps participants secure and thrive in work placements. At the same time, we are strengthening partnerships with employers who are genuinely committed to inclusive workplaces.

Our services continue to grow, with support coordination, direct support, and community engagement teams forging stronger partnerships with

families and local organisations to expand access to meaningful networks and opportunities.

With social isolation increasingly prevalent—exacerbated by COVID—our volunteering programs, including Leisure Buddies and our partnership with the Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme, are more vital than ever.

The Inclusion Designlab team continues to drive impactful research and resource development, hosting workshops to help organisations build best-practice approaches for including people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities. We also partner with organisations to deepen understanding of how inclusion truly works within their workplaces, benefiting both staff and clients. At the same time, contributing to systemic advocacy and shaping policies and systems remains a core focus of our work.

This year has continued to affirm our commitment to involving people with lived experience in shaping the way we work. Across the breadth of our services, people with disability are directly influencing how we design programs, measure impact, and plan — ensuring our direction remains grounded in their voices and experiences.

Amid a changing and challenging disability landscape, Inclusion Melbourne continues to demonstrate that person-centred practice, innovation, and collaboration create lasting impact. The stories in this report

reflect the dedication of our staff, volunteers, partners, and families who together make inclusion possible every day.

We extend our sincere thanks to each one for their dedication, and to our community for their continued trust and support. Together, we are building a future where every person with a disability can belong, contribute, and thrive.

Chris Allan

Chair, Board of Directors

Helen Williams

Chief Executive Officer





who we are

Inclusion Melbourne is Victoria's longest-serving community-based NDIS registered organisation supporting people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities and those experiencing social isolation.

With over 77 years of experience, we help people build genuine relationships, develop new skills, and pursue meaningful opportunities in work, education, and community life. But more than that, we champion rights, social justice, and self-determination, aiming to equip our participants to become self-advocates.

Our team brings deep expertise in disability practice and uses person-centred approaches such as Supported Decision Making, Active Support, and Positive Behaviour Support. We are also a Registered Training Organisation and home to Inclusion Designlab, our advocacy and research hub that works to improve inclusion and the quality of disability support across Australia.

overview of services



direct support



support coordination



community support-volunteering



inclusion training



inclusion designlab

impact in numbers

inclusion designlab:



over 1,500

research and project hours



over 250

unique workshop participants



over 800

total participant hours



total support hours:

over 25,000
hours of support



community support:

over 5,000
volunteering hours



education & training:

over 12,000
hours of education & training



direct support

The Direct Support Team works hand in hand with participants, families, and the wider community to make everyday life richer and more connected. Through personalised plans and meaningful relationships, the team supports people to pursue their unique goals and aspirations.

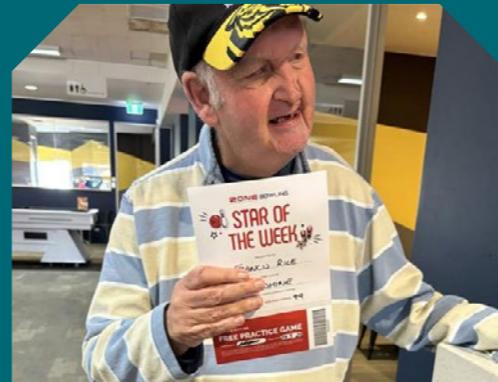
We support people to live full and connected lives through five key areas: **meaningful employment support, lifelong learning, community participation, daily living skills, and advocacy.**



meaningful employment support

We help people discover and pursue employment that builds on their strengths and aspirations. Through personalised vocational coaching, pathway planning, and practical support, participants gain the skills and confidence to step into meaningful roles where they are valued and supported to thrive.

Bilal's passion for gardening has seen him recognised for his commitment to volunteering through a Homestead Community Centre Award. This builds new skills and opens doors to future employment opportunities.



community participation

This year, more participants are choosing to explore leisure, fitness, and community activities, from sports and concerts to local arts events. These experiences not only enhance physical and mental well-being but also foster social connection and personal growth.

To make this possible, our direct support services have expanded beyond weekdays to include evenings and weekends. This provides families with valuable respite while giving participants greater opportunities to take part in the activities that matter to them.

Li recently stayed longer at her favourite café, choosing to remain even as it grew busier and noisier. This small but meaningful step shows her growing confidence and comfort in the community, exactly what Direct Support Worker (DSP) Therese has been encouraging her to do.

Frank's love of bowling gives him fun and friendship. Well-known in his local bowling community, he enjoys the games and social catch-ups, building both confidence and connections.



lifelong learning

In our classrooms, participants are supported to engage in lessons and activities in ways that suit their needs, ensuring learning is both accessible and engaging. We also work closely with our in-house training team to ensure classroom experiences align with each participant's vocational and long-term goals.

George enjoys learning about cleaning and community responsibilities with his friends at Inclusion Training. Recently, he joined Australia's Clean Up Day and received a certificate for his efforts. He's also been developing gardening skills through a backyard project, planting and painting pots, building practical skills and pride in his environment.

"I am proud to keep my community clean. I did it." - George



daily living skills

We support participants to build the skills and confidence needed to make informed decisions in their daily lives. Whether it's choosing how to spend their time, planning routines, or navigating community spaces, our team provides guidance while respecting each person's preferences. This approach empowers individuals to take an active role in shaping their lives.

Nicole is supported to build her capacity for independent living by developing cooking skills. This includes learning how to purchase ingredients, clean and prepare food, and make a meal. She particularly enjoys preparing salads.

"I love making salads for lunch and sharing it with my friends." - Nicole



"There'll be more experiences like this to come for sure! We had a great day today for sure!" - Tobias

support coordination

Our Support Coordination team is passionate about helping people living with intellectual and cognitive disability, as well as those experiencing social isolation, to make the most of their NDIS plans. With expertise in areas such as behaviour support, home and living applications, employment goals, and supporting people with complex needs, the team ensures every plan is practical, flexible, and aligned to each person's aspirations.

In 2025, our work has focused on three priorities: building capacity across the journey, providing the right support, and navigating change.



building capacity across the journey

Support Coordination is about more than just preparing a NDIS plan, but it's about supporting participants before, during, and throughout the life of their plan. Our team helps people identify their needs and priorities, build their plan, and make adjustments along the way, guiding decision-making to ensure they get the most from their funding. This ensures participants have supports in place that reflect their goals, preferences, and circumstances at every stage.

providing the right support

Having the right supports in place can make all the difference. Our coordinators go beyond providing support — they connect participants with the people and services that matter most, particularly within their communities. By fostering trusted relationships with families, providers, and NDIS planners, we ensure participants access supports that meet their immediate needs while also building pathways for future growth and opportunities.

Bryan, who wanted to go on a short holiday, explored his options with the help of his Support Coordinator and chose Bendigo as his destination. Together they planned the details, from accommodation to activities and health supports, ensuring everything matched his needs and preferences. With the right arrangements in place, Bryan received a clear itinerary and felt confident and prepared to enjoy his time away.

Matthew (in blue) has always wanted to be part of a music group, and with the right support in place he has been able to pursue this passion. Our team worked to ensure his lessons were accessible and his musical group was a good fit for him, helping him feel comfortable and included. Matthew recently performed at his first National Celtic Music Folk Festival and has built strong friendships within his music group; alongside the connections he enjoys in his day program.



navigating change

Life circumstances, goals, and needs are always evolving and we believe a support plan should evolve with them. Our team supports participants through these transitions, from moving into new housing to starting work or study, or adjusting supports for health and personal changes. By guiding people through reviews and plan updates, we help ensure their supports stay relevant, flexible, and meaningful at every stage of life.



Moving into Briggs St has been a positive change for Ric. His new home is full of energy, activities, cooking, and friendly staff who feel more like housemates. He enjoys exploring his neighbourhood — from breakfast at Elster to custard tarts at Baker Bleu — and feels happy and settled. With support from his coordinators, Ric's transition has become an opportunity to connect with his community and discover new experiences.

"My Support Coordinator, Richard, helped secure funding through Steven's NDIS plan for an eight-week short-term accommodation. This will provide the care and support he needs while I undergo surgery and rehabilitation for my knee replacement. It's a huge relief knowing he'll be well looked after while I recover." - Kaithie, mother and nominee for participant Steven.



more ways we're making a difference

learning and skills

- Participants explored new areas, cultures, and life experiences through supported trips, developing planning and decision-making skills along the way.
- Many built confidence and independence by learning to drive, joining training programs, and strengthening their skills for future employment.
- Some completed courses and transitioned into new work opportunities, including roles in local cafés.

employment and volunteering

- Participants engaged in meaningful volunteer work, explored new opportunities, and transitioned into paid employment.
- Some began roles with local businesses such as Print Locker, The Green Team Villa, and other hospitality companies, gaining valuable workplace experience.

health and therapy

- Participants accessed regular speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy supports.
- Others received essential equipment such as hoists, wheelchairs, and shower chairs to improve comfort and independence in daily life.

living and housing

- Participants moved into Supported Independent Living or Specialist Disability Accommodation that better suited their needs.
- Others transitioned to new accommodation and supports following hospital discharge or through successful Home and Living applications, including those who moved from Residential Aged Care to more independent settings.

community and connections

- Participants were matched with Leisure Buddies, forming meaningful friendships and stronger community ties.
- Others discovered new interests in employment and craft, and received additional plan funding to meet weekly support needs and stay active in their communities.



community support

The Community Support team delivers impact by bringing people together through one-on-one volunteer matches. With expertise in volunteer engagement, the team actively recruits, trains, and supports volunteers across the full engagement cycle, while also supporting participants and their families.

This work comes to life through two key programs: the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) and our award-winning Leisure Buddies program.

LEISURE BUDDIES™

Our award-winning Leisure Buddies program connects participants with volunteers from their local community, to build lasting friendships through shared interests and hobbies. Each match gives opportunities for participants and volunteers to create moments that matter, strengthen skills and achieve goals, and engage in flexible and meaningful community activities.

creating moments that matter

What makes Leisure Buddies unique is the way these connections take place outside of family or paid support. Through regular planned activities and outings, buddies share simple but powerful experiences – whether it's cheering on a favourite sports team, enjoying a cup of coffee together, or trying something new. These small moments in time leave a lasting impact on both participants and volunteers.

For Tim, his relationship with Emma, his Leisure Buddy volunteer, is especially meaningful. It is the only friendship he has outside of his support worker and family, giving him someone new to share his thoughts and experiences with.

"Tim can talk openly and honestly about how he feels to Emma, and this is so important in regards to Tim's wellbeing."

- GARY, TIM'S CARER

strengthening skills and achieving goals

Through Leisure Buddies, volunteers support participants to build practical skills and work towards their individual goals through everyday activities. This may involve developing confidence to attend appointments, practising budgeting and shopping, managing bills, or becoming more involved in social and community life. Volunteers provide gentle guidance, encouragement, and friendship throughout the journey, helping participants grow their independence and sense of connection.

flexible and meaningful community engagement

Volunteers have the flexibility to contribute in ways that fit their lives – whether that's once a week, twice a week, or more during their six-month commitment. With training and ongoing guidance from our Community Support Team, they are supported every step of the way. This flexibility ensures each match is meaningful for participants and volunteers alike.



"I very much enjoy visiting Jim and i'm really happy that I applied for this type of volunteer role."

BILLY



aged care volunteer visitors scheme (ACVVS)

Since 2014, Inclusion Melbourne has proudly delivered the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) across metropolitan Melbourne. The program pairs trained volunteers with older people living at home or in residential aged care, providing visits at least twice a month that foster companionship and connection. Over time, these visits build genuine relationships that enrich the lives of both older people and volunteers.

easing social isolation

Regular volunteer visits help reduce feelings of loneliness for older people who may have limited mobility, health challenges, or little contact with family and friends. The simple act of sharing time together provides comfort, connection, and a sense of belonging.

ACVVS volunteer Billy decided to follow his passion for community services and left the hotel business after 21 years, joining Inclusion Melbourne as a volunteer visitor. Billy visits his recipient, Jim, who lives alone with dementia. Their visits are filled with conversation, music, and cups of tea in the backyard.

"We enjoy each other's company... I don't know what I'd do without you (Niki)."

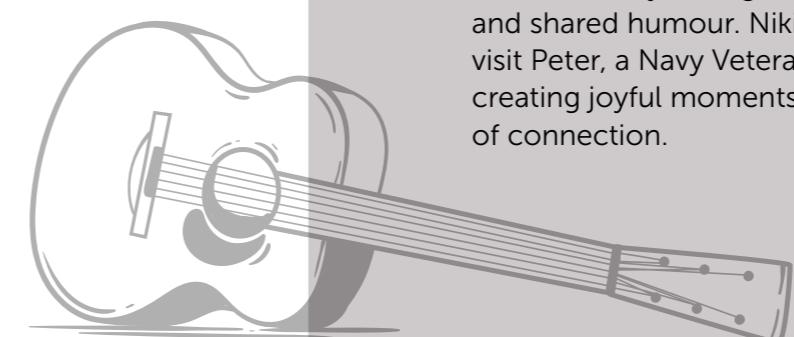
PETER



cultural friendships

ACVVS also supports older people who feel distant from their culture and heritage. By thoughtfully matching older people and volunteers with shared language, cultural backgrounds, or lived experiences, the program nurtures friendships that honour identity and build understanding.

Niki and Peter were matched through the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme two years ago and have since built a friendship full of laughter and shared humour. Niki sometimes brings the children she cares for to visit Peter, a Navy Veteran and bass guitar player, in residential aged care, creating joyful moments that span generations and celebrate the power of connection.





Inclusion Training delivers accredited and pre-accredited programs that support people with disabilities to build essential skills, gain confidence, and take steps toward employment or further education. Our courses are designed to meet diverse learning needs while aligning with national standards, ensuring that every student is equipped for their next stage of learning or work.

In 2025, our work has focused on three key areas:

- **Workplace Readiness**,
- **Specialised Vocational Training**, and
- **Pathways into Disability Support**.



workplace readiness

Our Workplace Readiness courses build the foundation for learning, employment, and independence. Participants strengthen essential skills in:

- Literacy and numeracy (e.g. reading timetables, budgeting, cooking measurements)
- English language (building vocabulary, everyday conversations, presentations)
- Digital skills (using smartphones, email, social media, staying safe online)
- Everyday life skills (travel training, money handling, teamwork, goal setting)

Through these programs, participants gain practical tools to engage in their communities and prepare for further study or work.

Angelo practicing the important skill of topping up a Myki card, supporting confidence and independence in using public transport.



Dhruv practicing digital literacy by searching on his iPad, alongside completing literacy and numeracy worksheets. In today's world, technology is everywhere, making it vital to build digital skills alongside foundational literacy and numeracy.



Participants show their activities in the pre-accredited classes that aim to build their confidence and autonomy.

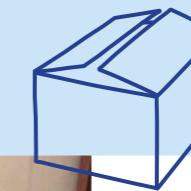
specialised vocational training

Our Specialised Vocational Training programs provide hands-on experiences that prepare participants for real workplaces. Through volunteering, work placements, and partnerships with local businesses, learners can explore different roles and build practical skills in community settings. Participants develop:

- Workplace skills (customer service, teamwork, problem solving)
- Industry exposure (experiencing roles across hospitality, retail, gardening, and more)
- Confidence and independence (navigating work environments, building routines, managing responsibilities)
- Career pathways (developing a roadmap toward future employment goals)

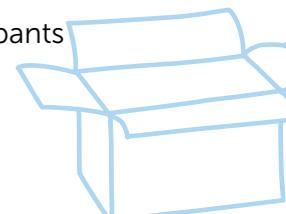
Vinh gaining practical skills through vocational training in a warehouse setting. Opportunities like this build confidence, workplace knowledge, and open pathways to future employment

"I like to work in a warehouse." - VINH



Students on placement at Mambourin, developing practical skills and gaining confidence by working alongside others in a professional setting. These opportunities give them the chance to experience what it's like to be part of a workplace

"It's rewarding to see our students applying their skills in a real workplace." - DSP CHANTEL



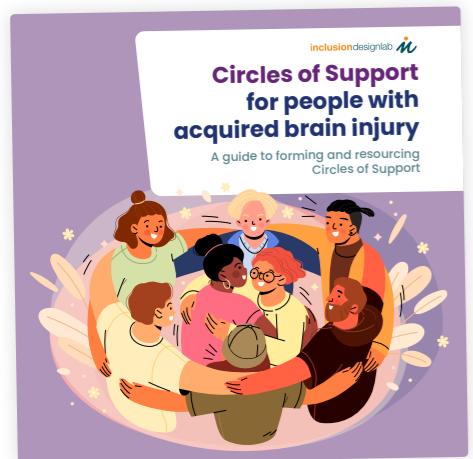
pathways into disability support

The Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) is designed for learners who want to build a career in the care and support sector. Through accredited training and practical experience, students gain the skills and confidence to take on rewarding roles supporting others. Participants learn about:

- Understanding the disability sector (the role of support workers and the NDIS)
- Person-centred care (working alongside people to achieve their goals)
- Practical skills (assisting with daily living, communication, and wellbeing)
- Workplace readiness (placements, volunteering, and pathways into employment in the sector)

[LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR COURSES HERE](#)

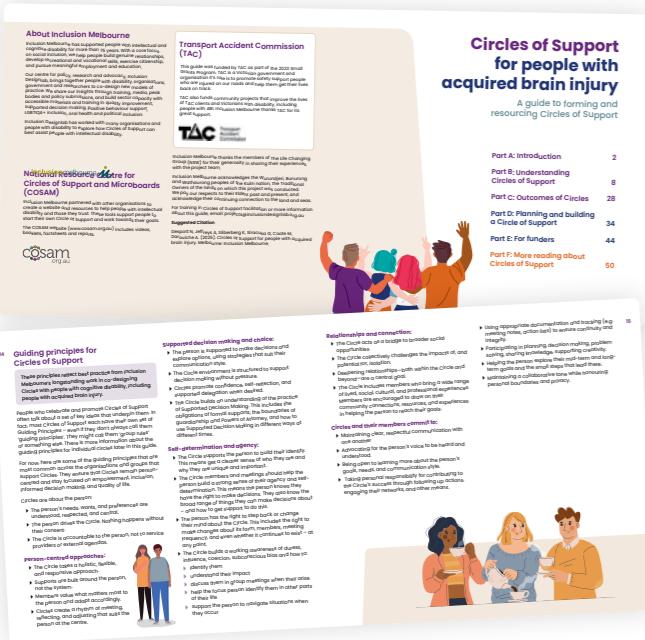
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circles of support for people with acquired brain injury

This new Inclusion Designlab guide shows how Circles of Support – intentional networks of family, friends, and allies chosen by the person – can uphold autonomy, connection, and participation after acquired brain injury. It provides clear steps for families, support coordinators, and allied health professionals to form, facilitate, and sustain a Circle, align with Supported Decision Making, and resource the work appropriately (without substituting paid supports).

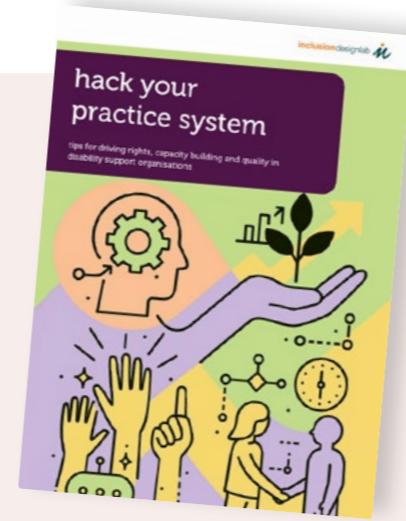
Developed with funding from Transport Accident Commission and a Project Advisory Group including people with lived experience and sector experts, the guide brings relationship-based practice to life in complex support contexts.



system hacks for person-centred practice

Funded by the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance – Empowerment Fund Grant

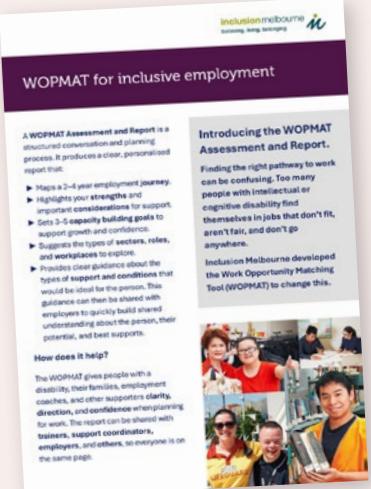
This Empowerment Fund project upgraded Inclusion Melbourne's internal practice systems - including Brevity (our participant database) and Sharepoint - to embed rights, autonomy, and safeguarding into everyday workflows. The project produced Hack Your Practice System, a practical guide showing how small "system hacks" in intake, planning, Positive Behaviour Support, and decision-making support can reduce harm and improve quality. Co-designed with staff and people with disability, the guide demonstrates how technology and practice reform can work together to make service delivery efficient, ethical, and measurable.



WOPMAT (Work Opportunity Matching Tool)

The Work Opportunity Matching Tool (WOPMAT) helps people with plan clear, realistic pathways into inclusive and meaningful work. In 2024–25, Inclusion Designlab expanded delivery through live WOPMAT Assessments and began building a digital version that makes the same high-quality, person-centred process accessible online. Creation of the digital platform is a project funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

Each WOPMAT Assessment produces a personalised Report that maps a 2–4-year employment journey, identifies strengths and support needs, and outlines practical next steps toward open employment. WOPMAT Reports can be used by the person, supporters, and professionals to get on the same page as they look for work opportunities with and for the person.



our supporters

The unwavering support of our volunteers, partners, funders and donors is vital to the success of Inclusion Melbourne's mission. Their commitment allows us to offer transformative services and programs that empower individuals with disabilities to live fulfilling, independent lives. By standing alongside us, they help create a stronger, more inclusive community where people with disabilities are respected and valued. This support is integral not only to our daily operations but also to the broader systemic change we are striving for, ensuring that we can continue to make a real and lasting impact in the lives of those we serve.

MENTONE GOLF CLUB

Mentone Golf Club held its **63rd Annual Charity Day for Inclusion Melbourne** in October, once again delivering an outstanding result. As their major fundraising event of the year, the day raised \$10,000 — bringing the club's total contribution over the years to an incredible \$208,000! This is an extraordinary achievement for a small club and a testament to their generosity and commitment.

We hold deep and sincere gratitude for Mentone Golf Club's long-term support. Remarkably, this partnership began 63 years ago with a simple coffee catch-up — a conversation that has since grown into one of the most enduring and impactful community relationships in our history.

The event is a true labour of love, with planning beginning as early as July and the Committee and members working tirelessly to bring it to life. The day features a round of golf followed by a shared lunch and a series of fundraising activities, including a major raffle, lucky number boards, a silent auction, and the raffle of ten themed hampers.

The generosity of Mentone Golf Club's members — through donations, participation, and unwavering support — continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people with disabilities."



inclusion melbourne partners



Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting



inclusion melbourne funders



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care



City of
STONNINGTON



City of
GLEN
EIRA



Families,
Fairness
and Housing



Treasury
and Finance



our amazing volunteers

Lefteris	Patlamazoglou	Karina	Yu
Kin Hung	Wong	Ernest	Zanatta
Gloria	Luan	Nimita	Alphonse
Yidi	Tang	Jessica	Jeffries
Beini	Zhu	Sanjeeewani	Fernando
Tara	Palmer	Sophie	Boyd
Zak	Quinn	Celine	Chao
Eleanor	Lawton	Megan	Lim
Andrew	Lewit-Mendes	Giulia	Paulin
Lucas	Newman	Anita	Peng
Jess	Navpreet	Navpreet	Khairah
Lucy	Bennett	Jessica	Barrett
Emma	McCaull	Ryan	Tran
John	Lloyd	Tess	Lynch
Oliver	Lacy	Niki	Esler
Marek	Turski-Szendzielarz	Riyah	Asad
Joel	Pearce	Joanne	Gooren
Christian	Brett	Sarah	Coakley
Linda	Hughes	Shane	Golden
Amber	Bowman	Jane	O'Loughlin
Melissa	Masutti	Michelle	Glanville
Yao	Wang	Nur Ezzati	Daud
Brian	Lynch	Renuka	Dharmaratne
Elizabeth	Meagher	Rebekah	Delahoy
David	Luffman	Peter	McLeod
Deborah	Holmes	Natalie	Lake
Rosita	Fernandes	Fahimeh	Anari
Emma	Bardon	Richard	Day
Luca	Giannessi	Fiona	Hough
Abijith	Jayakumar	Siti	Khan
Abby	Levy	Crystal	Wilson
Jid	Ofole	Ruchelle	Balasuriya
Anastasia	Kossivas	Sin Kam	Lau
Emma	Holder	Libby	Webb
Ivan	Zulman	Danni	Ramalingam
Carolyne	Den Hartog	Marvin	Ongsawasd
Geethi	Randeniya	Daniela	Poiettro
Clarice	Wong	Billy	Craven
Priya	Smith	Kylie	Castan
Ichha	Kaur	Jessy	Whitlock
Ying Yi	Soh	Antonio	Faella
Leo	Liu	Frances	Wheeler



board members

Mark Hearnes
Beverly Jeffreys
Chris Allen
Paul Gleeson
Robert Croshwaite

volunteer milestones

25 years
Richard Day



5 years
Renuka Dharmaratne
Emma Holder
Michelle Glanville
Nur Ezzati Daud
Jane O'Loughlin



staff milestones

15 years
Nathan Despott



5 years
Sally Baldry



"They've been meeting every fortnight for months to get coffee and share stories."



"I've gained so much from this experience. I've gained friendship and insight into my buddy's life."



"Both have grown in their own ways, proving that every connection gives something back."

LEARN MORE ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

CALL US ON 0408 400 612

volunteer@inclusion.melbourne



Before, the days all felt the same



"Hi! Ready to show me your garden today?"



"You know, I don't get many visitors. It's nice to have someone to talk to."



A simple visit, but it makes all the difference.



Sometimes, connection starts with just showing up.

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 Inclusion Melbourne Inc.

 InclusionMelb

Curious about receiving services
from us, eager to collaborate, or
just have a question?

Visit inclusionmelbourne.org.au
and get in touch today - we'd love
to hear from you!

GET IN TOUCH

ABN: 67 568 450 949 TOID: 6406



Andy, a man we support, enjoyed a free Collingwood game Inclusion Melbourne organised for him and his sister – *a first in 10 years!*