





#### **INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CO-CHAIRS**

Our last strategic plan (2022-25) was crafted in the aftermath of the pandemic; a period marked by deep uncertainty and change. We saw firsthand the disproportionate impact of cost-of-living pressures, workforce shortages, and ongoing care disruptions on vulnerable families. While our registration as an NDIS provider broadened our support to children and families with complex needs, it also brought challenges around sustainability and flexibility.

Some initiatives, like securing new premises, had to be paused. That's the reality of strategic planning: it is essential, but it can't be rigid. The world shifts, and so must we. If the past few years have taught us anything, it's that we must stay grounded in purpose while remaining agile in our path forward.

This new Strategic Plan reflects that balance with clarity, courage, and optimism. With a focus on:

- Expanding our reach by growing our Early Intervention and Allied Health services and significantly scaling Inclusion Works across more schools and communities.
- Building a skilled, sustainable workforce through continued training, partnerships, and career pathways.
- Strengthening long-term sustainability through diversified funding, including NDIS, fee-for-service models, and philanthropy.

Despite sector uncertainty - or perhaps because of it - we are stepping forward with boldness and hope. We will continue to adapt, collaborate, and innovate to create meaningful impact. As we grow, we are committed to becoming a recognised leader in best-practice, evidence-based support for autistic and neurodivergent children. We believe in what's possible when community, compassion, and evidence come together.

Above all, we remain deeply committed to building a future shaped by our renewed vision, purpose, and mission where neurodivergent children, families, and communities can thrive with support, understanding, and belonging.



Mary Muirhead OAM & Melanie Cook Co-Chairs, The Learning for Life Autism Centre

#### A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS TO DEVELOP OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

In early 2025, the Learning for Life team embarked on a collaborative strategic planning process, expertly facilitated by Helga Svendsen. Our aim was to ensure the plan reflected the perspectives and experience of both Board and senior leadership, fostering genuine ownership among all involved.

#### **Day One: Framing Our Vision**

Board members, Nicci Godsman, CEO and Clinical Director Emma Miller came together for a full day of structured discovery. Through a series of facilitated exercises - ranging from challenge mapping to "impact storytelling" - the group:

- articulated L4Life's enduring purpose, core values and ultimate impact on autistic children and their families
- surfaced critical assumptions and environmental enablers
- began sketching the long-term outcomes against which success will be measured

#### Day Two: Translating Insight into Action

Building on that momentum, Day Two brought in the Senior Management Team to co- design the strategic roadmap with the Board. Together, the group:

- finalised the content for the Logic Model, linking inputs (people, partnerships, funding) to activities, outputs, and outcome milestones
- considered ownership for each initiative, mapped resource requirements, and embedded risk mitigations
- defined short, medium, and long-term indicators to track our journey

#### From Workshop to Plan

Following the planning sessions, the working group outputs were synthesised into a robust Theory of Change and three-year Logic Model. This document formed the backbone of our 2025–2028 Strategic Plan - ensuring every priority is rooted in shared insight, empirical rigor and collective leadership expertise.

By engaging both our governance and management teams so deeply, we've not only crafted a technically sound strategy but have also cemented the shared commitment required to deliver on our promise of world-class support and inclusion for the children and families we serve.



# Vision, Mission & Values

The Learning for Life Autism Centre (L4Life) was created as a not-for-profit organisation in 2004, as a way to address the inequity that existed in access to best-practice early intervention programs based on the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) for children with autism in Victoria, Australia.

#### **OUR VISION**

A world where all autistic and neurodivergent people can thrive and live the life they choose supported by informed communities and inclusive environments.

#### **OUR PURPOSE**

We exist to provide high-quality, evidence-based services and support for autistic and neurodivergent children and their families regardless of financial circumstances. Working alongside families, educators, and communities, we help create environments where children feel included, confident, and supported in the places they live, learn, and play.

#### **OUR MISSION**

We deliver evidence-based, child-focused services that build skills, confidence, and meaningful inclusion for autistic and neurodivergent children. Our work spans early intervention, school and community support, educator training, and family collaboration. Using data-informed strategies underpinned by best-practice behavioural science, we combine direct support with research, advocacy, and community education to improve outcomes for children and the wider systems that support them. We are committed to doing all we can to ensure cost is not a barrier to accessing our services and to building a future where every child has the support they need to grow, learn, and belong.

#### **OUR VALUES**

Trust We value the individual
Respect We foster relationships
Equity We create opportunity
Joy We celebrate learning
Kindness We care



#### **OUR IMPACT STATEMENT**

At Learning for Life Autism Centre (L4Life), we exist to empower autistic and neurodivergent children and their families by delivering evidence-based, individualised, and inclusive services that promote lifelong learning, community participation, and personal wellbeing. Through expanding our geographic footprint, strengthening our workforce, embedding inclusive practices into schools and kindergartens, and leading sector research and training, we aim to build a future where high-quality early intervention, educational inclusion, and ongoing support are universally accessible and sustainably delivered.

Our work drives immediate improvements in developmental outcomes, educational participation, and community inclusion for children and young people, while also transforming the broader systems they live within — education, health, disability, and family support services.

By scaling our service reach, diversifying our funding streams, building sector leadership in evidence and advocacy, and strengthening community partnerships, we will create a measurable, sustainable impact that uplifts individuals, families, and systems — ensuring that every child, regardless of background or location, has the opportunity to thrive.



# Strategic Priorities

As The Learning for Life Autism Centre (L4Life) enters its third decade, we do so with a renewed sense of purpose and a clear roadmap for the future. Our 2024–2027 Strategic Plan is built on five key pillars that reflect both the challenges and opportunities ahead. These pillars are designed to ensure we continue delivering high-quality autism services while strengthening our foundations for long-term impact.

Each pillar addresses a critical aspect of our organisation — from the people who deliver our services, to the systems that support them; from the client experience, to innovation and sector leadership; and from community partnerships, to the broader ecosystem that enables our mission to thrive.

This strategic focus is shaped by shifts in the funding environment, growing demand for evidence-based and neuroaffirming supports, and the evolving expectations of the families we serve. Together, these pillars will guide our efforts to build a sustainable, scalable, and responsive organisation that continues to meet the diverse needs of autistic and neurodivergent children and their families.

#### **BUILDING TALENT AND LEADERSHIP**

Our people are our most valuable asset. Sustaining high-quality, individualised support depends on the recruitment and retention of skilled clinicians and the development of leaders who can guide teams, shape practice, and uphold our values. In a competitive workforce landscape, we need to invest in our team's professional growth while building leadership capacity to support the next phase of L4Life's development.

#### **EXPANDING SERVICE AND CLIENT EXPERIENCE**

L4Life has a strong track record of delivering life-changing services across childhood and adolescence. By focusing on increasing the reach and depth of our programs, more families can benefit from our expertise. We commit to continuously improving the client experience - making our services not only effective but also accessible, inclusive, and responsive to each family's journey.

#### OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE, GROWTH MANAGEMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable growth requires strong foundations. We achieve this by ensuring that behind every service delivered is a robust set of systems, processes, and structures — from financial planning to data systems and workforce strategy. As we expand our reach, we must also ensure we can scale responsibly, maintaining quality while managing risk and building resilience.

#### **INNOVATION AND STRATEGIC GROWTH**

To remain a leader in our field, we must continue to question, explore, and evolve. We do this by embedding a culture of innovation - developing new models of service, leveraging research partnerships, and trialling approaches that improve outcomes. By driving innovation within our core programs, we position L4Life as a forward-thinking, impact-focused organisation shaping the future of autism supports.

#### **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Our mission is powered by collaboration. Whether it's through philanthropic support, sector partnerships, or advocacy, this pillar emphasises the importance of building strong, values-aligned relationships. By demonstrating impact and nurturing trust, we can grow our community of supporters and ensure the sustainability of our services for years to come.

#### **BUILDING TALENT & LEADERSHIP**

Recruit, develop, and retain a skilled clinical workforce while building sustainable leadership pathways to support L4Life's growth and service excellence.

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#### Recruit and strengthen clinical team

- Reevaluate and adjust talent attraction and recruitment approaches for clinical teams by diversifying recruitment channels
- Implement workforce policies to develop and introduce workplace arrangements that attract a wider and more diverse talent pool
- Improve onboarding procedures by streamlining and developing processes to better support new hires and ensure seamless integration into L4Life culture.
- Recruit clinical team members to support future growth, expanded geographic reach, and increasing client demand.

#### **Develop and prepare internal leaders**

• Enhance senior staff development by designing and executing professional development plans to prepare senior staff for expanding leadership roles.

## Outputs

**Objectives** 

- Revised recruitment guidelines and policies that incorporate diverse sourcing strategies.
- Expanded candidate sourcing channels through targeted networking initiatives.
- Enhanced recruitment marketing materials and campaigns that clearly articulate the value proposition.
- Increased number of clinical team hires aligned with strategic growth areas (e.g., regional growth, service demand projections).
- Higher diversity metrics (e.g., cultural, linguistic, professional backgrounds) within new clinical hires.
- Established leadership development programs with measurable outcomes.

#### **Impact**

A flexible, diverse workforce positioned to meet immediate and future organisational needs

#### **Expand Internal Capability and Career Pathways**

- Develop staff into trainers to create a sustainable internal training model that supports career progression and workforce development.
- Continue to recruit clinical team members in strategic locations to enhance service delivery.
- Ensure that new hires are effectively upskilled, developed, and aligned with Learning for Life's culture and ways of working.

#### **Objectives**

#### **Advance and Prepare Future Leaders**

- Increase internal promotions into leadership roles by strengthening leadership readiness and building a sustainable talent pipeline.
- Establish and implement a leadership competency framework that defines the skills, behaviours, and benchmarks required for current and emerging leaders.

#### Outputs

Training programs and materials for new internal trainers.

- Recruitment campaigns focused on strategic geographic areas.
- Increased numbers of qualified therapy assistants and consultants.
- Increased number of internal promotions into leadership roles (showing readiness and pipeline development).
- Established leadership competency framework outlining skills, behaviours, and benchmarks for current and emerging leaders.

#### **Impact**

A self-sustaining internal training and leadership development framework with strengthened geographic reach.

# Objectives

#### **Embed Leadership Capability and Sustain Organisational Growth**

- Transition senior staff into leadership roles across new and expanding geographic locations to support organisational growth.
- Enhance and embed onboarding procedures to maintain cultural alignment and operational consistency across all locations.
- Implement continuous monitoring, evaluation, and refinement of talent and leadership strategies to sustain organisational culture and leadership effectiveness during growth.

#### **Outputs**

- Embedded onboarding processes and updated materials tailored for multi-location scalability.
- Succession plans actively implemented for key leadership roles in all locations.
- Cross-location team-building initiatives established to strengthen collaboration and organisational unity.
- Structured feedback and evaluation mechanisms operational, informing leadership development and cultural alignment

#### **Impact**

Strong, embedded leadership and culture across all locations, driving outstanding talent retention and organisational growth

# three

#### **EXPANDING SERVICE & CLIENT EXPERIENCE**

Strengthen and expand L4Life's Early Intervention, School-Age, and Inclusion Works programs to grow client reach, enhance service quality, and prepare for future organisational expansion.

year one	Objectives	<ul> <li>Expand Client Base and Strengthen Core Services</li> <li>Grow Early Intervention and School-Age client base (NDIS and fee-for-service) through targeted marketing and improved service pathways.</li> <li>Launch and embed Inclusion Works program across Early Years and schools, supported by trained program delivery teams.</li> <li>Strategically Prepare for Future Growth</li> <li>Conduct service line analysis to identify areas for future growth, maintenance, or reduction based on strategic impact and viability.</li> <li>Prepare for, but defer, geographic growth beyond current service</li> </ul>
	Outputs	<ul> <li>Increased client enquiries and service uptake through targeted marketing campaigns.</li> <li>Inclusion Works launched with 10+ school partnerships.</li> <li>Program delivery capacity scaled via trained teams.</li> <li>Strategic Foundation Supports adaptation plan developed.</li> <li>Service line viability review completed.</li> </ul>
	Impact	A significantly expanded client base, continued service quality, and organisational readiness to meet sector reforms and future service demands.
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<b>3</b>	Objectives	<ul> <li>Scale High-Impact Programs and Strengthen Market Position</li> <li>Double Early Intervention and School-Age client service hours compared to Year 1 baseline.</li> <li>Expand Inclusion Works integration across schools with established certification pathways for educators.</li> <li>Launch pilot service models in targeted locations to test growth readiness.</li> <li>Prepare for Organisational Growth</li> <li>Refine workforce and operational systems to support service scaling.</li> </ul>

#### Outputs

Doubled Early Intervention and School-Age client hours.

- 20+ schools implementing Inclusion Works.
- Expanded workforce and operational frameworks.
- Pilot service model evaluations completed and refined.

#### Impact

Stronger client relationships, broader service offerings, and proven pathways for future growth and sector leadership.

## Objectives

#### **Achieve Leadership Position in Priority Service Areas**

- Position Inclusion Works for Department-level or regional adoption.
- Sustain Early Intervention and School-Age client growth with 90%+ operational capacity.

#### **Expand Service Models and Sector Influence**

- Establish additional hubs/centres based on pilot learnings.
- Fully integrate Foundation Supports-aligned models across all service streams.

## Outputs

- Centre/hub business plans and operational models finalised.
- Two new hubs/centres operational.
- Inclusion Works embedded at a system or Department level.
- Full Foundation Supports rollout across all programs.

#### Impact

Expanded geographic presence, diversified service offerings, Inclusion Works recognised as a leading model for inclusive education, securing long-term sector leadership.

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#### **OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE, GROWTH MANAGEMENT & SUSTAINABILITY**

Build scalable, sustainable operational, financial, and workforce systems to enable L4Life's strategic growth, geographic expansion, and long-term sustainability.

#### **Operational and Workforce Readiness** · Assess operational and workforce capacity to support scaling; escalate identified gaps to Talent Acquisition initiatives. • Develop scalable operational systems to enable consistent growth. **Financial and Grant Stewardship** Strengthen financial controls and reporting to enhance transparency, sustainability, and Board confidence. · Establish a structured grant and philanthropy management system with ringfenced budgeting and reporting. **Objectives** Streamline donor management systems for improved transparency and auditability. Risk Management, Governance, and Quality Assurance Implement a Risk Management Framework, including a Board-approved Risk Appetite Statement and operational Risk Register. Require Board-approved business cases for all significant growth investments. Initiate phased implementation of a Quality Management System (QMS) covering clinical service quality, client experience, and Inclusion Works consistency. · Capacity reports, workforce escalation processes formalised. · Financial reporting templates enhanced; grant management system operational. · Donor management streamlined and auditable. **Outputs** • Board-approved Risk Appetite Statement and operational Risk Register active. Business case approval frameworks in place. · QMS Phase 1 implementation initiated. · Operational scalability frameworks and initial cost savings achieved Operational, financial, and risk systems strengthened to support future service growth with quality assurance foundations established. **Impact Operational and Workforce Growth** • Double Early Intervention and School-Age client service hours through scalable operational models. • Expand operational support frameworks to Inclusion Works programs.

#### **Objectives**

- Refine and modernise HR systems to ensure workforce sustainability and alignment with strategic growth.

#### **Financial and Grant Growth Readiness**

- · Maintain strengthened financial oversight, including tracking of new grants and growth initiatives.
- Implement grant management reporting to inform future philanthropic funding strategies.

#### Risk, Governance, and Quality Scaling

- Complete business case development for new centre/hub, incorporating financial, risk, and operational sustainability assessments.
- Expand Quality Management System (QMS) across all services and implement the first round of quality audits.

#### **Outputs**

- EI and School-Age services expanded through operational scaling.
- Expanded operational support for Inclusion Works programs.
- · Strategic workforce plans integrated with service growth.
- Business case for new centre/hub completed and Board approved.
- Quality audits operational across priority service areas.

#### **Impact**

Organisational and financial capacity expanded to enable disciplined service growth and prepare for new centre/hub establishment.

#### **Operational Delivery and Workforce Sustainability**

- Establish and operationalise the first new service centre/hub in line with Board-approved business case
- Maintain workforce capacity and operational consistency during service scaling.

#### **Objectives**

#### **Financial Alignment and Investment Stewardship**

- Maintain financial discipline across all expanded operations, ensuring budget adherence and sustainability targets are met.
- Conduct annual review of investment strategies, financial performance, and grant compliance.

#### Risk, Quality, and Governance Maturity

- Fully embed Quality Management System (QMS) with continuous improvement loops operational across all services.
- Monitor and report on risk appetite adherence across all new and existing services to Board.

#### **Outputs**

- New service centre/hub operational.
- Fully embedded QMS across clinical, client experience, and Inclusion Works.
- Growth and financial sustainability plans reviewed and realigned annually.
- · Risk appetite operationalised across all new service areas.

#### **Impact**

Sustainable, scalable service delivery embedded with strong financial and quality governance, and successful operationalisation of new centres.

**Impact** 

# L4LIFE STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028

## **INNOVATION AND STRATEGIC GROWTH**

Strengthen and expand innovation within Early Intervention, School-Age, and Inclusion Works to drive organisational growth and sector leadership.

hear one	Objectives	<ul> <li>Clarify Growth and Innovation Priorities</li> <li>Define strategic innovation and influence goals specific to Early Intervention, School-Age, and Inclusion Works programs.</li> <li>Strengthen data collection, sector scanning, and market insights to inform program improvement and growth.</li> <li>Leverage Networks and Sector Influence</li> <li>Engage with sector networks, government bodies, and thought leaders to position L4Life's services as best practice.</li> <li>Explore feasibility of establishing a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to support scaling Inclusion Works and workforce development.</li> <li>Identify Strategic Growth Opportunities</li> <li>Conduct feasibility studies aligned to Early Intervention and Inclusion Works growth, focusing on geographic and service reach within defined areas.</li> </ul>
	Outputs	<ul> <li>Strategic growth goals documented for Early Intervention, School-Age, and Inclusion Works.</li> <li>Market and sector insights captured to inform strategic planning.</li> <li>RTO feasibility study completed.</li> <li>Feasibility studies identifying priority growth locations within core service areas.</li> </ul>
	Impact	Clear strategic direction set to optimise and expand L4Life's leadership in core service areas, supported by early sector engagement and evidence-informed growth pathways.
year two	Objectives	<ul> <li>Expand Sector Influence and Visibility</li> <li>Promote evidence of program impact to position Early Intervention, School-Age, and Inclusion Works as sector-leading models.         Strengthen Delivery and Workforce Capacity     </li> <li>Pending feasibility, commence RTO registration to support workforce development and program sustainability.</li> <li>Implement improvements to existing service models based on market and client insights. Enhance Strategic Partnerships</li> <li>Strengthen alliances with education, disability, and health sector stakeholders to support program growth and visibility</li> </ul>
	Outputs	<ul> <li>Published program impact summaries and sector-facing communication materials.</li> <li>Service delivery refinements implemented across Early Intervention, School-Age, and Inclusion Works.</li> <li>RTO registration submitted (if viable).</li> <li>New strategic partnerships formalised.</li> </ul>
	Impact	Increased sector leadership, improved service delivery models, and strengthened strategic alliances driving deeper market presence
jear three	Objectives	<ul> <li>Lead Sector Innovation within Core Services</li> <li>Launch targeted campaigns and sector leadership activities promoting Early Intervention, School-Age, and Inclusion Works excellence.</li> <li>Expand Service Reach and Workforce Capacity</li> <li>Launch RTO programs (if registered) to support workforce readiness and sustainable service scaling.</li> <li>Sustain Strategic Influence and Program Impact</li> <li>Embed continuous improvement frameworks across all programs based on data and client outcomes</li> </ul>
	Outputs	<ul> <li>Sector-facing leadership campaigns delivered.</li> <li>RTO operations commenced (if viable), supporting workforce growth.</li> <li>Continuous improvement frameworks operational across core service areas.</li> <li>Growth into new geographic locations completed in priority areas.</li> </ul>

L4Life recognised as a sector leader in Early Intervention, School-Age Autism Services, and Inclusive Education through Inclusion Works,

with sustainable growth built on innovation and strategic influence.

#### **COMMUNITY, PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Build a resilient network of partners, donors, and stakeholders by deepening engagement, demonstrating impact, and aligning support for L4Life's mission and goals.

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#### **Develop Strategic Engagement Frameworks**

Develop a Strategic Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plan to guide all community, donor, and partner activities.

#### **Objectives**

#### **Enhance Community Visibility and Engagement**

- Implement community engagement plans and event schedules informed by the stakeholder strategy.
- Launch visibility campaigns to build recognition and trust.

#### **Strengthen Donor Management and Transparency**

Update donor management systems to track contributions and improve transparency with clear impact reporting

## **Outputs**

- Strategic Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plan developed and approved.
- Community engagement initiatives launched, driving increased stakeholder participation and visibility.
- Tailored donor engagement materials designed and deployed.
- Visibility campaign metrics and evaluation tools operational.
- Updated donor management system with impact reporting functionality

#### **Impact**

Foundations established for strategic, coordinated community and donor engagement, improving trust, visibility, and future fundraising success.

## **Objectives**

#### **Strengthen Strategic Partnerships and Alliances**

• Expand on Year 1 stakeholder engagement plans to build deeper partnerships and shared initiatives.

#### **Cultivate Long-Term Donor Relationships**

Enhance donor stewardship strategies with personalised engagement and recognition pathways.

#### **Leverage Organisational Impact for Advocacy**

Use program impact stories and outcomes to advocate for philanthropic support and community visibility

#### **Outputs**

- Expanded partnership agreements and joint community initiatives.
- Tailored long-term donor engagement and recognition programs operational.
- Advocacy materials developed showcasing program success stories to stakeholders and donors.
- Stakeholder feedback integrated into updates of engagement strategy

#### **Impact**

Deeper relationships with community and donors, strengthened organisational credibility, and a growing base of philanthropic support.

#### **Expand and Innovate Fundraising and Engagement Models**

• Launch new and diversified fundraising models based on data and emerging donor and community trends.

#### **Objectives**

#### **Consolidate Community Networks**

• Strengthen existing relationships and expand networks supporting L4Life's mission and goals.

#### **Demonstrate Impact and Steward Community Trust**

Publish annual community and donor impact reports, highlighting successes and driving further engagement.

## **Outputs**

- New fundraising initiatives and digital campaigns with performance analytics launched.
- Comprehensive community impact assessment and report published.
- Annual philanthropic growth and outcomes report shared with stakeholders.
- Updated strategic stakeholder engagement framework based on outcomes and new opportunities.

#### **Impact**

A resilient, sustainable community and donor network driving L4Life's strategic growth, program delivery, and future innovation



