

ANNUAL REPORT

2024/25



LearningforLife
AUTISM CENTRE INC

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Learning for Life Autism Centre (L4Life) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Diversity and Inclusion

We support diversity and inclusion, and we have zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment because of neurodiversity, race, colour, age, religion, sex, national origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, veteran, military or marital status, genetic information or any other protected status. We are committed to the safety and well-being of children and have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Language use

We recognise that there is no single “correct” way to refer to autism or to autistic people. Preferences vary across the autistic community, among families, and between individuals. Some people prefer identity-affirming language such as autistic child, while others prefer person-first language such as child with autism or child on the autism spectrum. Both forms are widely used across research, advocacy, and clinical practice.

Our commitment is to respect each person’s stated preference in individual and family communications. Where this Annual Report refers to groups more broadly, it is not always possible to reflect every preference. For this reason, we use both identity-first and person-first language interchangeably throughout the report, with the intention of being inclusive, respectful, and aligned with best-practice principles that honour individual identity and choice.

ABOUT L4LIFE

The Learning for Life Autism Centre (L4Life) was established in 2004 as a not-for-profit organisation to address the inequity in access to best practice early intervention programs for autistic children in Victoria, Australia. We support autistic and other neurodivergent children to develop skills that promote independence and choice.

Our Vision

A world where all autistic and other 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 other 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 other 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



The Learning for Life Autism Centre Inc. is a registered NDIS provider. NDIS Registration ID: 4-GQXRBAH



Nici Godsman, Mary Muirhead OAM, Melanie Cook

FROM OUR CO-CHAIRS

Chapter Two of L4Life began in earnest with the appointment of Nicci Godsmann as CEO in June 2024. Under her leadership, our integral service and workforce have evolved further, meeting the ever-changing needs of families, schools, and funding landscape.

In addition, we welcomed a change in Board leadership with the appointment of Melanie Cook as Co-Chair – we truly believe our complementary skills have strengthened our governance and teamwork.

We celebrated our 20th anniversary with two major Village events: our gala fundraiser and 20th birthday celebration, *When I Grow Up*, at the iconic Palais Theatre in St Kilda, and our inaugural Giving Day. We express our heartfelt thanks to Working Dog and friends for giving us such a joyful and memorable birthday gift – it truly was a night to remember. Our inaugural Giving Day was another remarkable opportunity for our Village to rally together – and so they did, far and wide - with all contributions from our Village donors tripled by our matching partners. This all fuelled our ability to dream big as we moved into the first phase of our next 20-year chapter.

The NDIS has continued to feature prominently in national conversations. The May 2025 Federal Election saw new Ministers appointed to drive much-needed reforms aimed at ensuring the Scheme's long-term sustainability. These changes will see the implementation of the planned foundation supports model put into place (now known as Thriving Kids program). Given that this is still a work in progress there is deep concern about what this means for autistic and neurodivergent children who no longer qualify for NDIS without a clear line of sight of how Thriving Kids will enable essential and continuous support for our children's ongoing needs.

Families and their neurodivergent children thrive on structure and predictability, yet the combination of government funding model changes as well as the constant flux in areas of education, disability, health and the charity sector creates high anxiety and burden. L4Life has had to dig deep and pivot substantially to fight for

the organisation's survival while trying to buffer the impact on families. We have been striving to do this through our strategic goals of increasing the number of families we support, scaling up in school & pre-school programs and increased charitable giving.

While our programs, management systems, and fundraising approaches continue to evolve, our focus is unwavering: providing individualised, evidence-based supports; working alongside families with empathy, clarity and care; ensuring children receive the right and timely supports, regardless of NDIS eligibility or financial barriers. In addition, our 2025–2028 Strategic Plan focuses on building capacity in schools and expanding the Inclusion Works® program into early-years settings – this will extend our reach and deepen our impact during children's formative stages.

Thank you to all members of the Board for their wholehearted engagement and flexibility through change this year. To our dedicated staff – thank you for your professionalism, care, and unwavering support of our families and of each other. And to our entire Village – thank you for celebrating with us, for giving, sharing your talents, spreading the word, taking part in our programs, and advocating for children today and for the generations to come. Together, we help children write their own stories:

*Just because you find that life's not fair, it
Doesn't mean that you just have to grin and bear it.
If you always take it on the chin and wear it,
Nothing will change.
Just because I find myself in this story,
It doesn't mean that everything is written for me.
If I think the ending is fixed already,
I might as well be saying
I think that it's OK -
And that's not right!*

"When I Grow Up" - Matilda the Musical

Mary Muirhead OAM & Melanie Cook

CEO REPORT

Having now completed my first full year with L4Life, I'm proud to reflect on all we've accomplished together. This report highlights a year of purposeful change, strengthened partnerships, and shared success – achievements made possible by the dedication and heart of our L4Life Village.

This past year has been one of purposeful transition – a deliberate process of strengthening our foundations and preparing for sustainable growth. We've reshaped our structure, systems, and strategy to deliver our mission with renewed clarity and confidence.

A key milestone in that journey was the launch of our 2025–2028 Strategic Plan, co-created with our Board and senior leadership staff. It provides a clear map for how we grow with purpose, guided by five pillars: Building Talent & Leadership; Expanding Service & Client Experience; Community Partnerships & Stakeholder Engagement; Innovation & Growth; and Operational Excellence & Sustainability. The plan now anchors how we make decisions, invest, and measure success. It can be found on our home page: www.learningforlife.com.au.

Together this year we:

- returned to break-even in FY25, powered by community generosity through When I Grow Up and our inaugural Giving Day;
- achieved an NDIS recertification audit with no non-conformances;
- modernised core systems – introducing Echidna (CRM) and Employment Hero (HR) and streamlining SharePoint for better accessibility and storage; and
- positioned Inclusion Works® as a flagship program for inclusive education across schools and early-years settings.

Most importantly, through all this change we kept services steady across Early Intervention, School-Age Consultancy, Social Skills, Positive Behaviour Supports and Inclusion Works®, ensuring that every child and family continued to receive the support they rely on, without interruption or compromise.

I'd like to share a moment that captures our year; a young client in our Early Intervention program, who once hesitated to join group time, stood proudly to lead a learning activity. Peers across year levels followed his cues and celebrated his success. In that small moment, relationships, therapy, family commitment, and trust came together. Growth didn't just happen to him, it happened through him. That's the essence of our work: making growth safe, empowering, and lasting.

At every stage of our transformation, the L4Life team has shown remarkable adaptability and care - proof that progress and compassion can sit side by side. I'm extremely proud of what our staff and leadership team have achieved this year, and thank them for their unwavering commitment to the work they do and for their positive energy. I am grateful to the Board for their steady guidance and belief in our direction, and thank them for being with me and the team on this Chapter Two journey. To our families, donors, and partners – thank you for the trust you place in us. Your support allows us to do what matters most: give children the chance to learn, grow, and belong.

System reforms continue to create challenges for many families, but our role remains clear: to provide stability and advocacy through change. By holding steady and focusing on what we can control, we help families be confident with what lies ahead and ensure that every child continues to have the opportunity to thrive.

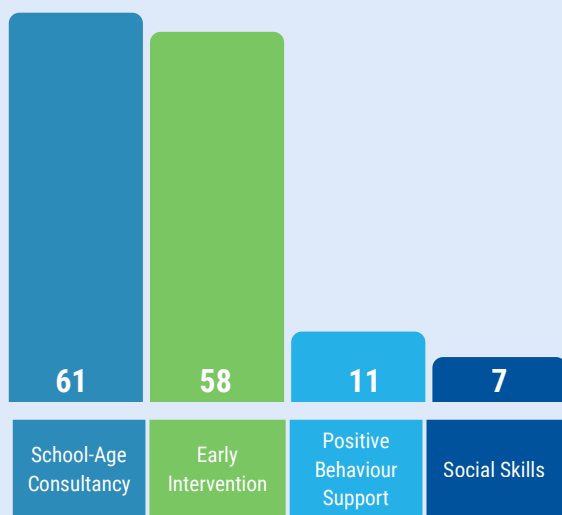
Looking ahead, we move from transition to momentum – expanding our reach in Early Intervention by 30 per cent, strengthening Inclusion Works® across more schools and early-years centres, and deepening our philanthropic partnerships to sustain equitable access. With strong relationships, clear direction, and a united team, we are ready for the next stage of impact – turning a year of transition into a future built on purpose and possibility.

Nicci Godsman, CEO

OUR IMPACT

Our Children

NO OF CHILDREN PER
L4LIFE SERVICE*:



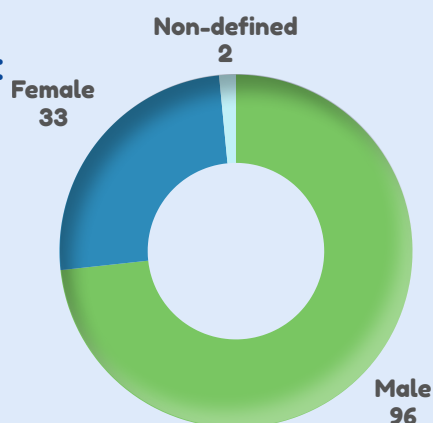
*Some children use more than one service



131

Children received at
least one direct
L4Life service

GENDER:



Our Families



54

Families received a
L4Life subsidy



130

Families received a
direct L4Life service



39

L4Life families speak a
Language other than
English at home

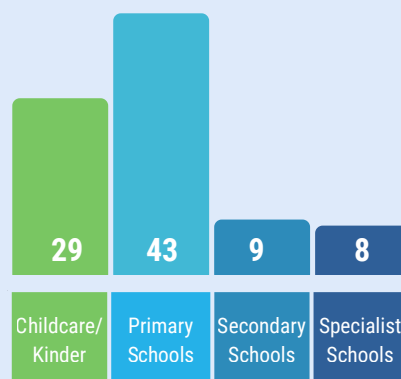
Education Services



89

Educational settings
where L4Life services
were delivered

BREAKDOWN OF
EDUCATIONAL
SETTINGS:





THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT

Starting Early Together

When Sonia's three-year-old child, Freya, received an autism diagnosis, she faced a six-month wait between applying for NDIS funding and receiving approval. Those months felt crucial. "We wanted early support for Freya," Sonia said, "but we weren't sure how we could start without funding in place."

A friend recommended Learning for Life Autism Centre (L4Life). After doing some research, Sonia discovered that L4Life could provide support in her area through a Clinical Consultant and a Therapy Assistant. Even better, the first meeting was obligation-free. "Someone from L4Life came to our home, met Freya, and talked us through what funding and planning might be needed to get started, including how to apply for a subsidy while we waited for our NDIS plan to be approved," she said.

While waiting for NDIS approval, Sonia's family received tailored guidance from L4Life's team and qualified for financial assistance through L4Life's Fair Access Program – an initiative supported by philanthropic donations to help families start services sooner. "It was such a relief. We could start straight away and didn't have to navigate everything on our own."

Working with Freya's Clinical Consultant, a set of learning goals that reflected Freya's learning priorities and interests was developed. "We wanted to focus on speech and socialisation," she said, "and our consultant suggested goals around building independence and confidence – like learning to ride a bike."

Sonia chose L4Life's Early Intervention Full-Service Model, which provides a dedicated team led by a Clinical Consultant and supported by trained Therapy Assistants. Together, they ensure the program is implemented consistently across home, kindergarten, and community settings.

L4Life also provided training for Sonia, her family and Freya's preschool staff in key strategies, helping everyone work together. "The training means we're all using the same approaches - it feels like we're part of one team supporting our child."

Reflecting on her family's experience, Sonia shared:

"Having the support of L4Life feels like we're not doing this on our own anymore – Freya's got a team right there with her every step of the way."

For more than 20 years, L4Life has been guided by the simple belief that no child or family should miss out on high-quality, evidence-based support because of financial circumstances. Working alongside families, educators, and communities, L4Life helps create environments where children feel included, confident, and supported in the places they live, learn, and play. Philanthropic giving makes this possible ensuring children like Freya can access the support they need, when they need it most.

Note: Name, image and details have been changed for privacy.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Service Delivery

FY25 was a year of strategic evolution across L4Life's clinical programs – strengthening our systems, expanding our expertise, and ensuring every change directly enhanced the quality and continuity of services for the children and families we support.

Our focus throughout the year remained clear: to deliver best-practice, evidence-based therapy while adapting to changes across the disability and education landscape. We invested in staff development, refined processes, and ensured that children continued to receive high-quality supports during a period of broader sector uncertainty.

Across each of our key programs – Early Intervention, School-Age Consultancy, Social Skills, Positive Behaviour Supports and Inclusion Works® – and within the evolving NDIS environment, our focus remained the same: strengthening practice and maintaining consistency for families.

Early Intervention

This year marked a major step forward in strengthening our Early Intervention program. All L4Life Early Childhood Clinical Consultants undertook the process to become NDIS registered Behaviour Support Practitioners, supported by a structured training program and ongoing supervision. This investment ensures that our youngest learners receive coordinated and consistent care, underpinned by evidence-based behavioural practice.

We also developed new resources and processes to deliver high-quality behaviour support for children who require it as part of their early intervention plans. These developments not only expand our capability but also align with shifts in NDIS plan design, where behaviour support is increasingly recognised as a core element of developmental support.

School-Age Consultancy

As children move through school, the need for consistent, individualised support remains critical. Our School-Age Consultancy program continued to provide one-on-one guidance for children and young people across their primary and secondary years – supporting learning, participation, and confidence in the environments where they spend most of their time.

Working alongside families, the young person, teachers, and education support staff, our consultants helped build the bridge between therapy and classroom practice. Sessions focus on practical strategies that foster communication, social interaction, and independence, while strengthening the child's ability to thrive within their school and wider community.

Through FY25, demand for consultancy support remained steady, with families and schools valuing the flexibility and collaboration that sit at the heart of this service. The program has continued to evolve toward a more integrated model, where consultants, educators, and families work together around shared goals – ensuring consistent, positive experiences for children across all settings.

Social Skills

Our Social Skills programs continued to evolve to meet the changing needs of school-age children. In addition to our Secret Agency Society offering (for 8-12 year olds) our Allied Health team designed a bespoke Social Skills program for children 6–9 years old. The program, finalised during the second half of FY25, will commence its first pilot group in early FY26. This refreshed model reflects our commitment to innovation: ensuring every child can access learning experiences that build confidence, social connection, and emotional understanding in ways that are age-appropriate and engaging.

Inclusion Works®

The end of 2024 marked the completion of program delivery for our Inclusion Works® PhD project - a multi-year collaboration with Monash University, led by Sarah Wood, that continues to shape and validate the full Inclusion Works® model. Analysis of the data is underway and will inform refinements across the program.

During the year, we welcomed a new school to our private Inclusion Works® program and redirected resources toward developing an Inclusion Works® Early Years model, planned for launch in 2026. This expansion reflects our strategic priority to strengthen inclusive practices from the earliest stages of education – empowering educators, children, and families to create learning environments where every child learns and belongs.

NDIS

With most L4Life families accessing services through the NDIS, system changes have an immediate and direct impact on how we plan and deliver support. In FY25, families experienced increasing delays in both NDIS access decisions and review outcomes, often creating periods of uncertainty while awaiting plan approvals or reviews.

To maintain service continuity, L4Life provided short-term financial supports through our Fair Access program, ensuring children could continue early intervention without disruption.

Our focus remained on support, transparency, and reassurance – walking alongside families as they navigated evolving processes and providing stability when systems around them were shifting.

Looking Ahead

The year ahead will see our focus shift from transition to momentum. Building on stronger systems and a skilled, connected team, our priority is to expand service reach, deepen school partnerships, and embed inclusive practices that endure beyond individual programs.

We know families continue to face uncertainty – not only within the NDIS but across education and community systems. These pressures are real, and they shape the everyday experiences of the children we

support. L4Life's response remains clear: to provide stability and trusted guidance amid that change, ensuring children continue to access the supports they need when they need them most.

As we move into FY26, our direction is steady and our purpose shared – to grow our impact where it matters most: in the lives of children and families who rely on us, and in the schools, kinders and communities that make inclusion possible.

Village Engagement

Staying connected with our Village remains central to how we work. This year, we strengthened these connections through key community events and sector engagement, including When I Grow Up, Giving Day, and Run Melbourne; attendance and presentations at the Association for Behaviour Analysis Australia (ABAA) Conference; participation in the Source Disability Expo to connect with families; and contribution to the Boroondara Community Planning Day and co-design project with autistic young people aged 15–25.

Sharing knowledge within the sector and broader community continues to be a key priority. At the ABAA Conference, Sarah Wood and Claire Birrell presented on Ethical ABA in the Context of Learning for Life, highlighting how our approach has adapted to meet the needs of autistic and neurodivergent children over the 20 years of operation. In April, as part of World Autism Awareness Month, our Head of Early Intervention, Claire Birrell, was invited to speak with the Bega Group team about autism, the importance of inclusivity in the workplace, and the impact of our services.



Claire Birrell (left) presents to the Bega Group in April



Hugo representing L4Life at Run Melbourne 2024

At the start of 2025, we welcomed students from Rossbourne School to our Centre as part of their community service program. Each week, the senior students worked onsite to revitalise the Centre's garden and assist with various projects on site. The partnership provided meaningful opportunities for students to engage with our team and contribute to a shared community initiative.

These opportunities allowed us to celebrate community, share expertise, and reach new families.

Hugo: From Early Learner to L4Life Ambassador

A special thank you to Hugo, a L4Life graduate who served as ambassador for both our Run Melbourne and Giving Day campaigns in 2024.

Hugo joined L4Life at age three and is now in his final years of secondary school. His family credits L4Life's early support and guidance with setting him up for a positive learning journey.

Hugo has many interests. He has competed in triathlons and national swimming competitions, and he's currently focusing on other passions, including movie-making and art.

Hugo is also committed to challenging stereotypes about autism, encouraging others to see people for who they are, not as labels.

As an ambassador, he combined his love of sport with his advocacy, helping raise funds and awareness so more young people can access the support they need.

"Each autistic person is an individual and has different traits, personalities and challenges and I would like to normalise these differences."

Hugo

Quality and Compliance

In October 2024, we successfully completed our first full NDIS recertification audit – a significant organisational milestone that reflected not only compliance but maturity in our governance and clinical systems. The audit resulted in no non-conformances, confirming that L4Life's policies, training, and quality assurance processes meet the NDIS Practice Standards.

Led by Emma Miller (Clinical Director) and supported by Krishani Dave (Executive Support and Governance Officer), the audit process strengthened our internal capability for continuous improvement, data management, and incident review.

The auditors commended L4Life's clinical supervision framework, safeguarding policies, and family-centred approach, recognising a strong culture of accountability and reflective practice.

Building on this foundation, FY26 will see the introduction of an updated internal audit cycle aligned with the NDIS Commission's 2025 standards review to ensure we continue to anticipate change and maintain excellence across service delivery and governance.

Administrative, Finance and IT Systems

Investments in technology and systems continued through FY25, laying stronger foundations for efficiency and communication across teams. The rollout of Echidna and Employment Hero platforms, the upgrade of our phone system, and the provision of iPads and emails to all Therapy Assistants have improved information flow, documentation, and connectivity across programs.

In parallel, we progressed the development of a more structured financial reporting framework to support clearer oversight and decision-making. Regular reporting at both Board and Senior Management levels has strengthened transparency and shared accountability, while also highlighting where further system refinement is needed. These steps position L4Life for greater financial clarity and consistency as new structures and roles continue to bed down in FY26.

Accessibility

Our Fair Access program received a significant boost this year, supported by funds raised through our *When I Grow Up* gala and Giving Day. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the program – and our ability to provide subsidies for families who may otherwise be unable to access services – we strengthened its structure. Clearer evaluation and enrolment procedures and improved transparency around fund allocation have enabled better planning and ensured subsidies are used to their greatest benefit.

We also redeveloped our client term report templates to make them more accessible and meaningful for families. The new format captures both children's and parents' goals, providing a clearer picture of progress and shared achievements.

To further improve accessibility for our broader community, we enhanced the design and functionality of our website. Updates included improved colour contrast for readability and the introduction of a Google Translate feature, allowing multicultural families to easily access information about our services, programs, and policies. Feedback on these updates has been overwhelmingly positive and set the scene for further developments in accessibility features in both our recruitment and onboarding materials.

Our Research and Consultation

Our clinical staff continue to collaborate with research institutions, government bodies, universities, and sector partners to ensure L4Life contributes to the conversations shaping outcomes for autistic and neurodivergent children and their families.

Our research continues to focus on inclusive education and the impact of in-service training for educators through the Inclusion Works® PhD project, together with Monash University.

Our partnership with La Trobe University – conducting a three-part study exploring the experiences of Chinese and South Asian families of autistic children, along with the professionals who support them – submitted their final paper for publishing at the end of FY2025.



Consultation

We engaged the following consultation projects in the 24/25 financial year:

- **Review of Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention facilitated by PRECI** (Professionals and Researchers in Early Childhood Intervention) – Emma Miller
- **Intensive Early Intervention Special Interest Group** (Association for Behaviour Analysis Australia) – Emma Miller
- **Association of Behavioural Analysts Australia (ABAA) Ethics Committee** – Claire Birrell
- **School Refusal Advisory Group** (Deakin University) – Sarah Wood
- **Boroondara Community Disability Advisory Committee** – Emma Miller
- **Boroondara Stakeholder Health Forum** – Nicci Godsman, Fleur Haberfield
- **Co-design with Boroondara Council**, engaging and facilitating workshops with young autistic people – Tiff Poljakovic (pictured)
- **Kooyong NDIS Advisory Group** - Sarah Wood

Inclusive Co-design in Action

Clinical Consultant and Head of Therapy Assistants, Tiff Poljakovic, worked with Boroondara Council on their community-led co-design initiative. Over three sessions across May and June, Tiff facilitated a group of autistic young people aged 15 – 25 to brainstorm, share ideas, and design an event that they would love to attend themselves.

The result was a Special Interest Trivia Night – a fun, relaxed and sensory-friendly event designed entirely by and for autistic young people aged 15-25 to be held in August 2025.

"It was such a wonderful experience to be part of the co-design project with Boroondara Council. Each planning meeting was filled with such passion and creativity from every young person involved, and I am so happy that I could help in my small way! There were so many ideas for the event that came from listening to everyone's values and passions, and I think the resulting Special Interest Trivia Night is wonderfully reflective of all of these things."

Tiff Poljakovic, Head of Therapy Assistants

Our Fundraising

The 2024/2025 financial year marked a year when renewed strategy, improved systems, and community support came together to deliver sustainable growth.

Across the year, \$1.03 million was raised from more than 350 supporters, donors, and philanthropic funders, reinforcing confidence in L4Life's mission to ensure no child is turned away from the supports they need.

Our Donor and Philanthropy Mix

Diversity of income remained a defining feature of L4Life's funding base. Grants from philanthropic trusts and foundations, together with gifts from private ancillary funds, represented more than half of total funds raised - underpinning essential programs and subsidies for families facing barriers to access..

Individual giving strengthened significantly through Giving Day, regular donations, and appeals, accounting for around 85% of donors. This reflects the reach of L4Life's multi-channel approach, combining philanthropy, digital engagement, and community fundraising to build a resilient and balanced portfolio.

Strategic and Structural Progress

This year also marked an important step in strengthening our internal fundraising capacity, with a dedicated fundraising management role established in January 2025. Janet Harris, who joined us in the role, brings more than three decades of experience in philanthropy and a genuine commitment to strengthening L4Life's mission.

"I believe fundraising is essentially about creating opportunities. I joined L4Life because the impact here is so tangible – every donation strengthens the path for a child to learn, grow, and feel included. I was also drawn to the passion of the staff and our CEO; their commitment to children and families is truly inspiring."

Janet Harris, Philanthropy Manager

Working with the Board and CEO, L4Life refreshed its Vision, Purpose, and Mission statements, providing a strong foundation for engagement and clearer alignment with funders. A medium-term fundraising strategy was developed to guide growth, set financial targets, and enhance donor retention. Ongoing investment in data systems and reporting improved accuracy, segmentation, and transparency. Together, these developments ensure that fundraising at L4Life is guided by sound governance, clear data, and shared accountability.

Community and Philanthropic Support

Every figure in this report represents real impact for children and families – and trust. Donors and philanthropic supporters place that trust in L4Life to steward contributions responsibly and deliver measurable outcomes.

Philanthropic funding in 2024/25 sustained key programs across early intervention, allied health, family support, and the continued expansion of Inclusion Works®. Flexible support allowed us to meet emerging needs, subsidise families awaiting NDIS approval, and invest in staff development and evaluation.

The results achieved this year are more than financial: they reflect the alignment of families, donors, and staff around shared values and purpose.

Governance and Accountability

Strong governance underpinned all activity. The Fundraising Sub-Committee, reporting to the Board, maintained oversight of performance and risk, ensuring alignment with organisational goals and Fundraising Institute of Australia (FIA) principles. Documentation and workflows for grant management were strengthened, reinforcing our commitment to integrity, accountability, and impact measurement.

Looking Ahead

As we enter FY26, our focus shifts to consolidation and growth – expanding donor stewardship, workplace giving, and gifts in wills. While the environment remains competitive, L4Life's foundation is strong, built on shared purpose and the enduring commitment to ensure every child can access the support they need, regardless of circumstance.



Natalie (L4Life Board), Estelle (Charidy) and Hugo (Ambassador) on Giving Day

Highlights and Outcomes

This year's fundraising results reflected both the strength of long-standing relationships and the success of new initiatives that broadened community engagement.

Our 20th anniversary event, *When I Grow Up*, produced by Working Dog Productions and held at Melbourne's Palais Theatre, brought together nearly 3,000 guests and raised \$315,000 – celebrating two decades of impact and collaboration, and our Village in action. The event was made possible through the generous support of Working Dog Productions, contributing an extraordinary level of in-kind support through the production of the show. We are also deeply grateful to the performers – Tom Gleisner, Sam Pang, Kitty Flanagan, Andy Lee, Celia Pacquola and Katie Weston – who generously gave their time and talent to bring the evening to life.

In October 2024, L4Life hosted its first Giving Day, testing a matched-giving model that exceeded expectations. The campaign raised \$220,000 and welcomed many new supporters, demonstrating the power of collective giving and the shared commitment to equitable access to autism support.

The Run Melbourne team once again carried the L4Life flag high, continuing our proud tradition of community fundraising that brings together families, alumni, and staff. Together, we reached our goal of \$20,000 - a wonderful celebration of our milestone year.

A special thank you goes to L4Life alumni, Hugo, who served as ambassador for both our Run Melbourne and Giving Day campaigns. Hugo and his family are a testament to the lasting relationships we build with our L4Life families and the enduring impact of our programs.

"Community Bank Inner East has enjoyed a longstanding partnership with Learning for Life. Learning for Life's commitment to supporting autistic and neurodiverse children in their educational journeys closely aligns with our mission to foster strong and resilient communities. Through our grants and sponsorship program, we have contributed nearly \$10 million to our local community through initiatives like this. We take pride in our support for Learning for Life and are excited to continue this partnership for many years ahead."

Nick Coker, Chief Executive Officer, Community Bank Inner East
Major Sponsor of When I Grow Up Charity Gala



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

At L4Life, our work is made possible by the generosity of our community. To those who give, support our events, spread the word, and share our values – you are part of our 'Village'. Your commitment allows us to deliver evidence-based, child-focused services that build skills, confidence, and inclusion for autistic and neurodivergent children. While we cannot name everyone, we are deeply grateful and would like to acknowledge the following:

Trusts and Foundations

- Anonymous
- 5Point Foundation
- The Baker Foundation
- A and C Cross Foundation
- The Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation
- Ducas Paul Foundation
- Equity Trustees
- GivingForce Foundation
- The Grace & Emilio Foundation
- H and L Hecht Trust
- Igniting Change Foundation
- The Laby Foundation
- The John & Betty Laidlaw Legacy
- Matsarol Foundation Pty Ltd
- Lesley McMullin Foundation
- Mutual Trust Pty Ltd
- The Samuel Nissen Foundation
- The Sharman Foundation
- Phil Taylor Foundation
- Wemac Endowment - Perpetual Trustees

Organisations

- Bega Group
- City of Port Phillip
- Gembridge
- Inner East Community Finance Ltd (Bendigo Bank)
- Lander and Rogers
- Learning Republic
- Lucas Dental Care
- Pallet Logistics Pty Ltd
- Pitcher Partners Advisors Proprietary Limited
- Pressroom Philanthropy
- Spectrumcare Solutions
- Wilson Pateras
- Working Dog

Individuals

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| • Anonymous | • Dr Matthew Harvey | • Sofie Piessens |
| • Morena Buffon and Santo Cilauro | • Ann Marie and Robert Herten | • Nathaniel Pizmony |
| • Poonam Charan | • Katrina Holmes à Court | • Greg and Lee Ridder |
| • Melanie Cook and Family | • Danielle Jones-Resnick | • Roslyn Rogers |
| • Janet Creaner | • Greg LaManna | • Pam Roy |
| • Christine and Francois Darcas | • Melanie and Ben Larkey | • Dr Amanda Sampson and Dr Lyndon Hale |
| • Naomi Dent | • Esther Lee | • Evelyn and Tom Snow |
| • Barbara Dungavell | • Karen Lee and James Wong | • Lyn and David Sowersby |
| • Georgie Dwyer | • Jacki Macleish | • Kylie Streeter |
| • Jennie Gale | • Therese and Danny McCoppin | • Helga Svendsen |
| • Natalie Gibbs | • Mary Muirhead OAM and Tom Gleisner AO | • The Willink Family |
| • David Gillard | • Mark Naughton | • James Wood |
| • Phil Harrington | • Adriana Pesavento and Sam Pang | |



If you wish to support us via donation, you can do so via the QR Code or at www.learningforlife.com.au/donate

OUR STAFF

Under the leadership of Nicci as CEO, L4Life introduced a refreshed staffing structure and expanded our Senior Management Team. These changes provided clearer reporting lines and strengthened the connection between administrative and clinical functions, ensuring more cohesive and efficient operations.

System upgrades through Employment Hero and Echidna improved administrative efficiency and transparency in human resource practices. These tools also freed clinicians to focus on what matters most – supporting children’s development and family outcomes.

Supporting and investing in our people remained a key focus throughout the year. All staff completed the annual wellbeing questionnaire, structured one-on-one supervision, three-month check-ins, and annual reviews provided consistent guidance and feedback. Every permanent team member – including part-time Therapy Assistants – now receives a professional development allowance, reinforcing L4Life’s commitment to continuous learning and career progression.

We updated our induction and onboarding processes, with a focus on our Therapy Assistants, to improve learning and ensure best practice within our therapy teams. We also invested in training for our administrative staff, introducing Lifeline’s Managing Challenging Interactions and Safe Client Interactions programs to strengthen customer service and client engagement practices.

All staff also completed cyber security training, following a period of simulated ‘phishing’ exercises facilitated by our IT provider, RedIT.

The evolving role of our Chief Happiness Officers (CHOs), Alana and Cassie, and an expanded calendar of team activities have strengthened workplace connection, wellbeing, and morale. They have introduced a program of events that combine social connection, wellbeing, and professional development to foster inclusion, friendship, and healthy workplace practice.

HR consultant Nicole Gozmiel from Frank HR provided invaluable support during a period of significant organisational change, strengthening our workforce planning, recruitment, and people strategies. As the

implementation phase progressed and workloads stabilised, responsibilities transitioned in-house to Krishani Dave, our Executive Support and Governance Officer, who has continued to grow in capability and confidence. Nicole remains engaged in a targeted advisory capacity, ensuring ongoing guidance, quality assurance, and continuity across key HR processes.

We welcomed a new Philanthropy Manager, Janet Harris, to strengthen our philanthropic endeavours. The role focuses on growing funds to support our subsidy program and services, while deepening engagement with our donors and philanthropic partners through thoughtful stewardship and relationship building.

Our Family Support function was integrated into the Clinical team, strengthening sector knowledge while ensuring continuity of support for families. This shift enabled a more coordinated, responsive and client-focused approach to service delivery. Looking ahead, we will recruit a dedicated Business Development and Community Engagement role to deepen our relationships with stakeholders and expand opportunities for collaboration.

At L4Life, we’re committed to supporting staff growth by developing skills and creating clear opportunities for progression within - and beyond - the organisation. At L4Life, we love seeing our people grow and thrive. This year, we celebrated some exciting milestones in our Senior Management Team, with Claire Birrell and Tiff Poljakovich stepping into new leadership roles as Head of Early Intervention and Head of Therapy Assistants, respectively. Well done to both! Krishani Dave was promoted to Executive Support and Governance Officer, and Alana McGrellis moved from Provisional Clinical Consultant to Clinical Consultant. Four of our Senior Therapy Assistants also progressed to Clinical Intern: congratulations Caitlyn, Aaron, Alysha and Rahia.

"Transitioning into a new role with broader responsibilities has been both challenging and rewarding. This year of learning and adapting has deepened my understanding of how we work together towards shared goals. I'm grateful for the opportunity to grow, develop new skills, and contribute more meaningfully to L4Life, strengthening both my confidence and my ability to support our teams."

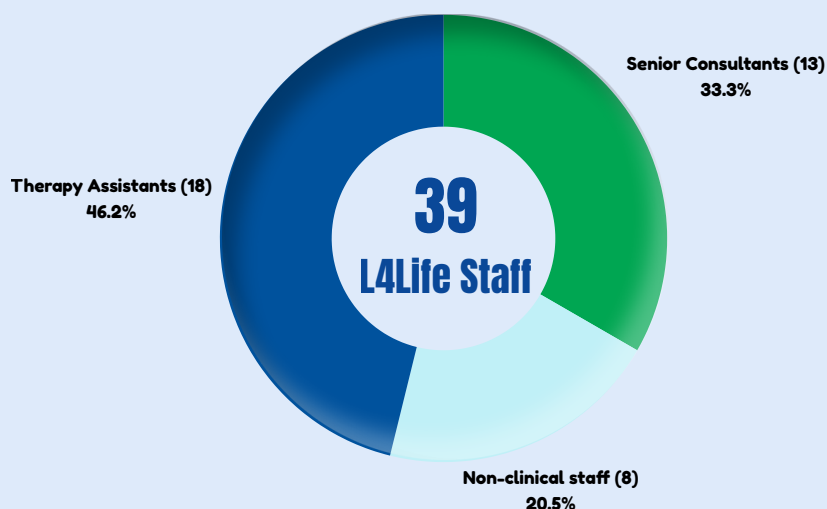
Krishani Dave, Executive Support & Governance Officer



"Being part of the senior leadership team, with access to deeper financial and operational insights, strengthened my understanding of the organisation's broader challenges and priorities. With this visibility, I've been able to engage more effectively in collaborative decision-making and align my team's priorities in ways that support the sustainability of our Early Intervention work."

Claire Birrell, Head of Early Intervention

Staff Statistics



STAFF EMPLOYMENT TYPE:



CLINICAL STAFF QUALIFICATIONS:



*Association for Behaviour Analysis Australia

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

A key milestone in our governance journey this year was farewelling Melanie Larkey after 13 years on the L4Life Board. Mel joined as Treasurer and Board member in 2011 and was pivotal in steering the Board from operational to a modern, professional governance model. Through her various roles, as a Board Member, our pro-bono Executive Officer (prior to the appointment of our first professional CEO), and then as Treasurer, Mel helped L4Life manage a tight budget, achieve NDIS accreditation, and keep the organisation together during the pandemic years.

Mel also passionately ensured that we fulfilled our mission to provide Fair Access via financial subsidies. Mel always carried out her responsibilities with dedication, integrity, compassion, and a sense of humour. Mel's presence and generosity was always there for our families, staff and Village. She opened her house every year for a decade for an end-of-year celebration and always had several tables of guests to every ball and trivia night. She remains an engaged and active member of our Village today, and we are hugely grateful for all she has done over the decades. Thank you for being a L4Life Legend Mel!

This year, Melanie Cook took on the additional responsibility of Co-Chair along with Mary Muirhead. This team complements each other well with a diversification of skills, workload, and is a key part of Board succession planning.

Our focus on succession planning in recent years has led to the establishment of a People and Culture Sub-Committee, strengthening our ability to adapt to changes in Board and executive roles arising from personal circumstances, career transitions and end-of-term movements.

We extend our sincere thanks to Chris Das and Natasha Gupta for their valued service over several years. We also offer a special thank you to Georgie Dwyer for her leadership as Chair of the People and Culture Sub-Committee, and to Gavin Smith for his steady stewardship as Treasurer during key transition periods this past year.

We continued our partnership with the Board Observership Program and greatly valued the



Mary Muirhead, and Mandy Sampson farewell Mel Larkey

engagement of members who join us for a year to share their time and expertise. Our thanks go to Peter Royce for his thoughtful contribution during this period.

This year marked the beginning of our new three-year strategy cycle. We were fortunate to work with experienced governance consultant Helga Svendsen, who facilitated two strategy sessions with the Board and Senior Management in February and March 2025. Helga skilfully balanced ambitious, future-focused thinking with practical considerations, helping us shape a strategy that is both aspirational and achievable. Her energy, encouragement, wisdom and expertise were greatly appreciated.

We established the Future Directions Sub-Committee to guide strategy implementation at Board level and welcomed Kevin Browning, whose background as an education specialist and principal adds valuable insight to the group. Our Risk, Finance, Governance, and Fundraising, Communications & Relationships Sub-Committees continue to guide critical activities across L4Life. We have also folded the Research and Best Practice Sub-Committees into operational functions led by Management to strengthen alignment and efficiency.

We look forward to building on the achievements of the past year as the Board leads L4Life through the opportunities and challenges of NDIS reform and into a sustainable and successful next chapter.

Board of Directors



Mary Muirhead
OAM
Co-Chair



Melanie Cook
Co-Chair



Amanda Sampson
Director



Matt Harvey
Director



Naomi Dent
Acting Treasurer



Natalie Gibbs
Director



Nathaniel Pizmony
Board Observer

Patrons: Tom Gleisner AO; Dr Amanda Sampson

Sub-committees

Future Directions Chair: Mel Cook

People & Culture: Chair: Mel Cook

Risk, Finance & Governance: Chair: Matt Harvey

Fundraising, Communications & Relationships: Chair: Natalie Gibbs

Farewell:

- John Tran (Board Secretary)
- Melanie Larkey Smith (Treasurer 2011-2024)
- Gavin Smith (Treasurer 2024-5)
- Chris Das
- Natasha Gupta
- Georgie Dwyer
- Peter Royce (Board Observer)

Welcome:

- Naomi Dent
- Danielle Jones-Resnik (Board Secretary)
- Nathaniel Pizmony (Board Observer)

Executive Leadership



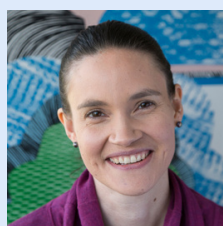
Nicci Godsmann
CEO



Emma Miller
Clinical Director



Fleur Haberfield
Marketing Manager



Sarah Wood
Head of Allied Health



Claire Birrell
Head of Early Intervention

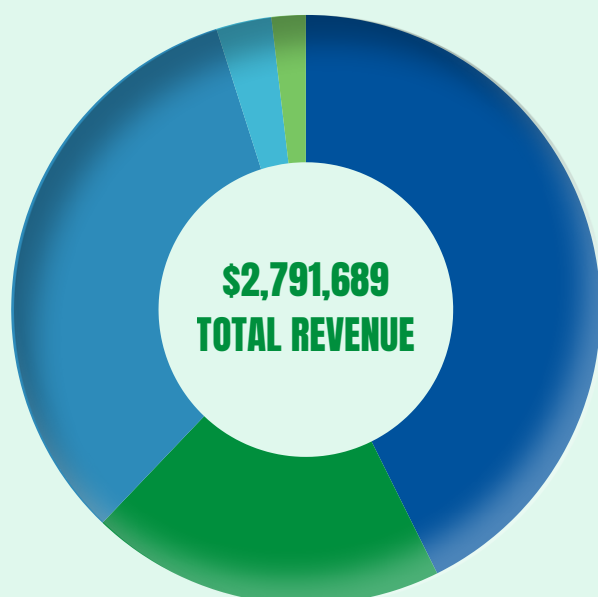


Tiffany Poljakovich
Head of Therapy Assistants








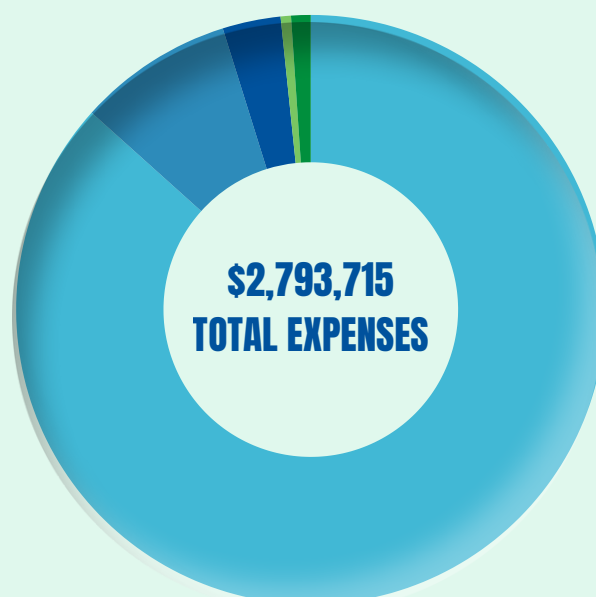
Megan Au-Spreadborough
Finance Manager

FINANCIALS 2024-2025








REVENUE

 EIBI Full Service Model income (net of subsidies)*	\$1,190,563
 Allied health and other related services*	\$543,811
 Grants, donations and events (includes tied grants)	\$920,278
 Endowments and bequests	\$84,738
 Interest Income	52,299



EXPENSES

 Employee benefits expense	\$2,420,741
 Other expenses	\$238,037
 Depreciation and amortisation expense	\$89,176
 Occupancy costs	\$15,817
 Grant and fundraising costs	\$29,944

Note: Revenue categories for FY25 reflect updated accounting treatments under current Australian Accounting Standards. Tied grant income, which was included within Allied Health revenue in FY24, is presented separately under Grants, Donations & Events in FY25.

FINANCIAL REPORT

FY25 was a year defined by greater transparency, strengthened collaboration, and a shared commitment across the Board and management to improving the financial foundations of the organisation. As a result of these efforts, L4Life closed the year with a near break-even result, recording a small deficit of -\$2,026. This outcome reflects both strong fundraising support in our 20th anniversary year, and considerable work invested to correct and strengthen our financial systems.

Total income increased to \$2.79 million. Early Intervention contributed \$1.19 million, Allied Health \$544,000, and philanthropic income – including grants, donations, events and bequests – totalled just over \$1 million, reflecting the depth of community support in our 20th anniversary year.

Philanthropy remained a critical source of stability, enabling us to support families and maintain service continuity during a year of continued sector pressures. Our 20th anniversary year, including the *When I Grow Up* event, materially supported our near break-even outcome. Due to the one-off nature of the anniversary, ongoing work to diversify income streams in an ever-changing environment remains a high priority.

Allied Health service delivery was sustained throughout FY25 (excluding Speech Pathology, which ceased in FY24). A portion of our Allied Health services were funded through grants received in previous years, and the apparent reduction in revenue reflects the reclassification of a significant component of grant-funded activity into Grants & Donations to meet current Australian Accounting Standards.

Expenses totalled \$2.79 million. Staffing continued to represent our largest cost, reflecting the labour-intensive nature of delivering specialised intervention and allied health supports. Other operating costs were managed prudently throughout the year and held within expected levels. Through strengthened monitoring and disciplined financial oversight, the organisation maintained tight control of expenditure in a challenging cost environment.

Building on the improvements implemented in FY24, this year saw further strengthening of our financial governance. Lease accounting processes were refined, and year-end reconciliation and reporting practices were strengthened, reflecting the organisation's commitment to accuracy, transparency, and continuous improvement. Pitcher Partners completed their second year as our independent auditors, with thanks extended for their ongoing support and collaborative approach.

While the overall net result is encouraging, our underlying operating position remains pressured, and our long-term financial position remains fragile. L4Life continues to hold a solid financial base, with \$1.96 million held in cash and term deposits and accumulated funds of approximately \$1.6 million. These reserves give us breathing room and the ability to maintain service continuity, provide subsidies to families in need, and strategically invest in workforce and program development to shift the organisation onto a more stable path.

The broader operating environment remains challenging. Families continue to experience tighter NDIS funding decisions, the organisation is navigating mandated increases in staffing costs, and demand patterns are shifting across service types. At the same time, community need continues to grow, placing greater importance on L4Life's role in providing equitable, high-quality support.

Looking ahead, FY26 begins with renewed clarity and strengthened financial foundations. Our year-end situation positions us well to grow Inclusion Works®, expand our allied health offerings, and continue investing in our workforce, ensuring we remain adaptive, sustainable, and focused on the children and families we are here to support.

Naomi Dent
Treasurer



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The Learning for Life Autism Centre Inc. is a registered NDIS provider.
NDIS Registration ID: 4-GQXRBAH.

