

ANNUAL
REPORT



2024
2025



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Acknowledgement of Country

Australia is a land with a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. Interchange Illawarra celebrates and respects these people as the First Australians. We acknowledge their unique cultural and spiritual relationships with the land and waters as we all strive for respect and equality in disability care.



About Us

Interchange Illawarra is a not for profit, community based, registered NDIS organisation providing quality flexible supports for people with disabilities.

Interchange Illawarra has proudly delivered support to people with disabilities and their families for over 44 years.

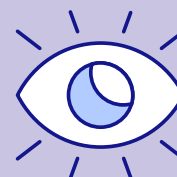
To us, supporting people goes beyond physical wellbeing to include nurturing friendships, discovering new talents and abilities. We are incredibly flexible with our programs to ensure they are always engaging, relevant and enjoyable.

Interchange Illawarra employs over 130 dedicated Support Workers. We support over 245 participants, and their families, but no matter how much we grow we promise that our heart and values will always remain the same.

We have an unwavering commitment to create opportunities for the people who choose us as their provider.

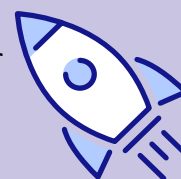
VISION

To support people with disabilities and their carers living meaningful lives.



MISSION

- To partner with and assist people with disabilities and their carers.
- To deliver flexible, high quality support.



OUR VALUES

- Collaboration
- Flexibility
- Innovation
- Reliability
- Respect





Our Services

1

Daily Living Assistance

Offering support to people with disabilities to increase independence in their own homes.

2

Community Inclusion

We offer a choice of assistance during activities, and while pursuing personal interests or goals.

3

Coordination of Supports

Assisting people with disabilities, and their families and carers, to identify goals and aspirations to live a full and meaningful life.

4

Parent/Carer Support

Developing opportunities for parents and carers to participate in the local community, foster relationships and strengthen informal networks.

Management Team



Jake Pearson, Chief Executive Officer

Jake has worked in the disability sector for more than 24 years and has been the CEO of Interchange for over seven years. He holds an MBA, Bachelor of Commerce, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, as well as completing studies in Case Management, Community Services Coordination and the AICD Company Directors training course.

Jake is a committee member on the International Short Breaks Association Board, Director on the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music Board and represents the disability sector in the COORDINAIRE Community Advisory Committee.



Amanda Maslowski, Business Services Manager

Amanda has extensive experience in the banking sector and small business management, particularly with not for profit organisations.

Amanda holds an Advanced Diploma in Accountancy and a Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) and has worked at Interchange Illawarra for over 12 years.



Michael Corby, Social Support Manager

Michael has been involved in disability support for over 23 years, initially as a volunteer and casual Support Worker, while studying for a Degree in Communications.

Michael also holds a Diploma of Community Services Coordination and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. He has a wealth of experience including roles as a Training Coordinator for people with a disability and teaching roles with TAFE Community Services department.



Emma Robinson, Human Resources Manager

Emma has worked in the disability sector for over 16 years starting as a volunteer with Interchange Illawarra's Social Support programs before becoming a casual Support Worker. Emma has worked in various roles within the sector including Team Leader, Case Manager, Support Coordinator and Planner. She has a Diploma in Disability and Community Service Coordination, a Diploma in Human Resources and a Diploma in Leadership and Management.



Tracey Greatz, Practice Lead

Tracey has a Bachelor of Science (Psychology), a Cert IV in Disability Support and has undertaken further studies in Trauma Informed Practice. She has extensive experience in welfare, including working with homeless and disadvantaged youth, as a youth counsellor, and providing early intervention support to children under 8 years of age and their families. Tracey has worked in the disability sector for over 15 years.

Board of Directors



Susan Wallis - Chairperson



David Richardson - Treasurer



Lorraine Diaz - Secretary



John Kennedy - Director



Nathan McEwan - Director



Peter Andrews - Director



Bruce Rowles - Director



Jade Webb - Director



Chairperson's Report

Reflecting on the 2024/25 year at Interchange Illawarra, I once again find myself both proud and humbled. It has been another year of extraordinary change, achievements, and some sadness too.

The most visible milestone was of course our move into the new Head Office in October 2024, which was a long time coming and definitely worth the wait. After 17 years at Kenny Street, leaving felt like the end of an era, but it has been wonderful to see participants, families and staff embracing the new purpose-built and accessible space.

In January 2025, our BestLife Support Program came to life in the downstairs Community Centre, and I cannot overstate the joy of seeing participants and staff connecting daily under one roof on my regular visits to the centre. We celebrated these achievements in April with a Grand Opening of the Wallis Centre, a humbling surprise, attended by Ms Alison Byrnes MP and Mayor of Wollongong Tania Brown as well as former Board Members Colleen Mandicos and Greg Doyle, life member Glenda Pearce, and many of our friends and colleagues from other community and disability organisations across the Illawarra. Most importantly, the people with disabilities and their carers who are at the heart of everything we do were in attendance to give us the seal of approval that matters the most.

This was also a year of transitions. We farewelled Life Member Jan May OAM from our Carers Advisory Committee after more than 40 years of incredible service in Board roles and as the previous Chair for many impactful years. Jan has given so much of herself to Interchange and will stay connected with our organisation, despite stepping away from formal representation.

We also warmly welcomed Jade Webb to the Board, bringing not only her professional expertise including her many years of service on the Carer Advisory Committee, but also her invaluable lived experience as a carer. This move has provided stability and continuity, with the Committee proving to be a valuable conduit to the Board.

The only constant is change, and the disability sector continues to face enormous challenges. One of the most painful impacts for us has been the end of our much-loved supported holiday program due to changes in Short Term Accommodation rules. Like many providers, we have advocated strongly for change, and I am proud of the way our organisation has joined voices with others to make sure participants and families are heard.

Amid these challenges, there has been so much to celebrate. Feedback from our annual surveys was again overwhelmingly positive, affirming that our culture of person-centredness and inclusion remains strong.



We also acknowledged the retirement of one of our longest-serving volunteers, Mauro Antonelli, who after 27 years stepped back from his formal role. Mauro has been at the heart of our Tuesday social support group and countless weekends away. He and his wife Lucy have given so much love and time, and we are grateful he will remain part of our Interchange family.

Carer support has again been a cornerstone of our year. Whether it was a winery tour, a pamper day, or a craft activity, the joy of carers being able to focus on themselves, connect with others, and know they are appreciated, cannot be understated. These moments are made possible not only by our donors but also by the culture of kindness within our organisation. We are proud that, despite this program not attracting any NDIS funding, we continue to make caring for carers a priority, as this is key to the culture of our organisation since its inception.

Nothing we have achieved over the last 12 months would be possible without our dedicated staff, Support Workers, and volunteers. The compassion and professionalism I witness across our organisation fills me with pride. Time and again, our team goes above and beyond for participants and families, and these countless acts of care are what truly define Interchange Illawarra.

To my fellow Directors, I thank you for your commitment, wisdom, and the countless volunteer hours you give. Serving alongside you is a privilege and I am immensely grateful that you choose Interchange Illawarra as your vehicle to use your considerable skills and make a difference to the fabric of our community. With the move to Church Street completed, I hope the next 12 months will be a little quieter, however I know whatever comes, we will continue to work together with people with disabilities at the centre of all of our decision making.

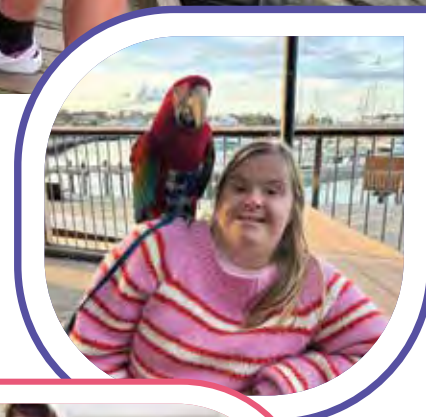


And finally, to the people with disabilities, their families, and their carers, you are the reason we exist. Thank you for trusting Interchange to be part of your lives.

The year ahead will no doubt bring new challenges, but I know that together we are ready.

With our strong culture, shared values, and unwavering purpose, Interchange Illawarra will continue to walk alongside families, helping to create meaningful lives and lasting connections.

Susan Wallis
Chairperson





CEO's Report

A lot can happen in 12 months, and reflecting on the 2024/25 financial year at Interchange Illawarra is testament to this, as it's difficult to know where to start this report!

In October 2024 we completed the development and construction of our new Head Office and Community Centre and managed to completely move in just before the end of the month. After 17 years of calling 81 Kenny Street home, it certainly was a big move, with staff, participants and carers appreciating the space and facilities offered by our new building.

In January 2025 we launched our new BestLife Support Program in the downstairs Community Centre, and seeing the continuity and interactions between participants, support staff and administrative staff on a daily basis, has been incredibly pleasing as the BestLife program grows in popularity.

We held a Grand Opening in April 2025 to celebrate our new building, attended by long time supporter Alison Byrnes MP, Lord Mayor Tania Brown, Life Member Glenda Pearce, Directors past and present and most importantly, people with disabilities and their carers who choose Interchange Illawarra as their trusted support provider.





From a governance perspective, Life Member Jan May OAM retired from our Carers Advisory Committee after more than 40 years involvement with the organisation and has continued to stay connected with the organisation. We welcomed Jade Webb to the Board, and she brings a considerable professional skillset and also a long term connection to the organisation as a service user. Jade has assumed the role of Carer Advisory Committee Chair and has worked with Jan May to ensure the transition was smooth and productive.

Following the release of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with disability in September 2023, the Federal Government finally responded to recommendations in July 2024, accepting 13 of the 22 recommendations in full, and 117 in principle. At the time of writing this report, no action has been undertaken to implement the changes accepted.

We have as an industry however continued to struggle with prices that do not keep up with increases to award wages or CPI, increased compliance and red tape requirements and significant rule changes handed down by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) with little notice and no consultation. Most notable for Interchange were the changes to Short Term Accommodation (STA) supports, limiting the number of nights per year that participants can access, and specifying that STA supports can only occur within a registered STA respite facility. This effectively ended our economical, popular and long term supported holiday program that offered participants the opportunity to explore new places with peers and engage in vicarious learning opportunities in the community. Interchange Illawarra, like many other not for profit organisations, is working with our Illawarra Disability Alliance (IDA) colleagues and National Disability Services (NDA) peak body to lobby the responsible ministers in the hope of explaining the impacts of the independently governed NDIA. These activities included a delegation to meet with Alison Byrnes MP and the Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP- then Minister for Social Services and the NDIS to discuss these and other challenges that registered, not for profit providers are facing.

After more than 25 years of successful operation, our Saturplay program ceased in September 2024. The decision was triggered by declining numbers of children with Autism who had been approved for non therapy based support, and also the unexpected loss of access to the ASPECT South Coast School for Autism. All Saturplay participants were successfully transitioned to 1:1 community based supports.

In early 2025 we engaged with participants/carers and also workers in our annual satisfaction surveys. I'm humbled and delighted to see that our culture of person centredness, commitment to quality and inclusion are viewed as distinguishing features of our organisation and service delivery. This feedback was reinforced by outstanding results in our mid-term NDIS third party verification audit in May. It is pleasing and reassuring to have independent auditors report the same positive characteristics of our service as from our surveys.

From a staffing perspective, we have maintained our commitment to investing in quality training opportunities for all staff. Our annual mandatory training program recognised that well trained and engaged staff are key to high quality, safe and inclusive supports.

Further to our usual training activities, office based staff engaged in an offsite planning day in September 2024. The Business Model Canvas template was used to help develop an enhanced understanding about our customer base, key points of difference, strengths, opportunities and potential threats facing us as we continue to navigate this complex and highly competitive market.

In June, Interchange Illawarra stalwart volunteer Mauro Antonelli decided to retire after 27 years outstanding service to social support participants and their families. Mauro was instrumental in the development and success of our Tuesday social support group, has supported groups, with his wonderful wife Lucy, on hundreds of holidays and weekends away at Evans Street. Mauro is known and loved by many for very good reasons, and I'm comforted to know that he will continue to stay connected to the Interchange family.

During a tumultuous year, we maintained our commitment to carer support, a cornerstone of our overall approach to disability support. We ran a number of activities for carers throughout the year including a winery tour, various luncheons, candle making, and craft activities, all free of charge to carers. These activities enable carers to spend some time on themselves, often engaging in activities that they may not ordinarily do, and connecting with people who also have a caring role.





Partnerships/Networks and Alliances

Working in partnership with other agencies continues to be a priority for Interchange Illawarra. The strength of our well-developed relationships provides the opportunity to support a greater number of people with disabilities to access value added activities, and to foster opportunities for community inclusion initiatives.

We have key partnerships with:

- Illawarra Disability Alliance Members
- Community Industry Group
- Good360 Australia
- Playgroups NSW
- Greenacres Disability Services
- Big Fat Smile
- TAFE Illawarra
- Illawarra Quota Inc.

Donations

Interchange Illawarra is always appreciative of donations received. These valued contributions provide opportunities for people with disabilities, their families, and their carers, which would not be otherwise available. In particular, donations to Interchange fund health and wellbeing activities for carers, as these activities are no longer funded under the NDIS. Interchange Illawarra acknowledges the following donations received throughout the 2024/2025 year:

- Illawarra Quota Inc.
- Henry and Maureen Crawford

Acknowledgements

Throughout the year, various people and organisations work in collaboration with Interchange Illawarra. These relationships are valued by this organisation and are vital to the ongoing support to people with disabilities, their families and carers.

These include:

- Interchange Illawarra Carers Advisory Committee
- Paul Davies from Paul Davies Digital Co.
- Ross Boyd from RB Computing
- The Illawarra Disability Alliance Membership
- Staff of National Disability Insurance Agency and NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission



Small, not for profit organisations, such as Interchange Illawarra, rely on the generous donation of time and expertise from exceptional people. We are incredibly fortunate to have a well-informed, passionate and diverse Board led by Chairperson Susan Wallis that work well to govern the organisation in an effective and professional manner. I value the Boards' direction, shared vision and trust that enable the organisation to turn our mission and values into quality service outcomes.

Our office staff team, being both the Planning and Administration/Finance teams, continue to perform at a very high level under challenging circumstances, helping to ensure the participant and worker experience is a good one at Interchange Illawarra. Being a relatively small team, communication, collaboration and respect are essential, and these are hallmarks of our culture. To Amanda, Michael, Emma, Tracey, Kylie, Brooke, Leanne, Leonie, Ash, Kade, Cat, Sally, Rene, Lui, Jess, Mel and Chloe – I thank you for your continued hard work throughout the year.

Our Support Workers are our lifeblood. Without our skilled, passionate and committed Support Workers there would be no Interchange Illawarra. I can recall dozens of examples of Support Workers going above and beyond the requirements of their roles this year to benefit the participants we serve. This is not the forum to discuss individual circumstances but it's worth noting that these stories not only fill me with pride, but they also continue to fuel my passion for delivering the quality supports we are known for.

Lastly, thank you needs to go to people with disabilities, their families and their carers for sharing their lives, and continuing to choose Interchange Illawarra as their preferred service provider.

No doubt the year ahead will feature unexpected circumstances, regulatory change and challenges that at times feel as large as Mount Everest. I'm comforted to know that our organisation is well placed to take on uncertainty from a cultural, financial and structural perspective and stay focused on our reason for being, to support people with disabilities and their carers to live meaningful lives.

Jake Pearson
CEO