



Workforce

Interchange Illawarra has made strong progress this year in cultivating a positive and engaged workforce through connection and maintaining our positive workplace culture. Engagement with our workforce is at an all time high with our move to the new office. With supports being provided down stairs from our office, this means we can have more face to face communication with our valued workers.

Interchange maintains steady and effective recruitment practices ensuring we have the right people for the right jobs. Recruitment has been ongoing throughout the year based on the needs of our participants. Maintaining lower than industry average turnover with a consistent recruitment pipeline we find ourselves in a great position to provide flexible person centered supports to people with disabilities while utilising the skills of our existing workforce.

Interchange hosted successful morning teas for R U OK? Day and the Cancer Councils Biggest Morning Tea, as well as the annual End of Year party which was a well attended hit! The End of Year party is an opportunity for connection for our whole organisation with participants, families, office staff and Support Workers invited.

As a core part of our commitment to providing highly quality supports, Interchange Illawarra remains committed to ensuring our workforce is highly skilled and we provide ongoing opportunities for training throughout the year. As well as face to face training, we hold an annual paid training campaign which has a 100% completion rate. Our commitment to ongoing training ensures the safety of our workforce and the participants they support.

Our most recent workforce survey showed that 8.4/10 Support Workers felt the training on offer prepared them to do their job safely and 8.5/10 felt the training was relevant to their role.

As an organisation we value the ongoing contributions that our dedicated workforce make and recognise those who have reached significant milestones in service.

These individuals are celebrated at our End of Year party with a certificate and gift card.

This year we celebrated:

- 5 years – 7 staff members
- 10 years – 6 staff members
- 15 years – 2 staff members

Our recognition doesn't stop there, we believe in celebrating wins and often recognise those who go above and beyond within their role.

As we reflect on our achievements, we are excited about the year ahead and the potential for growth within the organisation. We remain committed to growing a workforce that is highly skilled with the resilience to adapt to any new challenges.

It is our workforce, in all roles across our organisation, that contributes to the ongoing success of Interchange Illawarra and we look forward to another great year ahead.

Emma Robinson and Brooke Nigro
Workforce Team

Social Support



It was a busy and productive time for the Interchange Illawarra Social Support Program during the 2024/2025 financial year. After a period of consolidation and refinement during the previous fiscal year, we again looked to offer some new and exciting support options for our participants. This included the development and launch of our brand new BestLife Support program. We also continued to gain new participants for the program through improved marketing strategies and increased participant intake. With much planning and some reallocation of resources we have managed to ensure the continued quality of support for Social Support participants during this period of change, with feedback from participants and families being very positive.

Bookings and attendance at Social Support groups was again very strong. All groups maintained or increased their numbers during the year. The continued offering of transport to and from our groups has certainly contributed to this. After some previous group restructuring in response to identified changes in trends and support needs, the group offerings remained relatively unchanged apart from the addition of the new BestLife Support Program.

The BestLife Support Program is Interchange Illawarra's newest program of supported activities designed for people (18+) with low to moderate support needs. With options from fishing to Zumba, there's something for everyone.

BestLife kicked off in January 2025 and utilises The Wallis Centre, Interchange's new purpose-built centre and office at 114 Church Street, Wollongong. The ground floor area is an excellent fit for BestLife, with a great kitchen for skills building cooking sessions and plenty of room for activities like art, dancing and yoga. We also have technology facilities to conduct training sessions and programs for participants. BestLife is the first program of support we have offered at Interchange Illawarra.

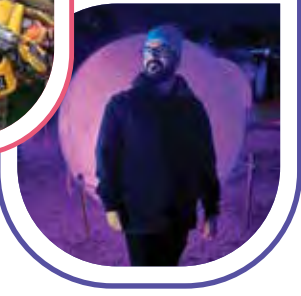
We wanted to offer something akin to a day program but with themed days to suit individual preferences and 12-week terms that could change activities each term so that things did not become stale or boring like some day program options. Participants can opt in or out of the next term if they do not like the activities we have planned. To date have not seen any opting out as we consult with participants about upcoming activities at our participant consultation meetings.

The meetings are something that we do for all our groups and are an important part of the planning process for our groups where participants share their preferences and ideas for group activities. The meetings also serve as opportunity to discuss any issues, remind participants of our complaints processes and ensure they know their rights and responsibilities as Social Support participants.

At the time of writing, we currently have four of the five days of the BestLife Support Program running, with 'Leisure' Thursday being the only day with not enough interest to operate at this stage.

The days we have operating are:

- **Active Mondays:** We know how important it is to stay active and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Our Active Monday Support Program includes activities like yoga, boxing and fitness classes, line dancing, meditation, walking and Zumba.
- **Life Skills Tuesdays:** Our Life Skills Tuesday Support Program focuses on independence building activities like planning and cooking healthy meals, food hygiene, management of money, community social skills and time management.
- **Outdoor Wednesdays:** Outdoor Wednesday is perfect for those people who love to get out and about in nature. The program includes activities like bushwalking, fishing, swimming, beach walks, visiting waterfalls and national parks, mystery bus trips and more.
- **Creative Fridays:** On Creative Friday we are getting super creative with some fantastic projects. Some of the activities include flower and plant-based craft (with Jodie from Eclectic Bower), guided painting exercises, card making, craft projects, sketching and more.



Overall, BestLife has had a successful start, and we are optimistic that it will become a mainstay and part of our Social Support Program for years to come.

In other areas of Social Support, I am really pleased that the trend of increased numbers attending our younger groups towards the end of 2023/2024 financial year continued. We have had a marked increase in new participant intake also within this under 18s cohort which is very encouraging. The school holidays program for high school students with a disability and our Saturday Club program both had an overall increase in attendance. Hopefully the trend continues, and we can continue to support younger participants to develop their social skills, meet new people and form friendships with other participants in a fun, safe and supportive environment.

As I mentioned in my introduction it has been a very busy year, so much so that over 2024/2025 financial year we offered 722 regularly scheduled group activity sessions across our Social Support program groups! Groups offered include Social Support Weekdays, Social Support Saturdays,



Weekends Away (Short Term Accommodation), Saturday Club, Kiama Social Support, Social Support South, Nightlife Social, Kemira, School Holidays and the BestLife Support Program. We provide support to participants across several age groups and service the three local LGAs of the Illawarra. The most popular activities for the under 18s groups this year were Inflatable World, Taco Tuesdays and anything train related.

For the adult groups the most popular activities this year were barefoot bowls, dinners at local restaurants and attending musicals and live shows.

In addition to our regular group activities, we try to offer special events outside our normal operating hours where we can. Some of the awesome special events we attended were MJ the Musical, the Australian Supercross Championships, Disney on Ice and the Enchanted Forest.

It was a massive year for our Illawarra Hawks group with the Hawks bringing home the 2025 title. Our participants were able to attend every home game including all the finals thanks to our continued relationship with The Hawks organisation. The Dragons group also continued to support their team at home games, but we did add some extra activities namely 'watch parties' for Dragons away games.

For these watch parties, our die-hard Dragons supporters were able to meet up at The Builders Club, watch the game on the big screen and cheer on their team over a meal together.

Our Weekends Away programs at Wollongong and Dapto (Kemira) continued to offer Short Term Accommodation (STA) to participants and respite to their carers. Participants stay at our respite cottages for the weekend with a group of their friends from the program. It gives the participants a chance to increase their independence, practice their daily living skills, spend time away from their primary carers and maintain their informal supports. Between our Wollongong and Kemira weekends Away, we held 60 weekends of STA group support in just 12 months.

As expected, the Social Support Short Holidays were very popular again. Unfortunately, due to changes to NDIS guidelines towards the end of 2024, the four holidays we held during this financial year will be the last we are able to offer unless we see changes in legislation that allow them to return. It is a great disappointment, as these holidays provided respite to parents and carers, and were a chance for participants to travel safely with friends, while still getting the support they need.



The Short Holidays we were able to facilitate were:

Philip Island	The group got to see the world-famous Penguin Parade and other great wildlife experiences.
New Zealand	The group revealed their adventurous side by going a high-speed jet-boat ride, as well as exploring the culture of New Zealand.
P&O cruise	Participants watched live shows, swam, ate delicious food and partied with their friends at the onboard discos.
Sydney City	This short holiday involved seeing Sister Act the Musical at the Capitol Theatre and exploring the city.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Support Workers that supported our participants on Short Holidays over the years. Thanks to your amazing work, everyone was able to have a great time and create memories that will last a lifetime!

The holidays were a lot of work to organise, but it was always worth it when you saw the smiles from participants and heard their great stories.

In summary, the 2024/2025 financial year was a fruitful one for Interchange Illawarra’s Social Support program. We were able to utilise a fantastic new space at Church Street, launch a brand-new program and expand the program by welcoming new participants.

As always, thank you to all the participants and families for their continued support and patronage of Interchange Illawarra’s Social Support programs. A big thank you also to the Social Support team for your exceptional efforts and the Support Workers who make it all possible.

Michael Corby
Social Support Manager



Parent/Carer Health & Wellbeing

At Interchange Illawarra, we recognise that supporting carers is essential to supporting people with disabilities. Over the past year, we've continued our commitment to carer wellbeing through a range of free activities designed to foster connection, relaxation, and community.

Caring for a person with a disability can be rewarding, but it can also be exhausting, isolating and create significant social and financial disadvantage. That's why our health and wellbeing initiatives focus on creating spaces where carers can recharge, share experiences, and build supportive networks. These events are shaped by feedback from carers themselves, ensuring they remain relevant, engaging, and inclusive.

Our Support Planners have played a key role in organising these events, and we've made it a priority for new members of our Administration team to attend carer gatherings early in their employment at Interchange Illawarra. This helps build a deeper understanding of the carer experience across our organisation.

Throughout the year, we hosted a diverse calendar of events to suit different schedules, interests, and locations.



Highlights included:

- A candle making workshop in Shellharbour, hosted by Tracey and Jen
- Our Chairperson, Susan, and CEO, Jake, hosted the annual Carers Week lunch at Wollongong Golf Club
- A festive end-of-year celebration at the Bert Lillye Lounge, Kembla Grange Racecourse
- A day trip to Centennial Vineyards in Bowral, hosted by Michael and Lui
- A kokedama creation and dried flower art workshop with Jodie from Eclectic Bower, hosted by Jess and Leanne
- A gathering of our 'Cuppa for Carers' group, featuring a tour of our new office and participation in Wollongong City Council's Community Strategic Plan feedback circle

These events have welcomed many new faces, and it's been heartening to see our carer community grow and thrive. We are excited to be facilitating more events in the upcoming year.

Kylie White
Support Planner/Coordinator





Kemira

The 2024/2025 financial year marked nine years of the long-standing partnership between Interchange Illawarra, Greenacres and IRT at Kemira.

Over the past 12 months, Interchange Illawarra has continued to provide Short Term Accommodation (STA) at Kemira, with 24 weekends held, one each month for male and for female participants.

These weekends away take place in Kemira's boutique hotel-like accommodation, featuring five individual bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms. This beautiful setting offers an enriching and supported experience for the participants and provides a respite opportunity for their parents/carers.

The Kemira weekend away activities place emphasis on building independent living skills, encouraging participants to enjoy time away from their primary carer, with a strong social and recreational component that participants look forward to each month.

Kemira's Social Support Program, Josie's Club, continued as a fortnightly group specifically for Kemira residents living with a disability.

The Josie's Club program is determined by the residents themselves, fostering a sense of community and independence. Interchange Illawarra Support Workers facilitate as needed, while supporting resident autonomy and leadership. The residents collaboratively create their own timetable of activities, including hosting dinners at the centre, community outings, craft, cooking, games nights and celebrating participant birthdays.

I am pleased to report another successful and enjoyable year for the participants that attend Kemira weekends away and the Josie's Club activities.

Catherine Windle
Kemira Coordinator

MyTime Wollongong

MyTime is a nationally recognised program funded by the Department of Social Services and delivered in partnership with the Parenting Research Centre, Playgroup NSW, Interchange Illawarra, TAFE Illawarra, and Big Fat Smile. It supports parents and carers of children aged 0–16 with additional needs or chronic illness by offering a space to connect, unwind, and access practical information.

This year, MyTime Wollongong continued to be a well-attended and a valued part of our carer support offering.

The program provides:

- A regular two-hour break for carers to relax and engage with others in similar situations
- Opportunities to share knowledge and experiences in a safe, welcoming environment
- A supported playgroup for children and siblings, fostering social development and inclusion

Uniquely, MyTime Wollongong also serves as a hands-on learning environment for TAFE Early Childhood Education and Care students, who gain experience working with children with disabilities under the guidance of their teachers and Big Fat Smile staff.

This model benefits everyone involved as children receive attentive care, students acquire valuable insights, and carers enjoy peace of mind.

Additional benefits of MyTime include:

- Reduced feelings of isolation and stress among carers
- Improved emotional wellbeing and resilience
- Enhanced access to local services and resources
- Strengthened community ties through peer support

We're proud to share that Interchange Illawarra was awarded the contract to continue delivering MyTime Wollongong for another 12 months from June 2025.

We look forward to another year of supporting families as they navigate the journey of caring.

Kylie White
Support Planner/Coordinator



THE WALLIS CENTRE CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE

NOVEMBER
2021



Interchange Illawarra purchases a free standing home at 114 Church Street, Wollongong.

JUNE
2023



The existing house is demolished and the land is cleared ready for construction.

AUGUST
2024



The second floor slab is poured, framing, structural steel, doors and windows installed.

NOVEMBER
2023



The foundations and ground floor slab are poured.

OCTOBER
2024



The office staff move from 81 Kenny Street, Wollongong to the brand new building!

APRIL
2025



At the Grand Opening ceremony, the building is named 'The Wallis Centre' in honour of our Chairperson, Susan Wallis.

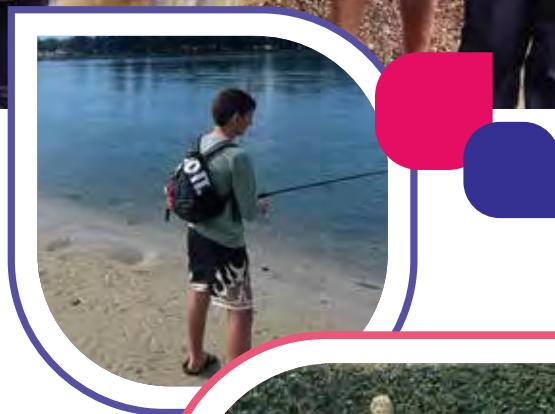


Thank you

Interchange Illawarra is proud to be a registered disability service provider.

To us, supporting people goes beyond physical wellbeing to include nurturing friendships, discovering new talents and abilities. We are dedicated to offering services, programs and events that are engaging, relevant and enjoyable.

We sincerely thank participants, and their families and carers, for continuing to choose Interchange Illawarra as their preferred service provider.





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