

# anowah



2023 Annual Report



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It is with great sadness that we present this Annual Report for Anowah Community Living, as we mourn the loss of our Chairperson, Bob McCotter, who passed away unexpectedly in August 2023. Bob was a visionary leader, a passionate advocate, and a dear friend to all of us at Anowah. He dedicated his time, energy, and expertise to advancing our mission of providing person-centred and innovative supports for people with disability. He was instrumental in shaping our strategic direction, strengthening our governance, and expanding our services and partnerships.

During his tenure, he oversaw significant achievements and milestones for our organisation, such as:

- The renovation and upgrade of our Horsley Park site, which improved the quality and accessibility of our accommodation and facilities.
- The enhancement of our staff training and development programs, which ensured that our team members have the skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality and personalised supports.
- The increase of our client satisfaction and engagement levels, which reflected our commitment to co-designing and delivering services that meet the needs and preferences of the people we support.

Bob always showed genuine interest and care for our clients, staff, volunteers, and families. He always listened to their feedback and suggestions, and encouraged them to share

## Vale Bob McCotter

their stories and achievements. He celebrated their successes and supported us through our challenges. He always advocated for our participants rights and inclusion in the community.

**We are deeply grateful for Bob's contributions to Anowah Community Living, and we will always remember him with respect, admiration, and affection. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. We dedicate this Annual Report to his memory, as we honour his legacy and continue his work.**

Rest in peace, Bob. You will be greatly missed.



## Message From New Chair

**Steven Lowrie**  
Chair, Anowah Community Living Board

Dear Anowah Community Living members, participants, staff and supporters, Having just stepped into the role of Chair of the Board, following the loss of Bob McCotter, it is on his and the Boards behalf that I welcome you to the Annual Report for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. This past year has been a defining period in the journey of our organization, marked by challenges, milestones, and unwavering commitment to our mission.

The year 2022-2023 has been a testament to the resilience and adaptability that define the essence of Anowah Community Living. As we reflect on the achievements and progress we have made, we are acutely aware that our success is intrinsically tied to the dedicated efforts of our remarkable team, the trust and support of our participants and their families, and the invaluable partnerships that we have cultivated with stakeholders across the board.

**We have made significant strides in elevating the standards of our supports and services, ensuring high-quality and safe services for individuals with disabilities and have also taken great strides to optimise workforce conditions and capabilities. Our dedication to delivering excellence in our services has never been stronger.**

Despite the undeniable challenges that the disability service sector has faced, none of us have lost sight of our fundamental mission: to empower individuals with disabilities, to listen to their needs and wants, and to support them in taking control of their lives. It is this unwavering commitment to the people we serve that sets the course for our future.

The recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission, with a particular focus on housing and group homes, have offered us an opportunity to further align our service offerings with modern standards of support and living. We recognize the importance of choices in how and where our participants live and with whom they choose to live.

Our goal is to provide the utmost support to realise these choices.

The resounding consensus among all Commissioners on the necessity for group home reform underscores the urgency and importance of this task. We have embraced this challenge with open arms, seeking to expand and implement the recommended actions.

Throughout this Annual Report, you will find a comprehensive overview of our journey over the past year, our achievements, and the areas where we aspire to improve. We remain committed to maintaining the highest standards of quality and safeguarding, while continuously exploring ways to include our participants and their support networks in our initiatives. Our aim is to enhance transparency and foster best practices, further securing the trust and confidence of all stakeholders.

As we delve into the pages of this report, let us do so with the understanding that our journey is ongoing. Anowah Community Living is well-positioned to be a leader in providing personalised home and living support well into the future. The recommendations from the Royal Commission are not merely a set of guidelines, but an opportunity for us to reflect, review, and revitalize our approach. Together, we can ensure that Anowah remains a successful and preferred provider of home and living support to individuals with disabilities, making a meaningful difference in their lives.

**I extend my gratitude to our dedicated team, our participants and their families, our partners, and all those who support our mission. It is your collective effort and unwavering commitment that makes Anowah Community Living the organisation it is.**



# Message From New CEO

**Jo Kernot**  
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Anowah Community,

I am honoured and humbled to be appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of Anowah Community Living, effective from September 2023. I am proud to be part of this amazing team of people who are passionate about making a positive difference in the lives of people with disability.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and farewell our outgoing CEO, Debbie Eisenhower Rodney, who has led Anowah with vision, integrity and dedication for the past 3 years. Debbie was instrumental in supporting the organisation through the extremely challenging Covid years and in shaping our strategic direction, strengthening our governance, and improving our infrastructure, IT and systems capabilities. Her leadership saw Anowah participants and staff remain safe during those years and supported the organisation to continue to operate in such uncertain times. Debbie has been a mentor, a role model, and an inspiration to many of us. She will be greatly missed, but we wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

As the new CEO, I am committed to building on Debbie's legacy and continuing our mission of providing person-centred and innovative supports for people with disability. I am also aware of the changing landscape and expectations in the disability sector, especially in light of the Disability Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability in Australia and the upcoming NDIS review. These are important initiatives that aim to improve the rights, inclusion and outcomes of people with disability in our society. They also present challenges and opportunities for us as an organisation to reflect on our practices, learn from our experiences, and adapt to the needs and preferences of the people we support.



I look forward to working with you all - **our participants, staff, volunteers, families, carers, partners, funders, supporters and stakeholders** - to ensure that Anowah Community Living remains a leading provider of quality disability services in our region. I invite you to read this Annual Report, which showcases our achievements and highlights in the past year, as well as our plans and priorities for the future. I also welcome your feedback and suggestions on how we can improve our services and performance.

**Together, we can make Anowah Community Living a place where people with disability can live their lives with dignity, choice and independence.**

Sincerely,

**Jo Kernot**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Anowah Community Living

# The Year That Was

This year Anowah invested in a range of new technologies to better support our participants and front line staff. The new systems give support staff immediate access to participant information, risks, support plans, likes and dislikes, and ensures that the most up to date information is able to be used to provide a high quality of support. The systems also allow leaders to have quick access to notes, incident reporting and hazards to improve our response to care concerns, an important part of our ongoing commitment to quality service delivery.

Staff benefit from new technology that allows them to manage their time and attendance, leave requests and ability to communicate with each other. Along with the introduction of Centro a policy, procedure and document platform that assisted us to get through our NDIS Mid Term Audit with flying colours, Centro gives staff access to all the information they need to work in line with Anowah's Vision and values.

Anowah also engaged support from the Empathia group to help us look to the future and plan how we can tell potential new participants about the wonderful services and supports Anowah provides, they also are helping us to understand our unique value proposition and to truly hear and understand the needs and goals of our existing and future participants.

The wonderful team at Good Things Happen have managed to capture many wonderful images of our people enjoying activities and living full lives. Many of them are shared in this report.

**We were as always so happy to have received a grant from Tanya Davis MP via the NSW Governments 2022 Community Building Partnership Grant that supported us to upgrade our back patio and decking area, that has created a wonderful space for Anowah participants to meet, celebrate milestones, have BBQ's with family and friends and escape the summer heat all while looking over the beautiful new garden areas.**



# Property Upgrades

Some exciting property renovations took place throughout the year.

**Sunset House received** a facelift with painting of internal brick work, doors and timber surfaces. The new white interior has uplifted the house to a bright and modern appeal. A program to upgrade and refurbish existing wardrobes and cupboards on the property commenced with the installation of new units at Sunset. Participants in most of our houses personalised their bedrooms by selecting their favourite colour for a feature wall.

**Upgrades have now been completed** to the patio area at the rear of the Admin and Hub buildings. We are delighted with the end result which is aesthetically pleasing and provides a pleasant, fantastic space for participants, families, friends and visitors to enjoy some quiet R&R or engage in an assortment of sun safe outdoor activities.

**A wheelchair accessible pathway** to the grounds in front of the decking area has also been completed, enabling easier access to the grounds and patio area for mobility impaired participants.

**Some fun and engaging additions to the Sensory Garden** included Henry the Hippo and the Ute. The ute was lowered to ground level and the back tray was modified and fitted out with a customised picnic setting, courtesy of members from the West Cumberland Men's Shed. Some raised garden beds were established and populated by Bunnings Bonnyrigg.





# STAY TUNED

## Support Anowah Community Liv-

Anowah Community Living is pleased to share our participant's and team member's amazing stories, recent achievements, images from our latest events and social activities on social media platforms. We encourage you to engage with our Facebook and Instagram posts - like and drop your comment and we would love to reply to them! Anowah also has its own LinkedIn page for professional posts, give us a follow to hear more from us!



@anowahcommunityliving



## Anowah Community Living Supporters we THANK YOU

Anowah acknowledges the assistance of all those who support us throughout the year and we give our sincere thanks to the fantastic staff, families and community members for their continued belief in the organisation.

### AND A BIG THANK YOU

Once again, a huge **thank you to Tanya Davies, MP** for **Mulgoa and Community Building Partnership (CBP)** funding for grant monies of \$59,793.00 which enabled us to complete our project **“Refurbishment of Patio/Terrace - Anowah Community Hub”**. The result of this project is fantastic and provides an updated, pleasing recreation area to be enjoyed by participants, families, staff and all who visit the property. The reveal of our new patio/terrace area was celebrated at our recent Open Day. Thank you to Mr Pasquale Turano for attending as representative of Tanya.



Thank you once again to Brian Zammit and his team from BAMS Building Services for their work on the back patio/terrace and accessible pathway. Brian continues to generously support Anowah with that extra care and attention.



We extend our **appreciation to The Mounties Group for supporting our Cat 1 Club Grants 2023** application for **“Grounds Beautification and Supported Gardening/Horticultural Therapy Program”** for the amount of \$20,053.83. These funds will allow us to enhance our Sensory Garden with shade structures, greenhouses, additional raised garden beds, garden settings and vegetable and flowering plants.



Sincere **thanks to Bunnings Bonnyrigg, West Cumberland Men's Shed, Think&Do Tank, Sydney University and Fairfield Community Nursery** for their support and participation at our **Open Day**.



## Anowah Community Living A word From The Anowah Team



I first began working for Anowah back in the early 90's. I left after 10 years to pursue other interests and then returned to Anowah in 2019. I am currently employed as a Support Worker at Bossley House.

**The reason I love working at Anowah is that Anowah makes an effort to put the best interests of our participants first.** I love working here and especially at Bossley house under our current Teamleader, and as a team we have worked towards seeing positive outcomes for our participants. It's fantastic to see that goals are being met, especially in the areas of health and wellbeing, communication, choice and control.

At Bossley, **I see that our participants are treated with dignity and respect by staff**, that they

have a voice and what they want to happen is happening for them where possible. I love that if staff have ideas that they are listened to. I love that families are seen as an important part of our service and are listened too.

In the future, hopefully more participants will access Anowah and we can show that Anowah is a service that listens and responds to their wants and needs.

**For me, it's rewarding when I get to see the smiles on the participants faces when they have achieved their goals. I have a lot of passion for this job and always put the participant at the centre of everything I do.**

**Connie De Meo - Disability Support Worker**

My association with Anowah is long. I was first employed by Anowah in February 1987 and throughout the ensuing years I explored other avenues of employment for short periods. I am currently employed as a Support Worker at Bossley House.

At Bossley, we have a strong team that works together by communicating and planning with our team leader for the individual needs of the ladies, ensuring all resources and aids are being used in a practical way in everyday life, to promote independence.

**I love working with the Bossley ladies to help enrich their home lives, getting to know each one of their personalities, likes, dislikes and providing them with means to access the community.**

I am also passionate about supporting the ladies in their accomplishments and helping them achieve their goals towards a fulfilling life.

**I bring many years of experience, loyalty, dedication, and a caring supportive attitude. I love my job and being part of the Anowah team.**

**Nickole Elasi - Disability Support Worker**

I have worked at Anowah for the past 10 years and I am currently employed as a Support Worker at both Bossley House and The Hub day service. I really love working with the participants at Bossley & the Hub. Over the years of my employment I have worked with most of the Anowah participants. I love talking to the Bossley ladies, they are great communicators and love to have a chat. I believe that the strengths I bring to Anowah are that I'm patient and a good listener, always taking time to understand each participant.

**Claudia Mancia - Disability Support Worker**



Hi, I'm Mel and I have been with Anowah for eight years now and a part of the leadership team since January 2023. I began my role as a support worker at CAS then worked my way into the houses in 2021 which then led on to a Team leader position at Horsley House (now moved into Sunset) and Hub team leader.

Being with Anowah for as long as I have, I have seen changes but the one thing that has stayed the same is the joy our participants bring to me every time I come on shift, it gives me great pleasure in knowing I am a part of a house that provides great care and support for our participants.

I am excited to see what the future has in store for Anowah. As for Sunset house, I am privileged to continue supporting staff to be the best support staff they can be, being part of Anowah's continuing journey and watching our participants achieve their goals.

**Melissa McAtear - Team Leader**



I have been employed at Anowah for the past 3 months in the role of Support Worker at Park and Sunset Houses and The Hub day service. I enjoy working with the older participants at Anowah who are more verbal and active. All of the Anowah participants are lovely and I like the homely environment at the Horsley Park site. I believe my calm and friendly nature is an asset for my chosen career in disability services.

**Janet Kalokoh - Disability Support Worker**

I have been working as a Support Worker across various sites of the Anowah service for the past 14 years. I enjoy my role as a support worker and look forward to coming to work to care for the participants and help them with all their needs. I love being with the participants who always show their appreciation for our support with their day to day living needs. Anowah has a high level of professional management and a good standard of dedicated Support Workers who provide great assistance to the participants and their families.

**Richard Ramaiya - Disability Support Worker**



I've been a Disability Support Worker for 7 years. I joined Anowah about 15 months ago as a Support Worker and I've enjoyed every minute of it. In June 2023 I was offered the opportunity to become the 'Horsely Site Support Lead'. I've been in the role now ever since June and I'm grateful for each and everyone in the leadership team at Anowah for their ongoing support, mentoring and guidance when I need help. Ensuring our participants are safe and living their best life everyday makes me feel content and happy. I've seen and been part of a few changes that have happened at Anowah and I'm happy to say that I'm keen to see what the future holds for our participants and staff.

**Vika Nabainivalu - Support Leader**



# Participants Stories

Hi friends, my name is Fiona and I currently live at Park House at the Horsley site. I moved into Park House with Shane & Jason early this year and love my bigger room and ensuite. I am able to have my fish tank and my horse wall decoration up in my new room, along with all my stuffed toys which I love buying on my CPA day program outings.



I attend my day program Monday to Thursday and Friday is my day to go to the shops and get my nails done. I like bright nail colours and have lovely long nails. I like to show off my new nail colour to staff when I return. Pancakes with blueberries are my favourite weekend breakfast and I like toast with honey & peanut butter during the week.

**I'm waiting to move up to Port Stephens to a new house to be closer to my brother Keith, I'm very excited about this move.**

## Fiona



# LIZZIE

**Lizzie went on a cruise for the first time this year,** she says her favourite thing to do on the cruise was to spend time with her support staff, Angela, whom she shared a cabin with. She enjoyed long nights chatting and strolling the decks on the cruise.

**She enjoyed watching movies in the cinema and the live cabaret show. Lizzie's favourite food to eat on the cruise was the unlimited pizza house!! Lizzie loved our stop off at Hobart where she enjoyed the Salamander markets.** She strolled through the markets and savoured some delicious food while overlooking the water. Lizzie is our resident note keeper at Anowah and makes sure we all have lists to remember the important things we need to do.

# KERRIE-ANNE

Kerrie-Anne also enjoyed a cruise with the support of Anowah staff this year. Kerrie-Anne was so happy to go with her friends onboard the ship, Phillip, Christina, Kerrie-Anne, and Lizzie. All enjoyed the endless amount of food which ranged from the unlimited buffet to fancy restaurants.

**Kerrie-Anne said her favourite part of the trip was the food, but also it was the open-air pool deck and spa. She enjoyed her nightly dip in the spa where she listened to Abba and reset for the next day ahead.** She also said she loved sipping on her mocktails while watching the evening cabaret show.

**She was up and dancing throughout the whole show with Christina her fellow cruise companion!**

Anowah Community Living  
**Some Important Numbers**

**\$4.98m**

Supported Independent Living Income

**\$608k**

NDIS Community Support Income

**\$315k**

HUB/Day Program Income

**\$59k**

Grants Received



**92**

**Number of Staff**



**20**

**Number of clients**

# Anowah Community Living Looking Forward

After our recent very successful Open Day we look forward to continuing our relationships with Bunnings- Bonnyrigg, Men's Shed and Think do tank . We also excitingly look forward to our relationship with Sydney University's VR and AI project.

Anowah has always had a great relationship with Wetherill Park TAFE, however we have recently enhanced that relationship with a commitment to support learners who are completing their Cert III and IV in Individual support to complete their placement hours, as well as having the team at TAFE delivering some vital training to Anowah's existing workforce.

We have a plan to continue our work on systems and streamlining and improving our policies and processes. We see technology as being a key part of ensuring our ongoing viability as well as having systems that will give us valuable data to improve our service delivery and support to participants and staff. Enhanced reporting will also help us to give partner services the data they need in real time to best support participants in areas such as positive behaviour support, Speech pathology, OT supports, general health and wellbeing and much more.

Further upgrades to property are being explored as well as a future property and growth strategy in line with recent reviews.

We recently received provisional registration to include Support Coordination and hope to offer this service to new participants to Anowah over the next twelve months.

## Anowah's response to the Disability Royal Commission

"All people with disability have the human right to live independently in the community regardless of how high their support needs are. This means providing access to services and support so people with disability can exercise choice and control over their lives and make all decisions concerning their lives."

At Anowah, like many other disability support providers, we find ourselves at a pivotal juncture with the recent release of the findings and recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission. These findings have illuminated several overarching themes and recommendations in the final report, presenting a roadmap for the future:

- Promoting rights-based inclusion in the Australian mainstream
- Elevating the standards of the disability support sector
- Ensuring high-quality and safe services for people with disability
- Achieving inclusion in open and supported employment settings
- Optimising workforce conditions and capability

The stark reality from the report is that abuse and neglect persist in some corners of our sector, often rooted in entrenched cultural norms that diverge from the values and policies of organisations. At Anowah, we take this sobering truth as a call to action. We eagerly anticipate the government's response to the Commission's recommendations, and will continue to build on our responsibilities in this space. Our focus remains on the individuals we serve, empowering them with control over their lives, ensuring their voices are heard, and tirelessly working to enhance our services.

The report's recommendations concerning housing and group homes are concentrated in Part C of Volume 7, 'Inclusive Education, Employment, and Housing.' These recommendations address the responsiveness of mainstream housing and homelessness systems, charting a path toward more specialised forms of accommodation. This presents a significant avenue for Anowah to concentrate our efforts, as we aim to offer modern, up-to-date standards of support and living. Our commitment to providing choices in living arrangements for our participants remains steadfast.

A unanimous consensus among all Commissioners is the necessity for reform in the realm of group homes. The final report puts forth recommendations, highlighting the need to prioritize actions outlined in the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's Own Motion Inquiry into Supported Accommodation. We are committed to expanding these actions, which include among other things implementing and embedding practices such as Active Support.

The volume of the final report dedicated to housing is expansive, recognizing that a home represents much more than a physical space. It is a place of self-expression, relaxation, safety, and acceptance. Tragically, this experience remains elusive for many individuals with disabilities in Australia.

The report further expounds on improving quality and safeguarding, which is detailed in Volume 10, 'Disability Services,' and Volume 11, 'Independent Oversight and Complaints Mechanisms.' Anowah, although already committed to maintaining a high standard of quality and safeguarding, is eager to explore innovative initiatives that incorporate our participants and their support networks, enhancing transparency and best practices.

**Anowah stands poised to emerge as a leader in providing personalized home and living support into the future. The report and its recommendations should serve as a catalyst for us to reflect, reassess, and revitalize our approach, ensuring that we remain a successful and preferred provider of home and living support to individuals with disabilities for years to come.**







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