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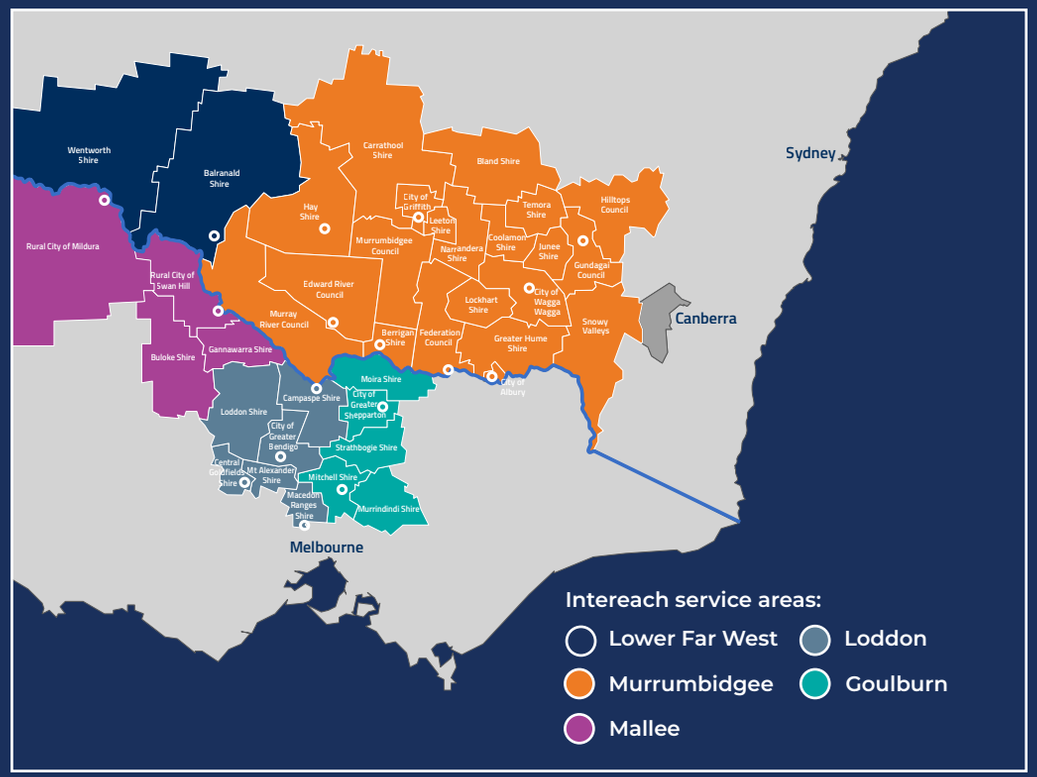
Annual Report

2026

Proudly supporting local communities

About **Intereach**

Intereach is a not-for-profit community organisation that has been supporting rural and regional communities and developing community infrastructure across the Riverina-Murray region of NSW and central and northern Victoria for more than 50 years. With 16 offices located in Albury, Bendigo, Cootamundra, Corowa, Deniliquin, Echuca, Finley, Gisborne, Griffith, Hay, Maryborough, Mildura, Seymour, Shepparton, Swan Hill and Wagga Wagga, we are deeply connected to the communities we serve.



OUR VISION

- To build strong connected communities.

OUR VALUES

Leadership

- We use our social influence to motivate others to reach their full potential.

Partnership

- We work collectively with others toward a common goal of positive social and cultural change.

Social Justice

- We protect and promote human rights by recognising that all people are free and equal in dignity and rights.

WHAT WE DO

Intereach offers a wide range of services, support and information for:

- Children and Families
- Community
- People with
- Disability
- Mental Health
- Older People
- Newly arrived Migrants and Refugees

ndis intereach

Delivering the NDIS in your community

Intereach is the National Disability Insurance Scheme Partner in the community across the Murrumbidgee region of NSW and Loddon, Goulburn and Mallee regions of Victoria.

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Acknowledgement of **Country**

Intereach acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and their strong spiritual connection to the land and the waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present and to those of the future, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the cultures and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We must always remember that despite major physical changes, this land is, was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

Intereach supports Treaty for Victoria and welcomes Treaty in NSW.

Intereach welcomes every person irrespective of gender or gender identity, age, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, cultural background, physical or intellectual abilities, country of birth, religious beliefs, sexual identity and other real and perceived differences.

Artwork commisioned by Alison Stewart

A message from the **Chair**

Intereach has always been shaped by the communities it serves. As those communities change, so too must the organisation.

This was particularly evident during 2025–26. Reform across many of the sectors in which we work, increasing expectations of our funders and participants, changing community needs and a complex operating environment have all required Intereach to think carefully about both the organisation it is today and the organisation it needs to become to achieve our purpose.

For the Board, our responsibility is to steward Intereach through evolution and change while remaining firmly connected to its purpose and the ambitions of our Strategic Plan.

Intereach continues to demonstrate an ability to respond to community need and extend its impact. The opening of the Intereach Community Preschool in Deniliquin, securing funding for a new 108-place Long Day Care centre in South Albury and implementation of the new Families Together program are important examples.

Families Together is particularly significant because it allows Intereach to build on its established experience in intensive family preservation and take that capability into a much larger geographic area. Similarly, the continued growth of our aged care services provides an opportunity for more older people to access support that enables them to remain independent and connected to their communities.

These are important achievements, yet from a Board perspective, growth is not an objective in itself. The question we must continue to ask is whether growth advances our purpose, responds to genuine community need and can be sustained over the long term.

Stewarding a strong and sustainable organisation

This question of sustainability has been particularly important during 2025–26.

The 2025–26 financial result reflects an operating environment that is becoming more complex than at any point in Intereach's history. Intereach's strong financial foundations provide resilience, while the experience of the year has reinforced the importance of maintaining a clear focus on financial performance and long-term sustainability as we adapt to changing operating conditions and invest in the organisational capability that enables our success in this environment.

The Board and management have taken important lessons from the year. Work is underway to continue to build our commercial and financial capability across the organisation- deepening our financial oversight and forecasting, greater visibility of how service activity translates into community outcomes and financial sustainability. This focus is about equipping Intereach for impact and sustainability to deliver and grow confidently.

Our responsibility as a Board is to ensure this capability is built deliberately and translates into the strong performance of quality and viable services. This will remain an area of focus as we enter 2026–27, and we are confident that these priorities will ensure that Intereach is better positioned for the environment ahead.

At the same time, our understanding of sustainability is broader than financial performance alone.

The development of Intereach's first Sustainability Strategy during the year is an important milestone. It provides a framework for considering the environmental, social and governance impact of our decisions and reflects a longer-term view of the organisation's responsibilities to the communities in which it operates.

Preparing for what comes next

One of the Board's most important responsibilities is to look beyond the immediate operating environment.

The sectors in which Intereach works are undergoing significant reform. Aged care is moving into a new era of greater choice and different expectations of providers. Disability and early childhood systems continue to evolve. Governments are reconsidering how services are funded, commissioned and delivered.

These changes create uncertainty, but they also create opportunity.

Intereach's regional footprint, community relationships and breadth of experience provide strong foundations. However, our future success will also depend on our willingness to evolve.

During the year, we saw continued investment in technology, systems, risk, quality and organisational capability. Work also commenced to consider how Intereach's operating model and leadership need to evolve as the organisation grows and becomes more complex.

The Board supports this work because a sustainable Intereach requires more than strong services. It requires an organisation behind those services that enables good decisions, supports its people and can adapt as the environment changes.

The people behind Intereach

While governance necessarily requires us to focus on strategy, risk, performance and sustainability, none of these things should ever become disconnected from the people who make Intereach what it is.

Across our communities, Intereach employees and volunteers work alongside children, families, older people and people with disability, often supporting people through significant periods of change in their lives.

It was pleasing to see the contribution of our people recognised externally during the year, including Intereach being named Business of the Year, Employer of Choice and receiving the Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award at the Deniliquin Business Awards, together with further recognition in Cootamundra and across the Riverina-Murray region.

These achievements speak not only to the organisation we are building, but to the people who represent Intereach in our communities every day.

On behalf of the Board, I thank every employee and volunteer for the professionalism, care and commitment they bring to their work.

Board leadership

It is a privilege to serve as Chairperson of an organisation with such deep roots in regional communities.

During the year, we welcomed Torrien Lau to the Board, bringing additional experience and perspective to our governance.

We also recognise an extraordinary milestone in the history of Intereach, with Pat Fogarty completing 30 years of service as a Director.

Three decades of Board service is a remarkable contribution. Pat has helped steward Intereach through significant periods of change and growth, and her commitment to the organisation and the communities it serves has been exceptional. On behalf of the Board, I thank Pat for her leadership, dedication and service.

I also thank my fellow Directors for the experience, care and commitment they bring to their responsibilities, and our Co-Chief Executive Officers, Michelle Tai and Yvette Buhagiar, together with the broader leadership team, for their leadership throughout a demanding year.

Looking forward with confidence

There will be challenges ahead for Intereach. The experience of 2025–26 reminds us that a strong organisation must be prepared not only to celebrate its successes, but also to learn, adapt and make changes when required.

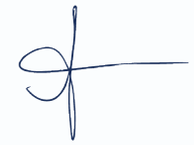
That is an important part of good stewardship.

As a Board, we enter 2026–27 focused on the long-term strength of Intereach: delivering our Strategic Plan, strengthening financial and organisational sustainability, supporting our people and ensuring decisions about growth remain grounded in the needs of regional communities.

What gives me confidence is that Intereach has demonstrated throughout its history an ability to evolve without losing sight of why it exists.

On behalf of the Board, I thank our employees, volunteers, funding and community partners, and most importantly the people and families who place their trust in Intereach.

We remain committed to ensuring Intereach continues to be an organisation capable of making a meaningful and lasting difference in regional communities for many years to come.



Alison Maclean
Chairperson

Message from **our CO-CEOs**



The 2025–26 year was one of significant progress and change for Intereach. We continued to deliver essential services across our communities while preparing for substantial changes in the sectors in which we operate.

Throughout the year, our focus remained on the people and communities we serve, guided by the ambitions of our Strategic Plan: creating Transformative Social Impact, developing Targeted Sustainable Solutions in response to community need, and continuing to build Intereach as a Destination Employer where talented people want to work, grow and build their careers.

These priorities have shaped where we have invested, where we have pursued growth and how we are strengthening Intereach for the future.

Investing in services for growing communities

One of the most significant achievements of the year was securing a significant funding contribution from the NSW Government to support the development of a new 108-place Long Day Care centre in South Albury.

Access to quality early childhood education and care remains a significant challenge in many regional communities. The South Albury development will increase access to quality early childhood education and care for local children and families in a growing community. Construction planning progressed during the year, with the new service expected to open following completion of the development in 2027.

Our commitment to creating transformative social impact was also reflected in the opening of the new Intereach Community Preschool in Deniliquin in May, expanding opportunities for local children to learn, develop and thrive close to home.

We also strengthened the future of our children and family services by successfully securing the new Families Together program, commencing from 1 July 2026 as part of the NSW Government's redesigned Family Preservation system.

Families Together builds on the significant experience and capability developed through our delivery of Intensive Family Preservation. Our teams have worked intensively alongside children and families experiencing significant vulnerability and complexity, helping families build safety, stability and capacity for lasting change.

Securing Families Together enables us to take that experience into a significantly larger geographic area, extending the reach and impact of our family preservation work to more children, families and regional communities.

Supporting older people through change

Throughout 2025–26, we prepared for the transition to the Australian Government's new Support at Home program, while remaining focused on what matters most -ensuring older people can access the support they need to remain independent, connected and living well in their own homes and communities.

The transition represents significant change for older people, their families and the aged care sector. Our focus has been on making that transition as clear and seamless as possible for the people we support while continuing to provide the trusted and personalised services they rely on.

At the same time, we continued to grow our aged care services so that more older people can access support when they need it. We strengthened local referral pathways, made it easier for people and families to find and connect with us, and continued to shape our services around what older people tell us is important to them.

For us, growth is ultimately about impact - reaching more people, providing greater choice and enabling older people to remain at home, connected to the people and places that matter to them.

Building a more sustainable Intereach

During the year, we developed Intereach's first Sustainability Strategy, establishing a more deliberate approach to our environmental, social and governance performance.

Our responsibility is not only to ensure Intereach remains financially sustainable, but also to consider our environmental impact, our contribution to communities and the way we govern and operate the organisation.

We are already seeing progress. Our carbon emissions during the year were approximately 21 per cent below our established baseline, exceeding our cumulative reduction target of 18 per cent. For an organisation with a large regional footprint, this is an encouraging result and demonstrates that meaningful environmental improvement can occur alongside service growth.

Strengthening the organisation behind our services

As Intereach has grown, so too has the scale and complexity of our organisation. During 2025–26, we continued to invest in technology, systems, quality, risk management and organisational capability to better support our frontline services.

We also commenced work to consider how our operating model needs to evolve. Our aim is to create greater clarity, enable decisions to be made closer to where the work occurs, equip our leaders to lead and ensure the organisation behind our services enables our people to do their best work.

This work will continue into 2026–27 as we build the capability and resilience Intereach needs for the future.

Our financial performance

The 2025–26 financial result reflected broader pressures being felt across the sector as funding models shift and demand for services continue to grow. This year has provided important insights that are directly shaping our approach to financial sustainability.

The result reflected a combination of factors, including the changing funding landscape and associated challenges with revenue recognition, increasing workforce costs, and our investment in organisational improvements. It reinforced the importance of understanding the financial performance of our services alongside the outcomes they deliver and ensuring we can respond early when circumstances change.

Intereach entered the year with a strong financial foundation, built through many years of careful stewardship. This strength has enabled us to absorb the impact of a difficult operating environment while continuing to invest in our services and communities, without compromising the quality or reach of what we deliver.

We have taken important lessons from this year's result and are strengthening the way financial and service performance are understood together across the organisation. This includes improving forecasting and financial oversight and building a clearer understanding of the sustainability of each of our programs and services.

These strategies will support earlier, better-informed decisions about where we invest, where we grow and where changes may be required.

The experience of 2025–26 is already informing our approach to 2026–27. We enter the new year with strengthened financial discipline, clearer accountability and a continued commitment to ensuring Intereach remains strong and sustainable for the communities that rely on us.

Our people and communities

Our ambition to be a Destination Employer is about creating a workplace where talented people want to work, grow and make a difference in their communities.

During the year, this commitment was recognised through a number of regional awards. At the Cootamundra Business Awards, Intereach was named Outstanding Community Services Organisation, with staff member Billie-Jo Johnson recognised as Outstanding Customer Support Person. At the Deniliquin Business Awards, Intereach received Employer of Choice, Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion and Business of the Year, followed by a Special Commendation for Employer of Choice at the Riverina-Murray NSW Business Awards.

These awards reflect the contribution of our people and our commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where people can do meaningful work.

This year we welcomed Alison Maclean as Chairperson of the Intereach Board and Torrien Lau as a new Director. Their experience and perspectives strengthen our governance and will be valuable as Intereach continues to implement its Strategic Plan and pursue opportunities that extend our impact across regional communities.

We also acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of Pat Fogarty, who completed 30 years of service on the Intereach Board during the year. Three decades of commitment to Intereach and the communities we serve is an exceptional contribution, and we thank Pat for her dedication, leadership and service.

Looking ahead

There is considerable change ahead for the sectors in which Intereach operates. Aged care reform will continue to reshape the way older people access and choose services, while disability and early childhood reforms will create new models and opportunities. Regional communities will continue to experience workforce, housing and service-access pressures that often look very different from those experienced in metropolitan Australia.

Our opportunity is to combine the things that have always made Intereach strong - our regional presence, community relationships and the expertise and commitment of our people - with robust organisational capability, greater use of technology and data, and a deliberate approach to sustainable growth.

None of the achievements described in this report would be possible without our people. We thank our employees and volunteers for their professionalism, adaptability and continued commitment to the children, families, older people, people with disability and communities we serve.

We also thank our Board collectively for its stewardship and support, our government and community partners for their continued confidence in Intereach, and the many organisations with whom we work across our communities.

Most importantly, we thank the thousands of people and families who choose to engage with Intereach and trust us to support them.

It is with this foundation of committed, exceptional people supporting our organisation and shared purpose that we look forward. The 2025–26 year was not without its challenges, but it was also a year in which we grew, learned and invested in the future. We enter 2026–27 with a clearer understanding of the work ahead and confidence in Intereach's capacity to continue making a meaningful difference across regional communities.



Michelle Tai
Co-CEO

Yvette Buhagiar
Co-CEO

Intereach **Board Members**

Intereach is guided by a passionate and committed Board of Directors who deeply care about the wellbeing of our communities.

With a shared dedication to our purpose, they provide thoughtful leadership and direction, helping us stay true to our values while ensuring we continue to deliver meaningful, high-quality services. Their support is vital in shaping a strong, compassionate organisation that puts people first.



Alison Maclean

Alison is an experienced strategist and leader with a strong background in the government and community sectors. She is Director of 3Whitehorses and previously served as Principal Strategic Advisor at the Integrated Family Violence Executive Goulburn.

Alison has also held leadership roles with Northeast Health Wangaratta, the Hume Region Board Chairs Forum, and NESAY, where she has led the organisation's long-term strategic direction since 2015.



Rob Brown

Rob is Director of Strategy at Peppin Family Consulting, supporting families across eastern Australia with financial and business planning. He is a Certified Financial Planner and Family Business Adviser with extensive experience working with individuals, families and rural communities.

Rob is Chair of Deniliquin Newspapers, a former board member of the NSW Rural Assistance Authority, and is actively involved in community leadership and development.



Andrew Johnstone

Andrew is a retired Veterinarian in the Southern Riverina of NSW. He previously ran an extensive Veterinary practice covering southern NSW and northern Victoria.

Andrew has held various community, sporting, and educational roles over many years. Andrew is committed to social justice and raising the profile and awareness of rural and remote community services.



Annette Radford

Annette has had an extensive career in learning and development, working in secondary school and TAFEs as well as designing and developing training programs for animal and plant emergency response.

Annette has spent a large part of her career delivering project support services with the Victoria State Government and is passionate about personal and professional growth.



Noel Graham AM

Noel operates a family business with his wife, son and daughter in law. Noel has board experience spanning two decades both in Australia and internationally.

Noel holds an MBA, is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and is committed to supporting his local community through longstanding volunteer involvement.



Christine Grafitti

Christine has more than 30 years' experience across the health, aged care and disability sectors, with expertise in clinical governance and community services. A registered nurse, she is passionate about social justice and strengthening regional and rural communities.

Christine holds a Bachelor of Nursing, a Diploma of Management and has completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors course (GAICD).



Hamish Bull

Hamish is a Chartered Accountant with more than 20 years' experience in commercial and financial management across the Asia-Pacific region. Having grown up in regional NSW, he is passionate about supporting regional communities.

Hamish holds qualifications in economics, finance and agricultural science, bringing both business and rural perspectives to his work.



Pamela Macdonald

Pamela has more than 20 years' experience in HR, governance and community services across the government, not-for-profit and private sectors.

Pamela is Director of Broadspring Consulting and has held board and leadership roles with organisations including Remembrance Parks Central Victoria and the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Torrein Lau

With over 20 years' experience as a business consultant, Board director, executive coach and CEO, Torrien has a proven track record of delivering organisational, social and financial outcomes.

Torrein is skilled at translating complex challenges into practical solutions and is a passionate advocate for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Intereach **Leadership Team**

At Intereach, our leadership team is united by a strong commitment to building inclusive, thriving communities.

Under the joint leadership of Co-CEOs Michelle Tai and Yvette Buhagiar, we take a collaborative approach that balances strategic direction with operational excellence. They are supported by four outstanding General Managers who bring expertise and leadership to our core areas of work.



Michelle Tai
CO-CEO



Yvette Buhagiar
CO-CEO



Felicity Whorlow
General Manager of People, Quality and Risk



Sarah Matthews
General Manager Operations



Kerri-Anne Hyde
General Manager Operations

Staff **Milestones**

Intereach is fortunate to have many long-serving employees whose dedication has helped strengthen our organisation and make a lasting difference in the communities we support. During the 2025/26 financial year (1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026), we proudly recognised team members celebrating service milestones ranging from five to more than 25 years. We are pleased to acknowledge and celebrate the following employees for their commitment and contribution to Intereach and the communities we serve.

5 Years

Pamela Fitzpatrick
Megan Dixon-Feldbauer
Julieann Godfrey
Lynette Newton
Frances O'Nial
Kay McGrath
Jennifer Power
Muhiba Dahi
Lynette White
Alicia Rose
Autumn Tippet
Alexandria Dyde
Jessica Marazita
Jennifer Parker
Jillian Owen
Stephen Perry
Sarbjit Kaur
Emma Asher
Helen Wild
Madeleine Hetherington
Elizabeth Morgan
Jennifer Camelleri
Jacinta Jones
Jemmah Coates
Lisa Druitt
Rhiannon Roe
Marlee Ellis
Emily Barrow
Jessica Kemp
Amy Evans
Gaye Hooper
Susan Van De Ven
Tiffany Wymouth
Tamara Locke
Katie Marks
Mere'Deth Farrell
Kasey Weaver
Tara Barrett
Wendy Johnston
Jasmine Boyland

10 Years

Karma Nethercote
Kelly Eldridge
Susan Jones
June Madden

15 Years

Carla White
Catherine Velthuis
Emma Edwards
Amanda Rhook

20 Years

Helen Armstrong



Pictured: Helen Armstrong celebrating her 20 year Staff Milestone Award

Inclusion and **Engagement**

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

In 2026, we marked one year since the launch of our 2025-2027 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), providing an opportunity to reflect on our progress and future priorities. Highlights include:

- 52% of the RAP timeframe completed
- 25% of actions fully completed
- 75% of actions in progress or ongoing
- 63 total actions tracked

We thank our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group members for their ongoing commitment to this important work.

Some of the highlights from the RAP:

Pledge to Treaty

Intereach is proud to share in October 2025, our pledge and formal endorsement for Treaty, recognised by the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria. This pledge represents more than a statement of support – it's a commitment to action and a recognition of our roles as an ally, walking together with First Peoples towards truth, justice and healing. By pledging our support, Intereach has formally recognised that the journey of Treaty aligns deeply with our values of strong, connected communities.

First Nations Unlimited Leadership Summitt

Intereach staff members Taigan Spink (Community Support Worker – Deniliquin) and Layhnee Kearns (Child, Family and Community Worker – Wagga Wagga) attended the First Nations Unlimited Leadership Summit in Sydney in late October 2025. This gathering of First Nations people aimed to amplify their voices, wisdom and leadership. It celebrated the vital roles First Nations individuals play in visionaries, advocates, mentors and custodians within their workplaces, communities and on Country.

Gathering on Country, caring for Elders

In May 2026, Intereach staff Yvette Buhagiar (co-CEO), Sarah Matthews (General Manager Operations), Sue Filipovich (Aged care Project Coordinator) and Frances Knight (Inclusion and Engagement Coordinator) travelled to the beautiful Dharnya Centre on Yorta Yorta Country in Barmah Vic to participate in a full day cultural awareness session. Guided by Yorta Yorta knowledge holders and community members, they learnt about caring for Elders – and what Country can teach us about connection, respect and belonging – from Yorta Yorta perspectives.

Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

We are now over half way of our 2024-2027 Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and continue to take meaningful steps to becoming a diverse and inclusive workforce, workplace and community. The action plan incorporates a range of initiatives that will bring our commitment towards diversity and inclusion to life. We say a big thank you to our Diversity and Inclusion reference group members whose passion and knowledge, continue to see such great outcomes for our organisation in this space.

Some of the highlights from our DIAP:

Observance Days

These dates play an important role in how we live our values and reflect our ongoing commitment to inclusion, respect and wellbeing across our organisation and communities we work alongside.

In the last 12 months we have celebrated and recognised

- Harmony Week – with our SETS teams leading and participating in community events across the footprint.
- IDAHOBIT – welcoming guest speaker Delsi Moleta (they/she) from the Victorian Pride Centre, passionate queer advocate, educator and founder of Unicorns to speak at an online Webinar for Intereach staff.

- **Volunteers Week** – saying thank you to our incredible volunteers at Intereach with a series of morning teas and special dinner to show our appreciation.
- **NAIDOC Week** – participating in local events as stall holders and speaking with community about our services and learning how we can better support their needs.
- **Aged Care Employee Day** – Thanking our wondering aged care staff at afternoon teas across our offices. International Day of People with
- **Disability** – Participating in local events to create awareness of disability services and how Intereach can support community members.

International Day of People with Disability Community events

In December 2025, our LAC staff member Fiona Brown coordinated a very successful IDPwD event in Echuca in partnership with key community organisations. People of all ages and abilities came to Echuca East Recreation Reserve to celebrate community connection through inclusive games, arts and crafts, performances, speakers, information stalls, food and all things accessible.

On the same day in Mildura, we held our second IDPwD Come and Try All Abilities Sports Day where participants tried their hand at wheelchair basketball, soccer, and futsal and enjoyed mini games, dancing, badge making, giveaways and more.

In Cootamundra our LAC team ran a Mocktails and Masterpieces event at the office. In Griffith we joined the Griffith City Council for Every Step Counts – community walk, arts, crafts, games, cupcakes and a chance to have your say on the councils Disability Inclusion Plan. In Wagga Wagga our staff ran Triviability and in Bendigo our LAC and EC staff represented Intereach at the Central Victoria Disability Festival. We are proud to continue our involvement in observance days and giving back to the communities we work alongside.

Hidden Disabilities

In September 2025 we were proud to announce that Intereach officially became a corporate member of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, strengthening our commitment to raising awareness and supporting people living with a hidden disability.

As part of this initiative, Intereach made sunflower lanyards and products available to both staff and customers who choose to share that they have a hidden disability. We also launched training across the organisation to help our staff to – recognise the Hidden Disabilities Symbol, gain a deeper understanding of hidden disabilities and confidently approach and support customers who may need a helping hand. We held official launch events in our Albury and Bendigo offices in October 2025.



Pictured: Andrea Clayton (left) and Yvette Buhagiar (right) at the Bendigo Hidden Disabilities launch.



Pictured: Children enjoying fun and games at the International Day of People with Disability Community event in Echuca.

Staff **Thank You Awards**

The annual **Thank You Awards** celebrate the outstanding contributions of Intereach staff across our organisation and communities.

Throughout the year, staff are nominated for their dedication to supporting participants, clients and colleagues. Nominations recognise individuals who embody Intereach's values of Leadership, Partnership and Social Justice.

This year's 'Overall winners' are recognised below. We thank them, and all our staff, for the incredible difference they make every day. Overall we had an impressive 86 staff nominations for the year.



PARTNERSHIP: **We work collectively with others toward a common goal of positive social and cultural change**

Rebekah Clifford has demonstrated the extraordinary impact that can be achieved when people, organisations and communities come together around a shared purpose. Through her leadership and collaborative approach, Rebekah brought Mildura's first inclusive wheelchair basketball program, Hot Wheelies, to life.

What began as an idea quickly grew into a community-wide initiative involving sporting bodies, disability organisations, local government, service providers and people with lived experience of disability. Rebekah worked tirelessly to build strong partnerships, secure funding, source equipment, coordinate transport solutions and bring stakeholders together to ensure the program's success.

Colleagues described Rebekah's passion and dedication as "incredible to watch", recognising her ability to unite people around a common goal and overcome challenges along the way. When transport arrangements unexpectedly fell through, she secured support from a local provider to ensure participants could still attend, demonstrating her determination and commitment to inclusion.

The success of Hot Wheelies has strengthened Intereach's reputation as a leader in community inclusion and collaboration, while creating opportunities for people of all abilities to connect, participate and thrive. Demand for future sessions is already growing, highlighting the lasting impact of Rebekah's work.



LEADERSHIP: **We use our social influence to motivate others to reach their full potential**

Jane Lord is the kind of leader who brings out the very best in those around her. Through her unwavering support, collaborative approach and genuine care for others, Jane has built a culture where team members feel valued, respected and empowered to succeed.

Whether mentoring individuals, guiding her team through challenges or working towards better outcomes for clients, Jane consistently leads with integrity, compassion and professionalism. She takes the time to understand different perspectives, encourages confidence in others and is never afraid to recognise the strengths and contributions of those around her.

Colleagues speak highly of Jane's ability to create a supportive environment where people can learn, grow and thrive. Her commitment to sharing knowledge and developing others has not only strengthened her team but has also contributed to positive outcomes for clients and the wider organisation.

Jane's leadership extends beyond day-to-day operations. She inspires trust, fosters collaboration and embodies the values that make Intereach a great place to work. Her influence can be seen in the confidence of her team, the quality of service delivered to clients, and the strong reputation Intereach maintains within the community.



SOCIAL JUSTICE: **We protect and promote human rights by recognising that all people are free and equal in dignity and rights**

Ivy Jensen has championed social justice by ensuring people from all backgrounds feel seen, heard and valued. Through both her professional work and community involvement, Ivy creates meaningful opportunities for inclusion, connection and belonging.

In her communications role, Ivy uses the power of storytelling to highlight the experiences of individuals and communities that are often underrepresented. Whether through participant stories, social media content or staff recognition, she ensures Intereach's communications reflect our values and celebrate diversity in all its forms.

Beyond her role, Ivy actively supports newly arrived migrants as a Welcome Ambassador in the Echuca region, helping people feel connected and welcomed as they settle into their new communities. Her actions reflect a genuine commitment to breaking down barriers and creating environments where everyone can participate and thrive.

Ivy's work has a lasting impact across Intereach. Through thoughtful, inclusive and person-centred storytelling, she helps build stronger connections between staff, participants, stakeholders and communities. Her efforts continually reinforce who we are as an organisation and the positive difference we strive to make.

Carers Reference Group **(CRG)**

The Intereach Carers Reference Group (CRG) continues to play an important role in strengthening support, connection and advocacy for carers across our organisation and communities. The group remains committed to helping Intereach be a workplace where carers feel recognised, valued and supported, while also raising awareness of the significant contribution carers make every day.

Throughout the year, the CRG has continued to build its profile and engagement with staff through Treehouse communications, creating opportunities to share information, promote available supports and foster connection among carers across our footprint.

During National Carers Week 2025, CRG members partnered with the Communications team to develop a self-care bingo card as a fun and engaging wellbeing initiative. Designed to encourage self-care and spark meaningful conversations, the resource was shared through Treehouse and displayed in offices across the organisation.

Staff were encouraged to complete the activities while enjoying a cuppa and connecting with colleagues. Group members also coordinated local celebrations, including morning teas, small gifts and other activities to acknowledge and thank carers for the invaluable role they play both within our workforce and in the broader community.

The CRG also supported a range of community-based Carers Week events made possible through grant funding. Activities included local lunches and a music bingo event, providing carers with opportunities to connect, socialise and celebrate.

Building on this success, the group has worked closely with the Intereach Grants team to strengthen its understanding of grant processes and contribute to funding applications that will support future Carers Week initiatives, including activities planned for 2026.

During the year, the CRG welcomed representatives from the Human Resources team to join discussions and share information about workplace supports and leave entitlements available to employees balancing work and caring responsibilities. These conversations have helped increase awareness and understanding of the practical supports available to carers within the organisation

CRG members continue to make themselves available as a source of support, information and connection for staff who have caring responsibilities. Through advocacy, awareness raising and peer support, the group helps ensure carers feel heard, supported and connected, while highlighting the unique challenges and valuable contributions of carers across Intereach and the communities we serve.



Pictured: Participants and speaker at CRG information session

Learning and **Development**

Learning and Development continued to play an important role in strengthening workforce capability across Intereach throughout the year. Supported by changes to program structures and the introduction of Workplace Trainers within service areas, the function became more closely connected to day-to-day operations and the evolving needs of teams.

This approach fostered stronger partnerships between Learning and Development, Program Managers and front line teams, helping to ensure learning opportunities remained practical, responsive and aligned with service delivery outcomes. By embedding learning support within program areas, staff were able to access more tailored guidance, capability development and workplace-based learning experiences relevant to their roles.

A key achievement was the delivery of the Facilitated Employment Pathway (FEP), led by Emily B. The program provided new staff members with intensive, practical and well-supported learning experiences, helping them build confidence and capability as they transitioned into their roles. Feedback from participants was consistently positive, highlighting the value of structured support during the onboarding process.

Intereach staff continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to professional growth, accessing study leave and a wide range of professional development opportunities throughout the year. Staff pursued qualifications and further study across disciplines including Counseling, Social Work, Psychological Sciences, Data Analysis, Change Management and the Arts, strengthening both individual career pathways and organisational capability.

Staff also participated in a series of Lunch and Learn sessions, creating opportunities for shared learning, discussion and collaboration across the organisation. Topics focused on team practice, wellbeing and organisational processes, supporting continuous learning and the exchange of knowledge between colleagues. These investments reflect Intereach's commitment to developing a skilled, adaptable and future-focused workforce, while supporting staff to build the knowledge and confidence needed to deliver high-quality services across our communities



Strengthening Learning and Development and Quality

In March 2026, Intereach strengthened its approach to Learning and Development and Quality through the decentralisation of these functions. This change created a closer connection between workforce capability, quality activities and the operational environments in which services are delivered

By positioning support closer to programs, the model enables more responsive, practical and program-informed learning, quality assurance and continuous improvement activities, while maintaining strong organisational standards, systems and governance.

For Learning and Development, this has included embedding Workplace Trainer roles within program areas, strengthening their ability to support induction, up skilling, capability development, learning design and workforce planning. The model recognises that effective workforce development is a shared responsibility and reinforces collaboration between operational leaders, people leaders and trainers.

This approach is helping to build a more connected and sustainable learning culture, where workforce development is closely aligned with service delivery needs and supports positive outcomes for staff, programs and the communities Intereach serves.

Human Resources **- People and Culture**

The People and Culture team continued to focus on improving systems, supporting leaders and enhancing the employee experience across the organisation.

A notable development has been the introduction of AI into recruitment processes, including the initial scoring of candidates and AI-supported interviews. Alongside this, the recruitment module within Employment Hero (EH) has been well received, significantly reducing manual administration and creating a more streamlined experience for both applicants and recruitment panel members.

The transition to the Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) model also reached an important milestone. While the model was introduced in April 2025, it came fully into effect during 2026 once all positions were filled and program structures were established:

- **HRBP 1: Family and Mental Health, Education and Care, Corporate Services**
- **HRBP 2: Local Area Coordination and Early Childhood**
- **HRBP 3: Aged Care, including Community Transport**

Feedback from Team Leaders and Managers has been overwhelmingly positive, with the model providing a direct line of support and expertise within each program area. HR Business Partners act as strategic advisors, supporting workforce planning, employee relations, capability development and employee engagement.

A major achievement during the year was the successful implementation of Employment Hero, bringing Human Resources and Payroll together into a single integrated system. Following the initial project meeting on 29 April 2025, significant work was undertaken including trial pay runs, single sign-on configuration, migration of employee and historical data, and implementation of new functionality designed to reduce manual processes and improve efficiency. Employment Hero was officially launched on 7 November 2025 and continues to evolve through regular system enhancements.

The platform has delivered a number of benefits, including improved management of employment contracts, role profiles and workforce documentation. Documents can now be generated directly from the system, with workflow approvals, electronic signatures and automatic filing into employee records. Flex accrual processes have also transitioned from manual spreadsheets to the Employment Hero platform, providing greater visibility and support for both staff and managers.

On 5 March 2026, Intereach launched the full Your Opinion Matters Survey (YOMS), providing workers, volunteers and Family Day Care Educators with the opportunity to share honest feedback about their experience at Intereach. Workplace flexibility emerged as a standout theme, with many respondents identifying it as a key contributor to a positive employee experience. The Leadership Team has worked together to review the feedback and identify priority areas of focus for the organisation.

Employee wellbeing continued to be supported through the Acacia Employee Assistance Program (EAP). During the year, 189 confidential sessions were accessed by staff, volunteers and family members. The service provides access to a wide range of supports including counseling, dietitian services, financial coaching and a manager support hotline. Acacia also provided critical incident support when required, with Intereach engaging the service on three occasions to provide direct, onsite support to staff.

Intereach also continued to promote the benefits of salary packaging, with account managers visiting offices across the footprint, including Wagga Wagga, Seymour, Shepparton, Bendigo, Deniliquin, Echuca and Griffith. These face-to-face sessions provided staff with opportunities to better understand and maximise the benefits available to them, with further visits planned across additional locations.

A new Lunch and Learn initiative was introduced during the year, creating opportunities for managers to come together, build capability and discuss key workforce topics in a supportive environment. Sessions covered a range of practical themes including Leading High Performing Teams, Flexible Working Arrangements, Essential Conversations, Decisive Release (Terminations), All Things Leave and Performance Improvement Plans. The initiative has been well received and will continue to expand across additional topics and programs in the future.

Work Health and **Safety**

During 2025–26, the Work Health and Safety (WHS) team continued to support Intereach's commitment to providing safe, healthy and supportive workplaces. Through risk management, injury management, emergency preparedness activities and collaboration with leaders across the organisation, the team worked to strengthen safety practices, reduce workplace risks and support organisational resilience.

Key activities during the year included:

- Supporting the identification, assessment and management of workplace risks in partnership with operational teams, Assets and Infrastructure, and support services.
- Coordinating the management and investigation of workplace incidents to support organisational learning, corrective action and continuous improvement.
- Strengthening injury management and return to work practices, with an increased focus on improving workers compensation outcomes through early intervention, injury prevention and sustainable return to work arrangements.
- Reviewing incident, hazard and injury trends to identify opportunities for preventative action, strengthen risk controls and reduce the likelihood of workplace injury.
- Supporting organisational preparedness and response during significant weather events through the provision of safety information, risk management guidance and operational advice to leaders. These efforts helped maintain staff safety, support business continuity and ensure services could continue to be delivered safely across the communities we serve.
- Delivering Work Health and Safety Month initiatives and communications focused on key workplace risks, including hazard identification, driver safety, ergonomics, and slips, trips and falls, helping to build awareness and reinforce safe work practices across the organisation.
- Completing foundational work to support implementation of Intereach's new Quality Management System (QMS), which will enhance incident management, reporting, investigation processes and broader safety management systems.

Incident, hazard and near miss reporting continued to provide valuable insight into workplace risks across Intereach. Information from reporting activities was used to inform preventative initiatives, workplace improvements, safety communications and risk control measures. Intereach remains committed to fostering a positive reporting culture that supports early intervention, continuous improvement and the prevention of workplace injury and illness.



Quality and **Risk**

During 2025/26, Intereach continued to strengthen its quality, compliance and continuous improvement framework to support service excellence and organisational growth.

Significant progress was made in developing the organisation's new Quality Management System (QMS), including the design of dedicated sites for Aged Care, Children's Services, Disability Services, Family and Mental Health Services, and Corporate Services. These enhancements will provide a more streamlined and user-friendly platform for document management, assurance, risk management and continuous improvement, with the broader Policy Connect rollout planned for 2026/27.

The decentralisation of quality functions strengthened support across the organisation, with specialist Quality Advisor roles established for key service areas. The Quality team also supported regulatory and legislative reform activities across Aged Care, Children's Services, Child Safe Standards, Disability Services, Mental Health and Work Health and Safety, while assisting with the establishment of the new Deniliquin Preschool.

A key milestone was the implementation of the Audit Evidence Collection Tool (AECT), supporting audit readiness and preparation for Aged Care accreditation requirements. Aged Care also successfully completed the Community Transport Point-to-Point Audit.

During the year, a range of governance, quality and compliance documents were reviewed or developed, including Child Safe, Work Health and Safety, Risk Management, Workforce Planning, Learning and Development, Diversity and Inclusion, Feedback and Complaints.

These initiatives have strengthened Intereach's governance, assurance and compliance capability and enhanced readiness for future regulatory and service delivery requirements.

Risk Management

Intereach continued to strengthen its risk management capability during 2025/26 through the development of a centralised organisational risk management framework within the new QMS Assurance platform.

Work commenced on enhancing the organisational risk register to improve risk identification, reporting and oversight across the organisation, including the incorporation of strategic risks. This work will support stronger governance, informed decision-making and organisational resilience, with the enhanced risk register scheduled for presentation to the Board in 2026/27.

Feedback - Compliments and Complaints

Intereach values feedback as an important source of insight to improve services, strengthen relationships and recognise positive outcomes. Throughout 2025/26, complaints, compliments and feedback received across the organisation were monitored, reviewed and used to inform service improvements and quality assurance activities.

Feedback from clients, families, carers and stakeholders contributed to continuous improvement initiatives across a range of programs and services. Compliments received acknowledged the dedication and professionalism of employees, while complaints were managed in accordance with organisational procedures to ensure concerns were addressed fairly, respectfully and in a timely manner.

"June went above and beyond for the participant. Once they had spoken the participant was very happy and very appreciative of the support that June gave them." - NILS Participant

"Nadine works really hard to support participant to achieve positive outcomes within the NDIS space. She advocates for participants to get the supports they need to improve their health and wellbeing." - NDIS Participant

"My quality of life would be pretty poor without them, couldn't manage without them. Allows me to continue at home" - Aged Care Services Participant

"Without ROAR, there is a giant hole in the already scant services available for our small border town." - ROAR Participant

"Our daughter is all smiles the moment she exits the car and walks into daycare, waving as we leave."- FDC Participant

"Amber is a most helpful and patient person. She guided me through the pitfall of form filling with good humour and competence. Thankyou Amber." - FMH Community Strengthening Participant

Intereach in **Numbers**

Customer Support

77,409 - Total enquiries

Early Childhood

6,315 - NDIS Early Childhood Participants
2,136 - Children supported with Early Connections
295 - Children supported with Early Supports
78% - Of families reported satisfaction with the service

Local Area Coordination (LAC)

16,462 - Participants across entire footprint
2,073 - Information, Linkages and Capacity Building across the entire footprint

Human Resources (HR)

510 - Employees
53 - Volunteers
7 - Students
122 - External vacancies filled
74 - Internal recruitment opportunities
11.75 - Average days to hire

Aged Care Services

42,429 - Meals delivered
2,200 - Total Commonwealth Home Support Programme clients
53,756 - Total Commonwealth Home Support Programme service hours
517 - Total Support At Home clients
84,957 - Total Support At Home service hours

Community Transport

3,385 - Deniliquin number of trips
7,561 - Griffith number of trips
192,790km - Deniliquin mileage
132,679km - Griffith mileage

Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)

469 - People with settlement service and case management
785 - People with support to address their individual settlement needs
30 - Different groups across funded locations
202 - Funded group session delivered
1,206 - Participant attendances recorded across these group sessions

Reach Out and Relax (ROAR)

34 - Group programs delivered
156 - Group sessions facilitated
39 - Events and community activities delivered
195 - Clients supported with one-on-one services
2,276 - Occasions of service recorded

Quality and Risk Audits

Aged Care - AECT (Audit Evidence Collection Tool) program commenced in April 2026 to support accreditation in 2027
Community Transport - Point to Point / April 2025
OOSH - External audit (Q2 2025/2026)

Improvement and Feedback

334 - Total complaints received
700 - Total compliments received
14% - Reduction in complaints
95% - Positive Feedback Rate*
1,034 - Total feedback items received
26 - Improvements identified from external feedback including paticipant surveys and complaints
12 - Improvements implemented from external feedback including participant surveys and complaints

Early **Childhood (EC)**

Our NDIS Early Childhood (EC) team continues to deliver meaningful support, helping children 0-8 years with developmental concern, delay and/or diagnosed disability, and families and carers, thrive through early intervention, information and service navigation. This year, we are proud to share some highlights and good news stories.

Early Supports

Over the past year, the NDIS Early Childhood program has strengthened its focus on Early Support services. Early Supports provides time-limited early childhood intervention for children under 6 with developmental concerns, ineligible for NDIS funded supports, and their families or carers.

It is grounded in family-centred practice, capacity building and coaching, supporting children to learn and participate in everyday home, community and early childhood settings. Services combine individual and group support options delivered by Allied Health and Educator qualified practitioners.

Place-Based Support in Action:

Robinvale

In Robinvale, a small community near Mildura with limited access to early childhood supports, the NDIS Early Childhood team strengthened local connections through regular outreach and collaboration. Visiting every second Wednesday during the term, the team worked alongside Our Place, preschool field officers, early years supports, family services and other travelling providers to understand community needs, reduce duplication and coordinate support for families.

Across the visits, 10 families from the Robinvale district were connected with Intereach's Early Childhood team, with further referrals and advocacy to family services and allied health supports where needed. The Early Childhood Coordinator team provided information, guidance and practical connections for local educators, playgroup facilitators and community partners to continue supporting families beyond the outreach visits.

BDAC

A member of the Early Childhood team attends djimbaya Kindergarten at BDAC once a fortnight to meet with families, discuss support pathways, share information and strengthen local connections. These regular visits provide families with timely guidance about child development and the services available to support their child's progress.

The partnership also supports djimbaya Kindergarten at BDAC team members to build confidence and knowledge in identifying developmental needs and understanding referral options. This ongoing co-location has had a positive impact for the community, creating a more accessible and culturally connected entry point for families seeking early childhood support.



Pictured: Two children exploring creative play, with parental support nearby.

CASE STUDY

From First Words to Meaningful Conversations

Intereach's Early Supports team delivered the Hanen It Takes Two to Talk® program, an evidence-based, Speech Pathology-led group designed to help parents support their child's language development through everyday interactions.

Delivered virtually, the program brought together families from across the Intereach footprint, providing practical strategies to build communication skills at home while creating opportunities for parents to connect with others on similar journeys.

Throughout the program, parents reported significant improvements in both their children's communication skills and their own confidence in supporting their child's learning and development. One parent shared that their child had:

> ***"gone from barely talking to now talking and expressing and putting words together"***

Beyond speech and language outcomes, families also valued the opportunity to connect with other parents in a supportive environment. For many, the group reduced feelings of isolation and provided reassurance that they were not facing challenges alone.

One participant reflected:

> ***"getting to know the other parents... it felt like I wasn't alone."***

The program highlights the positive impact of early intervention and parent-led learning approaches. By equipping parents with practical skills and fostering peer connection, families were empowered to support their children's communication development in meaningful and lasting ways.

CASE STUDY

Building Confidence Through Consistent Support

This case study highlights the positive impact of Early Supports services for Daisy (not her real name), a four-year-old child experiencing emotional and behavioural challenges at home. Daisy's mother was feeling overwhelmed by frequent tantrums, sleep difficulties, constant movement and conflicting advice from family members and educators.

Working closely with the family, an Early Supports Practitioner listened to their concerns and introduced simple, practical strategies that could be easily incorporated into daily routines. These included a visual bedtime routine, a first-then board, the use of a timer and movement breaks such as star jumps to support regulation and transitions. The practitioner also helped Daisy's mother build confidence in using play-based approaches to strengthen connection, learning and communication.

Recognising the importance of a coordinated approach, the practitioner worked alongside Daisy's early childhood educators and local community hub to ensure everyone was supporting the family in a consistent way. This collaborative approach helped create a stronger support network around Daisy and her family

As a result, Daisy's mother reported feeling more confident and supported in responding to her daughter's needs. Strategies became more consistent across home and early learning environments, and the family was successfully connected with ongoing community-based parenting supports.

This case study demonstrates how early intervention, practical strategies and strong collaboration can help families build confidence, improve consistency and create positive outcomes for young children.



Pictured: An educator engaging with children through handwriting and constructive play activities.

Children's **Services**

Over the past year, our Children's Services team has continued to provide high-quality education and care across our Family Day Care services (NSW and VIC), Deniliquin OOSH, Barham OOSH and, most recently, Deniliquin Community Preschool. Our services have remained focused on creating safe, welcoming and engaging environments where children can learn, grow and build meaningful connections.

Key Achievements and Highlights

The most significant milestone for the year was the successful opening of Deniliquin Community Preschool in May 2026. The preschool was established as an extension of our existing OOSH service and was developed in response to a growing need for early childhood education services within the Deniliquin community.

The successful opening of Deniliquin Community Preschool has been a significant achievement for our team and an exciting addition to the Children's Services portfolio. Established in response to a clear need for additional early childhood education options within the community, the service has already been well received by local families.

We are particularly proud that the service is led by a highly experienced Early Childhood Manager and that the preschool program is delivered by a qualified and experienced Early Childhood Teacher (ECT). This ensures children and families have access to a high-quality program that supports learning, development and a successful transition to school.

We have been able to provide this service with the support of Start strong funding which allows the families to access our Preschool at an affordable cost.

Another highlight was the completion of facility improvements, including bathroom renovations and painting upgrades. These works have created more welcoming, functional and child-friendly environments for children, families and educators, reflecting our ongoing commitment to providing quality learning spaces.

Throughout the year, both Deniliquin OOSH and and Barham OOSH continued to deliver After School Care and Vacation Care Programs. These programs both providing an important service for local families during the term and also the school holiday periods.

Children participated in a variety of activities and experiences that encouraged creativity, social connection and fun in a safe and supportive environment.



Impact on Our Community

Across our Children's Services, we have continued to provide safe, inclusive and high-quality education and care options that support local children and families.

The introduction of the Deniliquin Community Preschool has increased access to early childhood education within the region, while our OOSH and Vacation Care programs have continued to meet an important community need.

Together, these services provide families with flexible and reliable education and care options that support participation in work, study and community life. Our educators have worked tirelessly to create positive and enriching experiences for children, fostering strong relationships with families and helping each child feel a sense of belonging within our services.

This year has been one of growth, investment and opportunity, and we are proud of the positive impact our team continues to make across Deniliquin and Barham.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, Children's Services remains committed to delivering high-quality education and care that supports children to thrive. We will continue to respond to the needs of families across Deniliquin and Barham, strengthen our services, and provide inclusive, engaging programs that create positive outcomes for children and their communities.

Family Day Care (FDC)

2026 has been a year of growth, achievement, and continued commitment to quality education and care across Intereach Family Day Care. Throughout the year, our educators have provided nurturing, play-based learning environments that support children to grow, develop, and thrive while building strong relationships with families and their local communities.

The early childhood education and care sector has experienced significant reform throughout 2026, particularly in relation to child safety, child protection, and safeguarding practices. Intereach Family Day Care remains firmly committed to ensuring child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, culture, and daily practice.

Through ongoing professional development, policy review, risk management processes, and educator support, the service continues to strengthen its commitment to creating environments where every child feels safe, valued, respected, and heard.

Throughout the year, Intereach Family Day Care welcomed compliance and regulatory visits across both jurisdictions in which the service operates. Our New South Wales services underwent compliance monitoring by the NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Regulatory Authority, while our Victorian services received visits from the Victorian Education and Care Regulatory Authority (VECRA).

These visits resulted in outstanding compliance outcomes, reflecting the dedication of educators and staff in maintaining high standards of education, care, safety, and regulatory compliance.

Intereach Family Day Care has continued to expand its footprint across regional communities, increasing access to quality family day care for children and families. Over the past twelve months, new educators have commenced operating in:

- Narrandera
- Cohuna
- Cootamundra
- Lockhart

This growth reflects the ongoing demand for flexible, community-based early childhood education and care and strengthens Intereach's capacity to support families across a wider geographical area.

The commitment and professionalism of Intereach educators was also recognised through the 2026 Family Day Care Australia (FDCA) Excellence in Family Day Care Awards, with 19 educators nominated by families.

As Australia's only awards program dedicated solely to family day care, these awards recognise educators who make a positive difference in the lives of children and families. The nominations reflect the strong relationships our educators build with families, their dedication to quality education and care, and the lasting impact they have within their communities.

Intereach Family Day Care is proud to support educators in their ongoing professional development and lifelong learning. During 2026, Rowena Shipton and Kelly Campbell (Griffith) successfully upgraded their qualifications to a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. These achievements demonstrate a commitment to professional excellence and continuous improvement in practice.



Pictured: Two children baking Anzac biscuits during our FDC Anzac Day event in 2025

Children and Parenting Service **(CAPS)**

The Children and Parenting Service provides early intervention and prevention support to strengthen the wellbeing, development and safety of children and families. The service works with parents, carers and children to build parenting confidence, strengthen family relationships, support healthy child development and improve access to practical, social and emotional supports.

The service is family-centred, strengths-based and culturally responsive. It supports families from pregnancy and early childhood through to school years, with a focus on children from birth to 12 years and flexibility to support young people up to 18 years where needed. Support may be delivered through individual work, group programs, home visits, supported playgroups, parenting education, care coordination, referrals and community-based activities.

Peer Support groups

- New Parents group (Edward and Murray shires)
- Mums and Bubs group (Hay shire)
- Minds in Motion after school Lego group
- Community Capacity building groups
- Focus on Kimochis groups as we continue to have a high demand for this program in primary schools and Pre-schools across Edward, Hay and Murray shires

Community Capacity Building events

- Art in the Park Event
- Introduction to Infant First Aid
- Free Child Car Safety check sessions (In conjunction with NSW transport)

New Parents Group Feedback

> *"Very good group, helpful in gaining knowledge about services. Eg: was able to go see physio, lactation consultant, dietician/nutritionist"* - Annonymous

"Understood baby development and felt reassured" - Annonymous

> *"Met some great mums who I'll connect with and have a friendship with, who are in same situation as myself"* - Annonymous

> *"Love the group. The presenters are extremely helpful and building connections with other mums in the thick of it like me. Thankyou"* - Annonymous

"Enjoyed it all! Am glad I came to most sessions and I feel supported". - Annonymous

> *"I have recently moved to Deniliquin, and I already feel so connected. Visiting Baby Bounce and Playgroup are our favourites. These sessions have been absolutely helpful, and I am very grateful to be able to participate"* - Annonymous

> *"Very welcoming and supportive group of people. Thoroughly enjoy getting out of the house on a Tuesday morning and chatting with like minded people"* - Annonymous

> *"Great presenters at all sessions, very worthwhile. Thankyou for the opportunity to attend these sessions. Great network of Mums and Bubs formed."* - Annonymous

Introduction to Infant First Aid session Feedback

> *"Very informative & well structured. Extremely valuable and gave me greater confidence in responding to different emergencies."* - Annonymous

"Fantastic – thank you!" - Annonymous

"Grateful for Intereach covering the $30 thankyou" - Annonymous



GOOD NEWS STORY

Esther charts **her own course**

If there's one thing Esther has never been afraid to do, it's dream big.

At just 18 years old, the Glenburn teenager is an accomplished artist, has flown a plane, sailed tall ships, joined the Air Force Cadets, built intricate model sailing vessels from scratch and inspired other young people with disability to follow their dreams.

So, when asked about her greatest achievement, it's no surprise she struggles to choose just one.

After a moment's thought, Esther settles on a recent highlight: being selected to join the iconic Young Endeavour on a 11-day voyage at sea.

> ***"It was fun,"*** she said.
>
> ***"The best part was climbing up the rigging."***

For Esther, the voyage was much more than an adventure. It was the culmination of years spent pursuing a passion for ships, sailing and exploration.

For her mother, Ruth, it was also a proud reminder of how far her daughter has come.

> ***"All of her hard work has accumulated into getting on a ship,"*** she said.

Diagnosed with autism when she was six, Esther has always seen the world a little differently and it is proving to be her greatest strength.

Growing up on a rural property surrounded by bushland, she spent hours exploring, imagining and creating. Those interests have grown into a fascination with engineering, maritime history, aviation and drone technology.

Among her many passions is building functional model tall ships, a hobby inspired by a large painting of a ship, painted by its Captain, William Stevenson in 1904. William, Esther's great-great-great-grandfather, sailed to Australia from England, with her great-grandfather as a young deckhand.

What began as a small project quickly became something much bigger. Esther now spends countless hours researching, designing, and constructing detailed sailing ships, combining creativity, problem-solving, and technical skill.

Asked about her fascination with tall ships, she quickly answers.

> ***"It's one big, massive machine that is operated by a team of people," she said.***
>
> ***"I like old things. They're stylish, unique and beautiful."***

Her love of adventure doesn't stop at sea. Esther was an Australian Air Force Cadet for four years, completed a year's worth of flight training on a Cessna 150 aircraft and is exploring opportunities in drone technology and maritime applications. She is also about to start work experience with a specialist hobby store aligned with her interests, helping her develop practical skills and explore future career pathways.

Esther is a young woman driven by determination, curiosity and a willingness to challenge expectations.

> ***"She's an unstoppable firecracker," Ruth said.***
>
> ***"If she likes something, she'll go and get it or do it. Hello world, let me at it."***

Ruth said supports from Intereach and the NDIS had played an important role in helping her daughter build confidence, develop life skills and pursue her goals.

Through NDIS funding, Esther has accessed a range of supports over the past seven years, including speech therapy, psychology, occupational therapy, and podiatry.

One of the most influential supports has been her long-term speech and pragmatic communication therapist, who has worked alongside Esther throughout her secondary school years.

For Esther, those supports have helped her better understand herself and the people around her.

For Ruth, the transformation has been remarkable.

"Coming out of her shell, just blossoming, being herself, finding herself," she said.

"It's helped her grow and blossom and be strong and independent."

Attending Croydon Community School, Esther's learning is tailored to her interests and aspirations through the school's Big Picture Design.

With her sights set firmly on the future, Esther continues to build the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to turn her passions into a career.

Most importantly, she has embraced exactly who she is.

It's that unique way of seeing the world that continues to propel Esther forward, whether she's navigating the deck of a tall ship, taking to the skies or building the next model vessel in her workshop.

And for other young people living with disability, she has one simple piece of advice:

"Don't care about what other people think. You do what you want to do."

If you're living with disability and looking for support to achieve your goals, contact Intereach on 1300 488 226 or visit www.intereach.com.au/service/people-with-disability/









Pictured right: Esther at the helm of the Young Endeavour, trying her hand at archery, taking to the skies in a light aircraft, and showcasing one of her watercolour paintings of the Endeavour.

Aboriginal **Family Health Program**

The Aboriginal Health Program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities to access culturally safe, holistic and community-informed health and wellbeing services. Recognising that health encompasses physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing, the program promotes strong connections to family, community, culture and Country as foundations for positive health outcomes.

Working alongside Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, local health services, Elders, community leaders and families, the program improves access to prevention, early intervention, primary health care, health promotion and wellbeing supports. Services are delivered in a respectful, trauma-aware and family-centred way, guided by local community priorities.

In July, 18 participants attended the Women's Cultural Activities Group, held each Monday. The women came together to enjoy arts and crafts, lunch and refreshments, while sharing stories and connecting with one another.

Guest speaker Leonie Frances from TAFE Deniliquin worked with the group on preserving and sharing community stories. One participant spoke about the history of "Verandah Babies", sparking meaningful conversations and highlighting the importance of storytelling in strengthening community connections.

NAIDOC WEEK - Dharnya Day

Intereach was proud to take part in the official Opening of Dharnya Day. Despite a foggy start to the morning, the weather cleared by lunchtime for a wonderful day of celebration. A bus was arranged to bring community members to the event, with strong engagement from those who attended.

The day featured a vibrant program including performances by the Yorta Yorta Dancers, live music, and more than 50 stalls offering food and children's activities. Attendees had the opportunity to explore the stalls, connect with a range of service providers, and take part in the official opening of the new Dharnya Centre.

It was heartening to see children and community members engage with Intereach's activities on the day, including pot planting and painting, while also learning more about our programs. A huge crowd turned out, making it a memorable "meet and greet" for community members of all ages.



Pictured above: LAC Jessica Kemp at the Dharnya Day - NAIDOC Week event

Deniliquin Koori Market Day

The Deni Koori Market Day was a fantastic success, with families and individuals eager to complete their forms and claim their NAIDOC shirts. Turnout on the day was excellent, and there was strong community interest in learning more about Intereach's services.

Staff were on hand with brochures and giveaways, and held consultations with community members throughout the day. It was particularly rewarding to see individuals discover services they hadn't previously known about, including Aged Care, Community Transport, Family Services, EC Services and NDIS support.

Approximately 250 people attended on the day — a great result and a fantastic effort by the whole team.



Pictured above: Inclusion and Engagement Coordinator Frances Knight with children at Deniliquin Koori Market Day

Settlement, Engagement and Transition Support **(SETS)**

The **Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)** program plays an important role in supporting humanitarian entrants, other vulnerable migrants and their communities as they navigate their settlement journey.

Helping Families Settle

Intereach commenced delivery of the SETS program in 2024. During the second year of service delivery, our dedicated Settlement Workers continued to build strong relationships with individuals, families, community groups and local services, providing practical support and creating opportunities for people to connect, participate and build confidence within their communities.

The SETS program focuses on strengthening independence, self-agency, self-efficacy and personal wellbeing, while supporting individuals and families to address their settlement needs, increase social and economic participation, and develop stronger connections within their local communities.

Recognising that every individual, family and community has different experiences, strengths and settlement needs, the program provides flexible and tailored support that responds to local priorities. Through individual support, group activities, community engagement and strong partnerships, Intereach works alongside communities to build capacity and achieve meaningful settlement outcomes.

Examples of targeted activities included:

- Birrang Driving Support Group
- Wentworth Shire Employment Tour
- Women's Swimming Lessons
- 72-hour Emergency Planning
- Transport for NSW Child Restraint Checks

These activities provided participants with practical knowledge, skills and connections to support greater independence and participation within their communities.

Social Participation Groups

Social participation is an important part of settlement, providing opportunities for people to develop friendships, strengthen community connections and participate in activities in a safe and welcoming environment.

During the reporting period, five social participation groups were delivered, with a total of 609 participant attendances across the groups.

Activities included:

- Campaspe Women's Walk and Talk
- Women's Group Melbourne Excursion
- Men's Group in Swan Hill
- Women's Cooking Lessons
- PNG Families Social Groups
- Mildura Sewing Group

These groups provided opportunities for participants to build social networks, share culture and experiences, develop confidence and reduce social isolation.

Child and Youth-Focused Groups

Supporting children and young people to participate, connect and develop a sense of belonging is an important component of the SETS program.

During the funding period, five child and youth-focused groups were delivered, engaging 133 identified participants across multiple sessions and locations.

Activities included:

- SETS Sprinkles Playgroup
- MLHD STEPS Preschool Eye Test initiative
- Netball NSW Inclusion Project
- Play and Chat
- Study Lounge

These activities created opportunities for children and young people to develop social connections, participate in community activities and access services and supports that promote their wellbeing and inclusion.

Conversational English

Building confidence in English is an important part of supporting people to navigate everyday life, access services and participate more fully within their communities.

Intereach delivered six Conversational English groups across multiple locations, supporting 284 identified participants with opportunities to practise English in welcoming and informal environments.

Groups included:

- Coffee and Chat – Cootamundra
- Conversational Club – Corowa
- Conversational Classes – Swan Hill
- Conversational English – Griffith
- Finley Conversation Club
- Young Everyday English

These groups provided more than opportunities to practise language; they also created spaces for people to build confidence, develop friendships and strengthen their connection to the local community.

Community Events and Connection

Community events provide an important opportunity to celebrate cultural diversity, bring communities together and strengthen a sense of belonging.

During the reporting period, Intereach supported and delivered five community events across our service locations, including:

- Muharram
- Welcome to Cootamundra Evening
- Multicultural Shared Lunch
- Griffith Multicultural Festival – 2025 and 2026
- Harmony Day

These events brought people from diverse backgrounds together to celebrate culture, share experiences and build connections with the broader community.

Building Awareness and Safety

Intereach also delivered three Forced Marriage Identification and Information sessions, supporting community members to build their understanding of forced marriage, recognise potential risks and understand where support may be available.

Sessions included:

- Forced Marriage Information Session for Women
- Men's Group – Forced Marriage Information Session
- Forced Marriage Identification and Information

These sessions provided safe spaces for participants to ask questions, increase their knowledge and strengthen their understanding of safety, choice and available support.

Strengthening Community and Sector Partnerships

Strong partnerships are essential to achieving positive settlement outcomes. Throughout the reporting period, Intereach actively strengthened its presence across the settlement, multicultural and broader community services sectors through networking, collaboration and ongoing engagement.

During the reporting period, Intereach:

- Connected with 732 sector representatives and stakeholders.
- Participated in 130 governance and partnership meetings.
- Recorded 2,340 group client attendances across 130 community engagement sessions.

These partnerships have strengthened referral pathways, increased awareness of available services and supported a more connected and collaborative approach to settlement across our communities.



Pictured above: Deniliquin SETS Coffee and Chat

Looking Ahead

The continued growth of the SETS program demonstrates the importance of flexible, community-led settlement support. Through individual case management, targeted groups, community events, language support and strong sector partnerships, Intereach continues to work alongside individuals, families and communities to build confidence, independence and connection.

Helping families settle is about more than accessing services — it is about building belonging, strengthening community connections and supporting people to feel confident and empowered in their new communities.



Pictured above: Mother and Daughter at Mildura SETS event

CASE STUDY

A New Beginning: Building Confidence and Independence

Mildura - Victoria

A woman in her early 30s from Iran arrived in Australia with her husband after a difficult journey. After marrying outside her faith, the couple first moved to Turkey due to serious safety concerns and challenges with her family. These circumstances ultimately led them to leave their home country and start a new life together. They later settled in Mildura.

When she first arrived, life was not easy. Her English was limited, she felt isolated, and without a driver's licence or reliable transport, it was difficult to get around and maintain her independence. Determined to create a better future, she connected with the SETS program. Through this support, she gradually built her confidence, improved her English skills and worked towards obtaining her driver's licence. Over time, these small but significant steps made a real difference in her daily life and helped her regain a sense of independence and control.

Reflecting on her journey, she shared, ***"At the beginning, I felt lost and alone, but this support helped me feel more confident and hopeful."*** She also said, ***"Learning English changed everything for me. Now I can speak for myself and feel part of the community."***

Obtaining her driver's licence was another important milestone. She explained that it gave her the freedom to work, attend appointments and better support her family. She spoke highly of the program and the role it played in helping her rebuild her life, achieve her goals and look to the future with confidence.

Today, both she and her husband are working full-time while continuing their studies. They have purchased their own home and recently welcomed a baby boy. She is now more confident, independent and connected to her community, providing a powerful example of how the right support at the right time can help people build a brighter future.

CASE STUDY

From Uncertainty to Belonging

Swan Hill - Victoria

When Cambodian couple Ly Hok Lim and Huo Pheng Chhun arrived in Australia, they were searching for something many people take for granted: safety and the opportunity to build a better future.

Leaving behind their home, loved ones and familiar surroundings, they arrived in a country where they spoke little English, knew no-one and faced the challenge of starting over.

Today, the Swan Hill couple speak of something very different: friendship, community and a place they are proud to call home.

Their journey is one of the One Million Stories celebrated during Refugee Week 2026. For Intereach, it highlights the important role communities play in helping people rebuild their lives.

Through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, Intereach has supported more than 3,000 refugees and migrants, including Ly and Huo, to settle into life in Australia by creating opportunities for connection, confidence and belonging.

> ***"Every person who arrives in Australia brings their own story, skills, experiences and dreams for the future,"*** SETS Program Manager Cass Hunt said.
>
> ***"Refugee Week is an opportunity to celebrate those stories and recognise the strength, resilience and contributions refugees make in our communities every day."***

Having experienced the impacts of conflict and instability in Cambodia under the Pol Pot regime during his younger years, Ly was seeking safety, opportunity and a fresh start.

Sponsored by his brother, Ly arrived in Australia 10 years ago on a Humanitarian Visa. His wife, Huo, joined him six months ago.

> ***"Australia is a good place to feel safe and there is a lot of support here, from the government and the community,"*** Ly said.

However, settling into a new life came with challenges.

> ***"The hardest thing for us is the language,"*** they said.
>
> ***"Everything is new. We have to adapt to a new environment."***

With support from local services, including AusUnityAid and later the SETS program, the couple gradually found their footing in Swan Hill.

The practical support they received helped them improve their English, navigate local services and build connections within the community. More importantly, it helped them feel welcomed and supported.

> ***"For a lady like me, living far away in a new environment and culture, it helps a lot,"*** Huo said.
>
> ***"I feel happy and safe. I don't feel lonely."***

Slowly, the fear and uncertainty they once carried began to fade.

> ***"We don't feel afraid to go out. We can go out and everything is okay,"*** Ly said.

Simple acts of kindness, friendly conversations and opportunities to connect with others helped transform uncertainty into confidence and belonging, turning strangers into neighbours and a new town into a community.

> ***"It made me feel warm,"*** Huo said.
>
> ***"I feel like we are the same family."***

Today, Ly and Huo continue to build their lives in Swan Hill and remain grateful for the opportunities and support they have found in Australia.

> ***"First of all, I would like to thank all the Australian people and the government,"*** Ly said.
>
> ***"We feel very lucky to live in Australia."***



Pictured above: Cambodian couple Ly and Huo photographed in front of the Sydney Harbour Bridge

CASE STUDY

Advocacy Secures Critical Financial Support for Humanitarian Family

In late 2025, Intereach partnered with the Welfare Rights Centre (WRC) to support a multicultural family whose Centrelink payment application had been automatically declined due to their visa category. While the applicant had a refugee-like background and their partner had arrived in Australia through the humanitarian program, their eligibility had not been correctly assessed.

After reviewing the family's circumstances, it became clear they met the eligibility requirements and were not subject to the newly arrived waiting period. Recognising the financial hardship this was causing, Intereach and the WRC worked with the family to gather supporting evidence and seek a review of the decision.

In February 2026, the review was successful, resulting in approximately $10,000 in back payments for the family. They expressed their gratitude, acknowledging they would not have known how to challenge the original decision without support.

This outcome highlights the value of advocacy and strong partnerships in helping vulnerable community members access their entitlements. It also demonstrates how timely support can improve a family's financial security, wellbeing and settlement journey.

CASE STUDY

Inspiring Future Aspirations Through Community Connections

One of the most memorable outcomes of the SETS program involved supporting a 12-year-old girl to explore her dream of becoming a pilot. After learning about her aspiration, Intereach partnered with RAMAIR Flying School in Wentworth to provide the family with an opportunity to experience the aviation industry firsthand.

During the visit, the young participant was welcomed by staff, introduced to a range of light aircraft and given the opportunity to sit in the cockpit, learn about aviation careers and speak directly with an experienced pilot about the pathway to becoming one herself.

The experience gave her valuable insight into the training and commitment required to achieve her goal and inspired her to continue pursuing her ambition. While flight training is currently beyond the family's financial means, the visit showed her that a career in aviation is possible and within reach.

This story highlights the power of community partnerships in creating meaningful opportunities for young people from multicultural backgrounds. Sometimes a single experience can spark confidence, broaden horizons and encourage a young person to keep striving towards their dreams.

CASE STUDY

Building Confidence Through Conversational English

Cootamundra - NSW

Mercy, a Chinese migrant living in Cootamundra, attended Intereach's Conversational English group throughout 2025 to improve her spoken English and build confidence in everyday communication.

Like many newly arrived migrants, Mercy initially relied heavily on translation apps and lacked confidence speaking English with others. Through regular attendance in a welcoming and supportive environment, she developed her conversational skills and became more comfortable practising English with volunteers and other participants.

As her confidence grew, Mercy applied for local employment, something she had previously considered beyond her reach due to language barriers. She successfully secured a job and has since found that working in an English-speaking environment has further strengthened her language skills and confidence.

Mercy now practises English every day with colleagues and customers and is far less reliant on translation apps. While she still uses them occasionally, she is increasingly confident communicating independently.

Mercy's journey demonstrates the important role conversational English programs play in supporting settlement outcomes. By building confidence alongside practical language skills, the program helped her gain employment, increase her independence, strengthen social connections and participate more fully in her community.

Families Together and **Intensive Family Preservation (IFP)**

The End of an Era

June 2025 marked the end of an important era for Intereach, following 15 Years of delivering Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) services to families across the region.

Throughout those 15 years, the IFP program and its dedicated staff played an important role in supporting families involved with NSW Child Protection. Through intensive, family-focused support, the program worked alongside families to build resilience, strengthen relationships, promote child safety and wellbeing, and support children to remain safely within their families and communities wherever possible.

The IFP Program was funded to support up to eight families each year through periods of significant vulnerability and challenge. Over its 15 years of service delivery, the program supported more than 120 families, providing intensive, tailored support to strengthen family relationships, build resilience, promote child safety and wellbeing, and help families remain safely together wherever possible.

Each family's journey was unique, and the dedication of the IFP team enabled families to receive consistent, intensive support at times when they needed it most.

The contribution of the IFP team over the years has left a lasting legacy within Intereach. The knowledge, skills, relationships and practice expertise developed through delivering IFP have provided a strong foundation for Intereach's successful transition into the Families Together program.

Families Together builds on this strong history of working alongside families and communities, continuing to provide family-focused support across Albury City, Federation Council and Greater Hume Shire, while also expanding into new communities across the Murrumbidgee District.

As part of the expansion of Families Together, Intereach has invested in seven additional staff members, and one staff member from IFP to strengthen our capacity to support families across these communities. Over the next five years, the expanded program will provide support to more than 245 families, building on Intereach's longstanding commitment to strengthening families, promoting child safety and wellbeing, and keeping families connected within their communities.

While the IFP chapter has come to an end, its legacy continues through the people, practice and relationships that have shaped Intereach's approach to supporting vulnerable children and families. The transition to Families Together represents not only a new chapter, but an opportunity to build on 15 years of experience and continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families across our communities.

CASE STUDY

Building Stability Through Support and Connection

When a young Aboriginal mother first engaged with the Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) program, she was caring for her one-year-old son while working towards restoring her relationship with her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, who was living in kinship care under a restoration order.

At the time, she was facing multiple and complex challenges. These included alcohol and other drug concerns, financial stress, limited transport, housing instability and a history of involvement with the justice system. Previous support services had ceased due to periods of incarceration and disengagement, and significant trauma continued to impact many aspects of her life.

Throughout her time with IFP, she experienced further challenges, including homelessness following the loss of housing, domestic and family conflict, limited safe support networks and ongoing child protection concerns. Despite these circumstances, she remained committed to creating a safer and more stable future for herself and her children.

Through consistent engagement and relationship-building, IFP workers provided intensive case management and practical support. Regular contact helped establish trust and created opportunities to work together on goals related to safety, housing, parenting

and wellbeing. Support included advocacy to secure stable housing, assistance with obtaining identification documents, enrolment of her son into childcare, referrals to specialist services and support to access emergency accommodation through a women's refuge when required.

The program also worked alongside the client to strengthen her safety and independence. This included support to obtain an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO), develop healthy boundaries within relationships and connect with culturally appropriate services, including Indigenous Community Support.

Over time, the participant demonstrated significant resilience and determination. She remained engaged with services, even during periods of homelessness, reduced her substance use, established stronger personal boundaries and took important steps to improve safety for herself and her children.

In March 2026, she secured stable community housing, providing a foundation for greater stability and routine. Her son was enrolled in childcare, supporting his development and social connections while also allowing the family to establish a more structured daily routine

Today, the client continues to live safely in stable housing with her son and remains engaged with support services. Protective measures remain in place, and she has maintained healthy boundaries within family relationships. Her journey reflects the power of persistence, trust and relationship-based support in helping families overcome significant adversity.

As she continues to build on her progress, her goals include maintaining stable housing, strengthening her parenting capacity, remaining connected to support services and continuing to create a safe and positive future for herself and her children.

CASE STUDY

Rebuilding a Relationship, Creating a Brighter Future

When a young girl was referred to the Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) program, she had been living with her maternal grandmother for most of her life and had very little connection with her birth mother. Following a significant family transition, she moved into her mother's care, creating challenges for both as they began building a relationship and adjusting to life together.

The family faced a range of concerns, including limited attachment, inconsistent routines, financial hardship, an unstable living environment and the use of ineffective parenting strategies. Referral to IFP was made to support the family's safety, wellbeing and stability.

Through regular home visits and ongoing case management, IFP worked closely with the family to strengthen the mother-daughter relationship and build parenting confidence. Support included referrals to counselling services, assistance with essential household items, housing advocacy, and practical strategies to establish consistent daily routines. Activities were also introduced to encourage positive interactions and strengthen attachment.

Over time, the family made significant progress. Routines improved, the home environment became more stable and the mother developed more positive ways to respond to her daughter's behaviours. As her understanding of her daughter's needs grew, she increasingly prioritised her physical and emotional wellbeing.

The mother's ongoing commitment to engaging with services and willingness to learn new skills has been a key strength throughout the family's journey. Today, the relationship between mother and daughter continues to strengthen, with both becoming calmer and more settled as their connection grows.

The family continues to work towards maintaining stable housing, strengthening their attachment and building a safe, nurturing environment for the future.




Come learn
play & grow
us







Communities and Family Support (CAFS)
Wellbeing and Safety

Community and Family Support strengthened wellbeing, safety and connection for children, parents and families through parenting education, group programs, targeted case management and practical support across local communities. Programs helped families build confidence, improve access to services, strengthen community connections and achieve positive outcomes for children and parents.

2025/26 Highlights:

- Across the year, programs created welcoming, accessible spaces for families to connect, learn and receive support. Delivery included New Parent Groups, Kimochi, Wiggle and Giggle, Circle of Security, Bringing Up Great Kids and CAFS case management.
- New Parent Groups in Moama, Barham and Finley supported first-time parents with practical information, peer connection and confidence-building during early parenthood.
- Kimochi groups in Mayrung and Deniliquin helped children recognise, express and regulate emotions.
- Wiggle and Giggle supported families across Greater Hume, including Jindera, Lockhart, Walla and Corowa, through play-based learning and partnerships with local playgroups, preschool and early childhood services.
- CAFS provided case management and parenting-capacity support across Lockhart, Greater Hume, Federation, Murray River, Edward River, Murrumbidgee and Hay LGA's.
- Circle of Security and Bringing Up Great Kids were delivered to strengthen parenting confidence, routines, relationships and child wellbeing.

Key Outcomes

- Families strengthened links with health, dental, speech, occupational therapy, housing, counselling and community services.
- Parents reported increased confidence, improved routines and stronger strategies to support children's emotions and behaviour.
- Children developed friendships, emotional awareness and confidence through regular group participation.
- One family achieved child restoration following completion of the Bringing Up Great Kids program.
- Community partnerships increased accessibility and helped families engage in ways that suited their needs.

Impact

Overall, Community and Family Support combined early intervention, practical assistance and relationship-centred practice to help families feel more connected, capable and supported. The year's work showed the value of flexible, place-based programs that respond to local needs and create meaningful outcomes for children, parents and communities.



Communities and Family Support (CAFS)
Community Strengthening

In January 2026, the Department of Communities and Justice recommissioned the Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) program, which became Community and Family Support (CAFS). The program secured funding for a further 5½ years, through to July 2031.

The CAFS Community Strengthening (CS) program operates from community centres in Finley, Corowa, Cootamundra, Deniliquin and Hay, while also providing Indigenous community support in Leeton and Narrandera.

Between January and June 2026, CAFS-CS supported 652 people through one or more community centre services, while a further 160 people received support from the Community Strengthening Indigenous Worker. During this period, the team co-facilitated 25 events and workshops across the region, engaging 829 community members.

A range of weekly and monthly social participation groups continued to bring people together across the footprint, including Grandparents Support Groups, Carers Groups, Lego Groups, Wiggle and Giggle sessions, Dementia Groups, Knitting Groups, Aboriginal Women's Groups and Kimochis programs.

The impact of these groups is reflected in the feedback received from participants.

> ***"One child attended the Kimochis program from the River Region preschool said their favourite thing for the year was participating in Kimochis."***

The CAFS-CS team was also successful in securing funding through community grants from Edward River Council and Transgrid. These grants enabled the delivery of two screenings of the Parent TV documentary Seen and the establishment of two ongoing Minds in Motion Lego groups.

The program also played an important role in supporting people experiencing financial and legal challenges. With assistance from CAFS-CS, 13 Work and Development Orders were fully or partially completed, helping participants reduce fine-related debt while engaging in positive supports and activities.

One participant shared:

> ***"...has finalised my Work Development Order that I was referred to when doing a NILS loan. I will now be receiving help for my addiction. Please pass on my sincere gratitude to CAFS. She has been so helpful, non-judgmental and a wonderful influence in my life. I am now striving to surround myself with positive and inspirational people like her to improve my life. Thank you so much."***

No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)

The No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) continued to provide vital financial assistance across the region, with 316 successful loan applications approved during the reporting period.
The service received strong praise from community organisations and participants alike. One referrer highlighted the empathy and support provided by the NILS team, noting that the assistance had significantly improved a participant's financial situation and helped them feel respected and supported throughout the process.

Participant feedback further demonstrates the difference the program makes in people's lives:

> ***"I just wanted to give you a massive shout out and thank you for everything you've done and your prompt responses. It has meant the world to me during this troubling time. Thank you."***

> ***"Thank you so much for your help with a NILS loan. I'm so grateful for this service and your help and understanding. My wife and I (Both aged in their 80's) haven't had a shower for 5 days and today the plumber can come and install a new Hot Water System as he will be paid. I don't know what we would have done without your help. Thank you."***

Reach Out and Relax **(ROAR)**

Throughout the year, the ROAR team continued to support children and young people across our footprint through school partnerships, group programs, community events and targeted holiday activities designed to promote wellbeing, resilience and social connection.

School Holiday Activities

With the successful acquisition of NSW Government School Holiday Funding, ROAR delivered a range of engaging activities for children and young people across multiple communities during the school holiday period.

The funding enabled young people from Gundagai and Cootamundra to participate in two trips to Wagga Wagga, where they enjoyed activities including bowling and Vortex. Young people from Wagga Wagga also took part in a Mystery Bus Tour, visiting communities including Junee and Marrar.

These experiences provided opportunities to build confidence, develop social connections and participate in positive recreational activities within a safe and supportive environment.

Strengthening School Partnerships

Partnerships with local schools remained a cornerstone of ROAR's work throughout the year. In collaboration with schools across the region, the team delivered 34 group programs focused on building resilience, emotional regulation, positive friendships, social connection and wellbeing.

ROAR also continued to facilitate a monthly peer support group for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Wagga Wagga. Activities were co-designed by participants, ensuring young people's voices helped shape the program and create a welcoming space for connection, support and community participation.

Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing

ROAR maintained its strong partnership with Headspace Wagga Wagga through the delivery of the annual Riverina Youth Mental Health Forum. The team contributed to securing grant funding and supporting the event, which brought together approximately 300 students from across the Riverina to explore topics such as mental health, resilience and wellbeing

Facilitated by Burn Bright, the forum provided an opportunity for young people to hear from inspiring speakers, connect with their peers and build practical skills to support their mental health both at school and in everyday life.

Building Connections Through Community Partnerships

ROAR continued to strengthen relationships with schools and community organisations through participation in initiatives that support young people's wellbeing.

This included involvement in The Man Cave program at Sacred Heart High School in Cootamundra, providing an opportunity to connect directly with students, strengthen local partnerships and increase awareness of available ROAR supports.

Corowa high school year 7 camp

The team was also invited to participate in Corowa High School's Year 7 Camp at Lake Hume Recreation Centre. Through interactive activities, students explored positive friendships, supporting peers during the transition to high school, identifying trusted support people and understanding when and how to seek help.

The camp provided a valuable opportunity to connect with young people at a key stage of their school journey and promote awareness of available support services.



Pictured above: Senior Child Family and Community Worker, Tiffany (right) and Child Family and Community Worker, Katelyn (left) at a local ROAR event.

Looking Ahead and Celebrating Success

2026 has been a significant year for ROAR, marked by milestones, growth and continued community impact.

In August, ROAR staff travelled to Mildura to celebrate the launch of the program's Aboriginal logo, an important milestone that reflects ROAR's commitment to cultural inclusion, respect and connection with Aboriginal communities across the region.

This year also marks ROAR's 10-year anniversary, celebrating a decade of supporting children, young people, families and communities throughout regional New South Wales. The milestone provides an opportunity to reflect on the achievements, partnerships and positive outcomes that have shaped the program over the past ten years, while recognising the many young people whose lives have been strengthened through connection, support and early intervention.

As the youth support sector continues to evolve, ROAR is well positioned for future reform. Strong community partnerships, established school relationships and a proven track record of delivering quality mental health and wellbeing programs have reinforced ROAR's reputation as a trusted provider of youth support services across the region.









Pictured right: Children participating in the ROAR School Holiday Program

CASE STUDY

Celebrating Culture, Connection and Community Through the ROAR Aboriginal Logo

In August, members of the ROAR team travelled to Mildura to celebrate a significant milestone for the program, the completion and launch of the ROAR Aboriginal logo. What began as a project to strengthen cultural representation within program materials evolved into a meaningful opportunity to celebrate Aboriginal culture, community connection and partnership.

The logo was developed in collaboration with Aboriginal artist Della Philp, whose artwork reflects themes of identity, belonging, connection and community. Throughout the development process, ROAR sought broad community input to ensure the artwork would be culturally respectful, inclusive and meaningful across the diverse communities the program serves. While the consultation process helped inform the final design, the lasting value of the project lies in the relationships built, the cultural conversations it inspired, and the positive impact it continues to have on young people and families.

The August gathering in Mildura brought together ROAR staff and the artist to acknowledge the completion of the artwork and celebrate the shared journey. The event provided an opportunity to hear directly from Della about the story behind the design and the significance of Aboriginal art as a medium for connection, storytelling and cultural expression. For staff, it was a powerful reminder of the importance of working alongside community and ensuring Aboriginal voices are represented in the spaces where children and young people engage.

A Lasting Impact Beyond a Logo

Since its introduction, the artwork has been incorporated across ROAR resources, promotional materials and program merchandise, including shirts, hoodies and items used during group activities. The visual identity has become a recognised symbol of cultural inclusion and has helped create welcoming environments for Aboriginal children, young people and families engaging with the service.

Importantly, the impact has extended well beyond branding. Staff continue to receive positive feedback from children, families, school staff and community members who recognise and appreciate the visible representation of Aboriginal culture within the program.

One particularly meaningful moment occurred more than a year after the logo was introduced when a young participant commented to a ROAR worker:

"Hey, I really love your hoodie. It recognises our culture."

Pictured right: Geoff wearing an Intereach ROAR Aboriginal logo T-shirt at a funded school holiday excursion.

For the team, feedback like this demonstrates the power of culturally inclusive practice. A simple visual symbol can help young people feel seen, valued and respected, reinforcing a sense of belonging and connection to services designed to support their wellbeing.

Looking Ahead

The ROAR Aboriginal logo stands as more than an artwork. It represents partnership, respect and a commitment to ensuring Aboriginal children, young people and families see themselves reflected in the services that support them.

The August celebration in Mildura provided an opportunity to acknowledge the collaboration behind the project and celebrate the positive impact it continues to have across the communities ROAR serves. Through meaningful partnerships and culturally responsive practice, ROAR continues to foster environments where all young people feel welcomed, respected and connected.



CASE STUDY

Amplifying Youth Voices Through Youth Week 2025

As part of Youth Week 2025, the ROAR Program partnered with schools across Deniliquin and the broader service footprint to create meaningful opportunities for young people to share their ideas, aspirations, and experiences. Guided by the Youth Week theme, “We are the future and the future is now!”, the initiative placed young people at the centre of the conversation, recognising them as leaders and decision-makers in their communities today.

Working closely with school wellbeing teams, ROAR staff established welcoming consultation spaces during school break times. Through music, art, games, informal conversations and interactive surveys, students were invited to engage in ways that felt natural, safe and enjoyable. Rather than asking young people to participate in formal workshops, ROAR created drop-in environments where students could contribute voluntarily and authentically.

What Young People Told Us

The consultations highlighted the insight, awareness and leadership potential of young people across the region.

Students spoke passionately about their communities and identified a need for more accessible and diverse activities outside of school. While sport and technology opportunities were available, many young people expressed a desire for broader recreational, creative and social options.

They linked the lack of engaging activities to increasing boredom, disengagement and anti-social behaviour among young people.

Importantly, students demonstrated a strong understanding of the challenges facing their communities and offered thoughtful ideas about how communities could better support youth wellbeing, inclusion and participation.

Outcomes

The Youth Week consultations delivered positive outcomes for young people, schools and the ROAR Program.

For young people:

- Increased confidence and self-expression.
- Stronger connections with trusted adults and wellbeing supports.
- Greater social connection and reduced isolation.
- Opportunities to share their perspectives and influence future planning.

For ROAR:

- Rich youth-led feedback to inform future service delivery.
- Stronger relationships with young people and school communities.
- Clear evidence of the effectiveness of youth-led, relationship-based practice.

Looking Ahead

The Youth Week 2025 consultations reinforced the value of creating safe, accessible spaces where young people can connect, contribute and be heard. The initiative demonstrated that when young people are trusted as partners and provided with genuine opportunities to shape their communities, they engage meaningfully and confidently.

The insights gathered will help inform future ROAR programming and community development efforts, ensuring services continue to respond to what young people say they need most. Most importantly, the initiative highlighted a simple but powerful message: when young people are given a voice, they are ready to lead, contribute and create positive change, not just in the future, but right now.



Pictured right: Children participating in the Gundagai ROAR School Holiday Program

Local Area Coordination **(LAC)**

Intereach delivers Local Area Coordination (LAC) services on behalf of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) across Victoria's Goulburn, Loddon and Mallee regions and the Murrumbidgee region of New South Wales. We have been supporting people with disability, their families and carers to navigate the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for more than five years.

As a Partner in the Community, Intereach supports participants to understand the NDIS, connect with services and pursue their goals, while working with communities to improve accessibility and inclusion.

Throughout the year, our LAC teams provided information, referrals and practical support to participants and families, while building partnerships with councils, schools, businesses, community groups and advocacy organisations.

To improve access to services in smaller communities, Intereach delivered community engagement activities through the August for All initiative, bringing LAC support directly to communities where we do not have a local office.

We also partnered with local businesses and organisations to deliver the Access at a Glance Project, giving people with disability the opportunity to share their lived experience and help improve accessibility in their communities.

LAC staff worked alongside councils and community groups to identify and address accessibility barriers, including through ongoing involvement with the Wagga Access Reference Group. Teams also attended expos, information sessions and stakeholder forums to promote inclusion, accessibility and greater awareness of disability supports.

Throughout the year, staff celebrated key events including Carers Week, Social Inclusion Week and International Day of People with Disability, while activities such as Triviability and Mocktails and Masterpieces created opportunities for connection and community participation.

In the Mallee region, the LAC team launched Hot Wheelies, Mildura's first inclusive wheelchair basketball program, in August 2025, followed by a second season in February 2026. The program brought people of all abilities together through sport and community connection.

The Seymour team continued its regular outreach at Our Place Community House, strengthening local connections and improving access to information and support.

During Homelessness Week, staff in the Goulburn region participated in BeyondHousing's Hoodies for Homelessness campaign, helping raise awareness of homelessness and housing insecurity in regional communities.

Through strong partnerships and local engagement, Intereach's LAC teams continue to support people with disability to access opportunities, build connections and participate fully in community life.



Pictured above: LAC team members Jessica (left) and Jake (right) accompanied by Care Partner Alison (centre)






Mildura MG
KING


CHRISTMAS
BAUBLES


EMINEM

GOOD NEWS STORY

Michael smashing wickets and **disability barriers**

For Michael Ford, cricket is more than a sport — it's a space of belonging, opportunity and purpose.

The Mooroopna spin bowler, who has autism and an intellectual disability, has just represented Victoria for the fourth time in the National Cricket Inclusion Championships.

And Michael is proving that disability is not a limitation, but a strength that is shaping his success.

The 35-year-old was one of only 14 players selected in the state's Intellectual Disability squad, who headed into the competition at the WACCA in Perth as reigning champions.

Michael finished the 5-day tournament with 10 wickets — equal second overall — including crucial breakthroughs against some of the competition's top batters.

In the grand final, he also produced a hat-trick and finished with 4 for nine in a performance that highlighted his consistency and determination.

> ***"Playing for Victoria has been a big achievement for me,"*** he said.

Across 4 national championships, Michael has now taken 45 wickets. And while the statistics are impressive, he said the greatest gains had come off the field.

For much of Michael's childhood, life was challenging.

> ***"Between the ages of 5 and 15 was tough. I struggled in social settings and understanding social cues, and I was severely bullied at school,"*** he said.

With strong support from his family and community, and by building the right networks around him, Michael began to understand his strengths and how to navigate the world with confidence.

Six years ago, he connected with Intereach and accessed the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which has played a significant role in building his skills and confidence.

> ***"The NDIS funding has helped me achieve my goals, like getting out and doing things like sport and cooking and maintaining a healthy lifestyle,"*** he said.

Through his NDIS plan, Michael is funded for core supports that help him with daily living and community participation.

He works with a support worker several days a week to build his independence skills, attend the gym and get to cricket training.

His plan includes assistance with everyday tasks such as cooking, household tasks and gardening, as well as support to develop budgeting and money management skills.

He also receives Capacity Building supports, including occupational therapy and assistance to strengthen his mental health and overall wellbeing.

With the right supports, Michael has obtained his driver's licence, lives independently and has been employed as a disability support worker since 2018 — drawing on his own lived experience to support others.

> ***"It gives me an understanding of what it's like to live with a disability,"*** he said.
>
> ***"I really love working with people and providing the support they need."***

And through it all, sport has always been a powerful outlet — providing structure, teamwork and a clear sense of purpose that complement his strengths.

> ***"I don't struggle in that area (cricket). I always do my best and I enjoy helping the younger kids coming through and giving them tips to improve their cricket skills,"*** he said.

Michael has played with Mooroopna Cricket Club since he was five, describing members and players as welcoming and close-knit.

> ***"We're all good mates who get along and help each other. It's a great club to be part of,"*** he said.

Representing Victoria is a proud moment not just for him, but for the club and people who have supported him along the way.

> ***"To be able to represent my state for my family, friends and my club was really good,"*** he said.

Looking ahead, Michael hopes to pull on the Victorian colours again and one day represent Australia.

But more than anything, he wants to live his best life while motivating others to do the same.

> ***"People with disability do belong in society and just need a bit of understanding,"*** he said.
>
> ***"Get out there and enjoy life and kick some goals. Enjoy the time you've got in life with the people you love and doing the things you're passionate about."***

If you're living with disability and need support, reach out to Intereach on 1300 488 226 or visit www.intereach.com.au









Pictured Right: Michael Ford representing Victoria for the fourth time at the National Cricket Inclusion Championships. Also pictured is Michael celebrating a hat-trick for Victoria, alongside teammates at a tournament, and proudly holding the Victorian championship trophy. Photo: Shepparton News.

GOOD NEWS STORY

Blind freedom: **Wendy living life of possibilities**

Wendy is living proof that disability doesn't define your abilities — and that the right supports can open the door to doing what you love.

Blind for much of her life, the Echuca local has never let that stand in the way of pursuing a life of opportunities and staying connected to the things that matter most.

With her trademark optimism, Wendy has a message for others living with disability:

> ***"People say 'you can't,' but I say 'I can'. You just have to think outside the box. It might take some figuring out, but most things are doable."***

Wendy said the NDIS — and the support of Intereach local area coordinator Fiona — helped her stay independent and actively connected to the community she loves.

Born with Retinitis Pigmentosa — a rare eye condition that gradually breaks down the cells in the retina — Wendy's vision slowly deteriorated over many years. She has now been completely blind for two decades.

But she said vision loss was never a reason to stop living.

> ***"Sure, you have tough days, but you can't let it bring you down and stop you. I've got too much living to do,"*** she said.

Fiona said Wendy's positive mindset and willpower had made all the difference.

> ***"Wendy has taught me you can achieve anything you put your mind to if it is a real passion,"*** Fiona said.

One of those successes has been her determination to continue riding horses.

When her former riding instructor moved away, Wendy engaged Jodie from HorseHand as a support worker who understands how to guide her safely around horses. Together they adapted Wendy's setup to suit her blindness.

> ***"Jodie had to completely rethink how she supports me. I'm teaching her, and she's teaching me,"*** Wendy explained.

They added bells to her horse's gear so she could hear its movements and introduced sound markers around the arena to help her stay oriented. With these safety measures in place, Wendy can confidently ride in her arena on her own terms.

> ***"It has completely improved my life. I can do things independently that I've wanted to do for a long time,"*** Wendy said.

Wendy's resilience is a reminder that disability is not the end of possibility — it's the start of finding new ways forward.

With the right supports behind her, she is shaping a life of independence and purpose.

If you're living with disability and need support, reach out to Intereach on 1300 488 226 or visit www.intereach.com.au



Pictured above: Wendy with her horse Webby

Community Transport **(CT)**

Intereach Community Transport supports older people, people living with disability, including children and their carers, people who are transport disadvantaged and Department of Veterans' Affairs support recipients, to stay independent and connected to their local community.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Taking the Stress Out of Medical Appointments

For Richard, Intereach Community Transport has made an important difference to his healthcare journey.

Having used the service multiple times to attend medical appointments, Richard says the greatest benefit is being able to relax and focus on his health rather than the challenges of driving long distances.

> ***"It really takes the pressure off having to drive. Thinking about the diagnosis, you're a little bit worried, but you can relax and be in a good frame of mind when you go and see your doctor."***

Living in a regional area means specialist appointments often require travel to centres such as Albury, Shepparton and Echuca. Richard says having reliable transport available makes those trips much easier.

> ***"It just makes the experience a lot easier. You can relax and you're looked after so well."***

Beyond getting people safely to and from appointments, the service also provides companionship and reassurance along the way. Richard fondly recalls sharing conversations about football with fellow passengers and drivers during his journeys.

Grateful for the support he has received, Richard says he would not hesitate to recommend Community Transport to others.

> ***"Any problem in driving, or if you just need that assistance, it's a wonderful thing. You can relax and be driven there and dropped off at the door. We're all very grateful that the service is available and that we're able to be looked after so well."***



Pictured above: Richard (left) with Community Transport Coordinator Emma Edwards (right)



Pictured above: Community Transport Participant Richard

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

A heartfelt Thank You to our incredible Community Transport team

In January 2024, my family and I embarked on a life-changing journey after a family member was diagnosed with Central Nervous System Lymphoma. With the offer of a place on a clinical trial at Monash Hospital, we faced a hard road ahead, one made even harder when chemotherapy left my loved one unable to drive. Being able to attend the constant stream of doctors and hospital appointments in Melbourne felt impossible.

To take part in the trial meant travelling to Melbourne for treatment every three weeks over two and a half years. Without community transport, this treatment simply would have been out of reach for us.

We want to express our deepest gratitude to Emma and Greg, whose incredible organisation made our complex schedule of treatment and appointments feel effortless. Their care behind the scenes gives us great peace of mind. Our driver Jay, does so much more than just provide transport, he is compassionate, committed, and provides a much needed laugh during an emotionally and physically exhausting time.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you to the entire team for giving us hope, support, and access to life saving treatment. It is an essential service for our community.

We are forever grateful.

VOLUNTEER TESTIMONAL

Making Every Journey Matter

For Neville, volunteering with Intereach's Community Transport service is about much more than driving people to appointments. It's about supporting others, building connections and giving back to the community.

"I've loved every minute of it," Neville said.

After a long career with Telstra as a Senior Technical Officer, Neville found himself looking for a new purpose. What started as a volunteer opportunity soon became a meaningful way to stay connected and make a difference in people's lives.

> ***"It's meeting different people and being able to interact with them. We talk about everything, whether it's their health, cooking, sport or just everyday life."***

His love of driving, combined with a desire to help others, keeps him coming back.

> ***"It gives me something to do, but more importantly, it's about putting back into the community."***

Over the years, Neville has shared countless conversations with passengers, creating meaningful connections along the way. Some have been light-hearted and funny, while others have left a lasting impression.

One particularly memorable trip introduced Neville to a specialist who was highly recommended by one of his passengers. Not long afterwards, Neville found himself needing that same specialist's care.

> ***"It's funny how some conversations stay with you. You never know what you might learn from the people you meet."***

As a cancer survivor, Neville has also become passionate about raising awareness and supporting others navigating similar health challenges. Volunteering has given him the confidence to speak openly about topics that can be difficult for many people.

> ***"It's allowed me to speak more freely about some of the challenges people face and hopefully help others along the way."***

Neville believes many people don't fully understand the role volunteer drivers play in the lives of those they support.

> ***"We're not just drivers,"*** he said.
>
> ***"Sometimes we're a friendly face, a listening ear, a guide, or simply someone people can rely on when they need to get somewhere important."***

The role requires compassion, patience and a strong sense of responsibility.

> ***"It's not just about driving. You're responsible for the people in your vehicle and making sure they arrive safely."***

While there are challenges, Neville says the rewards far outweigh them.

> ***"Many people are incredibly appreciative of what you do. Sometimes a simple thank you at the end of the day means everything."***

When asked what makes a great volunteer, Neville's answer is simple.

> ***"You need compassion, empathy and a genuine desire to help someone who may be doing it tough."***

He also believes volunteers are vital to the strength of regional communities.

> ***"If we didn't have volunteers, our whole community would suffer. Volunteers are the backbone of so many organisations and services."***

For anyone considering volunteering, Neville encourages them to give it serious thought and find a role that aligns with their interests and values.

> ***"There are challenges, but there are also so many rewards. Knowing you've helped someone and made their day a little easier is worth it."***

If he had to describe volunteering in three words?

Passionate. Rewarding. Meaningful

Through every kilometre travelled and every conversation shared, Neville continues to make a lasting difference in the lives of the people he supports, helping them stay connected to essential services and their community.

If you've ever thought about volunteering reach out to our friendly Community Transport team today to discuss opportunities via



Pictured: Community Transport Volunteer Neville.

VOLUNTEER TESTIMONAL

Meet Jo Evans: Driving Connection Through Community Transport

For the past three and a half years, Jo Evans has been one of the familiar and friendly faces behind the wheel of Intereach's Community Transport service.

After spending 40 years as a teacher, Jo eased into retirement gradually before deciding she wasn't quite ready to slow down completely.

> ***"I thought, I've got all these days available and I wanted to do something useful for the community,"*** Jo said.

Combining her love of driving, meeting people and staying active, volunteering with Community Transport turned out to be the perfect fit.

> ***"I like getting out and about, and I like talking to people. When I came across the volunteer driving role, it just seemed right. I haven't looked back."***

For Jo, every volunteer shift is different. Whether she's travelling to Shepparton, Albury or a nearby appointment, no two days are ever the same. While flexibility is part of the role, it's also one of the things she enjoys most.

> ***"It's great because you meet such a variety of people. Sometimes it's someone you've driven before and sometimes it's someone completely new. You get to know people right across the community."***

Beyond the driving itself, Jo values the connection that develops during each journey.

> ***"The social aspect is probably one of the biggest reasons I keep coming back. You spend time talking to people and hearing their stories. Some people have had the most incredible lives and you'd never know it just by passing them in the street."***

Over the years, Jo has discovered that every passenger has a unique story to tell.

> ***"I've met people who've travelled the world, worked in fascinating industries and had extraordinary life experiences. Some of the stories I've heard are unbelievable. That's one of the things I love most about volunteering."***

As well as providing companionship, Jo knows the service plays a critical role in helping people access healthcare and other essential services.

> ***"Many of the people we transport don't have family or friends available to take them to appointments. They're incredibly grateful for the service because it takes away a lot of stress during what can already be a difficult time."***

Jo believes one of the biggest misconceptions about Community Transport is that many people simply don't know it exists.

> ***"A lot of people are familiar with Intereach and some of the other services available, but they don't necessarily know Community Transport is there to help them."***

Volunteering has also strengthened Jo's connection to the community.

> ***"There are lots more people I know around town now. It's a nice feeling knowing you're contributing to something that makes a real difference for individuals and the community."***

When asked what qualities make a great volunteer driver, Jo doesn't hesitate.

> ***"Reliability is probably the most important thing. You need to be patient, compassionate, flexible and enjoy working with people."***

Her advice to anyone considering volunteering?

> ***"Don't wait too long. Think about what your strengths are, what you enjoy doing and find a volunteer role that matches those things. For me, driving was the perfect fit."***

For Jo, the most rewarding part of volunteering is simple.

> ***"They're just so grateful. Knowing you're helping someone get where they need to go and making their day a little easier is incredibly rewarding."***

Through every journey, conversation and connection, Jo is helping keep people connected to the services they need and the community they call home.



Pictured: Community Transport Volunteer Jo.




ULLATELLA







Aged Care Services **(ACS)**

Our Aged Care Services support older people to remain living safely and independently at home through the delivery of responsive and person-centred care and support.

Our services are shaped around each participant's individual needs, preferences and goals. Working closely with participants, families and carers, our teams coordinate and deliver supports that promote independence, wellbeing and connection to community.

Through ongoing communication, monitoring and review, we respond to changing needs, coordinate appropriate supports and assist participants to make informed choices about their care. This approach enables us to identify emerging needs and risks early and adapt services to ensure participants continue to receive the right support at the right time.

Our direct care services provide practical assistance with everyday living, health and wellbeing, access to appointments and essential services, community transport, and opportunities for social and community connection.

We remain committed to delivering safe, high-quality and responsive services that adapt to participants' changing needs and support them to live independently in their communities.

GOOD NEWS STORY

Intereach in-home aged care keeping mother and daughter together

For 88-year-old Kathleen, home is where she feels most comfortable, surrounded by the people she loves.

Living with dementia, Kathleen relies on the support of her daughter Sue, who lives with her, providing daily care. While caring for a loved one can be rewarding, it can also be challenging, particularly when extra support is needed to help them remain safely at home.

That is where Intereach in-home aged care has made a profound difference.

> ***"It is always hard when the time comes when you need help to assist with daily living requirements to continue to support your loved one at home,"*** Sue said.
>
> ***"With the guidance of Intereach, this has made this transition less stressful and overwhelming."***

Through Intereach's aged care services, Kathleen receives regular in-home support from Community Support Workers like Hayley, helping her maintain her routine and continue living in the place she knows best.

For Sue, the support provides more than practical assistance. It also offers valuable respite from the demands of caring for Kathleen around the clock.

From their very first meeting, Sue knew Hayley would be a positive presence in their lives.

> ***"From the first introduction to Hayley, it was clear she was the perfect person for this role,"*** she said.

The relationship Hayley has built with Kathleen has become an important part of the Kyabram family's routine.

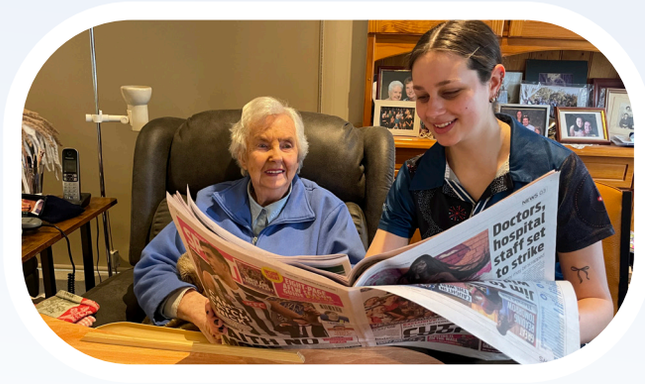
For people living with dementia, familiar faces and trusted routines can provide comfort and reassurance. Hayley's consistency, kindness and understanding have helped create exactly that for Kathleen.

> ***"Hayley has always been a reassuring presence in our home and her patience, warmth and professionalism are greatly appreciated."***

Through personalised support, Hayley helps Kathleen maintain her dignity and independence while giving Sue confidence that her mother is being looked after from someone who genuinely cares.

> ***"Hayley is a great asset to Intereach and all community caring roles she delivers,"*** Sue said.

As more seniors look for ways to remain at home for longer, Kathleen's story highlights the difference in-home aged care support can make, not only for older people, but for their families and carers.



Pictured above: Kathleen (left) and Community Support Worker Hayley (right)

GOOD NEWS STORY

Home sweet home: John's secret to healthy ageing

For Swan Hill senior John, the key to his health and happiness is living in the home he loves for as long as possible.

> ***"It's really important for me to stay at home,"*** he said.

> ***"I couldn't imagine myself being anywhere else."***

However, now in his 80s and living alone after his wife went into residential care, John also realises he can't do it all on his own.

While he is still able to do many things independently, he needs a helping hand around the house every now and then.

> ***"I'm still capable of doing a bit, but there are things I can't do anymore,"*** he said.

That's where Intereach in-home aged care comes in.

John's Community Support Workers (CSW) visit once or twice a week, helping him with physically demanding household tasks and a bit of practical assistance.

> ***"It wouldn't look this clean if I didn't have those girls here,"*** he laughed.

One of those CSWs is Mon, who John says consistently goes beyond expectations.

> ***"Mon's everything I want. Every time I tell her to do something, she does more. She doesn't do less. She goes over and above,"*** he said.

For John, the practical help is only part of the story.

> ***"The first day Mon came, I said, 'I'm having a coffee, you have one too, and we'll have a chat',"*** he said.

Over time, those conversations have grown into a genuine friendship.

> ***"She's really good. We know all about each other's families."***

For Mon, building those trusted relationships is one of the most rewarding parts of the role.

> ***"I love working with my clients and being able to build a really good rapport with them,"*** she said.

> ***"Aged care is more than just completing tasks. It's taking the time to understand what is important to your client and making a real difference in their life."If I can make life a little easier for someone, that's what I love about the job. And for me, it's not really a job. It feels more like helping family."***

Having trusted support allows John to focus his time and energy on what matters most, including visiting and supporting his wife, spending time with family, maintaining his routines and staying socially connected. Just as importantly, it gives him confidence for the future.

> ***"It's reassuring to know that help is there if I ever need it,"*** he said.

As more seniors look for ways to remain at home for longer, John's story highlights how in-home aged care allows older people to maintain their independence and community connections so they can live the life they choose.



Pictured above: Swan Hill senior John (left) and Community Support Worker Mon (right)

GOOD NEWS STORY

The work of showing up: **Riverina Care Partners Story**

There is a particular kind of knowledge that only comes from sitting in someone's kitchen while they tell you what they're afraid of losing. It doesn't show up on a funding application. It doesn't fit neatly into a case note. But it is, more often than not, the thing that determines whether an elderly person gets to stay in the home they raised their children in, or whether a family in crisis feels supported instead of abandoned.

Across the small towns of the Riverina, including Tocumwal, Berrigan and Deniliquin, a Care Partner spends her days doing this quieter, harder-to-measure work. Her job title suggests logistics: coordinating services, managing budgets and liaising with providers. But talk to the families she has worked with and a different picture emerges, one closer to advocacy, patience and a stubborn refusal to let a person's final wishes, their independence or their safety become collateral damage in a system that can be slow, rigid and impersonal.

A Daughter's Wishes, Honoured to the End

In Tocumwal, a woman was dying, and her family wanted one thing above all else: for her final weeks to be shaped by her wishes, not by the momentum of a system that often makes decisions for people rather than with them

The Care Partner worked closely with the client, her family and the various services involved, coordinating care so that comfort and dignity stayed at the centre of every decision.

It sounds simple when written down like that. It rarely is. Palliative care at home involves dozens of moving parts, including equipment, medication schedules, support workers and family members trying to hold themselves together. Someone has to keep all of it pointed in the same direction, toward what the dying person actually wants.

When it was over, the family reached out. They described the support they'd received as "amazing". What stayed with them most, they said, was the reassurance that their mother's needs and goals had remained the focus of every decision, right to the end.

Winning Over a Reluctant Wife

Not every act of care looks like crisis intervention. Sometimes it looks like a slow, patient process of building trust.

In Berrigan, an elderly couple were determined to keep living independently, a determination that was, ironically, making independence harder to sustain. The husband could see they needed extra support. His wife could not, or would not. She had spent years resisting the idea, dismissing her family's attempts to help.

It took months of conversation before anything shifted. The Care Partner did not focus on what the couple stood to lose. Instead, she focused on what they stood to keep: their independence, their home and their routines. Support was framed not as the beginning of the end, but as the thing that would help them hold onto all of it for longer.

Eventually, something in that reframing resonated. The wife agreed to let services in. Both of them are still living at home.

Later, the husband made a point of saying something striking. After years of his own family trying and failing to convince his wife, this was the first time anyone had successfully gotten through to her.

Caring for Someone from Interstate

Some of the hardest caring work happens at a distance, carried by people who are not even in the room.

A client living with dementia in Deniliquin had almost no family nearby. Her closest relative, a niece, lived in Tasmania and was trying to manage her aunt's care from more than a thousand kilometres away. That kind of arrangement can easily become a source of constant anxiety, driven by uncertainty and the inability to simply drop in and check how someone is doing.

The Care Partner became, in effect, the niece's eyes and hands on the ground. When support workers occasionally fell through, particularly around medical appointments, she stepped in personally rather than allow a gap in rostering to become a gap in care.

Months later, a thank-you card arrived. It was not only gratitude for the aunt's care. The niece wanted it known that she, too, had felt supported. Carrying the responsibility of care from interstate is its own quiet burden, and someone had recognised that.

A Second-Hand Alarm and a Bit of Persistence

Not every solution requires new funding. Sometimes it simply requires refusing to let a good thing go to waste.

A Deniliquin client had experienced several falls and faced increasing risks to her safety at home and in the community. She urgently needed a personal alarm but had very limited funds and was waiting for approval for further funding and home modifications.

Around the same time, the family of a previous client, who had recently passed away, offered their relative's near-new alarm rather than let the service simply be cancelled.

It would have been easy to let the paperwork lapse and the alarm go unused. Instead, the Care Partner worked with the provider to formally transfer the alarm into the new client's name.

The financial saving was significant. The cost reduced from approximately $555 to $176. More importantly, the new alarm provided coverage both inside and outside the home. For a woman determined to remain active in her community, that made an enormous difference.

Solving an Equipment Puzzle Before Hospital Discharge

A client preparing to leave hospital after a lengthy stay needed specialised equipment to manage complex medical needs at home. The equipment required was not readily available, prompting extensive research, consultation with healthcare professionals and exploration of alternative options.

Eventually, a different brand was identified that met the client's needs. The treating Speech Pathologist approved the recommendation, allowing for a safe and timely discharge.

There were no unnecessary extra nights in hospital and no return home without the right supports in place.

It is the kind of outcome that rarely attracts attention. For the client, however, it meant the difference between going home and not.

The Common Thread

None of these stories are extraordinary in the way that word is usually used. There are no dramatic rescues or headline-grabbing interventions.

What connects them is something quieter and, in its own way, harder to sustain: a consistent commitment to putting each person's goals at the centre of the work.

A dying woman's wishes, honoured. A reluctant wife, gently persuaded rather than overridden. A niece in Tasmania, given peace of mind. A second-hand alarm, given a second life. A hospital discharge made possible through persistence and problem-solving.

Ask people who work in aged and disability care what the job is really about and many will tell you it is not about services, budgets or funding categories.

It is about showing up, again and again, for the parts of someone's life that do not fit neatly into a form, and refusing to let the limitations of a system become the limit of what is possible for the person in front of you.

Financials

	2026 $	2025 $
CURRENT ASSETS		
Current assets	3,196,486	3,354,451
Trade and other receivables	601,278	1,126,297
Investments	2,415,603	5,264,274
Other assets	1,174,446	1,565,368
Total current assets	**7,387,813**	**11,310,390**
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	4,915,220	3,259,521
Right-of-use assets	3,184,215	3,246,994
Intangibles	232,638	189,167
Total non-current assets	8,332,073	6,695,682
Total assets	**15,719,886**	**18,006,072**
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	1,343,977	2,661,308
Contract liabilities	1,919,533	26,976
Lease liabilities	1,352,811	1,183,742
Borrowings	-	6,377
Employee benefits	2,469,168	2,996,146
Provisions	-	-
Total current liabilities	**7,085,489**	**6,874,549**
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease liabilities	2,206,805	2,477,193
Borrowings	1,200,000	-
Employee benefits	444,286	593,260
Total non-current liabilities	3,851,091	3,070,453
Total liabilities	**10,936,580**	9,945,002
NET ASSETS	**4,783,306**	**8,061,070**

	2026 $	2025 $
EQUITY		
Reserves	435,960	435,960
Retained surplus	4,347,346	7,625,110
Total equity	4,783,306	8,061,070
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from customers (Inclusive of GST)	58,539,679	57,489,991
Payments to employees and suppliers (Inclusive of GST)	(59,678,681)	(58,079,947)
Interest received	330,125	421,339
Interest paid	(2,457)	(4,404)
Interest paid - leases	(184,476)	(212,984)
Net cash used in operating activities	(995,810)	(386,005)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Investment in terms deposits	2,848,671	(235,188)
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment	-	43,842
Payment for property, plant and equipment	(1,927,707)	(41,108)
Payments for intangibles	(141,652)	(186,044)
Net cash from investing activities	779,312	(418,498)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Repayment of loans	1,193,623	(77,004)
Repayment of lease liabilities	(1,135,090)	(1,059,938)
Net cash from financing activities	58,533	(1,136,942)
CASH EQUIVALENTS		
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents	(157,965)	(1,941,445)
Cash and cash equivalents - beginning of financial year	3,354,451	5,295,896
Cash and cash equivalents - end of financial year	3,196,486	3,354,451

Funding **Partners**

Through the funding we receive and our partnerships with a diverse range of community, non-profit, and government-funded organisations, we're able to make a meaningful difference in the communities where we live and work.

- National Disability Insurance Agency
- Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network
- Services Australia
- Good Shepherd
- Legal Aid NSW
- Transgrid
- Victorian Department of Health
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Department of Education NSW Health
- Transport for NSW
- Commonwealth Department of Industry,
- Science, Energy and Resources
- Department of Health and Aged Care
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Veterans' Affairs




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