

2026
Annual Review

abilityfirst AUSTRALIA



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About Ability First Australia

Ability First Australia is the country's largest not-for-profit industry alliance in the disability sector, bringing together 25 of Australia's leading disability service providers. Our members represent the interests of approximately $6 billion worth of support services to hundreds of thousands of Australians with disability, their families and carers.

Ability First is a national body of leading disability service providers with member organisations in all states and territories. Our members have a long and trusted history, having supported people with disability for between 50 and over 100 years. In FY26, ten former Alliance 20 members joined Ability First, strengthening our scale, capability and national reach at a time of significant sector reform.

Each member delivers services to people with disability independently. Ability First provides a national brand for promotion, awareness raising, cost efficiencies, strategic alliances both domestically and globally, and advocacy. Our member organisations share information and best practice, benefit from economies of scale and are involved in research and learnings that benefit people with disability.

VISION

A not-for-profit disability services sector that enables people to thrive.

MISSION

To build a robust community that accelerates members' capacity to deliver high quality services.

VALUES

Bold – We act with courage, clarity, and conviction –challenging norms in pursuit of better outcomes for people with disabilities and their families and supporters.

Trusted – We are principled, transparent and reliable – earning the respect and confidence of members, government, and the industry.

Inclusive – We see diversity and generosity as a strength – listening closely to a range of voices and bringing the spirit of willingness to enrich members and the people they support.



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The Year in Review 2025–26

National Strength, Shared Purpose

FY26 was a defining year of growth, influence and impact for Ability First Australia amid significant sector reform.

As governments introduced foundational supports, pricing reform and stronger provider oversight, Ability First Australia consolidated its role as the leading national alliance of mission-driven disability providers, offering practical leadership and informed policy advice.

A significant milestone for Ability First this year was the admission of ten new members, one of our most important achievements to date. Formerly part of Alliance 20, the new members transitioned into Ability First Australia through a structured onboarding process that supported their integration while preserving our culture of trust and shared purpose. We also welcomed MSWA to Ability First. Ability First is now Australia's only not-for-profit industry alliance of its kind, with 25 leading disability service providers across every state and territory, representing approximately $6 billion in annual revenue and more than 50,000 NDIS participants with the most complex support needs.

NDIS reform remained a central focus. Our continued engagement with ministers, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the Department of Social Services and agencies on NDIS pricing, registration and safeguarding, workforce sustainability, Supported Independent Living, housing, assistive technology and employment, keeping the realities facing providers, participants and families at the centre of policy discussions.

Ability Roundtable continued to strengthen its position as Australia's leading disability benchmarking platform, with more than 100 members and $9.5 billion in combined annual revenue, almost 97,000 participants and 80,000 workers. Its papers, *The Quality Quandary – What Next for Quality Registered Therapy Providers* and *A Model Built to Fail – The Disability Support Worker Cost Model*, challenged assumptions underpinning pricing and service delivery.

Ability First Australia Community Housing Limited (AFACHL) continued building the governance, partnerships and operational foundations to deliver innovative, sustainable housing for people with disability.

With approximately 3,900 active panellists, the Ability Forum completed significant research on the disability health interface, informing advocacy and submissions and attracting growing interest from government, researchers and universities.

In December 2025, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing extended the national Systems Coordinators Program for 12 months; it will conclude in December 2026 after more than five and a half years. The Program engaged more than 1,600 younger people in Residential Aged Care, helping over 170 become NDIS participants and 11 leave Residential Aged Care with state-funded support. The national enquiry line took more than 4,500 calls and helped a further 400 people become NDIS participants. Thank you, Deborah Hoffman and the Systems Coordinator Team, for your commitment and expertise in delivering this important work.

The Assistive Technology Pilot gained momentum, with more than 400 participants using its services, saving the NDIS thousands of dollars and speeding access to vital equipment. Its extension reflects its value for future policy and service design.

Our Employment Program continued to expand, showing how employer and provider partnerships create meaningful jobs in mainstream workplaces. The David Jones partnership, run without government funding, has resulted in the employment of twelve people with disability and demonstrates what is possible in inclusive retail employment.

Ability First Australia also secured reaccreditation of the Diploma of Leadership in Disability Services for a further five years.

Cerebral Palsy Australia continued supporting people with cerebral palsy and their families, including by growing the MyCP Guide, a national, evidence-based resource that helps individuals, families and professionals make informed decisions across the lifespan.

Farewell Phil Cave AM. This year was also a year of Board renewal. Following the November 2025 Board meeting and Annual General Meeting, Phil Cave AM retired as Chair after almost fifty years of service to disability. Phil was Ability First Australia's inaugural Chair for 22 years and personally funded its start-up. Across more than four decades in disability services, including as Chair of The Northcott Society, he has been a steadfast champion for people with disability. Under his leadership, Ability First Australia grew from a small alliance into a trusted national voice with its own benchmarking, housing and research capability. We sincerely thank Phil for his extraordinary contribution.

Callen O'Brien has been appointed by the Board as Chair, ensuring continuity of leadership through a complex reform environment.

Greg Ward also resigned during the year as CEO of Novita for ten years and subsequently as a Director of Ability First Australia. We thank Greg for his contribution and long-standing support.

Ability First Australia enters its next phase from a position of considerable strength. The past year reinforced that the sector's challenges are too great for any one organisation to address alone. Evidence, collaboration and innovation will continue to guide our work with members, governments and communities towards a stronger, more inclusive future for people with disability.





Andrew Rowley
CEO

Callen O'Brien
Chairman

Ability First Australia
At a Glance

Established in 2003, Ability First Australia is a not-for-profit industry alliance of 25 leading disability service providers operating across Australia, providing a national focus for our members and building their collective capacity to deliver high-quality services.

Our membership is responsible for the care and coordination of services to over 50,000 Australians every day, representing around 10% of all registered NDIS payments.

Ability First members employ more than 47,000 staff and provide around $6 billion worth of support services each year, primarily with government funding.

Services are provided from ages 0-65+. They cover the whole range of Core Supports, Capital Supports and Capacity Building Supports outlined in the NDIS Pricing Schedule and Support Catalogue (2026-27), although this varies from member to member.

Our members specialise in services for people with multiple and complex disabilities. Guided by our FY2026-28 Strategic Plan, we foster collaboration, champion reform and incubate scalable, innovative solutions. We do this by providing forums for shared problem solving through our Communities of Practice and working groups, advocating to government with evidence-based policy advice drawn from members experience, and developing strategic partnerships and industry solutions that require collective action.

Ability First's purpose is to build a robust community that accelerates members' capacity to deliver high-quality services.

Ability First operates primarily without government funding, providing a return on investment on membership fees, with additional revenue streams through fee-for-service and commercial products.

Strategic Plan
FY2026-28

VISION
What success looks like ...

A not-for-profit disability services sector that enables people to thrive.

MISSION
Why we exist ...

To build a robust community that accelerates members' capacity to deliver high quality services.

STRATEGY
What we are focused on ...

Fostering collaboration, championing reform and incubating scalable innovative solutions for our members.

Community	Advocacy	Innovation	Effectiveness
Facilitate collaboration; inform and engage members to develop policy positions	Promote member views and sector reform to government and other stakeholders	Pilot, incubate and grow industry solutions that require collective action	Operate a sustainable, effective and capable organisation

MEASURES
What success looks like ...

Member engagement | External stakeholder regard | Innovative solutions | Financial surplus | Talent succession

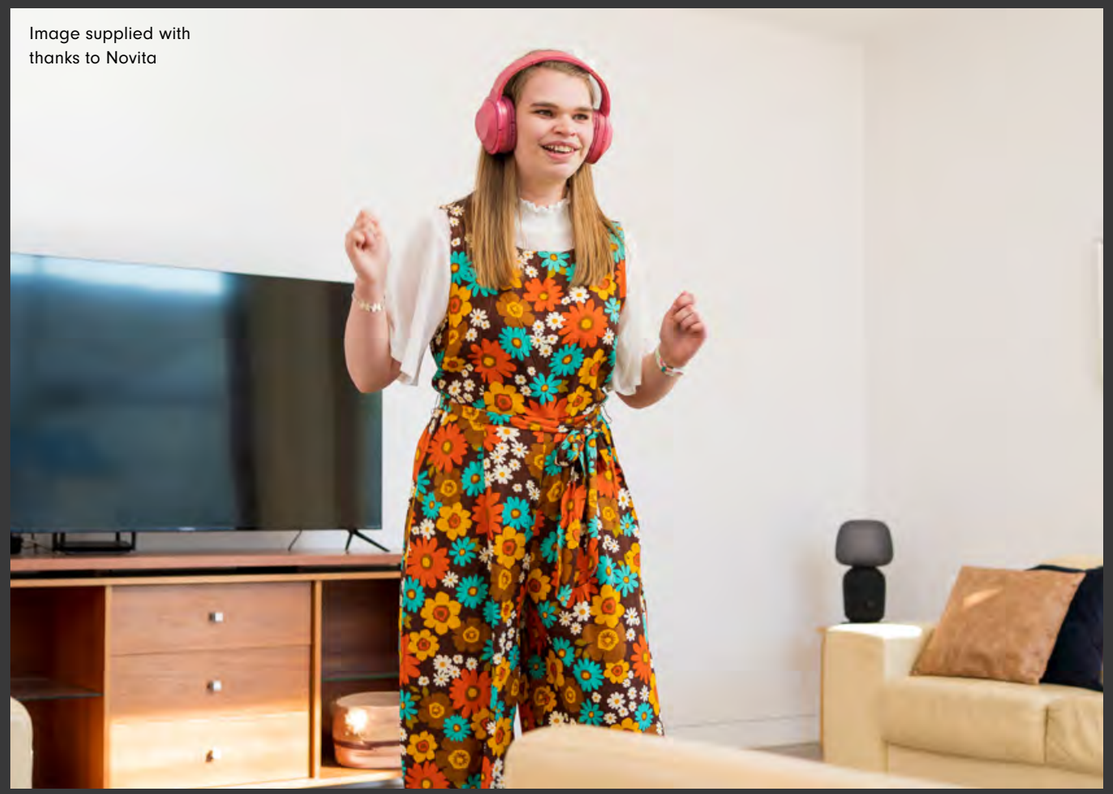
VALUES
How we show up ...

Bold | Trusted | Inclusive

Member Services

Our members deliver the following adult and children's services:

- Support Coordination
- Short Term Accommodation (STA), including respite
- Home and Living Supports
- Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)
- Supported Independent Living (SIL)
- In-home Care and Support
- Complex and High Intensity Supports
- Community Access and Participation
- Centre-based Programs
- Life Skills and Capacity Building
- Early Childhood / Early Intervention Supports
- Children and Young People's Programs
- Employment Preparation and Employment Supports
- Supported Employment
- Disability Employment Services / Employment Services
- Allied Health and Therapeutic Supports
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Assistive Technology and Equipment
- Disability-specific Transport
- Sexuality and Relationship Supports



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Expansion of Ability First Australia

Following endorsement by the Board and Executive Committee, ten former members of Alliance 20 (A20) – Life Without Barriers, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Endeavour Foundation, Minda, genU, Sunnyfield, Sylvanvale, Unisson, Somerville and The Disability Trust (now Meridia) – joined Ability First, substantially strengthening the organisation's scale, capability and national reach.

This brings many of Australia's leading not-for-profit disability providers together as a single collective voice at a time of unprecedented sector reform.

The expansion followed a deliberate process to ensure alignment with Ability First's purpose, values and strategic direction, including due diligence and direct engagement with CEOs, executive teams, existing members and sector stakeholders. The objective was not simply to grow membership, but to strengthen our ability to influence policy, contribute practical expertise and provide national leadership.

To support a smooth transition, we have worked closely with each new member through governance and membership formalities, one-on-one meetings with leadership teams and dedicated onboarding sessions, and have welcomed them into our Executive Committee meetings, Communities of Practice and strategic working groups. Engagement from new members has been strong, deepening the quality of discussion while reinforcing the collaborative culture that has always defined Ability First.

Looking ahead, Ability First has moved beyond a strategic alliance of like-minded providers to become the leading national representative body for large mission-driven not-for-profit disability providers, with membership spanning every state and territory. Over the next twelve months, our focus will be on shaping reforms in provider regulation, workforce, Supported Independent Living commissioning, Foundational Supports, market stewardship and participant pathways, drawing on the depth of operational experience across our expanded membership to provide evidence-based advice.

As our influence grows, so too does our responsibility. We will maintain the trust and member-led culture that underpin our success while deepening engagement, building capability and ensuring Ability First remains the recognised national forum through which large not-for-profit providers shape a sustainable, high-quality and inclusive disability support system.

Our Members

Ability WA is a not-for-profit disability service provider that has been supporting Western Australian families for more than 70 years. We are committed to providing our customers and their families the services and supports they need, Ability WA supports people living with cerebral palsy, autism and other physical and intellectual disabilities. Ability WA has built its reputation as a leading disability services provider by providing excellent service, empowering our customers to realise their abilities. abilitywa.com.au

Achieve Australia is a for-purpose community organisation that has been providing accommodation and services to people with disability since 1952. Achieve champions social inclusion, focusing on the individual needs and lives of the people we support. An NDIS-registered provider, Achieve delivers expert disability support services in greater Sydney, Northern Rivers regions of NSW and South East Queensland. achieveaustralia.org.au

Aruma is one of Australia's most experienced disability providers and the champions of inclusion and human rights. We partner boldly and respectfully with people and their support circles to live the life they want, the life they choose, across every stage of their life. We offer expert care and personalised disability support across NSW, QLD, VIC and the ACT. We're a registered NDIS disability service provider – but we're so much more. aruma.com.au

Across Melbourne and regional Victoria, we support people of all ages and needs. Our 2,000+ staff provide a wide range of quality services, including accommodation supports, specialist accommodation for people with complex health conditions, employment, support coordination, kindergarten assistance, recreational and community access supports and therapy services. The coming together of Berry Street Yooralla in 2024 aligned the shared values and strengths of both organisations to deliver greater impact for the individuals and communities we work with and support. yooralla.com.au

For over 75 years, Cara has been a leading South Australian organisation providing possibility services to people with disabilities and their families. Through SIL, STA, HCS, and Day Options, Cara supports clients to live bigger, fuller, more meaningful lives full of joy, purpose, and belonging. Cara, where disability is different. cara.org.au

Carpentaria has been providing high quality services in the Northern Territory for more than 50 years. We are committed to delivering innovative and flexible services to empower people to thrive and live a great life. As a not-for-profit, for-purpose service provider, participants are always at the centre of what we do and are offered choice, flexibility and control in the selection and delivery of services. carpentaria.org.au

Cerebral Palsy Alliance is a ground-breaking, global centre of expertise for cerebral palsy research, advocacy, intervention and assistive technology innovation. For over 80 years, we have been driven by our founders' vision of a future where nothing is impossible for people with cerebral palsy and similar conditions. cerebralpalsy.org.au

CPL – Choice, Passion, Life is a leading disability support provider across Queensland and Northern New South Wales, partnering with people with disability and their families to create meaningful change. Through personalised support, expert guidance, and innovative technology, we empower each person to live the life they want at every stage. cpl.org.au

Endeavour Foundation is one of Australia's largest disability service providers, we continue to advocate for inclusion and support people with disability to live the life they choose. endeavour.com.au

For more than 70 years, genU has been enriching lives through connections, supports and opportunities. Today, with close to 5,000 employees across Australia, we deliver disability, allied health, accommodation, senior services, training and employment services. Guided by our vision of genuinely inclusive communities, we combine local expertise with national reach to support people to live the life they choose. genu.org.au

Life Without Barriers story is one of courage, learning, adaptation, and innovation, always placing our people at the heart of everything we do. Our organisation was formed to address an unmet need: people with disabilities were being denied access to vital quality services and the opportunity to fully participate in their community. lwb.org.au

For over 50 years Melba Support Services has been providing services to Victorians that supports people with disability to dream big, embrace life and do what they choose and value. We do this one person at a time. Our approach is driven by the people we support and is built on a human rights values-based framework. melbasupport.com.au

Meridia is a not-for-profit NDIS registered support services provider with a rich history of disability advocacy and providing person centred support services. We have been supporting people with disability and their families for over 50 years. Meridia

Minda is the largest and most experienced not-for-profit intellectual disability service provider in South Australia, supporting people with intellectual disability for more than 125 years. mindainc.com.au

MSWA exists to meet the needs of Western Australians living with a neurological condition. In everything we do, we maintain a single-minded focus on the people we support. We nurture a caring and collaborative culture within our workforce, guided by our purpose, vision and values. mswa.org.au

Northcott is a leading not-for-profit disability service provider, supporting people with disability to achieve their goals and live the life they choose.
As a registered NDIS provider and Early Childhood Partner in the Community, Northcott employs more than 2,400 staff and provides empowering, personalised services and support to over 30,000 children and adults with disability, and their families and carers each year. We have nearly 100 years of experience supporting people with disability through all stages of life. northcott.com.au

For more than 85 years, Novita has supported people to achieve their goals and live the lives they choose. Today, Novita is one of South Australia's leading community-based providers and supports its almost 6,000 clients across South Australia and into Broken Hill to Achieve Amazing. We deliver our supports of Therapy, Community Programs, Community Living and Assistive Technology through a network of hubs, as well as in homes, schools, workplaces, pre-schools and community settings - wherever our clients need us. novita.org.au

Since 1938 Rocky Bay has been a trusted provider of exceptional community and health services in Perth for people living with disabilities. With a commitment to quality and service excellence, our holistic approach, encompassing community services, therapy programs, and supported accommodation, is designed to help you achieve your full potential. We are dedicated to supporting you through life's transitions. rockybay.org.au

Scope Group is one of the largest not-for-profit disability service providers in Australia, supporting thousands of people with complex intellectual, physical, and multiple disabilities. We operate across Victoria and New South Wales through over 425 service locations.Our mission is to enable each person we support to live as an equal and empowered citizen, through a rang e of services including: integrated therapy, supported independent living, short-term accommodation and assistance, lifestyle options for individuals and groups, communication access and support coordination. scopeaust.org.au

Somerville operates its disability services in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, and Alice Springs, with over 350 staff and plans to expand. It is a uniquely well-loved Northern Territory institution which has had a place in many peoples' lives across its history. somerville.org.au

A proudly Tasmanian not-for-profit providing whole of life solutions to Tasmanians living with disability since 1937. St.Giles is a recognised leader in allied health therapies, disability support services and assistive technology solutions. St.Giles is a registered NDIS provider with many services available statewide. stgiles.org.au

Since 1952, Sunnyfield has been working with families in Sydney and across NSW, to support a brighter future for people with disability. sunnyfield.org.au

Founded in 1947, Sylvanvale is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) service provider committed to providing high quality, customer focused service to the people we support and their families. sylvanvale.com.au

Unisson's story began in 1924, dedicated to transforming lives of individuals with disabilities across NSW. We are more than a service provider; we are a community deeply invested in the power of human connections. unissondisability.org.au

The Vertaview Group consists of All About Living, Allinto, Arbourwell, Multicap and Open Minds bringing together leading human and social service providers to amplify pursuit of our shared and enduring social impact. Services include supported independent living, short term accommodation, in-home support, assisted employment, life skills development and recreational activities are delivered from over 100 different locations across Queensland, Northern New South Wales and Victoria. vertaview.org.au



Image supplied with thanks to St Giles

Member Showcase

Opening up a world of opportunity for people to have a fabulous life



Image supplied with thanks to Melba

At Melba, we remain ambitious for every person to live a fabulous life, supported by inclusion, choice and human rights as everyday realities, not merely aspirations. For nearly 55 years, we have worked alongside people with disability, supporting each person to live a fabulous life shaped by their strengths, identity, relationships, preferences and aspirations.

Expectations have grown, understanding has deepened and the voices of people with disability increasingly shape how we think about rights, inclusion and quality. Yet there is always more to do.

Human rights must be lived, not simply stated.

At Melba, we have a simple and powerful belief: we are all equal by virtue of being human. For Melba, human rights are not separate from great support. They are at its centre. Quality starts with knowing each person: recognising their strengths, understanding how they communicate and respecting their choices. Above all, it means starting with what matters to the person and what is possible.

Choice, voice and opportunity

Everyone has the right to make decisions, build relationships, participate in their communities, pursue their aspirations, take risks and exercise genuine choice and control over their lives. These are not additional features of quality support. They are fundamental to it.

Person-led practice, supported decision-making and Person-Centred Active Support bring these principles to life in everyday moments. When someone needs support to make a decision, we provide the information, time, communication and trusted support they need so their will and preferences remain central.

A fabulous life is not defined by services or completed tasks. It is shaped by having a say in your day and your home, developing relationships, being part of your community, exploring interests and experiencing new opportunities. It is about being known, understood, heard and respected.

Our ARROW groups (Advocacy, Rights, Responsibilities, Opportunities and Worth) give people we support genuine advocacy, feedback and decision-making across Melba, including reporting to the board. Rights realisation is not something done *for* people. It is something built *with* people.

Raising expectations

Being strengths-based means having high expectations. Nobody should have to settle for less choice, less opportunity or less control over their life. Our role is to recognise each person's strengths and aspirations, understand what matters to them, remove barriers and support them to pursue the life they choose.

Strong safeguarding, capable teams, practice leadership, good governance and continuous improvement are essential, but ultimately quality must be experienced by the person. For Melba, this means asking whether people feel heard, have meaningful choice and control, and are participating, building relationships and pursuing their goals. This keeps our focus on people, their rights and the lives they choose to lead.

It also requires us to keep learning: building on what works, responding when something is not working for a person, and using people's experiences to strengthen our practice. Rights, dignity, quality and accountability belong to all of us.

Innovation with purpose

New technology, systems and models of support will continue to create possibilities, but innovation should never be an end in itself. Its value lies in what it makes possible for people: strengthening choice, control and voice, removing barriers and opening up opportunities for participation, independence and connection.

As our sector keeps evolving, we must keep listening, learning, adapting and advocating for a strong and sustainable disability support system where people with disability have genuine voice, choice and opportunity.



Image supplied with thanks to Northcott

Government Engagement

2025/26 was a defining year for the NDIS and for Ability First's work with the Federal Government, as we advocated on behalf of our members and the people with disability, families and carers they support.

Following the May 2025 election, Ability First engaged early with the new Parliament. Our invitation to the Productivity Roundtable reflected our standing as a trusted, evidence-based voice for mission-driven not-for-profit registered providers.

Ability First's close working relationships with Ministers Butler and McAllister, their offices, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and the NDIA are grounded in open dialogue and a shared commitment to a sustainable NDIS. In April 2026, when Minister Butler announced the most significant reset of the NDIS since its inception, we drew on the practical, on-the-ground experience of our members to inform its design, including through evidence to the Senate inquiry into the reform Bill.

As a result of this engagement, changes were made to the reforms, and Ability First continues to work constructively with Government on behalf of our members.

Since 1 July, we have welcomed former Alliance 20 members into Ability First and introduced a new program of state-based Canberra engagement days to support our expanded membership.

In September, Ministers Butler and McAllister, Shadow Minister McIntosh and Department of Social Services Secretary Michael Lye joined member CEOs and Board Chairs at our Parliament House meeting, a clear reflection of the trust Ability First has built across Government and Parliament.

In 2026/27, our focus will be on supporting members through the implementation of these reforms: helping shape the commissioning of Supported Independent Living and support coordination, advocating for pricing that reflects the true cost of delivering quality supports, contributing to registration reforms, and safeguarding provider viability through the transition, so our members can continue supporting people with disability who have the most complex support needs.

We will continue to raise issues and unintended consequences with Government on behalf of members, working collaboratively to find practical solutions that secure the long-term sustainability of the NDIS and enable the on-going support of people with the most complex support needs.



The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Ageing and Minister for Disability and the NDIS, and Senator The Hon Jenny McAllister, Minister for the NDIS meet with Ability First's Board Chair Callen O'Brien and CEO Andrew Rowley in Canberra.

Communities of Practice

An integral part of Ability First Australia is our Community of Practice program, which we started almost a decade ago as a way of connecting peers across our national membership. Today, we have more than 15 community of practice groups in operation, with the common goal of facilitating discussion, crowd-sourcing solutions to key issues, and sharing best practice knowledge and innovations.

The program at a glance

- 15+ groups across multiple business streams, including CEOs, COO, CIO, People & Culture, Quality & Safety, Strategic Communications and Property
- Annual cycle of meetings held online and face-to-face, with the support of our corporate partners Gilbert + Tobin, PwC, Microsoft, Corrs Chambers Westgarth and Commonwealth Bank of Australia who generously host our groups in various headquarters across the country
- Guest presenters include sector thought-leaders and key government stakeholders from the NDIA and Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
- These communities of practice provide a platform for shared procurement opportunities, policy paper development and networking



Ability First's Quality & Safeguards Community of Practice with Emeritus Professor Christine Bigby, AO, FASSA, PhD, GAICD, who presented a workshop on Active Support at Gilbert + Tobin in Sydney.

Ability First Australia Community Housing Ltd

Ability First Community Housing continued to build its Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) portfolio during FY26, with a clear focus on providing high-quality homes that give people with disability greater independence, choice and security.



Residents enjoying their new home. Image supplied by Scope

A significant milestone during the year was the completion of the Chelsea Heights development in Victoria. Delivered in partnership with Scope, the two purpose-built High Physical Support homes became operational in June 2026, with the first three residents moving into their new homes. The homes provide greater accessibility, privacy and personal space, with an environment designed around individual needs and the opportunity for residents to maintain strong connections with family and community.

By 30 June 2026, Ability First Community Housing's portfolio comprised five locations across Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia, providing 23 places and working alongside established disability service providers including Ability WA, CPL, Aruma and Scope. The continued growth of the portfolio reflects the original ambition: to use the collective strength of Ability First and its members, to create sustainable housing opportunities for people with disability.

Ability First Community Housing also maintained a sound financial position during the year. With Phase One capital now deployed, the focus is turning to the next stage of development, building stronger relationships with Supported Independent Living providers and identifying future housing and investment opportunities. At its heart, however, the objective remains straightforward: to create more quality homes where people with disability can live with greater independence, dignity and choice.

ability roundtable

Benchmarking to compare performance and drive sector-level innovation and best practice

- Australia's largest and most trusted national platform that supports disability and care system service providers through independent benchmarking, data and insights.
- Supports a national dialogue amongst members designed to identify best practice and innovation through Knowledge Networks.
- A trusted and independent partner to sector leaders and governments to support and influence policy outcomes.

Ability Roundtable Achievements

New Strategy to Guide the Next Phase of Growth - We launched the Ability Roundtable Strategy 2026-28 to position the organisation for long-term growth, sustainability and sector impact. The strategy established a clear focus on data-driven sector intelligence and policy leadership and provides a clear roadmap for expanding benchmarking and analytics offerings, strengthening member value and building organisational capability.

Successful Delivery of the New Benchmarking Platform – We delivered and implemented a new enterprise-grade benchmarking platform, representing one of the most significant investments in Ability Roundtable's history. We have built a modern, scalable and secure technology capability that allows for future growth across multiple products and markets. It improves member experience through enhanced data submission, reporting and analytics capabilities, and increases organisational independence, flexibility and ability to rapidly develop new benchmarking products and insights.

Membership Growth Across Benchmarking Products - Membership growth has continued and we now have 100+ organisations who participate in one or more of our benchmarking groups – representing more than $9.5 billion in combined annual revenue. Our annual cycle of Knowledge Networks provides an opportunity for organisations to collaborate with their sector peers, explore best practice and drive business improvements through a combination of data and dialogue.

Expansion into Inclusive Employment Australia (IEA) - Successfully launched a new benchmarking product supporting providers delivering services under the Inclusive Employment Australia program. This extends Ability Roundtable's reach into an adjacent market, creating new growth opportunities and diversifying revenue streams.

Maturing of Quality & Safety Benchmarking - Continued to mature the Quality & Safety Benchmarking program and Supported Employment Benchmarking program. Both programs have grown significantly over the past 12 months, demonstrating Ability Roundtable's ability to respond to the needs of the disability sector.

Strengthening Relationships with Sector Leaders and Government – We have developed stronger partnerships with provider leaders, peak bodies, researchers and government agencies. This has increased our engagement and influence of key policy and reform conversations impacting disability and care sectors. Ability Roundtable is recognised as a trusted industry partner providing evidence, insights and practical solutions to sector challenges.

Growing Influence Through Research and Policy Leadership - We released several policy papers to support sector development and to support evidence-based policy by governments and policymakers. This included:

- "The Quality Quandary – What next for quality registered therapy providers" in response to the NDIA's therapy pricing announcements in June 2025
- "A Model Built to Fail - the Disability Support Worker Cost Model", which highlighted the flawed cost model underpinning NDIS pricing, and the risk of failure for many established, registered providers who are operating at or near financial unsustainability
- A joint report with Disability Services Consulting using findings from our Quality and Safety benchmarking data, exploring how providers can strengthen safeguarding practices and support continuous practice improvement.

Building the Foundations for the Future

The achievements delivered during 2025-26 collectively represent a significant step forward in Ability Roundtable's history. With a clear strategy, modern technology platform, growing membership base, expanding product suite and increasing policy influence, Ability Roundtable is well positioned to deliver greater value to members and play a leading role in shaping the future of the disability and care sectors.

About Ability Roundtable

Founded in 2013, Ability Roundtable is Australia's leading benchmarking, analytics and sector intelligence network for disability and care sector providers. We bring organisations together to measure performance, share insights and drive better outcomes through data-informed decision making.

Our work is centred around three core functions: Benchmarking and Analytics, Collaboration and Capability Building and Sector Intelligence and Research – transforming robust data into actionable insights that support providers, boards, governments and policymakers to better understand market trends, emerging challenges and opportunities for reform.

Today, Ability Roundtable supports a growing national membership across its expanding suite of benchmarking programs and knowledge networks, members gain access to evidence-based insights that strengthen organisational performance and support continuous improvement.

The organisation's investment in a modern benchmarking and analytics platform has significantly enhanced its ability to collect, analyse and report highly granular operational data. This capability enables deeper performance insights, more sophisticated benchmarking and faster access to actionable intelligence for members.

Beyond supporting individual organisations, Ability Roundtable plays an increasingly important role in informing sector-wide conversations. Through research, policy papers, benchmarking reports and engagement with government and sector leaders, Ability Roundtable contributes independent evidence and practical insights to support a more effective, sustainable and outcomes-focused disability and employment services system.

ABILITY FORUM

Membership, Engagement, and Research Update

The Ability Forum continued to provide a unique national platform for hearing directly from people with disability and their supporters.

During FY26, the Forum maintained an active panel of approximately 3,900 participants, completed a major research project covering disability health access and produced research findings that informed member organisations, government advocacy and sector policy discussions. Findings from the Disability Health Interface research were translated into a national white paper and policy submissions, while commissioned work for the Social Research Centre and interest from universities and research agencies demonstrated growing external demand for the Forum's evidence base. The year concluded with the commencement of a strategic redevelopment partnership with Verian to enhance the quality, sustainability and future commercial potential of the Forum.

Image credit with thanks to St Giles

Cerebral Palsy Australia
From establishment to influence



During 2025-26, Cerebral Palsy Australia (CPA) continued its evolution from building strong foundations to driving national influence. Following a Board strategy workshop, CPA refined its strategic focus to two key priority areas: Advocacy and Information, ensuring resources are concentrated on the areas where the organisation can have the greatest impact.

The Board also underwent several changes during the year. Laurel Tanner resigned from the Board, and Kate MacRae stepped down following her retirement as CEO of Scope. CPA appointed Evan O'Hanlon OAM PLY as a lived experience Board Director and Annie Riley, CEO of Carpentaria, as an Ability First Member Director.

CPA strengthened its advocacy role through active engagement with government, parliamentarians and sector stakeholders. This included preparing a submission to the Inquiry into the NDIS Amendment Bill and meeting with parliamentarians from across the political spectrum to raise awareness of issues affecting people with cerebral palsy. CPA also continued to progress the establishment of the Parliamentary Friends of Cerebral Palsy. This will create a future platform for people with lived experience to engage directly with policymakers and raise awareness of issues affecting the cerebral palsy community. Guided by its Board and Advisory Panel, both led by people with lived experience, CPA continued to ensure community voices inform policy and decision-making.

Cerebral Palsy AUSTRALIA
the national voice

My CP Guide
Delivering impact through information

my CP Guide

My CP Guide is the primary way Cerebral Palsy Australia delivers its Information strategy, providing trusted, evidence-based information for people with cerebral palsy, their families and supporters.

During the year, CPA secured funding through the Information, Advice and Referral (IAR) program, extending support for My CP Guide through to December 2027. CPA gratefully acknowledges the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing for this funding and its continued support of My CP Guide. The platform now hosts more than 1,000 curated information resources and continues to provide information across all life stages. During FY 2026, My CP Guide attracted more than 70,000 users, with an engagement rate of more than 88%, demonstrating its value as Australia's leading cerebral palsy information platform.

Accessibility remained a key focus, with continued investment in Easy English, Easy Read and Plain Language content. During the year, CPA also commenced development of an AI-powered assistant for My CP Guide, designed to improve accessibility and help users find relevant information through natural language conversations.

ANZ CP Strategy Collaboration Group
Driving collective impact

Australian & NZ Cerebral Palsy Strategy

As a founding member of the Australia and New Zealand Cerebral Palsy Strategy Collaboration Group, CPA continued to work alongside researchers, service providers and community organisations to advance outcomes for people with cerebral palsy.

The collaboration group maintained its focus on the priority areas identified through the Strategy, including healthcare, community knowledge and advocacy. Through quarterly collaboration and shared planning, members continued to identify opportunities for collective action, influence national conversations and strengthen the evidence base needed to improve outcomes for people with cerebral palsy and their families.







Young People in Residential Aged Care

A national initiative funded by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and operated by Ability First.

A grant extension approved by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing in December 2025 enabled Ability First to continue to operate this important national initiative for a further 12 months.

However, with the agreement coming to an end, the Program will finally close its doors in December 2026 after having operated for just over five and a half years.

Last year saw the Program working within a very different political environment following the implementation of the new Aged Care Act 2024 on 1 November 2025. The Program's drive to collaborate with the State and Territory governments was even stronger. Some of its successes included

- The establishment of an Ability First Taskforce which brought together key government stakeholders from across Australia to address the service gaps for those under 65 with complex care needs who are not NDIS participants. This Taskforce met several times and in August 2026 held a National Summit between the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments to ensure the visibility of this vulnerable cohort at a national level and to advocate for the development of an agreed action plan.
- Through the establishment of monthly Mult-Agency panels, it continued its collaboration with state and territory government agencies to build a greater understanding of the needs of, and types of services required for younger people (not eligible for the NDIS).
- The continued publication of Program Data in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) quarterly public data dashboard. The inclusion of the Ability First data has assisted stakeholders gain a better picture of the number of individuals under 65 who are not NDIS participants who remain living in residential aged care.

Ability First wishes to extend its sincere thanks to the Commonwealth government for funding this program. The grant allowed the national team of Systems Coordinators to assist thousands of people under 65 years with complex care needs across Australia to navigate and find services and supports, whether they were living in residential aged care, at home or in hospital awaiting support to be discharged.

Over the last 5 years, contact was made with over 1600 younger people living in residential aged care, with the majority consenting to be part of the program. Many of these younger people were found to be eligible for the NDIS and with the program's help, over 170 became participants of the scheme, providing a valuable pathway for funded supports to exit residential aged care. For those not eligible for the NDIS, the teams worked hard to find other support and services that could improve their well-being while living in residential aged care. The program was also able to assist 11 people to leave residential aged care with state-funded services and accommodation.

The 1800 national enquiry line responded to over 4500 calls from community providers, hospitals and people under 65 seeking information and support. Again, assistance was provided to many people to test or retest their NDIS eligibility and with our help 400 people became NDIS participants.

Finding state-funded services for those not eligible for the NDIS proved more challenging. However, with determination and dedication, the Systems Coordinators connected hundreds more to local services and support and provided much needed accurate information and guidance to its 400 strong network of community and hospital referrers.

Those who have complex care needs resulting from years of chronic ill health or life limiting conditions are by no means a homogenous group with the program supporting people as young as 25 and those about to turn 65.

This group continues to fall through the gaps of many existing service systems and Ability First is hopeful with the care sector reform agenda gaining momentum that the situation for this group will improve. One subgroup of this cohort is those who are non-Australian citizens and Ability First is pleased to share the story of two such people it supported.

Chanita's Story

Heather, one the Program's Systems Coordinators started working with Chanita (not her real name) following a referral in 2023 from her hospital treating team. Chanita had spent significant time in hospital after experiencing several strokes which had a devastating effect on her physical, sensory and cognitive function which meant that she could not return home.

As a non-Australian resident, Chanita was unable to apply for the NDIS, leaving a Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) as her only accommodation and care option. This plan was deeply concerning for Chanita and her support network as Chanita was aged 45 at that time.

Heather spent many hours with Chanita, her family and with the RACF staff to understand her preferences and wishes. One of Chanita's great loves was watching "Everybody Loves Raymond". Heather facilitated connections with the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme for social support, Young Stroke for assessment and treatment recommendations and Life Without Barriers who liaised with the Department of Home Affairs and Chanita's immigration lawyer regarding visa and citizenship status.

As well as a series of devastating strokes, Chanita also endured personal challenges. Sadly, Chanita was widowed in 2025 after which her teenage son was placed in foster care, supported by the Victorian Child Protection Service.

After three years living in Residential Aged Care (RAC), the team were rewarded with spectacular news in May, this year. Chanita was granted a permanent residency visa allowing her to test her NDIS eligibility. No time was spared by Ability First Australia, and an application was quickly lodged. Soon after Chanita was granted NDIS access.

With the closure of the Ability First Australia program in December, Heather made sure there was a smooth handover to Chanita's guardian and newly appointed NDIS Support Coordinator who will continue to work with the NDIA.
Plans are on schedule for Chanita to move into Supported Disability Accommodation by Christmas with tailored services, housemates her own age, regular visits from her son, jazz music and of course access to American TV!

Chandi's Story

Anna, one of the Program's Systems Coordinators started working with Chandi (not his real name) in late 2021 following his extensive hospital admission and rehabilitation. Chandi had been discharged to Residential Aged Care (RAC) due to the significant impact of the stroke on his cognition, communication and mobility at the age of 40. At the time of referral, Chandi was living in Australia on a protection visa and was not eligible for NDIS supports.

Over the next 5 years Anna worked closely with Chandi and his support network assisting him to secure Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) funding through Life Without Barriers, ensuring he had access to funds for essential personal expenses. She also collaborated closely with his Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) appointed guardian and Victorian Legal Aid lawyer to support his application for permanent residency.

Over several years, Anna maintained regular contact with Chandi, visiting him frequently in residential aged care and advocating for appropriate medical, nursing and allied health supports. Despite significant communication barriers, she regularly engaged interpreter services and remained committed to ensuring his needs and preferences were understood and represented.

In March 2026, after a lengthy and complex process, Chandi was granted permanent residency. This milestone opened the door to NDIS eligibility and marked a significant turning point in his life. Anna coordinated the NDIS access process, gathering extensive medical evidence and working closely with the OPA guardian and residential aged care facility to submit a comprehensive application.

Chandi was subsequently approved for NDIS funding and together with his support network they began exploring long-term home and living options that would provide Chandi with greater independence and community participation.

One of the most meaningful outcomes has been the establishment of regular visits from a support worker who speaks the same dialect as Chandi. This culturally responsive support has strengthened his sense of connection, belonging and wellbeing. Chandi is able to visit his local temple and participate in familiar cultural traditions, engage socially with members of his community, and enjoy authentic food from his homeland.

For a man who spent many years living with significant disability, communication barriers and limited opportunities, these experiences have been transformative. Staff have observed a noticeable improvement in Chandi's mood, confidence and overall outlook on life. He is engaging more with those around him, participating more actively in the community, and smiling far more often than before.

Postcript

Both Chanita and Chandi's journeys highlight the importance of persistent advocacy, good case management and extensive collaboration. Through the combined efforts of working with existing support networks, building new relationships and working closely with legal representatives and guardians both of these very young people have moved from a situation of limited options and uncertainty to one where they will now have access to the funding, therapies and supports needed to their quality of life.

Diploma of Leadership in Disability Services

The Diploma of Leadership in Disability Services continued to play an important role in supporting workforce capability and leadership development across the disability sector during FY26.

A significant achievement during the year was the successful renewal of the qualification's accreditation, resulting in the course transitioning from ASQA code **11076NAT** to **11461NAT** and securing accreditation for a further five years. Ability First proactively undertook the renewal process eighteen months ahead of schedule to ensure continuity of the qualification while national training reforms are considered.

Throughout the year, Ability First worked closely with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, Registered Training Organisations and HumanAbility to support delivery of the Diploma and contribute to broader workforce capability discussions. The qualification continued to be promoted through the Ability First website and remained available as a recognised pathway for emerging and experienced frontline leaders across the disability sector. Three states (Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland) now provide fee free/ subsidised access to the course. Ability First also maintained engagement with HumanAbility as it continued to progress development of a national training pathway for disability frontline leaders.

With dedicated grant funding for the Diploma now concluded, Ability First remains committed to supporting the qualification while government and sector stakeholders determine future workforce development arrangements. HumanAbility's review of the national training pathway is expected to be completed in 2027, with implementation anticipated later that year. The successful renewal of the Diploma has ensured the sector retains access to a recognised leadership qualification during this transition period and positions the course to inform future national workforce capability initiatives.



Image supplied with thanks to Achieve Australia

A recognised pathway for emerging and experienced frontline leaders across the disability sector

David Jones Employment Program

Fostering Inclusive Employment Opportunities

The David Jones Employment Program continued to expand during the year, demonstrating the success of inclusive employment pathways in mainstream retail settings.

Developed through a partnership between David Jones, Ability First Australia and member organisations, the program has created meaningful employment opportunities for people with disability while showcasing the benefits of collaborative workforce solutions.

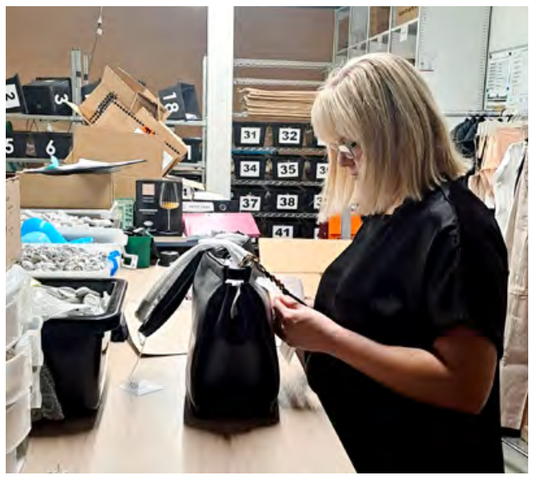
Building on the success of the original New South Wales pilot, the program expanded into Victoria, with placements established at the Doncaster and Glen Waverley stores. By late 2025, five employees were working across David Jones stores, including three employees in Sydney and two in Melbourne. Participants were supported through a dedicated recruitment pathway, workplace readiness training and ongoing employer engagement, resulting in strong outcomes for both employees and store teams.

The success of the program led to a further expansion phase, and there are currently thirteen employees working across Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland and Perth stores as logistics assistants. The David Jones Employment Program has been affected by David Jones' entry into voluntary administration and receivership on 5 November 2026. On 11 November the receivers confirmed the closure of 19 of its 38 stores, including sites in Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland and Perth, with closures expected by the end of the year. Four staff from the program are located in impacted stores and Ability First will work with David Jones and participating members regarding their employment and potential alternative placements.

The program's impact was formally recognised when David Jones received the 2025 Australian Disability Service Award for Best Employment Pathway Program, highlighting the initiative as a leading example of inclusive employment in practice.

Ability First is using learnings from the program to support other inclusive employment pilots.





DAVID JONES | Northcott | Berry Street Yooralla | cpl choice • passion • life | scope making it happen | Ability WA | MSWA Life not limits



Assistive Technology Rental and Refurbishment Pilot

Quality, Affordable Assistive Technology - Fast

Our Pilot program is exploring a more flexible, affordable and sustainable way for people with disability to access the equipment they need. Funded through the Australian Government's Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program, the Pilot provides professionally refurbished assistive technology for rental or purchase, complementing traditional pathways for purchasing new equipment.

Operating as Access Tech, the Pilot brings together Ability First Australia and member organisations NovitaTech, St Giles and Ability WA. Initially established in South Australia and Tasmania, the program expanded into Western Australia in February 2026, extending its reach and testing the hub-and-spoke model across three jurisdictions.

During the year, the Pilot built considerable momentum. Over 400 clients have now accessed equipment through rental or purchase. Encouragingly, 37% of rental clients are children under 15, one of the Pilot's priority groups.

The Pilot is giving quality assistive technology a second life by refurbishing and reusing equipment that might otherwise go to waste. By combining affordable rental options with specialised equipment that can be customised to individual needs, the program is helping people access appropriate assistive technology more flexibly while extending the life of existing equipment. It also highlights the potential for refurbishment and rental to become an enduring part of Australia's assistive technology market, helping to improve access, reduce waste and address gaps across the disability sector.

The pilot concludes in April 2027, where a detailed evaluation will be produced to demonstrate the value of the project and potentially expand services into the future.

For more information, visit: www.accesstech.org.au



access tech
An abilityfirst initiative

Program partners
St.Giles Whole of life solutions | novita tech | Ability WA



Ninth Annual Golf Day

Our 9th Annual Charity Golf Day was held at The Lakes Golf Club on 12th March 2026, bringing together supporters, partners and sponsors for another successful year of this much-loved event.

Funds raised through the Golf Day will go directly towards supporting our employment programs, which create meaningful job opportunities for people with disability. These programs are delivered without government funding and are made possible through the generosity and commitment of our partners, including David Jones.

We were proud to have David Jones return as our headline sponsor, alongside major sponsors Anchorage Capital Partners, Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Gilbert + Tobin, PwC Australia, BitLOGIC and Metrics Credit Partners.

Their ongoing support plays an important role in making the event, and the opportunities it helps create, possible.

A highlight of the day was hearing from guest speakers Sophie and Nathan, who shared their experiences working at David Jones and brought to life the impact that inclusive employment can have. We also thank Bruce Plasto for once again supporting the event as MC.

Congratulations to Alvarez and Marsal, who took out the win on the course.

With nine successful Golf Days now behind us, we look forward to celebrating the 10th anniversary of this important event in 2027 and continuing to build partnerships that create employment opportunities for people with disability.

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Nathan and Sophie shared their experiences working at David Jones.



Winning Team – Alvarez and Marsal

Board Members



Callen O'Brien – Chair

Callen is an experienced board member and corporate adviser with over 25 years' experience across a broad range of industries in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the US. Callen joined Anchorage Capital Partners in 2014 and was appointed Managing Partner in 2022. He is currently Chairman of GBST, Specialised Linen Services, Access Community Health (NZ) and a Director of Evolve Education Group (NZ), Entag, AWCON and HMA and has previously been a council member of the Australian Investment Council. He was formerly Chairman of Contract Resources and Director of Affinity Education and RailFirst. Prior to joining Anchorage, Callen was a senior partner at Minter Ellison where he advised many of Australia's leading private equity firms on their investments in the region. Callen has also worked for a number of years with leading law firms in London and New York advising on international M&A transactions. Callen holds a Bachelor of Commerce and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of NSW and had been admitted to practice law in Australia, England and New York.



Guy Cowan – Independent Director

Guy joined the Ability First Board as an Independent Director in 2017. He is currently Chairman of Queensland Sugar Limited and the Port of Brisbane Limited. He is also Chairman of two private companies. Previously he was a director of Santos Limited, Coffey International Limited and Ludowici Limited.

Guy had a 23 year career with Shell International in various senior Commercial and Financial roles. His last two roles were as CFO and Director of Shell Oil US and CFO of Shell Nigeria. Guy was CFO of Fonterra Co-operative Ltd between 2005 and 2009. He holds a BSc (Hons) Engineering from the University of Sussex and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and is a Fellow of the AICD.



Alison Quinn – Independent Director

Alison joined the Ability First Board as an Independent Director in 2023. She is a professional non-executive director with more than 25 years' experience as a CEO and senior executive in the property development and aged care / seniors sectors.

Through her roles with public, private and government organisations, Alison has developed valuable operational and commercial expertise in the areas of property investment, funding, infrastructure and development. Uniquely, Alison has significant expertise on the impacts and challenges of Australia's ageing population and has been at the forefront of thought leadership regarding meeting the housing, care and other service needs of the baby boomer generation.

Alison brings to the board a depth of experience in developing strategies that drive sustainable growth, a strong customer perspective and a passion and understanding of how property as an enabler can deliver both financial and holistic outcomes.



Geoff Lovell – Independent Director

Geoff joined the Ability First Board as an Independent Director in 2022. He has more than 30 years of experience in the corporate and for-purpose sectors, across real estate, investment management, banking, risk management, corporate governance, education and Indigenous Australia.

Geoff is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Chairman of Ability First Australia Community Housing Ltd (AFACHL) since 2022, President of the Cranbrook School Council, and the Chief Investment Officer of Sustainable Development Group Ltd.

Previously, Geoff has held senior executive roles at Lend Lease and Macquarie Group, where he was Chief Executive Officer of ASX-listed Macquarie ProLogis Trust and Head of Commercial Property Lending. In addition, Geoff has had extensive voluntary involvements in for-purpose enterprises, including as: Chairman of the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), Chairman of the Indigenous Real Estate Investment Trust (I- REIT) Investment Committee, Chairman of the Council of St Paul's College within the University of Sydney, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore), and a member of the Investment Committee of the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC). Geoff holds first class honours degrees from the University of Sydney (in Civil Engineering) and the University of Oxford (in Philosophy, Politics and Economics), where he was the inaugural Bradman Scholar.



Liz Forsyth – Member Representative Director

Liz is a skilled CEO and Senior Executive with experience leading at scale in a not-for-profit context, including in the child and family, and disability services sectors. As a social worker with management and governance qualifications, Liz has had an extensive career in human services. She is passionate about social justice, innovation, and leading for impact in the social and community sector. With an early career in child protection services, Liz spent over a decade working in disability for Northcott during the transformation of the industry through the NDIS. She then moved into the child and family sector as CEO of CareSouth and returned to Northcott in 2020 as the CEO and Managing Director. As well as being on the Board of Ability First Australia, Liz is a Director of The SpineCare Foundation and Ability Roundtable and is also a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Rhys Kennedy – Member Representative Director

Rhys has been Chief Executive Officer of CPL since December 2016. Rhys brings a unique combination of knowledge, skills and experience to the role, many of which have been acquired from within the organisation. After joining CPL as an Occupational Therapist in Rockhampton, Rhys held a number of local management roles before taking a leadership role in the organisation as General Manager – Strategy, a position which would ultimately lead him into the CEO role. Rhys is well known and respected in the human services sector, through his roles on a number of advisory groups. As well as being on the Board of Ability First Australia he also sits on the Boards of CPL subsidiaries, Cootharinga and Access Arts.

He holds a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy, Master of Business Administration and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Annie Rily – Member Representative Director

Annie is the Chief Executive Officer of Carpentaria, a leading Northern Territory provider of specialist disability supports and allied health services. With almost 20 years' experience in the disability sector, Annie has held leadership roles across frontline allied health practice, government, policy development and executive management. Prior to joining Carpentaria in 2017, she served as Senior Director of the Northern Territory Office of Disability, leading disability, forensic and remote service initiatives.

As CEO, Annie has led significant organisational growth while expanding access to high-quality disability and allied health services across urban, regional and remote communities. She is committed to evidence-based practice, service excellence and advancing outcomes for people with disability. Annie is a member of the Northern Territory Division of National Disability Services Committee (NDS), a Board Director of Cerebral Palsy Australia (CPA), and represents the Northern Territory on the NDIS Reform Advisory Committee.



Andrew Rowley – Managing Director and Company Secretary

Andrew joined Ability first Australia as Managing Director in 2012. Andrew comes with over 25 years' experience in the not-for-profit, education and commercial sector. He has extensive experience in strategy and establishing and securing revenue streams. While being passionate about helping those less fortunate, he is focused on ensuring accountability and outcomes whilst maintaining core values and mission. Under Andrew's leadership, Ability First Australia has established itself as the only strategic alliance in the disability industry. Ability First played a critical role in supporting 15 large service providers transition into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), one of Australia's largest social reforms since the introduction of Medicare in the 1980s. Andrew is a fellow of ADAPE Australia, a member of the CEO Circle and is the Chair of WeFlex.



Phil Cave – Chair (retired November 2025)

Phillip is a merchant banker beginning his career as an Executive Director of Macquarie Bank Limited. He is an accomplished Chief Executive Officer, Director, Chairman, and Board Member and has over 40 years' experience with a proven track record in major corporate turnaround projects, structured finance and corporate advisory services within Australasia. Phillip is Executive Chair and Founder of Anchorage Capital Partners and through this investment vehicle, was formerly Chairman of Golden Circle, Bisalloy Steel Group and Dick Smith Electronics Limited and is current Chairman of GBST and Executive Director of David Jones. Prior to Anchorage, Phillip held major shareholdings and Director/Chairman roles of Parbury Limited, Wormald, Sunbeam-Victa and Hygienic Lily. Phillip is also currently Chairman of Excelsia University College. He has been involved in Disability Services for over 30 years and was Chairman of Northcott Disability Services for seven years. He has participated in 25 Variety 'bashes' and in 2006 was admitted into the Hall of Fame of Variety, for the Children's Charity. In 2007 Phillip was awarded by the Australian Government, a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for service to the community, particularly through the provision of support services to Children and Young Adults with Disabilities and to business as a Company Director.



Greg Ward – Member Representative Director (retired July 2026)

Greg has served as Novita's Chief Executive Officer since July 2016. With a focus on innovation and shared outcomes, Greg offers strong leadership for the achievement of our vision and ongoing sustainability. His experience in the selection and management of high performing teams will enable the implementation of a range of new and exciting strategies for our transformation into meeting the challenges of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.Greg has a long and impressive pedigree with successful military, public and private sector roles, including at CEO and Board level.Greg is a firm advocate for investment into building skills, knowledge and staff retention, in order to maximise Novita's unique offer, points of difference and intellectual properties.

Image supplied with thanks to Northcott





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Aggregated Financials

Group Financials of Ability First Members

INCOME STATEMENT	2025 $'000	2026* $'000
Revenues		
- Government	2,733,984	5,747,208
- Fundraising	6,025	176,108
- Other	222,945	551,355
Total Revenues	**2,962,954**	**6,474,671**
Expenses	**3,027,363**	**5,805,101**
Surplus/ (deficit)	**(64,409)***	**669,570**
Surplus/ (deficit) excl. Fundraising and other		**-57893**
BALANCE SHEET		
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	301,081	511,216
Trade and other receivables	164,041	312,012
Inventories	9,463	37,993
Other financial assets	219,720	446,730
Other	82,276	85,238
Total Current Assets	**776,581**	**1,393,188**
Non-Current Assets		
Other financial assets	462,276	613,836
Property, plant and equipment	470,131	1,593,644
Other	201,540	258,723
Total Non-Current Assets	**1,133,947**	**2,466,204**
Total Assets	**1,910,528**	**3,859,392**
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	192,787	417,504
Other financial liabilities	105,269	56,347
Borrowings	1,445	134,769
Provisions	235,616	527,700
Other	144,085	218,055
Total Current Liabilities	**679,202**	**1,354,375**
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provisions	70,583	151,823
Borrowings	134,172	352,036
Total Non-Current Liabilities	**204,755**	**503,859**
Total Liabilities	**883,957**	**1,858,235**
Net Assets	**1,026,571**	**2,001,157**
Members' Funds		
Retained Earnings	883,746	1,669,172
Reserves	142,825	331,985
Total Members' Funds	**1,026,571**	**2,001,157**

*eleven new members included FY26

Governance

About Ability First Australia

Ability First Australia was established in 2003 to bring together seven of Australia's longest-standing not-for-profit disability organisations and harness their collective experience, knowledge and expertise for greater national impact.

More than two decades later, Ability First has evolved into Australia's largest not-for-profit industry alliance in the disability sector. Following significant membership expansion during 2026, Ability First now brings together 25 leading disability service providers operating across every state and territory. Ability First Australia's current public information indicates that its members support over 50,000 NDIS participants, many with complex support needs.

Importantly, this expansion did not change the governance of Ability First Australia. The Board confirmed that prospective members would continue to progress through the established application and due-diligence processes, reflecting the importance placed on maintaining the trust, collaboration and shared purpose of the alliance as it grows.

Governance and oversight

Ability First Australia is governed by a constitution and the Board has responsibility for the strategic direction, financial stewardship, risk management and governance of Ability First Australia and its consolidated entities.

The Board's oversight encompasses Ability First Australia's strategic plan, membership growth, financial sustainability, regulatory and sector risk, as well as the three Ability First subsidiaries of Ability Roundtable, Cerebral Palsy Australia and Ability First Australia Community Housing Ltd.

Ability First Australia Board

As of 1 July 2013, AFA's operating structure is as follows:

5 Independent Directors - "Independent Director" means a Director who:

(a) is not part of the Group's day-to-day management;

(b) is free of any business or other relationship that could materially interfere with – or could reasonably be perceived to interfere with – the independent exercise of their judgment; and

(c) has not been an employee or office-holder of, or consultant to, a Member or a Related Body Corporate of a Member, for a period of 24 consecutive months or such other period determined by the Board;

3 Member Directors:

(a) May be Board members or CEO's of the members.

International Affiliation

Ability First Australia also maintains its longstanding international relationship with Easterseals. Ability First Australia is currently described as Easterseals' only global affiliate in the Asia-Pacific region and participates in its Global Partners Committee alongside affiliates from Canada, the United States and Mexico.



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Supporters

We gratefully acknowledge the support we have received from our donors, sponsors and supporters:

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Microsoft

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Ricky Casali

Bob Critchley

Warren Douche

Kym Godson

Dennis Guy

Julian Harris

Robert Millner

Allan Moss AO

Callen O'Brien

Assunta Pellicano

Nunzio Pellicano

Your generosity allows us to work towards an Australia that puts ability first and ensures inclusion for all. Thank you for your outstanding support.





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