

# Annual Report

2022-23





Northcott acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands upon we work. We pay our respects to their Elders – past, present and emerging – and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We also pay tribute to their ongoing connection to land, water and community.

## Our purpose

Northcott is a not-for-profit disability service provider that works with customers to realise their potential.

We are striving to build an inclusive society where people can live the life they choose.

We support people with disability to reach their full potential by providing services and support to promote a genuinely inclusive society.

## Our vision

We want to grow our services because customers choose us as their provider of choice.

## Our values

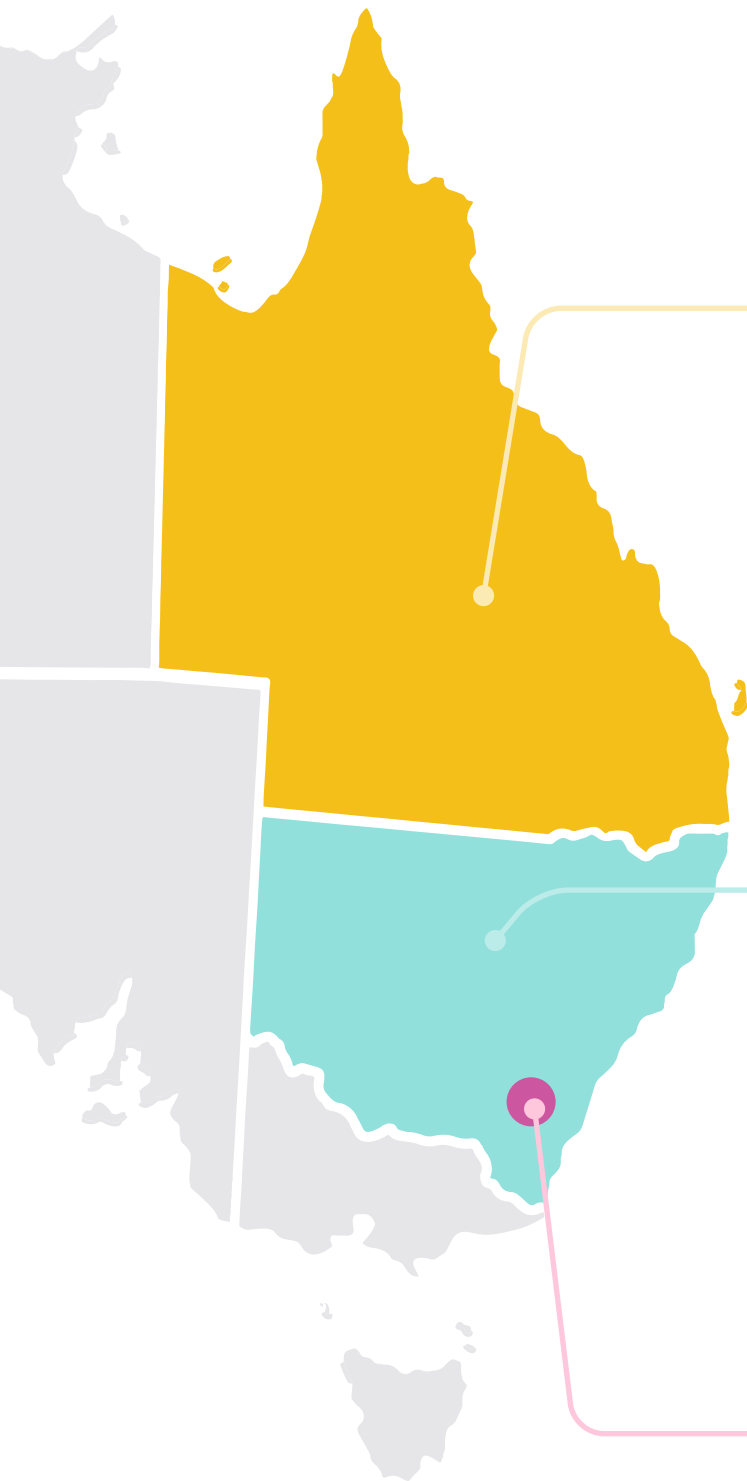
We are a values-based organisation that fosters a workplace culture based on our core values of:

- **INNOVATIVE** – because we develop new ideas and solutions with creativity in anticipation of changing needs.
- **RESPECTFUL** – because we believe that everyone's voice is unique and that they have the right to be heard.
- **BRAVE** – because we have the courage to stand up for people with all abilities, even in the face of adversity.



INNOVATIVE  
RESPECTFUL  
BRAVE

# Our community in 2022-23



**2,029**

customers supported in QLD

**4,281**

customers supported in NSW  
through Northcott services

**15,856**

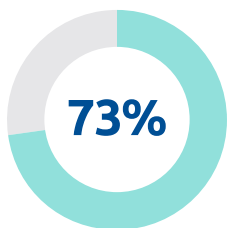
children and families accessed  
Northcott Early Childhood Services

**129**

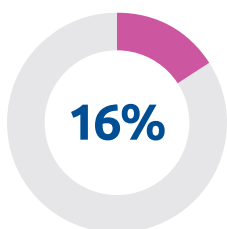
customers supported in the ACT

Northcott provided services and supports to

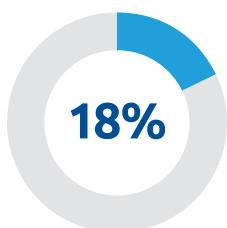
**6,310** people with disability\*



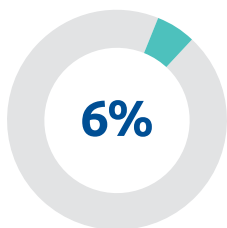
live in metropolitan areas



used more than  
1 Northcott service



used Northcott  
for the first time



told us they are Aboriginal/  
Torres Strait Islander



\*Excluding children supported by Northcott's Early Childhood Services as a NDIS Partner in the Community

# From the Chair and CEO

**The 2023 Financial Year was a rewarding one for Northcott. While COVID-19 has continued to cause some disruption, we have been very pleased to see our operations return to pre-pandemic levels.**

Our staff numbers are up, and we are delivering our full suite of services and supports - as well as some new programs - to thousands of children and adults with disability and their families and carers.

## **Growing and supporting our workforce**

We support a culturally diverse and inclusive workforce. Northcott now has more than 2,600 staff members located in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland. They are the heart of our organisation. Every day we see how they follow our values, care about our customers, respect each other and are passionate about our purpose to build an inclusive society for people with disability.

This past year, we have made progress in attracting more people with disability to our workforce. This is, of course, vitally important to our purpose and vision for a more inclusive society.

We want our staff to feel comfortable at work and be able to share other parts of themselves – whether that’s talking about their culture or their disability. To support this, we now have three diverse employee networks where staff members can connect with each other. The most recent addition is the Northcott Pride Network, for employees in the LGBTIQ+ community and their allies.



## **Thank you to our Chair**

Northcott Chair Michael Briggs will step down from the Northcott Board on 31 October 2023.

We would like to acknowledge Michael’s immense contribution to Northcott over more than two decades and we wish him all the best for the future.

## A few service highlights

One of the significant changes we have made is to introduce Customer Partners. These staff members work very closely with customers – and their families - to ensure each individual is achieving their goals, maximising the services they receive from Northcott and using their NDIS funds in the best possible way to live the life they choose.

With the housing crisis one of the biggest issues impacting the entire community, we are pleased to be growing Northcott's Housing service. Northcott now manages 123 disability homes across New South Wales, with 9 properties under construction.

In the Therapy area, we opened a new Active Therapy space in the playground at our North Parramatta office. Our thanks go to long-term partners Baresque and Western Earthmoving, and the NSW government and other donors, who provided the funding to make this possible.

Northcott's expansion into Queensland through the merger with Montrose Therapy and Respite has been another exciting development. Our Queensland Centres have started to offer Life Skills services to children and adults with disability, tapping into expertise from our teams in New South Wales.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) announced that Northcott will become the new Early Childhood Partner in the Community for the Northern Sydney region. This new contract will see our Early Childhood specialists support an additional 2,100 children.

## The coming year

Three significant activities will command our attention in the coming year. The first is Northcott's response to the Disability Royal Commission. We will work with the industry through Ability First Australia to deliver on the Commission's recommendations and ensure we are providing safe, high quality services and supports.

We have also been closely following the NDIS Review and anticipate this will bring quite significant changes to the way

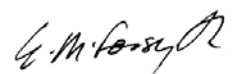
disability support is structured. We will also be focused on planning for our next Strategic Plan. The Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review will impact this heavily. However, after several years of building the foundation for a stronger, more effective and sustainable organisation, we believe Northcott is in a strong position to continue to deliver on our purpose to build a more inclusive society for children and adults with disability.

## Thank you

Northcott would not be the organisation it is today without our community of Directors, staff, partners and stakeholders. Our thanks go to Northcott's Board members, Executive team, staff, partners, supporters, donors – and the people with disability and their families who choose Northcott as their service provider. We are proud to support children and adults with disability to reach their potential and live the life they choose.



**Michael Briggs**  
Chair,  
Northcott



**Liz Forsyth**  
CEO,  
Northcott

# Our services and supports

## Behaviour Support

Highly skilled NDIS Commission registered practitioners, supporting people with disability regarding behaviours of concern.



## Northcott Early Childhood Services

Tailored support meeting the needs of children aged 0-9 with developmental delay or disability, delivered through our role as a NDIS Early Childhood Partner in the Community.



## Group Services

Services where customers with similar goals and interests come together in a group setting at a Northcott Centre or in the community. Includes Life Skills, Skills 4 Life, Recreation, Work & Study, Short Stays and more.



## Housing and Supported Independent Living

More than 120 properties, including shared homes and individual villas, so people with disability can find a place to call home and get the support they need.





## Individual Services

Services where a customer accesses one-on-one support in the community, at their home or at their workplace.



## Sexuality and Relationship Education

Counselling and group education programs for young people and adults with disability who want to learn, explore and manage their relationships and sexuality.



## Support Coordination

Support to assist people with disability to navigate the disability service system and understand their NDIS plan by providing information, advice and support when decisions need to be made.



## Therapy

Fully accredited therapy specialists, including speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, dieticians and allied health assistants. We also provide tailor-made orthotic and footwear solutions through our Orthotics and Custom Footwear service.



# A snapshot of our year



Visit our online Annual Report for more details about activities, highlights and achievements in 2022-23.

## Our workplace profile

**2,623**  
staff members

**90%**  
work in roles directly supporting people with disability

**30%**  
are casual employees

**71%**  
are female

Staff work from offices, centres and disability homes in NSW, QLD and ACT.



**200+** Northcott staff  
are qualified mental health first aiders!

## New disability homes

We opened two new purpose-built disability homes. In August 2022, we joined our partner Good Housing to break ground on a purpose-built villa complex in Albury. Then in April we were delighted to officially open a new disability housing development in Ballina with developer Casa Capace. We have several other new properties in the pipeline.



## Customer survey

In November, we asked the people we support to provide feedback on the services and supports they receive from Northcott. This year's survey was available in seven languages including Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Easy English with Key Word Sign, as well as a video version. Participants were able to complete the online survey using text, voice recording or video recordings. Providing a range of formats allowed people to access and respond to the survey in a way that best suits them. This is in line with Northcott's goal to be more inclusive and accessible.

## SPEAK UP ABOUT ABUSE



### Speak Up About Abuse

Our Safeguarding team supports customers, staff and the organisation to implement best practice in the areas of child wellbeing and adult abuse and neglect. This year, we introduced a campaign, known as Speak Up About Abuse, to raise awareness and improve staff understanding, response to and prevention of any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence towards our customers. The campaign encouraged staff to be brave and speak up if they see, hear or feel that something is not right concerning our customers.



### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We are committed to creating a disability confident culture. This year, we have been focused on improving our support for staff with disability, as well as implementing ways to recruit and retain more people with disability as employees.

Our workplace adjustments program continues to be accessed by staff across the organisation. This year, 30 requests were completed.

In April 2023, we added a diversity and inclusion statement to our job advertisements with the goal of attracting more applications from people with disability. We saw 51 applicants from people with disability in the last quarter of the financial year, compared with 19 in the first quarter.

### NDIS Early Childhood Partner

In June, Northcott was named as the NDIS Early Childhood Partner in the Community for the Northern Sydney region. This is the 5th region where Northcott provides early childhood support under the NDIS. Since 2018, we have been supporting children with disability and developmental delay and their families in Western Sydney, Hunter New England, Mid North Coast and Northern NSW. From 1 October 2023, Northcott will support an additional 2,100 children with disability and developmental delay and their families in this new region.

The NDIA also announced that Northcott's role as Early Childhood Partner in the Community for the existing 4 regions has been extended to 30 June 2025.



## Our Strategic Frameworks

Across the year, our Quality team worked with frontline staff to develop three vitally important Strategic Frameworks to guide the way we support people with disability to achieve their goals. They are:

- **The Practice Framework:** outlining eight practice foundations explaining the 'how' and 'why' we engage with customers in a particular way.
- **The Quality Framework:** shapes our practices, policies and procedures so we meet regulatory requirement and prioritise customers safety and wellbeing.
- **The Clinical Governance Framework:** supporting staff to deliver safe, effective and high-quality healthcare services.

## Northcott Pride

We set up Northcott Pride, a group for staff members who identify as LGBTQIA+ and their allies. The group contributes to Northcott's policies related diversity and inclusion as they apply to LGBTQIA+ employees and provides insights and feedback on our initiatives related to attracting, retaining and engaging workers who identify as LGBTQIA+. Northcott Pride also plays a role in planning social events, providing informal peer support and driving Northcott's involvement in community events such as Fair Day and WorldPride.



## Our Reconciliation journey

This was the final year of our Stretch RAP 2020-23, which expires in September 2023. Our RAP Working Group and Yarrabee staff network for employees who come from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage continued to operate, with their annual face-to-face meeting in May.

We are proud to have increased the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in senior leadership roles, including general manager, senior operations manager, team leaders and service co-ordinators.

Work is underway on our next RAP, which will be another Stretch RAP.



## Human Rights Conference

We were delighted to support three customers to appear on a panel at the WorldPride Human Rights Conference in Sydney in March. The customers bravely shared their lived experiences of the challenges they have faced as people with disability who identify as LGBTQIA+.

**Inclusion Squared:**  
breaking down barriers  
surrounding the LGBTQIA+  
disability community

A panel discussion by Northcott for Sydney  
WorldPride Human Rights Conference  
12.55pm Friday 3 March 2023



## Therapists make a splash

Using an Australian Government Information Linkages and Capacity (ILC) Building grant, we developed and delivered a tailored Learn to Swim program for children with disability and neurodiversity in the Wollongong area. Kate Dryden and Lauren Williams, Northcott Occupational Therapists, and Cameron Ryan, Allied Health Assistant, ran iSplash for 20 kids over Terms 1 and 2 in 2023. Our team’s therapy knowledge about sensory and emotional needs, as well as their expertise in social skills development for children with disability were some of the unique benefits of the program.

## Active Therapy Space

Therapy customers and staff are loving our new outdoor Active Therapy Space in the revamped playground at our North Parramatta office. The upgrade has made the space more functional and welcoming. Our Therapy team are using the area and equipment to support children with disability to develop and build their daily skills while having fun in the playground. We’ve named the space, ‘Walu Dynamila’, which means ‘Let’s go play!’ It was made possible with support from Baresque, Western Earthmoving and the NSW Government.



Scan the QR code to watch a video of the opening!



## Our Early Childhood Services

**5,582**

first NDIS plans approved

**3,907**

NDIS plan reviewed

**2,539**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children supported

**1,258**

children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds supported

## Tertiary Scholarships

**29** students supported in 2022-23

Every year our subsidiary The SpineCare Foundation administers the Northcott Tertiary Scholarship Program, made possible by the enduring commitment of several Trusts and Foundations. This long-running program supports people with disability to pursue tertiary education. Students receive a financial grant to put towards costs such as transport, computer equipment, library and internet charges, textbooks, on-campus accommodation, personal care and scribes and tutors.

This year, we introduced a new scholarship, thanks to a bequest from the estate of disability advocate and quadriplegic, John Moxon AM, and a donation from Parramatta Computer Pals for Seniors. Having lived more than 40 years with Spinal Cord Injury, Mr Moxon and his wife, Margaret had a long association with Northcott. We are grateful for their support.



## Date nights!

Our Sexuality and Relationship Education service hosted two “LOVE-ABLE” date nights in Parramatta for adults with disability. The nights were a big hit, with people enjoying conversations, food, dancing and trivia. Experienced Northcott support workers and relationship counsellors were on hand all night to provide support when needed.

The nights were a chance for people to build confidence in social settings and practice their social skills in a safe environment, which can sometimes be difficult for people with disability without events like this to attend regularly.



## Nest

Northcott Innovation’s (NI) disability housing matching website, Nest is 5 years old! The site has grown significantly and is known as one of the best tools to support people to find disability housing that meets their funding requirements and support needs.

**nest**  
gonest.com.au

**8,000+**

site visits each month and growing

**1,477**

disability housing providers listing properties

**5,905**

properties listed

**22**

applications or enquiries to the site on average every day

**8,838**

profiles created by carers, support coordinators and people with disability

## More support for customers

We introduced a new Customer Partner role to better support our customers to achieve their goals. Customer Partners work closely with customers and their support network to get to know them and ensure they are accessing the most appropriate Northcott services and using their NDIS funding to the best of their ability.



Scan the QR code to learn about the role from Narelle, a Customer Partner in Ballina.

## Disability Royal Commission

Liz Forsyth, Northcott's CEO, appeared on two panel discussions as part of the 32nd hearing of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability.

On the first panel, Liz shared information on Northcott's policies and procedures for complaints and incidents, how complaints and issues are managed and how customers and families can raise issues. In the second hearing, Liz spoke about Northcott's Speak Up About Abuse campaign, safeguarding phone hotline, and whistle-blower policy as examples of how Northcott is committed to encouraging the reporting of any suspected abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violence against customers.



## Athletics carnival

Almost 150 primary and secondary school students competed in Northcott's two inclusive Athletics Carnivals in November. The carnivals were sponsored by Western Earthmoving with our inclusive fitness partner WeFlex organising races and activities. Children took part in adaptable events that matched their abilities. For the first time, the carnivals also had a sensory safe space for kids who needed a break from the competitive environment. Northcott therapists were on hand running games in the calming space.



Scan the QR code to watch a video of Swimming Carnivals.

## Supporting refugees with disability

The collaboration between NSW Health, Northcott and NI to support recently arrived refugees with disability reached five years in 2023. Over this time, 34 refugees, aged from 2 – 65 years, have received much-needed footwear or orthotics equipment at no cost. Refugees referred to the program are not yet eligible for NDIS funding. Funding from NSW Health covers the cost of assessments by Northcott therapists and orthotists, as well as the manufacture and fitting of customised equipment and devices. Many of the devices provided are life-changing in their support.

**“This collaboration has been wonderful for a number of our clients. It enables clients to receive much-needed orthotics in a timely fashion. Given our clients are newly arrived humanitarian entrants, the project is like a fast track to receiving much-needed devices and an important step in enhancing the settlement process for this vulnerable population.”**

**Mark Mahoney**

Clinical Nurse Specialist, Disability Support Team, NSW Refugee Health Service



# Early connections make a difference

**A phone call from Northcott's Early Childhood Services team provided the support and connections Yojana needed for her son, Kaayan.**

Kaayan was diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome when he was 2 years old. This genetic condition causes neurological symptoms, including intellectual disability, distinctive facial features, speech delay and mobility problems. Sadly, Kaayan is not eligible to receive funding under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) due to his visa status. In 2022, our Early Childhood Services, Therapy and Fundraising team worked together to find a way to provide Kaayan and his family with vital early intervention services and support.

## Early Childhood support

Our Early Childhood team supports families with young children with disability or developmental delay to access NDIS funding and link with support and services. When a child is ineligible for funding, our team links their family with services, information and other referral pathways so they can get the support they need. For Kaayan, this meant referrals to the local community health team where he could access some occupational therapy and physiotherapy sessions free of charge as well as receive grant funded lower body equipment to assist with balance and posture development. Our team provided Kaayan's mother Yojana with

information about the Inclusion Support Program in preschools, and helped with placing Kaayan on the preschool waiting list. The family was also linked to support to help with their visa application and advocacy for Medicare services. Their Northcott Early Childhood Coordinator also passed on information about transitioning to kindergarten and the available support for Kaayan. "The strategies and information from the Northcott Early Childhood team was really good at a time when I had no one who could help me," says Yojana. "I am very thankful to the Northcott Early Childhood team who have given us a way to access funding, services and support."



## Giving Day 2022

Kaayan was the face of our 2022 Giving Day campaign. Thanks to generous matching partners and wonderful donors, we raised \$126,000 for children with disability, like Kaayan, who aren't eligible to receive NDIS funding for vital therapy services.



Scan the QR code to watch our Giving Day video featuring Kaayan!



## Therapy support

Kaayan was also linked to Northcott's Fundraising and Therapy teams who nominated him to receive therapy services free of charge, using donations from our generous community of partners and supporters. The occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy Kaayan has received throughout 2023 have made a huge impact on his development. "The strategies the Northcott therapists have given me for mobility, for his attention, for his feeding are really helpful. Compared to last year, Kaayan is now standing, holding onto

support. He is walking around with support. Before he was just taking a few steps, but now if he can hold on, he will go everywhere. He has also started eating finger food by himself ... and has become more expressive than he was last year," his mother explains.



Visit our online report to see how our therapists are supporting Kaayan.

**In FY2023,  
Northcott's Early  
Childhood Services  
supported 15,856  
children and their  
families.**



Kaayan and his dad



# Life-changing therapy support for Prayaag



**Our young customer Prayaag is enjoying a more independent life, thanks to a new standing wheelchair and tailored occupational therapy support.**

## Prayaag's goals

Prayaag has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD). This is causing a progressive loss of mobility and muscle strength, which impacts his ability to complete activities and tasks independently.

When Prayaag started accessing Therapy services with Northcott, he told us his goal was to remain as independent as possible.

"I wanted to be able to go to the movies and shops with my friends – without the support of my mother or a support worker. I wanted to order food independently at food courts, and complete wood technology and hospitality subjects at school," Prayaag recalls.

Prayaag's Northcott Occupational Therapist, Erin Thornton, identified areas where therapy could support him to achieve his goal.

"One of the main barriers to Prayaag's goals was loss of strength in his upper limbs (hand, arm, shoulder) due to his disability. This affected his ability to reach outwards and upwards for objects in his environment from a seated position in his wheelchair," says Erin.

Around this time, Prayaag was also starting to outgrow his power wheelchair.

## Finding a solution

Erin identified that a standing power wheelchair might give Prayaag the independence he was looking for. A standing wheelchair supports a user to be in an upright or standing position, allowing them to interact with people and objects at eye level.

Prayaag and his family were keen to explore this option, so Erin began a lengthy assessment and trial process.

"The assessment, which was conducted in liaison with Prayaag's physiotherapist and other health and medical professionals, started with identifying the issues Prayaag was currently experiencing with this wheelchair," explains Erin.

**"It's been so rewarding to see all of the functional tasks that Prayaag can do now...and all of the other social and psychological benefits that have flowed on from this."**

**Erin Thornton**

Northcott Occupational Therapist



"It involved assessing his posture to ensure that the seating on the new wheelchair would meet his postural support needs and provide him with a functional seated position.

"Prayaag also completed trials of the standing power wheelchair so that we could assess, measure and gather evidence of the functional benefits he received from being able to move in and out of a standing position. We also needed to confirm that the wheelchair was compatible with the environments he spends his time, such as home and school," Erin says.

Erin was also involved in Prayaag's application for NDIS funding to cover the cost of the wheelchair and the additional therapy he would need to get the most from the equipment.

"I was able to advocate for Prayaag's needs and communicate just how beneficial the standing wheelchair is for his independence and ability to engage in activities," Erin explains.

### **New-found independence**

Since receiving his new standing wheelchair in September 2022, Prayaag has been enjoying a whole new level of independence.

"I can now get snacks or a drink from the cupboard or fridge at home, use the microwave, and

help my family with preparing meals. I can help mum with the grocery shopping and get items from the shelves, order my own food at the food court, play arcade games at Time Zone and more independently, access the equipment in the wood technology and hospitality rooms at school," Prayaag says.

Standing has also had some huge social benefits for Prayaag. He is now able to stand up and hug his mum. He also says his friends tend to hang around and talk to him more at school when he's standing up and at eye level with them.

"It's been so rewarding to see all of the functional tasks that Prayaag can do now...and all of the other social and psychological benefits that have flowed on from this," says Erin.

# Opening up Luikas' world

**Our Skills 4 Life program has been the perfect after-school activity for Luikas, a young Indigenous participant from Taree. While learning everyday skills, he's been building his independence, growing in confidence and making new friends.**



Luikas was born genetically deaf and at 18 months old, he received bilateral cochlear implants. Now aged 15, he is non-verbal and has been attending Skills 4 Life with our Taree team to improve his social skills and participate in the community.

"We were having trouble with Luikas connecting with other people. He could connect with adults really well, but with kids there was a barrier. Now that they are older, they take a lot more time [to connect with]," explains Michelle, Luikas' mother.

## **What is Skills 4 Life?**

Skills 4 Life is a skill development program that supports teenagers with disability to gain independence by learning practical life skills in a fun environment. It runs two afternoons a week during school terms.

Michelle says the program appealed to her for Luikas because it rolled a range of different activities together, all of which she knew Luikas would benefit from.

“It’s been hard to get Luikas interested in doing things that could benefit him outside of school. I knew this program would offer things that would be good for him. They would cook with him, take him shopping and teach him about money,” she says.

Michelle also liked the idea of Luikas interacting with other kids with disability and being part of a community.

### How Luikas has benefitted

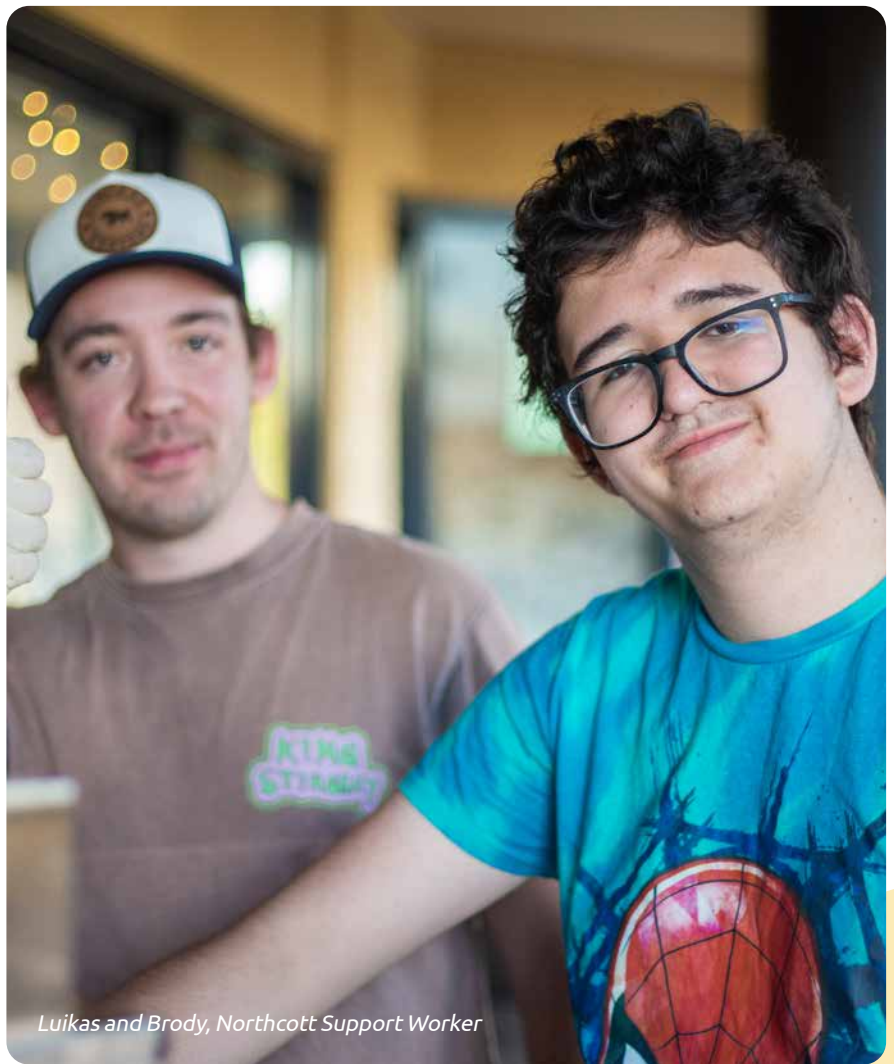
Michelle has seen big changes in Luikas over the past year. She says he loves going to the program and always come home happy.

“He has changed a lot. He’s more independent and he does a lot more for himself. It’s his social skills and the community participation that’s seen the biggest benefit,” she says.

“I think he enjoys just being out. He gets picked up from school [by Northcott] and that gives him a sense of independence.

“When he first went, he really liked it. He had a worker named Brody, and he got on really well with him. He hadn’t had male workers around him previously.”

Interacting with the other participants has also been beneficial for Luikas, who uses Auslan. The group has been learning Auslan to be able to communicate together.



*Luikas and Brody, Northcott Support Worker*

### A world of potential

Although Luikas has attended mainstream schooling since year 2 and is doing well in many of his classes, Michelle admits she had “a lot of doubts” about his future before he reached high school.

Thanks to support from Northcott and a supportive community around him, Michelle says she can now see Luikas finding work after finishing school.

“With a lot of help, I think getting a job is definitely possible. He’s changed. He’s really capable.

“I say to him all the time, ‘Me and dad are really proud of you, bud.’”

**“I say to him all the time, ‘Me and dad are really proud of you, bud.’”**

**Michelle**  
Luikas’ mother



Scan the QR code to find out more about Luikas and our Skills 4 Life program in this video!

# Gaining confidence and job skills after school

**Our second Life After School program was a life-changing experience for 28 participants. The young adults with disability gained vital employment skills and valuable work experience out in the real world.**

After completing Life After School, participants said they felt more confident about looking for work and understanding workplaces.

At the group's graduation in June, Northcott's Program Coordinator, Tanjina Rahman said: "It makes me feel overwhelmed to see how much the participants have achieved. It's not only how this program has shaped them to find a job or gain employment skills. It's about how they have improved their communication skills, how they have grown in confidence to go out there and talk to people, nurture friendships."

## What is Life After School?

Life After School is a 6-month face-to-face program providing practical support, mentoring, coaching and work experience opportunities for young people with borderline disability who are not eligible to receive NDIS funding. The program aims to support participants to develop skills to find and keep a job.

In 2023, Life After School was delivered at four Northcott centres, in collaboration with TAFE and Disability Employment Services. In a group setting, participants completed modules to prepare them for applying for jobs and understanding workplaces. Each participant also completed a work experience placement in an industry or business of their choice, including Bunnings and Target. Northcott's Library, Life Skills service, Therapy and Administration teams also offered work experience opportunities.



## Taneisha, aspiring writer

"When I first joined the program, I isolated myself from people and I didn't talk much. But after a few lessons, I managed to gain some new confidence.

"I'll be enrolling in a course at TAFE called Statement of Creative Writing, while working part-time in a retail job. Because of Bunnings [work experience], I hope that I can be transferred from a trainee to an employee, to help me to become a writer."



**3 Life After School graduates landed paid jobs while participating in the program!**

**Sam, aspiring occupational therapist**

"I learned a lot more about work and etiquette ... I didn't have a lot of experience with that, or a lot of knowledge. I also learned more about how important communication is in life and in work. The program has definitely helped.

"I've learned I want to do a lot more with people with autism. I think I've got knowledge that is really helpful and I want to work doing therapies that are very fun and engaging. After the program, I'm thinking of exploring more opportunities in the therapy space and practising things I've learned."

**Life After School is funded by an Australian Government Information Linkages and Capacity (ILC) Building grant.**

**Lloyd, aspiring librarian**

"I feel clearer about what I should be doing to get a job. I was really unsure before about how it works. Now I feel more coherent about using websites such as Seek and Indeed and Jura to search for jobs. Also, how to write resumes, I never knew that before. I didn't understand it but now I do.

"Working the Northcott Library has been very rewarding. It has built my skills up higher in shelving, knowing how to catalogue and the Dewey Decimals system."



Scan the QR code to watch our video for more about Life After School!



# A role helping all young people with disability

**Hannah Ogden and Tyra Buteux are customers from our Casula Work & Study service. They have joined our workforce as our first Community Research Officers.**

Hannah and Tyra work with Sam Frain, Northcott's Senior Manager for Research and Innovation, and a team of researchers and co-workers undertaking a research project into relationships between young people with intellectual disability and their paid support workers. As young people with intellectual disability themselves, the pair provide ideas on how to best carry out research with this cohort of young people. They participate in meetings with other researchers

and have helped to design workshops so young participants with disability feel comfortable sharing their stories. One of their more challenging tasks is helping to translate complex written information into language that is easy to understand by young people with disability.

Northcott is proud to be a research partner in "*Confronting everyday harms: preventing abuse of people with disability*", led by the Flinders University Disability & Community Inclusion research team.



Find out more about the research project in our online Annual Report.

## Hannah

"Me, Tyra, Ruby and Rachel are all young adults with disability. We are part of the research group because we have a better understanding about what looks right and what looks wrong for people like us.

I got this job because I wanted to speak my mind and be heard. I wanted to be a voice for people like me to improve the system because there are some cracks that people are not aware of.

It feels really good to have this job. I like being a double agent ... I am a staff member on one day, then a customer on the other day.







Of the Northcott staff who have shared with us that they have a disability, 84% of them have an invisible disability.

My favourite thing has been going on to the university campus. I've been driving past the uni for the past 26 years going to the Children's Hospital for appointments. I've dreamed of just stepping one foot on there. To be able to go there and be in a meeting room, it's like my dream came true. We work for Northcott, but we're part of their research team. So, in a way, we're staff of the University of New South Wales."



**Tyra**

"Me, Sam and Hannah work with Sally from Flinders University and Karen from the University of New South Wales. We talk about everyday harms, abuse and when things are not going well between a support worker and young person with intellectual disability.

We also work with Ruby and Rachel who are community researchers, like me and Hannah. We see them online on Zoom. I like that we all have different skills in how we work in a team and solve problems.

We are helping to plan workshops because we know what it's like [for young people with intellectual disability]. It's important that we tell the other researchers, so they know how to help young people.

The best thing about this job is helping people. It feels good to be helping to make things better. I have also enjoyed going to places and meeting new people. When I first went to the city, it was new to me, so I got a little bit anxious about it. Afterwards I was okay. I'm definitely more confident when I get to meet new people now."



# Bringing Bec's business to life

**With support from Northcott, Bec is realising her goal of starting her own business.**

When Northcott started offering Life Skills from the Darra office in Queensland, Bec was one of our long-term customers who began accessing the service to gain skills to build her independence. With the new skills she's learnt, Bec is now the proud owner of her own small business, The Savage Queen, which sells beautiful handmade candles and jewellery. "I started bringing my card-making materials to Northcott and a coordinator encouraged me to take my hobbies and turn them into a business, which I thought was a good idea," says Bec.

## Creating a business

In consultation with Bec, Northcott introduced an entrepreneurial skills program within the Life Skills service, with the goal of supporting Bec to start her own business.

Creating a business can be complex, but Bec was determined to learn the process. She was supported through every step by Northcott Service Coordinator, Luka Thomas.

"We supported Bec to develop a business plan and every week we discuss a different part of the plan. While she already has strong creative skills and knows how to make earrings and candles, we had to figure out the logistics. This included things like setting up an ABN, coming up with the

name for the business, deciding what products to sell and the marketing side of things," says Luka.

"It has been really rewarding to see Bec not only grow her business but to have her trust in me. I love hearing about her success and to see her be proud of herself."

## Selling crafts at local markets

The Savage Queen is thriving! With Luka's support, Bec has hosted market stalls in Brisbane with great success.

"It was about a 3-month process for me to make all the inventory, get a site booked and eventually do the market," says Bec.

Although the process was long, it was extremely rewarding for both Bec and Luka.



**"It makes me feel good to earn my own money. I plan on using the money to decorate and buy things for my own house."**

**Bec**  
Northcott customer

“The markets have given Bec a purpose and you can see that she takes that responsibility with such pride. She is able to have choice and control over what she is doing, and she is learning that her voice matters,” says Luka.

### What's next for Bec?

The next stage of supporting Bec with The Savage Queen is developing a website so she can sell her products online.

This will involve assisting Bec to organise photography of the products as well as set up social media accounts to promote her products. Luka will also support Bec to learn about how to navigate the internet appropriately and safely.

Bec has recently moved out of home and hopes to use the money she earns from The Savage Queen to help with her expenses.

“It makes me feel good to earn my own money. I plan on using the money to decorate and buy things for my own house. I look forward to doing more markets with support from Northcott,” says Bec.

**Northcott has seven offices in Queensland. We began delivering Life Skills and Skills 4 Life services in 2023.**



# When opportunity knocks ...

**Since stepping up to a Service Coordinator role, our Deniliquin-based staff member Kayla May has enjoyed playing a greater role in improving quality of life for her customers.**

## **Kayla's career path**

"I started in this disability home in 2015. I was a casual support worker. Back in my 20s, I started working in community aged care and supporting young people with complex disabilities.

"I found I enjoyed looking after people. When I moved to the disability home, I enjoyed building relationships with the customers. I would do eight hour shifts instead of visiting a person for one hour. It was more rewarding for me. I've now got relationships with the customers and their families, and there's something special about that.

"Since becoming a service coordinator, I'm enjoying a closer connection with the allied health practitioners who visit our house. I have also built a really good connection with our support coordinator. I like to know the ins and outs of my customers' plans so I can have a say about what funding they might need. If someone needs a holiday, or new equipment, I'll let the support coordinator know and talk about what we need to do to make it happen."



**"The opportunities are there; you just have to take them."**

**Kayla May**  
Service Coordinator

## Internship program

"In 2022, I had the opportunity to participate in the Northcott Innovation (NI) Supported Living Lab Internship program. I liked the idea of getting workers together without managers to solve some of the complex issues we have. I also liked being given the opportunity to participate from Deniliquin, which is a very long way from head office.

"I really enjoyed getting to know other support workers. Working out in Deni, we don't have that connection with other staff. It was really good to know that we're not alone, that others have issues.

"I was very nervous, but also excited when my idea was chosen by NI to be presented to the Northcott Board. I'm now working with NI to develop my project further. It is a really good feeling to know I'm actually making a difference."

## Working in disability

"If disability is what you want to do, Northcott is a great place to work.

"When I started working here [at Northcott's disability home in Deniliquin], I never thought I'd be a service coordinator eight years later. It was never in the plan. When it was suggested that I should step up, that's just what I did.

"A big aspect I focus on in this house is keeping the skills our customers have. For example, we have one customer who can do her own washing. That means a lot to her. Seeing the smile on her face when she accomplishes that, it's rewarding.

"Working in disability is not as scary as you think. It can be complex at times, it can be difficult at times, but you have all the support you need. It's really rewarding. It is a great job."



## Kayla's innovative idea from the Internship

### The challenge:

Customer support plans are often complex. Bringing new support workers up to speed on each customer's unique support needs and preferences is time consuming. How can Northcott improve this for customers and staff?

### The solution:

InstaSupport – short, informative videos that demonstrate how customers prefer to be supported – as per their support plans. At the start of a shift, new support workers watch the videos to quickly learn about each customer's individual needs and preferences.

Kayla

# Monique moves out of her family home

**When Monique's parents heard about Northcott's new disability accommodation close to their family home, they knew they'd found a place that Monique could call home.**

## Meet Monique

Twenty-eight-year-old Monique has a lovable, inquisitive personality that draws everyone in around her. For most of her life, Monique has been cared for by her mother Deb, father Nicholas and other family members.

"Monique has NEXMIF disorder which is a chromosomal disorder. She presents with autism, Tourette's, a lack of speech and other behavioural issues. She was only diagnosed a few years ago and has accessed Occupational Therapy and Life Skills services with Northcott Wagga Wagga since then," says Deb.

## Worries about Monique's future

While Monique was happy living at home, her parents worried about her future and what the next phase of her life would look when they were no longer around.

"Several families in our lives lost a parent and it made us realise we are not getting any younger," Deb says.

Deb was also keenly aware of the lack of modern, robust, single occupancy disability accommodation options around the Riverina region.



**"I am so pleased for Monique to be able work towards being more independent and really happy for her family as well"**

**Sam Terzi**  
Service Coordinator

At the same time Deb was having these concerns, Northcott announced plans for new purpose-built accommodation with specialist disability housing provider Casa Capace in Gobbagombalin, a suburb of Wagga Wagga.

Hearing about the new supported independent living (SIL) properties from Northcott was the first time Deb felt confident about her daughter moving into a place that would be right for her to truly call home.

### Planning for the move

The first stage of supporting Monique to move into the home was the hardest. This involved applying for and securing the right type of funding.

“Applying for funding is a long process in general and when we first applied, the funding we got was for shared living,” says Sam Terzi, Northcott Service Manager. This was not what Monique’s family wanted for her; they wanted her to live independently.

Together with Monique’s family and the Regional Disability Advocacy Service, the Northcott team advocated for more funds to allow Monique to be in the right type of accommodation for her. Our team was instrumental in gathering the information needed to prove a single occupancy home was most suitable for Monique.

“The wait for the result was again long and tense, but in the end, we got the result we were after!” says Sam.

“I am so pleased for Monique to be able work towards being more independent and really happy for her family as well.”

Northcott supported Monique to move into her new home in early 2023.

### Monique today

When Monique first moved in, she showed significant behavioural issues and was only able to spend a few hours at the new house before returning to her parents. After a period of transition with tailored support, Monique has now settled in well and lives full time in the Gobbagombalin property.

Monique and her family couldn’t be happier with the outcome!

With Monique now living independently, life has also changed for Deb. No longer Monique’s primary carer, she says she is enjoying spending time as mother and daughter. “I still go to all of Monique’s appointments with her and visit several times a week, but I’ve definitely noticed she is more affectionate with me now.”

**Northcott is one of the top 5 housing providers in Australia.**

**We manage 123 disability homes with 9 more in the pipeline as of July 2023.**



Monique with Will, Northcott Support Worker

# Supported Living Lab Internship

**Our second cohort of interns graduated from the Northcott Innovation (NI) Supported Living Lab Internship program in September 2023. This unique learning opportunity offers Northcott support workers a chance to learn human-centred design skills while contributing to better outcomes for customers who live in our disability homes and the staff who support them.**

Northcott's innovation subsidiary NI works alongside customers and people with disability to find ways to do things better or solve challenges in the disability sector. One of the team's initiatives is the Supported Living Lab (SL/Lab). This co-design hub is focused on improving the quality of supports and services provided to Northcott customers living in our homes.

In 2022, NI launched the SL/Lab Internship Program for support workers from our disability homes. An enthusiastic group of frontline workers from across NSW participated in the inaugural internship, with the second cohort taking part over the majority of 2023.

Over 7 months, interns learn skills in communication, problem solving and human-centred design from experts and educators from Northcott and the disability sector. Additionally, through a partnership with the University of Technology Sydney's School of Design, they gain skills in design thinking and the design process. Each participant brings a challenge to the group that they believe, if solved, will positively impact the lives of customers. Over the course of the internship, participants put their new skills to use to explore and develop a solution to their issue before pitching their idea to the NI Board. Solutions with the potential to make a difference to customers and/or staff are adopted by NI and Northcott for further development and, down the track, implementation.





## Reflections from our 2023 Interns



**"I have gained an understanding of and experience in human-centred service design, which puts customers' needs, desires and abilities at the centre of the development process."**

Evelyn



**"I've enjoyed hearing and experiencing how to work with others. It's been good making new friends as it is hard to find others because we all work in small groups."**

Sofia



**"I have enjoyed learning how to identify problems, how to choose strategies to address the issues and how to plan and execute the tactics needed to achieve customers' goals."**

Ranjeeta



**"This has given me the opportunity to think outside the box, learn from my own experiences, identify problems and find solutions. It has enabled me to be a changemaker and stand up for customer voice and choice."**

Mitul



**"I found it interesting having people with lived experience of disability educate us about the ways we can support them better. I also enjoyed the UTS session ... and meeting members of Northcott who shared their work experiences."**

Kumba



**"I am walking away with knowledge I can apply at work and in my lifetime experiences. I am not the same guy who started at the beginning of the program. I have grown and am proud of my educators and myself."**

Bernard

**5 PROJECTS**

**from the 2022 Internship program are being explored further by Northcott and NI.**



# A new home for David and Chris

**When Chris and David's Northcott-supported disability property no longer met their support requirements, our team found them a new home.**

## **Chris and David's needs**

Chris and David are long-term friends and Northcott housemates. They have lived together for more than 7 years, initially in Carlingford, and since September 2022, in Oatlands.

Although the pair were comfortable and happy in Carlingford, a review of their living situation revealed things had changed over time and their home no longer fully supported their needs.

Due to weakening of his knee joints, David needed better support while walking around the home. Additionally, without many communal areas in the home, Chris and David had few opportunities to socialise with each other and their other housemates.

## **A more suitable option**

After Chris and David's Northcott team put the word out to find a new home, 2 vacancies came up in a 5-bedroom purpose-built Northcott house in Oatlands, just 10 minutes from where they were living. The team felt the home and current residents were a perfect match for Chris and David. They could live as independently as possible and experience a socially abundant life.



**“It’s great how, despite the move, I have been able to keep my life going – my doctors, my work, my favourite restaurants.”**

**Chris**  
Northcott customer



“Not only are the current residents, Guy and Graeme, of similar ages to David and Chris, but they also have similar social needs such as engaging in smaller group outings rather than centre based programs,” explains Alys, Service Coordinator at the Oatlands home.

“The wall rail system built around the house is also a great solution to keep David more mobile. This home also has a separate section with 2 rooms and a common area so David and Chris can have their own space within the larger home.”

### **The transition**

Before Chris and David could move into the new home, significant planning and preparation took place to ensure the change would lead to a better life for everyone.

Alys liaised with all the stakeholders, including talking with the customers’ families. Once everyone agreed to the move, Chris and David regularly visited the Oatlands house to start to feel comfortable and get to know their new housemates.

“For the move itself, we set up Chris and David’s rooms to help make the transition more comfortable. On the day of the move, we planned a picnic to bring all the housemates together. It was an epic day for everyone,” Alys remembers.

### **Positive outcomes for all**

David and Chris are now living in a newer, purpose-built home that better meets their needs, with closer proximity to shops, the local pharmacy and access to transport.

“It’s great how, despite the move, I have been able to keep my life going – my doctors, my work, my favourite restaurants,” says Chris.

“The most important benefit of the move is an enriched quality of life for all residents. The group community access and social interactions for all residents have increased. Since their needs and goals match, all four of them can enjoy the outdoors by visiting Sydney’s surrounds rather than participating in centre based programs,” says Alys.

Chris and David’s families are also happy with the outcome.

“Change can be daunting and challenging but ultimately, this change has delivered great outcomes for everyone. I am extremely happy with the staff at Northcott and am confident that my brother is well taken care of,” says Alan, David’s brother.

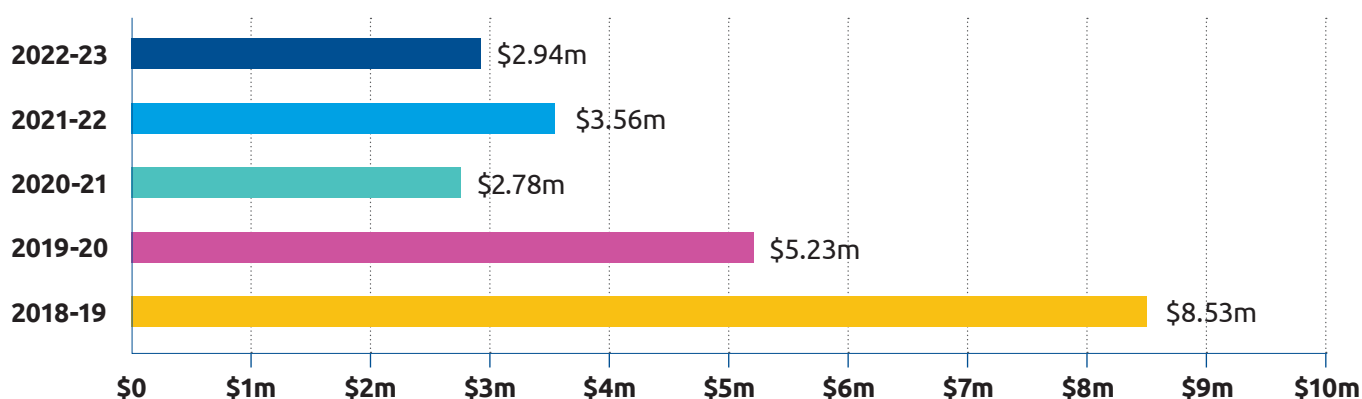
# Financial summary

## Five Year Financial Summary

|   | 2022-23<br>(\$'000) | 2021-22<br>(\$'000) | 2020-21<br>(\$'000) | 2019-20<br>(\$'000) | 2018-19<br>(\$'000) |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Revenue &amp; Expenditure</b>              |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |
| Operating Revenue**                           | 217,402             | 216,942             | 216,864             | 206,335             | 192,436             |
| Operating Expenditure                         | (236,864)           | (223,642)           | (212,370)           | (201,193)           | (188,465)           |
| <b>Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>            | <b>(19,462)</b>     | <b>(6,700)</b>      | <b>4,494</b>        | <b>5,142</b>        | <b>3,971</b>        |
| Financial Income/(Loss)                       | 3,779               | (5,045)             | 9,130               | 389                 | 4,322               |
| Capital Grants Income                         | -                   | -                   | -                   | -                   | -                   |
| Estates & Bequests                            | 656                 | 354                 | 322                 | 2,847               | 6,765               |
| Other Non operating Income/(Loss)             | 2,788               | 393                 | 627                 | 184                 | 243                 |
| <b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>                  | <b>(12,239)</b>     | <b>(10,998)</b>     | <b>14,573</b>       | <b>8,562</b>        | <b>15,301</b>       |
| <b>Assets &amp; Liabilities</b>               |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |
| Total Assets                                  | 112,167             | 123,662             | 133,930             | 150,021             | 129,098             |
| Total Liabilities                             | 52,911              | 52,167              | 51,436              | 82,101              | 69,739              |
| <b>Total Equity</b>                           | <b>59,256</b>       | <b>71,495</b>       | <b>82,494</b>       | <b>67,920</b>       | <b>59,359</b>       |
| <b>Cash Flows</b>                             |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |
| Net Cash (used in)/ from Operating Activities | (11,471)            | (6,729)             | (15,012)            | 27,002              | 11,043.13           |
| Net Cash (used in)/ from Investing Activities | 39,465              | 5,283               | 14,610              | (27,430)            | (34,892.23)         |
| <b>Cash and Cash equivalents at 30 June</b>   | <b>36,018</b>       | <b>8,024</b>        | <b>9,470</b>        | <b>9,872</b>        | <b>10,300</b>       |
| <b>Ratios</b>                                 |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |
| Current Assets/Current Liabilities            | <b>1.57:1</b>       | 1.93:1              | 2.25:1              | 1.56:1              | 1.51:1              |
| Total Cost of Services/Total Expenditure      | 87%                 | 1                   | 88%                 | 91%                 | 88%                 |

\*\*Operating revenue excludes Revenue from Capital Grant income

## Total Fundraising Revenue (including bequests) (\$)



Total fundraising revenue shows all funds (cash) received within the year.

# 94%

of our total  
income comes  
from Government  
Funding (includes  
capital grants)

# 92%

of our total  
income is spent on  
delivering services

See [www.northcott.com.au](http://www.northcott.com.au) for the full Financial Report 2022-23.

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## Life Governor

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Mrs Ann Coventry

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Mr Rodney Smith

**Northcott acknowledges the support of members who passed away in 2022-23.**

*\*Board Member*

# Acknowledgements

Northcott is grateful to receive donations, financial assistance, sponsorships, in-kind and pro bono gifts, support and advocacy from our members, other organisations, individuals and communities. This support enables Northcott to provide the services and supports children and adults with disability need to achieve their goals. While we cannot acknowledge all contributions here, we greatly appreciate all the support we receive.

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Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM,  
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Castle Hill RSL Club

Granville Diggers

Hornsby RSL Club Ltd

Kemps Creek Sporting  
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Magpies Waitara

North Ryde RSL Community Club

Parramatta Leagues Club

St Johns Park Bowling Club

St Marys Rugby League Club

Western Suburbs League Club

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Estate of the Late Aino  
Maria MacKie

Estate of the Late Alla Kamaralli

Estate of the Late Allan  
Archibald Rowling

Estate of the Late Anita  
Stafford McKenzie

Estate of the Late Barbara  
Jane Gregory

Estate of the Late Caroline  
Mary Newman Jones

Estate of the Late Denis  
Stanley Klein

Estate of the Late Edith Roche

Estate of the Late James  
Arthur Shipley

Estate of the Late Janet Noonan

Estate of the Late Lionel  
Ernest Frederick Dege

Estate of the Late  
Mona Isobel Paul

Estate of the Late Peter  
Charles Holder

Estate of the Late Ray  
Leslie Wright Blencowe

Estate of the Late Veronica  
Anne Barry (nee Hanlon)

Cater Charitable Trust

Harry L Howden Charitable Trust

K & G Gluck Trust

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Citi Foundation





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