



# afford news

Autumn 2025



The Australian Foundation for Disability acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their deep connections to land, sea, and community.

# From the Editor

Welcome to the autumn edition of **Afford News**, our quarterly magazine for clients, families and carers.

In the News section on pages four and five we share facts and figures about Afford clients and we introduce the new NDIS Minister, the Hon Amanda Rishworth. We celebrate the approval of Afford's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and take a quick look at changes to Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031.

In our client story on pages six and seven we share the story of mother and daughter Bev and Naomi. Bev was an Afford client when she was a child and Naomi is a client now.

We celebrate the success of our first ever Pocket Cinema on pages eight and nine and focus in on Mardi Gras – including sharing news of our new Mardi Gras ambassador – on pages 10 and 11.

We get to know Afford's new Business Development Lead, Mary Ryan, with a Q&A on page 12. Finally, we showcase some of our current Supported Independent Living (SIL) and Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) vacancies in **A place to call home** on pages 13 to 15. Happy reading.



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Mother and daughter Bev and Naomi from this edition's client story on [page six](#).

# From the CEO



**Here at Afford we work with clients and their families and carers to provide the support they need now, and in the future too.**

Knowing that people you care about will be safe and happy after you're gone can bring peace of mind. As this issue's cover story about mother and daughter Bev and Naomi so sensitively shows, you can rely on Afford to provide the support your family needs.

Understanding as much as we can about our clients and staff helps us to make sure we're offering the right services, and to fine tune our services to meet client needs and goals is important. Every year we take a good look at what we achieved the year before and make plans for the year to come. That's why there are lots of fun facts and figures in this edition and some short format news highlights.

One of my favourite stories in this edition is about one of Afford's most creative and inclusive experiences to date: Pocket Cinema. Pocket Cinema is a smartphone filmmaking project that took place last year. It aimed to break down barriers for people with disability in creative spaces and culminated in a spectacular red carpet screening event on the International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) on Tuesday 3 December 2024. There will be more happening in this exciting space, so stay tuned.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Afford News.

**Jo Toohey**

Chief Executive Officer

# A quick look at the numbers

In November 2024 we released our annual report for 2023-24. In it we shared a fun breakdown of how many clients we supported in the 12 months between July 2023 and June 2024 and which of our services they used. Take a look – can you see where you fit in?



## Introducing the new NDIS Minister



In 2022 the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP was elected the Member for Kingston, South Australia, for a sixth term.

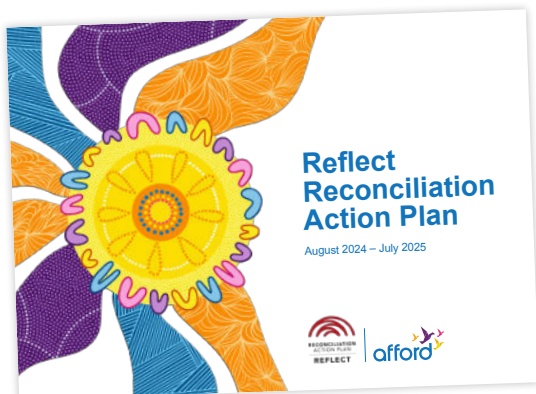
Along with being the Federal Member for Kingston and the Minister for NDIS, she is the Minister for Social Services.

Before she became involved in politics full time, Amanda was a psychologist. Amanda is also a mum. She lives in Hallett Cove with her husband Tim and their two young sons, Percy and Oscar.

Afford feels positive about Amanda's commitment to making an impact on the lives of Australians touched by the NDIS portfolio and ensuring that our government is an inclusive and compassionate one.

# Afford highlights

## RAP launch



**We're proud to share that Afford's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) has been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.**

A RAP is a document that guides organisations wanting to build strong and supportive relationships with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We celebrated our RAP with a launch at our Parramatta head office in October 2024. Aunty Grace Mumbler opened with a heartfelt Welcome to Country. Employees from across Australia gathered to take the message of reconciliation back to their teams. Guests enjoyed a bush tucker-inspired grazing feast as they connected and reflected on the occasion.

As part of our reconciliation journey, Afford will partner with First Nations services and communities to increase cultural safety in our own services and supports. We look forward to continuing to reflect, listen, learn and be part of this important journey together.

**You can explore Afford's Reflect RAP [here](#).**

## Changes to Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

**The Australian Government Department of Social Services has updated Australia's Disability Strategy.**

The updates include three new targeted action plans. These will focus on community attitudes, inclusive homes and communities, and safety rights and justice. There are plans to improve data and reporting and a guide with practical advice on how to make the strategy work. We look forward to working with the strategy to improve our clients' experiences.



## A wild Christmas

Our 2024 Christmas celebrations were wild – literally.

Clients and employees across the country enjoyed days at the zoo, with amazing animal encounters, festive treats and time spent connecting with friends. The parties were filled with laughter, adventure and plenty of holiday magic. A perfect way to wrap up the year.



## Mother and daughter find peace of mind

**A mother who was cared for by Afford as a child has turned to Afford for reassurance that her own daughter will be well cared for when she's gone.**

Naomi is in her 50s and has an intellectual disability. She and her mum, Bev, live together and have a close and loving relationship. But Bev is getting older. She knows she needed to make plans for Naomi's care, for when she is less able or no longer around. Afford has been the perfect choice.

"She just loved it from the very first day she went. Thanks to Afford she is getting so much more out of life," says Bev.

"Before Afford she was a girl who was ignored...it was as though she wasn't important. It was heartbreaking because I knew she had so much more to give, so much more going on inside. Afford was the first to really see that potential and to bring it out.

"The staff make her feel important and that has changed her. She's not just a client and they're not just support workers. They're friends."

Since joining Afford, Naomi is more confident and outgoing and has discovered new skills and talents. Now Naomi can read a handful of words, tell the time, use a mobile phone and catch public transport. She has learned to cook and discovered a love for Zumba.



“The staff make her feel important and that has changed her. She’s not just a client and they’re not just support workers. They’re friends.”

– Bev

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“They have taught me so much,” says Naomi with a grin. “I can tell the time now and I know how to cook.”

Amazingly, Bev has discovered a remarkable connection. As a child, Bev suffered polio. It turns out that she too was supported by Afford.

While it’s daunting to consider that one day Naomi will be without her beloved mum, Bev is reassured by the knowledge that her daughter will be loved and cared for.

“My time is coming to an end. But when the time comes for me to go, I can do so knowing she will be safe,” says Bev.

“She will be supported and most importantly, she will be with her friends. It brings me great comfort knowing that she will be okay.” ✨

## Afford’s history of caring for people with polio

When Afford was established in 1951, it was called The Poliomyelitis Society of Australia.

The 1950s were the height of the polio epidemic in Australia, and caring for people with polio was its core offering.

Bev still remembers the day her mother first took her to Cherrywood (pictured) for support.

“I remember hiding behind my mother’s legs and I can remember the machines. I remember the noise they made, and I wondered, ‘Are they going to put me in one of those machines?’”

Polio can cause paralysis of the breathing muscles, meaning some sufferers were placed in large machines known as iron lungs. It was these that six-year-old Bev was hearing. Luckily, Bev recovered from polio and never needed to use an iron lung.

Afford became the Australian Foundation for Disabled in 1969 and Afford (as we know it today) in 2015.



Cherrywood

# A passion for Pocket Cinema

**Pocket Cinema is one of our most creative, fun and inclusive client experiences. We're so excited to share it with you.**

Pocket Cinema is a smartphone filmmaking project launched by Afford in December 2024.

With guidance from professional filmmakers, Afford community services clients learned to plan out, shoot, and edit their own short films using just their smartphones.

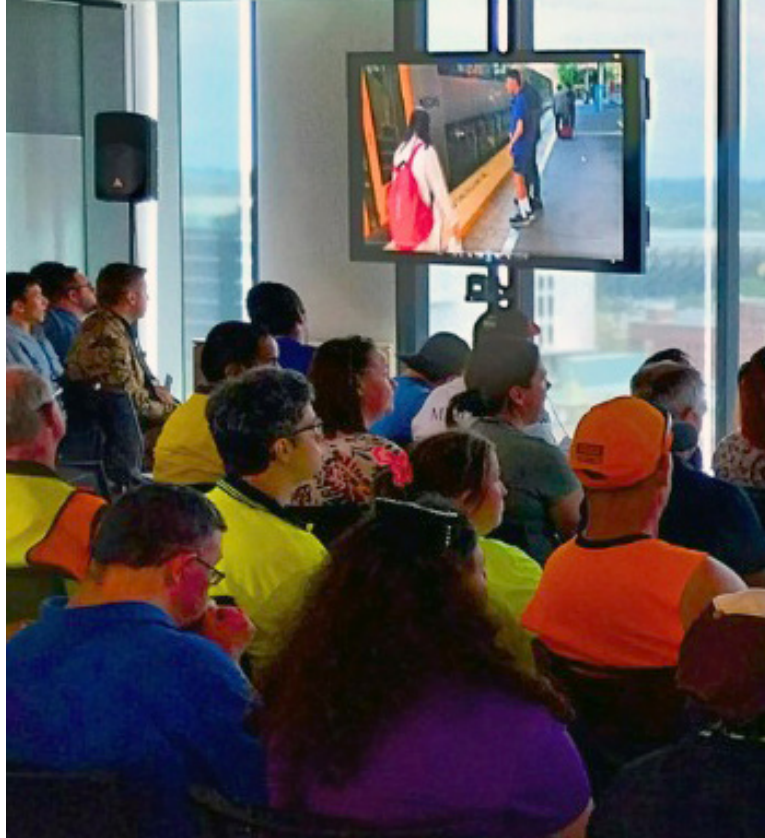
“By providing the tools to tell their own stories, this program opens doors to new possibilities and even pathways in the film industry, visual arts, content creation, and podcasting,” says Afford’s Head of Engagement, Nicky Bryson, who led the project.

“One of our aims with projects like Pocket Cinema is to break down barriers for people with disability in creative spaces. Others are finding new ways to work together, learn new skills and have fun.”

Clients who took part say they had a great experience.

“We had fun when we used our smartphones to film. The best part was brainstorming and putting different ideas in our diaries,” said Thomas Watson, one of the Pocket Cinema filmmakers.

Thomas played multiple roles in the program, both in front of and behind the camera. The first short film to make a public debut from the program



“We had fun when we used our smartphones to film. The best part was brainstorming and putting different ideas in our diaries.”

– Thomas

Dan





is Crash Course, a V8 supercars mockumentary created by Thomas and his co-star Asad. Thomas has had some positive media attention through Pocket Cinema, with an article on 9Honey. The Sydney Morning Herald also shared a reel (a short video story) about the project and Health News Daily ran a full story too.

Pocket Cinema ended with a spectacular screening event at our head office on IDPWD, on 3 December 2024. Imagine a red carpet, the buzz of excitement and the joy of seeing your own story on the big screen.

The event delivered a true film festival experience, featuring a red carpet and cinema-style treats like popcorn, slushies, and a doughnut wall. The filmmakers were cheered on by an enthusiastic audience, creating an unforgettable celebration of inclusion and creativity.

This exciting program was made possible thanks to the support of our official partners SF3 SmartFone Flick Fest and Optus, as well as the collaborative guidance of Bus Stop Films. 🐦

## What's next?

Smartphone filmmaking is just the beginning. We are exploring more opportunities for storytelling, advocacy and connection. These initiatives aim to create meaningful experiences that empower people with disability to share their voices and talents with the world.





# More Mardi Gras magic

**Afford represented at the 2025 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival parade – and this year, supported employee Allan was our ambassador.**



Afford represented at the 2025 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival parade – and this year, supported employee Allan was our ambassador.

The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival parade Mardi Gras (Mardi Gras) took place on 1 March. Our float featured LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies from Afford, CPA, and Northcott. It was our second year partnering to represent LGBTQIA+ people with disability at the festival, and our second year creating an amazing float and experience together.

The theme for this year’s Mardi Gras was Free to Be. A celebration of strides made toward true LGBTQIA+ equality, it also acted

as a global reminder that our fight is far from over, and that we are not truly free until we are all free to be. Our 2025 float’s theme was Free to Fly.

Allan Quick, a supported employee at Afford, was our ambassador for the 2025 parade. He has been in the parade seven times with both deaf and hearing LGBTQIA+ groups. He first marched with Afford in 2024.

“I was so happy to be at the parade with Afford. It is wonderful to see disability in a happy parade float and to see our community being more accepted,” says Allan about his recent star role.

Along with ambassadors from CPA and Northcott, he played a key role in



representing LGBTQIA+ people with disability. Allan contributed to planning the float, costumes, and parade experience, participated in media and promotional opportunities, took part in a flag-raising ceremony, and helped bring the community together.

“It was great to be a part of this amazing team made up of people with disability. I am so proud of the work we did on our costumes and our beautiful Free to Fly float. The night was all about love. I can’t wait to do it again.”

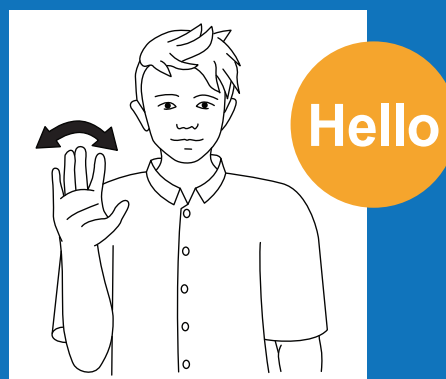
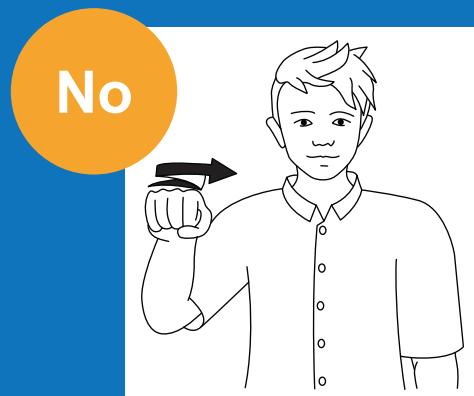
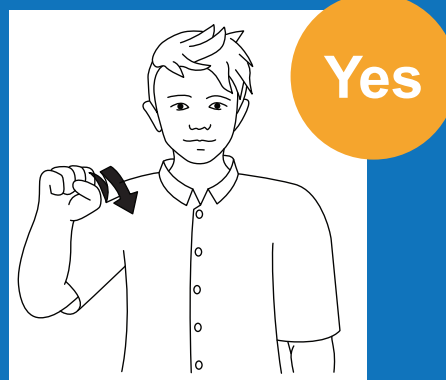
And of course, Allan proudly led our Free to Fly-themed float at the Parade on Saturday March 1, 2025. We loved every minute of it. 🦋

## All about Auslan

Auslan is the sign language of the Australian Deaf community.

Auslan was developed in Australia by people in the Deaf community so that people can communicate. Auslan is about 200 years old and is unique to Australia. Auslan speakers use their whole body to communicate. They also use finger spelling.

Our new Mardi Gras ambassador, Allan, is one of more than three million Australians who are partially or fully deaf. Here are some useful Auslan signs to learn.





Mary (left) with Jemma

## Meet Mary

**Mary Ryan is Afford's new Business Development Lead. Her role is all about connecting clients with housing and community supports and services. We sat down together for a friendly question and answer session.**

**Q: Hi Mary, welcome to Afford. What is your role of Business Development Lead all about?**

**A:** I joined Afford in January 2025. Part of my role is to assist people with disability to find a home that's the right fit for them. Afford has houses available in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria.

**Q: What are some of the skills you're bringing to Afford?**

**A:** My background is originally in nursing. I started work in the disability sector in the 1980s. I also have experience in community work and small business and I am a licensed real estate agent. So, a role where I can assist people with disability to find their forever home is a dream job. I pride myself in finding creative solutions to support clients.

**Q: How do you go about making sure you find the right home for Afford clients?**

**A:** We are committed to working as a team with our clients, their families and support network to find the best possible home. First, we identify where they would like to live, and what else is important to them. Do they want to live alone, or with others? Do they work? What are their hobbies and interests? Most of our clients are NDIS participants and have accommodation in their plan. They might have specific accessibility needs or prefer a quiet area. Once we understand someone's wants and needs, we can start looking at some houses.

**Q: What are some of the things they might like to organise or prepare before moving?**

**A:** Finding a new home can sometimes feel overwhelming. I often suggest writing a list of questions of what you'd like to have in your new home. Remember, there are no silly questions. Get your support team behind you, have a look at what's available and reach out when you're ready. If you're interested in living with others, I recommend arranging to hang out with them, perhaps having a coffee or a meal together, before you move in.

**Q: What do you like to do when you're not at work?**

**A:** I love my job, but I'm also very family focused. I have a big family, from my elderly mum who's 96, to my four adult children and two grandchildren. We love getting together. I cycle to work every day and enjoy yoga and cooking. If I'm not doing any of those things, you'll probably find me in the garden.

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To learn more about finding a new home with Afford, email Mary at [Mary.Ryan@afford.org.au](mailto:Mary.Ryan@afford.org.au), talk to your Support Coordinator or call us on **1300 233 673**. 🐦

# A place to call home

Current vacancies in some of Afford's houses in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria.

Afford is one of Australia's most experienced providers of homes for people with disability. We are committed to making sure that your experience in our accommodation is positive and fulfilling. To do that, we work closely with you and your family or carers to understand your needs and assisted living goals. We also take care to match you with housemates with common interests.

## New South Wales



Learn more

### Empire Penrith

 4  2  Accessible

There are two fabulous men-only homes at this big property. In one home, three friendly housemates aged 48, 55 and 60 are ready to welcome another. The housemates are often out and about at work or in the community and like the occasional pub lunch. At home they watch movies and footy and enjoy video games. The home is wheelchair-friendly, with great outdoor entertainment areas.



Learn more

### Glen Alpine

 5  1

Seeking quiet housemates who enjoy getting involved with household tasks and group activities. You'll join two men and one woman who like games, TV and arts and crafts, and work or get out and about. This lovely home offers spacious living rooms, an accessible kitchen and bathroom, beautiful gardens, and a large backyard with a swimming pool and outdoor entertainment area.



Learn more

### Green Valley

 4  2  Accessible

This modern and comfortable home has room for two more residents. The current housemates are women who love to get out and about during the week. They also enjoy celebrations, like birthdays and holidays, and having their own quiet time. A man or woman aged 25+ would be a great fit.

## New South Wales



Learn more

### Mount Drutt

 4  2  Accessible

This spacious home for men is ready to welcome another male housemate. You'll be a great fit if you enjoy TV, movies and chess, or enjoy getting out and about for work, community activities and walks. You'll join three others aged 26-64. This home has a renovated kitchen, accessible bathroom and big backyard with an undercover entertainment area and garden.



Learn more

### Nowra

 5  2  Accessible

This lovely and accessible home is in a quiet cul-de-sac. Spacious and with open plan living, it has a large kitchen, two living areas and a secure backyard with a garden and barbecue area. You'll join three women housemates who enjoy community activities and getting out and about into nature.



Learn more

### South Windsor

 5  1  Accessible

Seeking two men aged 20-30+ to join three others in this quiet, accessible men-only home. The current housemates enjoy being in the community, watching TV, going for drives and supporting their favourite NRL teams. The home includes an undercover outdoor entertainment area, BBQ and garden and an accessible kitchen.



Learn more

### Sunshine

 4  1  Accessible

This home for women is ready to welcome another independent female aged 45+. You'll join three others who get out and about in the local community or head to work during the week. When they're home, they enjoy a balance of social and quiet time. Watching TV, cooking and arts and crafts are favourite activities. The house itself is spacious and open plan, with gardens and an undercover outdoor entertainment area.

## Queensland



 4  2  Accessible

There are two vacancies in this lovely home, which is in a quiet cul-de-sac in Crestmead. You'll be joining one man and one woman housemate, both aged in their 30s, who enjoy cooking and socialising. The home itself offers open plan living with a kitchen, dining and living area that opens onto a gorgeous entertainment area with a barbecue.

## South Australia



 5  2  Accessible

Seeking a woman aged 25+ for a relaxed and comfortable women-only home. They also enjoy getting out and about into the community and being busy around the house. They also enjoy getting out and about into the community and being busy around the house. The house has a large garden and entertainment area, ramp access, and an accessible bathroom and kitchen.

**Visit the Supported Independent Living (SIL) page on our website to learn more about SIL at Afford, or to search for SIL vacancies near you.**

**Visit the Supported Disability Accommodation (SDA) page on our website to learn more about SDA at Afford, or to search for SDA vacancies near you.**

## Victoria



 5  2

This modern, comfortable and quiet home is looking for a fifth housemate aged 50+. You'll join two men and two women who enjoy watching TV and movies together, along with going for coffee, sport, and getting out and about in the community. The home has open plan living, accessible bathroom, and outdoor deck and entertainment area with barbecue.

## About Afford

The Australian Foundation for Disability (Afford) provides essential services in accommodation, lifestyle and recreation and employment for people with disability.

Afford's mission is to provide innovative, flexible and high-quality support to enhance lifestyle, learning and vocational opportunities for people with disability, their families and carers. Our vision is to be the partner of choice, supporting people with disability to shape their own lives.

Everything we do is underpinned by our values of Kind, Clear, Team and Explore.

This magazine is published to tell stories of interest to our community, to share news and information and to celebrate our people – including our clients, our clients' families and friends and our employees.

If you have any questions or want to suggest a story, contact [brand.engagement@afford.com.au](mailto:brand.engagement@afford.com.au)

## Code of Conduct

Afford operates according to the NDIS Code of Conduct. You can also read Afford's Code of Conduct here: [afford.com.au/about/publications/](http://afford.com.au/about/publications/)



[blendcreative.com.au](http://blendcreative.com.au)

## Feedback and Complaints

Afford is committed to continuous improvement and client-centred service, so we welcome open feedback and complaints. If you want to share your feedback with Afford, or you have a complaint, please visit our website or speak to our Service Delivery Directors in your region. [afford.com.au/feedback/](http://afford.com.au/feedback/)



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