

afford

2024-25 Annual Report



About the Australian Foundation for Disability

The Australian Foundation for Disability (Afford) is a company limited by guarantee and is a charity and not-for-profit service provider registered as a Public Benevolent Institution and with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. At Afford, we provide disability and employment services across Australia to support people to live the lives they want to and achieve their personal ambitions. We take a rights-based approach to service delivery and engagement, that puts our clients at the centre of everything we do.

Our purpose

To create an inclusive world where human rights are realised. A world where people of all abilities come together to share in life's adventure.

Our vision

To improve the lives of people with disability by prioritising their choices, promoting their rights and exploring possibilities together.

Our values

Kind. Clear. Team. Explore.

ABN and ACN

Australian Business Number (ABN): 99 000 112 729

Australian Company Number (ACN): 000 112 729



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

Contents

- 2** Purpose, vision and values
- 4** Our commitments
- 5** A word from our Chair
- 6** A word from our CEO
- 8** Sector vision
- 12** Afford by numbers
- 14** Our impact
- 16** Community programs
- 17** Employment
- 19** Accommodation
- 20** Consumer experience
- 24** Learning and development
- 26** Our leaders

On the cover

Our new community program, **Explore**, is here.

Our commitments

Afford is a purpose-led, not-for-profit organisation. We are committed to our Code of Conduct and to ending modern slavery, as outlined in our Modern Slavery Policy. These documents are available on our website: afford.com.au/about/publications/

We are a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider and a Disability Employment Services (DES) provider.

We are committed to upholding the NDIS' Code of Conduct by ensuring it applies to all aspects of our organisation and in our service delivery.

Our commitments ensure we:

- Act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making in accordance with relevant laws and conventions
- Respect the privacy of people with disability
- Provide supports and services in a safe and competent manner, with care and skill
- Act with integrity, honesty and transparency
- Promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that might have an impact on the quality and safety of supports provided to people with disability

- Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse of people with disability
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct
- Remain open to feedback.

Afford's Code of Conduct defines our values in action, including our best practice commitments or positions on:

- Being a client-focused workplace
- Leadership
- Zero tolerance of bullying and harassment of our clients and employees
- Conflicts of interest
- Criminal conduct
- Gifts, benefits and donations
- Public comment
- Drugs, alcohol and smoking
- Workplace surveillance.

We appreciate our clients, families, carers and employees providing feedback so that we can maintain our commitment to continuous improvement and quality services.

To provide feedback to Afford, visit: afford.com.au/feedback



A word from our Chair

A year of balance and dedication

Afford has continued to balance the needs of our clients with the need to remain strong and sustainable as an organisation, all during a time of big-picture change and reform across the sector.

Following the Australian Government's review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the release of the final report in 2023 to 2024, reforms have begun to roll out.

The NDIS Amendment Act 2024 came into effect in October and brought many changes. These include clearer definitions of what the NDIS will fund, new limits on therapies not backed by evidence and reforms that will require us to review some of our ways of working.

We recognise the value of changes that aim to support better outcomes both for individuals and the broader system. These include the new NDIS Evidence Advisory Committee to help build a stronger understanding of what works for participants, and the early work being done on a future model to help people navigate their services.

We also acknowledge the changes to funding periods introduced in May 2025 for new and reassessed plans. We are supporting our clients as they navigate these changes, so that they deliver on their intention of making things easier for clients.



At the same time, we remain concerned about how the planned reductions in NDIS spending growth, outlined in the 2024 to 2025 budget papers, will be achieved – and what benefits they will achieve or enable for participants. Considerations like these are important, given ongoing pressures on public spending and the rising cost of living that many people – including clients – continue to face.

As Chair of the Board of Directors at Afford, I am proud of what has been achieved this year and of the way the organisation continues to grow with care, resilience and a focus on doing what is right.

It has been a steady year for the Board, with no changes to our membership after welcoming five new Directors in the previous year. I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their time, care and insight over the past 12 months. I look forward to continuing our work together as we support Afford to keep improving and delivering quality supports to people with disability.

Carol Bryant
Chair



A word from our CEO

Championing inclusion and progress

Afford has made great strides in refining how we provide services and community connection for clients and elevating our role as a disability sector leader.

Successfully embedding the new purpose, vision and values and three-year strategy we launched in 2023-24 across our sites and teams has been a major focus.

We finished consolidating our Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) in New South Wales from five to three and ceased ADE operations in Victoria. We offered tailored support to all supported employees impacted by the changes and were pleased to welcome many to our expanded ADE site in Ingleburn.

We also announced the closure of our community centres. These were replaced by a new one-to-one community program, Explore, which launched in June 2025 to positive interest from clients, their families and carers and our sector peers.

Explore is one of several initiatives begun in 2023-24 that launched this year. Others include Afford's first Reconciliation Action Plan and our first impact survey and impact report.

We piloted a new model for evidence-based person-centred support at Afford and made progress on a model for lifelong support.

We successfully tendered to the Department of Social Services to deliver Inclusive Employment Australia, which replaces DES on 1 November 2025. In 2025-26 Afford will deliver Inclusive Employment Australia in NSW, Queensland and Victoria.

Alongside the hard work and dedication, there was fun. We took part in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade for the second year running and delivered our first smartphone film festival, Pocket Cinema.

It's an absolute honour to lead Afford. We remain proudly committed to creating an inclusive world where human rights are realised, and where people of all abilities come together to share in life's adventure.

Joanne Toohey
Chief Executive Officer





Sector vision

Afford has continued to refine how it provides services and community connection for clients, and to elevate its role as a disability sector leader in 2024-25.

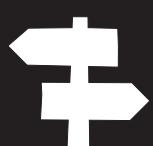
Our vision for the sector aligns with our purpose: to create an inclusive world where human rights are realised and where people of all abilities come together to share in life's adventure.

Core to this is the recognition and safeguarding of the rights of people with disability, the dismantling of historic systems and the fundamental transformation of the way we – Afford, and the sector as a whole – deliver on our commitments.

At an organisational level, the journey of rediscovery we embarked on in 2022-23 has seen Afford secure its reputation as a responsible, ethical and innovative disability services provider. One where responsiveness, action and deep care are an intrinsic part of our culture and how we support our people and clients to truly thrive.

We take the broadest possible view of disability, recognising the diverse ways it can shape people's lives. We understand that one person's experience of living with disability can differ from another's. We recognise that disability can be visible and invisible, lifelong or temporary, and can impact an individual, and their family and carers, in different ways throughout life.

At a sector level, we remain committed to contributing to positive and impactful change against a backdrop of ongoing sector review and reform. We proudly work alongside Government, National Disability Insurance Agency, stakeholders and peers to enhance the provision of disability services in Australia. We look forward to continuing to be a leading voice as we work together for the good of all.



Shaping the future of disability services

This year has been a positive and productive year for Afford, with the exploration, development and launch of innovative programs and evidence-based models of support.

Guided by strong leadership, our renewed purpose, vision and values and our strategic pillars, we have continued to prioritise our clients' rights and the delivery of person-centred support.

Listening to our clients in the ways they want and need is an integral part of how we do this. We do this formally, through initiatives like our Inclusion Council, client impact survey and Voice of Consumer program, and informally, through building and sustaining client relationships based on transparency and trust.

A new one-to-one community program

In June 2025 we launched Explore, a new one-to-one community program that supports clients to choose activities aligned with their individual goals and interests.

Explore transcends the sector's traditional approach of a one-size-fits-all set of daytime-only activities with a tailored and responsive range of experiences that take place morning, afternoon and evening. The new program is all about supporting clients to be part of their local community, in locations determined by their goals and interests.

Our model for lifelong support

As one of the five strategic pillars underpinning the Afford Strategy 2024-2027, lifelong support is fundamentally important to us and to our clients. We believe that the provision of support and care is a lifelong commitment, and we want our clients to know they have a home for life with Afford, regardless of any challenges that may come along the way. To provide this assurance we are developing Stages, our model for lifelong support.

Evidence-based person-centred support

We have found new ways to proactively ensure our people work in alignment with best practice by drawing on La Trobe University's Person-Centred Active Support model. A successful pilot enabled our practice coaches to assess the quality of support being provided to clients by some of our frontline support workers and to give real-time coaching, mentoring, and reflection. We're now exploring how to scale evidence-based practice across our home and living offerings.

Delivering our strategy

The Afford Strategy 2024-2027 puts our clients' rights, needs and aspirations first. Guided by its five strategic pillars – Lifelong support, Thriving organisation, Increased impact, Good humans, Ethically driven – we began bringing multiple foundational projects and initiatives to life this year.

Lifelong support

We began building Stages, a model for lifelong support. Whether our consumers are navigating change, pursuing a new opportunity, or facing a challenge, Afford will be alongside with consistent, high-quality, and tailored supports. Co-designed with 14 Afford consumers and grounded in best practice, Stages has a clear premise – at Afford, you have a friend for life.

Thriving organisation

To ensure we're offering contemporary, outcomes-driven services guided by research and data, we revised our service portfolio. We invested in efficiencies, data-driven decision making and a new best practice incident management system. We also built the foundations for a new rostering system to drive service efficiency.

Increased impact

We released our first impact report in 2024-25. It measures our progress against our key outcome areas and provides a baseline for benchmarking our impact as we continue to deliver excellent services to people with disability.

Good humans

We have continued to invest in a strengths-based culture for our greatest asset – our people. We're uplifting our peoples' capability through individualised learning pathways to support professional and personal development. We have also built the foundations for exciting future projects, including a new Enterprise Agreement and a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Ethically driven

We launched our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2024. It complements our Human Rights Framework and is helping to ensure being ethically driven informs every part of Afford. We also increased our environmental sustainability, with our Head Office and Explore program committing to being paper-free.



Afford values in action



This year we activated our new values of Kind, Clear, Team and Explore in our sites across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria.

Our values are vitally important to us. They're our north star, guiding our client interactions, decision-making and our team building and cultural identity.

The new values were co-designed with clients, families, other disability sector leaders, our employees and the community and launched to our leaders, along with a new purpose and vision, in 2023-24. This year has been all about putting them into action.

We communicated our new values to teams across Afford in September 2024 with a competition celebrating the values in action. Staff, supported employees, clients and their families and carers were invited to nominate others who were living our values of Kind, Clear, Team and Explore. People could also nominate themselves.

We received 46 nominations and were thrilled to award support worker Zoe Buenen a \$1,000 prize. Zoe was nominated by a client's family member who loved Zoe's commitment to the Try Time rugby league team she'd organised.

The recognition and celebration of people bringing our values to life is now a monthly event. Successful nominees receive an Afford-wide shout out, are celebrated at team meetings and receive a gift voucher.

Feedback about the values has been very positive, with people in diverse roles and locations reflecting that they can see and create opportunities to embody the values in their day-to-day work.



Afford by numbers

Our services and reach

In 2024-25, Afford delivered a range of services across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria.

43

Supported
Independent Living

2

Dedicated Short Term
Accommodation/
respite services

3

School Leaver
Employment Supports
in NSW and QLD

4

Disability Employment
Services Areas
across NSW

2

Australian
Disability
Enterprises

18

Dedicated
Community
Services locations



Clients

2,142

Total clients

Many Afford clients participate in multiple services

197

Supported Independent Living

1,080

Community Services

47

Short Term Accommodation

435

Support Coordination

352

Supported Employees

18

School Leaver Employment Supports

590

Disability Employment Services

Employees

939

Total employees

23.1%

Supported employees

106

New employees

16.4%
Full-time

22.2%
Casual

61.4%
Part-time



Measuring our impact

This year we launched our first impact framework and released our first impact report.

Our impact framework measures and enhance our ability to improve our clients' lives across four key impact domains: Human rights, Individual experience, Inclusivity and connection and Economic wellbeing.

In 2024-25, we measured our impact by collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data through independent surveys and interviews. This informed our impact report.

Survey respondents rated our impact across the four domains highly with a Positive Impact or Significant Positive Impact ratings achieved in all four.

Amplifying our impact is one of the pillars underpinning the Afford Strategy 2024-2027. By tracking and identifying ways to uplift our impact, we aim to change the lives of the people we support for the better, and to foster social awareness, respect and inclusion for people with disability more broadly.



Clients feel safe with Afford

83%

82%



Clients feel happy with Afford

of clients who participate in employment programs said that Afford helps them to feel confident at work

of clients who participate in employment programs said that the money they make from their job improves their life

78%



Employment clients feel valued

of clients who participate in employment programs said Afford makes them feel valued when they are at work

81%

of clients who participate in employment programs said that they feel more independent because they work



Employment clients feel independent

of clients who participate in employment programs said that they feel more independent because they work



A new one-to-one program

Explore is a new one-to-one community program that supports clients to choose activities aligned with their individual goals and interests.

Explore is made up of three mini programs: Connect, Move and Create, each including a range of popular activities. This enables clients – Explorers – to choose activities they love, gain new skills and make the most of each day.

The new program is all about supporting clients to be part of their local community as they explore their goals and interests. It aligns with our assessment, planning and provision of supports policy's focus on person-centred support.

Explore transcends the sector's traditional approach of a one-size-fits-all set of daytime-only activities with a tailored and responsive range of experiences. Mornings at the gym, meditation lessons, movie and zoo visits, mix and mingle events, evenings at the bowling alley or karaoke are just some examples. There's something for every Explorer, any time of day or night.

Clients can participate one-on-one with a support worker, or in small groups. A fourth mini program, You Choose, supports further exploration. Participation can be linked to NDIS core and capacity building support categories, or can be self-funded.

The program launched on 30 June 2025 to significant interest. We look forward to growing Explore in the years to come.



Connect is all about building relationships in your community and having a whole lot of fun



Move focusses on activities that make you feel good from head to toe, inside and out



Create lets you try different artforms and tap into your creative spirit



Jackson loves being an Explorer

Jackson was one of the first clients to take part in our new Explore program, where he has experienced multiple positive impacts, including individual experience and inclusivity and connection. His mum, Jennifer, is thrilled with the result.

Jackson moved into one of our Supported Independent Living (SIL) homes in Victoria in 2019, just before COVID-19 was announced.

“The lockdowns were hard for Jackson, as he prefers to be in the community and feeling that connection. He’s always been a happy guy with a happy disposition, but that changed a bit during COVID,” said Jennifer. “Afford looked after him as best they possibly could. During the first lockdown the support team locked down too. I was hugely impressed with their care and dedication.”

More recently, Jackson has transitioned from attending an Afford community centre to our new Explore program. Explore offers a tailored and responsive range of experiences and one-to-one care.

“The one-to-one support is especially important for Jackson, as he experiences unpredictable falls and needs constant attention to stay safe,” said Jennifer.

“Unless you spend time with Jackson and have that one-to-one connection, it’s hard to get to know him because he doesn’t use words or speech. He uses Makaton signing, which not everybody’s familiar with and he makes up his own signs.”

Jennifer finds it useful to know what Jackson has been up to with Explore, so she can talk with him about it when they catch up.

“Now, because he’s got one-to-one support workers working closely with him, communication between Explore, the SIL home and our family is much smoother. I can ask him about going bowling, I can ask about movie club. Everything’s knitting together, and Jackson is back to being a really happy guy.”

Growing our inclusive employment offering

Afford delivers a full spectrum of services supporting people with disability to build careers and engage in meaningful work, aligned with our impact commitment to economic empowerment.

In 2024-25 we delivered outstanding results in our Disability Employment Services (DES), refreshed our School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) offering and invested in quality, safety and sustainability at our Ingleburn Disability Enterprise.

Inclusive Employment Australia

We worked with 590 DES clients this year, supporting 330 to secure sustainable employment with career-focused employers. We achieved excellent ratings for all three KPIs (quality, efficiency and effectiveness) in the Department of Social Services DES Performance Framework. We also successfully tendered to the Department to deliver Inclusive Employment Australia, which replaces DES on 1 November 2025. In 2025-26 Afford will deliver Inclusive Employment Australia in NSW, Queensland and Victoria. This will see a fourfold growth in our employment client base and 13 new sites.

School Leaver Employment Supports refresh

Our SLES service provides young people with disability the support they need to successfully transition from school to the workforce. This year we refreshed our SLES learning modules.

With the guidance of a registered teacher, we updated the content and design template and restructured the modules to balance focused learning time and activities. So far feedback has been positive, with SLES participants telling us they're enjoying the variety of new activities and are excited to demonstrate their learnings.

Ingleburn ADE expansion

Consolidating and expanding our ADEs is enabling us to provide a greater and better range of work, opportunities and pathways to open employment for our supported employees. We expanded our Ingleburn Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE) warehouse in NSW this year. This involved increasing capacity with bathroom and lunchroom renovations. The site also welcomed more than 65 supported employees who chose to relocate after the closure of two Afford ADEs in 2024-25. The new employees are involved with providing a range of business packaging solutions to a variety of industries and several major brands.





Getting workplace ready

Trey joined Afford's School Leaver Employment Supports program in 2024. An accomplished sportsman and classic sports fan, he was soon kicking goals in a work experience placement.

Afford's School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) program empowers young people with disability to transition from school to the workforce.

When our SLES employment coach met Trey, his passion for sports and fitness and his desire to help others shone through. Trey's coach supported him to cultivate crucial soft skills such as effective communication, problem-solving and

"I'm having the best time and I'm learning so I can get myself a real job that I love."

teamwork. Trey also explored strategies for self-advocacy, workplace etiquette and fostering positive interpersonal relationships with colleagues.

All of this stood Trey in great stead at The Holt Bolt, a centre for physical training and exercise physiology in Caboolture, where trainer Michelle Schneider enjoyed showing Trey what it's like to work as a fitness coach.

As time progressed and Trey's confidence and communication skills grew, he was able to take the lead on several client training sessions. Trey worked at The Holt Bolt every Friday for 12 months, proudly wearing his Holt Bolt uniform and enjoying being part of the team. His role involved supporting clients to develop their physical, social and cognitive skills, in line with their personal and NDIS goals.

Trey also worked towards getting his learner's licence and is considering doing the Certificate III in Fitness. When he finished his SLES training, he was able to continue in his role at Holt Bolt. We can't wait to hear about Trey's next career move!



Happy housemates

Brett and Colin have been living at one of our Supported Independent Living (SIL) homes for more than a decade. We caught up for a chat about their experience.

Brett and Colin are two of five residents who live at an Afford SIL property. Both are long-term Afford clients who work at Afford Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE). Colin used to live at Cherrywood.

The friends say the house is comfortable and spacious, with kind housemates and staff who listen and are helpful. Brett likes having his own space at home, a nice kitchen to cook in, and that he can walk to the local shops and train station.

Colin also likes having his own space. “The house is big. I have my own room and bathroom, and I have nice staff that help me,” he said. “I also like the garden.”

The property where Brett and Colin live has two cosy homes on it, with residents in both. The housemates often dine, socialise and hang out together.

“I like living in my house as it’s my home and I like my housemates because they are nice and caring and we are like a family.”

“We all get along and we like some of the same stuff. The house is quite big and my housemates are kind and friendly,” Brett shared, going on to list shopping, bowling, visiting his local RSL club, trips to the park and watching TV together as activities he especially enjoys. Colin likes going bowling, barbecues and celebrating birthdays.

We are committed to making sure our clients' experiences in our SIL accommodation are positive. Colin's closing remark makes it all worthwhile.



Service excellence

Our internal Consumer Experience (CX) Charter outlines our commitment to providing clients, families and carers an exceptional experience with Afford.

The charter was developed and implemented across our head office functions in 2023-24. It is based on feedback gathered through our Voice of Consumer program, consultation with executive and senior leadership teams and advice from our Inclusion Council.

The CX Charter sets out what we expect from our employees and provides clear standards for service excellence and delivering exceptional experiences. Six consumer experience principles underpin the charter:

Responsive	Transparent	Respect	Quality	Professional	Simplicity
We will proactively respond to consumer enquiries and individual needs, wants and desires	We will be open and clear about our processes and client progress	We will recognise and respect our consumers' individual experience	We will provide high quality person-centred services and protect our consumers' human rights	We will work with our consumers based on our core values	We will make it easy for consumers to access and understand our information and decisions

Quarterly benchmarking shows that consumer satisfaction with head office communication, invoicing and wait time on calls and emails have improved this year. In 2025-26, we plan to roll the charter out to our service delivery teams.



Evidence-based practice

To ensure our clients can live the lives they choose, we have increased our capacity for evidence-based practice at Afford.

We're committed to doing our best for our clients – not simply what's always been done. That's the heart of evidence-based practice: using approaches backed by solid research, informed by real-world experience and tailored to each person's unique needs.

Evidence-based practice raises the standard. It enables us to use proven, person-centred strategies that build skills, increase independence, and support people to live life their way.

To strengthen our practice, we've drawn on the Person-Centred Active Support (PCAS) model developed by La Trobe University, a best practice standard for Australia.

In February 2025, we ran a four-week pilot program of the PCAS model at our Penrith site with 27 clients and 15 support workers.

Our goal was to improve engagement, participation and person-centred support. By the end of the pilot, we had achieved

several key improvements, including increased staff confidence, better engagement and more client participation. Staff feedback about the pilot program was positive.

We're now exploring how to scale evidence-based practice across our home and living offerings. Data collection will play a vital role in informing this process, helping us to understand what works, guide continuous improvement and ultimately enhance the quality of support we provide.

"This is a great tool, and it makes it easier to have conversations with staff about what they do well and where we can do better."

Service manager

Strengthening our commitment to Reconciliation

We launched Afford's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) – a Reflect RAP – in October 2024.

We celebrated with a launch event at our head office. Aunty Grace Mumbler from the Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council honoured us with a heartfelt Welcome to Country. We heard from RAP Working Group Co-Chairs and Afford's Board Chair and CEO and enjoyed a bush tucker-inspired grazing feast from a First Nations business as we came together to reflect on this important milestone.

Artist Alysha Menzel shared the story behind the artwork she created for our RAP, A Brighter Tomorrow, Together, which symbolises Afford's reconciliation journey.

We also unveiled a piece we commissioned from Uncle Paul Constable Calcott, renowned artist and 2024 International Day of People with Disability Ambassador. His artwork, Giilang Guyulgang, Story of Strength and Resilience, tells his personal journey as a First Nations gay man with disability. The unveiling was an emotional moment, made even more special by the presence of Uncle Paul's family.

We also marked NAIDOC Week (7 to 14 July 2024) and Reconciliation Week (27 May to 3 June 2025). We took the opportunity to talk about the importance of Reconciliation across our channels and encouraged employees to attend related events.

We're committed to reconciliation long-term – not just during special weeks. We participated in our first Workplace RAP Barometer survey, which showed most of our people believe a strong relationship between First Nations peoples and other Australians is important, and that 72 per cent think it's important to educate themselves about First Nations histories and cultures.

We're continuing to explore ways to strengthen relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, to take meaningful action to create positive social change and to ensure the voices of all people with disability – including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – are heard and valued.



Supporting self-expression and inclusion

Two fabulous creative events showcase our commitment to inclusion and to supporting our clients' rights.

There are eight key rights in the Afford client rights charter – among them the right to respect, the right to be an equal individual, the right to be safe, the right to be included, and the right to express yourself. As these two events show, we also believe in the right to have fun!

Pocket Cinema

Imagine the joy of seeing your story on the big screen. This was the magic of Pocket Cinema, Afford's smartphone filmmaking project. With guidance from professional filmmakers, Afford community services clients learned to storyboard, shoot and edit their own short films using just their smartphones.

The filmmakers showcased their talents at a red-carpet screening at Afford's Head Office on 3 December in honour of International Day of People with Disability.

"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.

Pocket Cinema was supported by our official partners SF3 SmartFone Flick Fest and Optus, with the collaborative guidance of Bus Stop Films.



Mardi Gras Parade

On Saturday 1 March we took part in the 47th Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, together with Northcott and Cerebral Palsy Alliance. This was Afford's second year at Mardi Gras and it was fabulous!

Our float, Free to Fly, supported LGBTQIA+ people with disability to be visible, claim their identities and feel support, love and acceptance from thousands of allies.

"It was great to be a part of this amazing team made up of people with disabilities. 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," said Allan Quick, a supported employee at Afford and our ambassador for the 2025 parade. "I can't wait to do it again."





Diversity, equity and inclusion

This year we established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Working Group and started working on a DEI strategy.

Afford aims to lead in diversity, equity, and inclusion by creating a workplace where everyone is respected and empowered to be their true selves. We're committed to upholding human rights and making sure all staff – no matter their abilities, gender identities, sexual orientations, ethnicities, religions, or any other aspect of who they are – feel valued and celebrated.

In 2024-25 we invited our people to get involved by applying to join the DEI Working Group, or the DEI Feedback Group.

We had a healthy number of applications for the working group and selected nine diverse staff for the group. Between February and June 2025, the group attended two workshops and monthly one-hour meetings. In this time, they helped co-design the development of our DEI strategy with ideas, insights and feedback.

The DEI Feedback Group is open to all staff and includes people from external disability advocacy groups. Its goal is to make sure we hear a range of perspectives. The group will give valuable feedback at two key stages of the strategy's development.

Diversity in the workplace means recognising and celebrating the unique backgrounds and experiences of our employees, such as race, gender and age. By supporting our people to embrace differences, we can tap into new perspectives and ideas that help us grow.

Equity and inclusion are about making sure everyone has equal access to opportunities. With the right strategies we can address biases and build a truly inclusive culture where everyone can succeed and belong.

Setting our people up for success

Investing in our people with a range of learning and development initiatives helps to ensure success at individual and organisational levels.

We have continued to strengthen our people in line with targeted organisational action plans we developed in 2022-23. By focusing on our key priorities, we have been able to take meaningful steps toward improvement.

Access to Vocational Pathways

With support from a registered training organisation, 20 supported employees successfully studied for a Certificate I in Access to Vocational Pathways (FSK10119). Designed to equip participants with foundational skills for further vocational training and employment, it built skills in literacy, numeracy, digital technology and employability. We look forward to celebrating these employees and their achievements at a graduation event.

Gallup strengths-based activities

We partnered with Gallup to gauge employee engagement and opportunities for growth and development in line with our four priorities. In February 2025, people across our sites participated in Gallup's Q12 employee engagement survey. We were delighted to learn that our score in 2024-25 (3.84) was an exact match for our score in 2023-24. This demonstrates stability and consistency in the way we support our people and highlighted room for improvement. We supported our managers to unpack results with their teams and develop meaningful action plans that will support team-level improvements.

Other learning achievements

We successfully delivered a Practice Refresher Program focussed on best practice medication management, epilepsy and manual handling to all frontline support workers. We facilitated training in Complex Care and Assessment Planning and Provision of Supports to ensure our people have the appropriate skills and competencies to support the diverse needs of our clients. We also ran the My Life, My Future Program for all our people. A half-day workshop, it gave all teams, including our head office, the opportunity to learn more about how we can all contribute to provision of support that leads to meaningful outcomes and great client experiences.

Our leaders

Board of Directors



Carol Bryant

Board Chair; Audit, Assets and Risk Committee member; People and Organisational Development Committee member; Consumer Experience and Safeguarding Committee member; Corporate Development Committee member



Paul Umbrazunas

Board Director, Audit, Assets and Risk Committee Chair; Corporate Development Committee member



Claire Vissenga

Board Director; Consumer Experience and Safeguarding Committee Chair



Louise Eyres

Board Director; Audit, Assets and Risk Committee member



Viv Da Ros

Board Director; Audit, Assets and Risk Committee member, People and Organisational Development Committee member



Mark Arnold

Board Director; Corporate Development Committee Chair; Audit, Assets and Risk Committee member



Jodie Haydon

Board Director; People and Organisational Development Committee Chair; Consumer Experience and Safeguarding Committee member

Executive Leadership Team



Jo Toohey
Chief Executive Officer



Leith Sterling
Chief Operations Officer
(from January 2025);
Executive Director of Consumer
Experience and Safeguarding
(until January 2025)



Peter Orr
Chief Operations Officer
(until January 2025)



Katelyn Barakat
Chief People and
Brand Officer



Nick Johnson
Chief Financial Officer and
Company Secretary

afford

Contact us

 Level 6, 85 Macquarie Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

 @affordau

 @affordau

 @australian-foundation-for-disability

 afford.com.au

 1800 233 673

 info@afford.com.au