



# Best Lives



Diverse abilities. Endless possibilities.

## 2024/25

### Annual Report





## Acknowledgement of Country

Best Lives acknowledges the Aboriginal peoples of Western Australia as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work. We are privileged to work with and alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present.



## Diversity and Inclusivity

At Best Lives, Choice, Equality and Inclusion are at the core of who we are. Our commitment to these values is seen throughout all levels of our organisation. Diverse and inclusive teams have a positive impact on our services and help us better serve customers, employees and community stakeholders from every background.



Avon Community Employment Support Centre Inc.  
T/A Best Lives  
ABN: 73049570899





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# Welcome to a new chapter in our story!

Over the past year our team were hard at work, behind the scenes on a complete business rebrand and we couldn't be prouder of the outcome!

## How we got here – it's a process that has taken several years.

All the best organisations evolve, so that they can grow and embrace new opportunities. We spoke to everyone: the people we support, our partners and our teams across the Wheatbelt and Perth. We conducted workshops and surveys. We consulted experts. And crucially, we listened. Carefully.

All our conversations with our customers and colleagues led us to one conclusion: we need to position ourselves to embrace exciting new opportunities to support people with disability and diverse abilities in leading their best lives. And that's where our new name and logo came from.

## Goodbye, Essential Personnel. Hello,

**Best Lives**

Diverse abilities. Endless possibilities.

We view our new name and logo as an **evolution of Essential Personnel**. Our new name represents our promise and our new logo refreshes, rather than reinvents our old logo, so there's still a clear link between who we were and where we're heading.



While our look may have changed, our commitment remains stronger than ever. We're still the same team, offering the same trusted service, just with a refreshed identity that better represents who we are today and the exciting direction we're heading in. Our promise to you is clearly articulated below:

- **Our Best Lives purpose:** Inspiring and supporting people with diverse abilities to enjoy a life of purpose, promise and possibilities.
- **Our Best Lives promise:** To listen to you, understand what your best life looks like, and work with you to make it happen.

- **Our Best Lives tagline:** Diverse abilities. Endless possibilities.

This update is more than just a visual change. It's a renewed promise to deliver the **best quality, and care**.

We invite you to explore our new brand and see how it reflects the values we share with you, please visit our new website at [www.bestlives.org.au](http://www.bestlives.org.au) and let us know what you think, we'd love to hear from you.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We're excited for what's ahead, and even more excited to have you with us.

# CEO's Report



**Well, what another amazing year! I could not be prouder of the team over the past 12 months.**

This year has brought its fair share of challenges and plenty of exciting moments. Despite the broader economic climate, we've achieved outstanding outcomes for our customers and their families – a result that truly reflects the dedication, passion, and resilience of our entire team.

We've grown our organisation to the next level, strengthening our operations and building efficiencies that will serve us well in the years ahead. As always, the NDIS presented funding challenges, but through teamwork and collaboration, we've continued to deliver high-quality services and uphold choice and control for our participants.

The introduction of our Supported Independent Living (SIL) services has been a significant milestone for Best Lives. This addition has not only supported our sustainability but positioned us strongly for future growth – enabling us to continue providing high-quality, wrap-around supports. We've also focused on succession and ensuring the right people are in the right roles to drive our organisation forward.

A major highlight this year was our successful tender submission, ensuring we continue to provide Employment Services for People with Disability (PWD) under the Inclusive Employment Australia, (IEA), contract. We're proud to have retained our services across the Wheatbelt and, in a highly competitive process, secured the contract in the East Metro region. Work is well underway to increase our locations and ensure a seamless transition into the new program.

We also built strength within our teams with the formation of a dedicated Human Resources Department. Our HR team is now well-established, ensuring staff are supported, have access to growth opportunities, and that we remain compliant with legislation,

policies, and procedures. A strong focus this year has been on staff training and development, with a wide range of opportunities provided across all levels of the organisation – including Mental Health First Aid, Incident Reporting, Power BI, Medication, Fundamentals for DES, Cyber Security, and more. These initiatives not only build capability but also foster confidence, growth, and a culture of continuous learning across Best Lives.

Another major achievement was the full rollout of our Risk Management Framework, embedding risk awareness across all areas of the organisation. This proactive approach ensures we continuously improve the safety and quality of services for both our customers and staff.

Amidst these operational achievements, we also undertook one of our most visible transformations – the rebrand from Essential Personnel to Best Lives. This was no small task, but one completed with care and purpose. Our goal was to capture who we are today without losing sight of the values and history that have shaped us over the past 40 years. I believe the result speaks for itself – fresh, confident, and ready for the future.

As we look ahead, I'm genuinely excited to see what 2025–2026 brings for Best Lives and everyone connected to our journey – our customers, staff, employers, and the broader community.

We have some truly exciting initiatives on the horizon – so watch this space.

**Teeny Lane**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Chairperson's Report

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I present this year's Chairperson's Report on behalf of the Board of Best Lives.

The past 12 months have been nothing short of extraordinary. Despite the continuing challenges across the sector, we have not only met our goals – we have exceeded them, in ways that have deeply enriched the lives of the people we support.

At the heart of everything we do is a simple but powerful belief: that every person with a disability has the right to live full, inclusive, and self-directed Best Lives.

This year, we turned that belief into action – at a scale and depth that surpassed our most optimistic projections.

At a time when the not-for-profit sector continues to navigate uncertainty and increased demand, Best Lives has demonstrated what is possible when passionate people come together with a shared mission.

We have not only expanded our reach with our already beloved new name and logo but have also deepened our impact in meaningful and measurable ways.

Through strong governance we ended the year in a healthy financial position, with a surplus that allows us to reinvest in our programs, we were successful in our bid for the Inclusive Employment Australia (IEA) contract and we grew our supported independent living homes from two to nine homes.

The strength of Best Lives lies in its people. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to:

- Our incredible staff: Their tireless commitment, compassion, and professionalism have transformed lives this year.
- Our customers and families: Your trust, feedback, and partnerships guide everything we do.



- Our external stakeholders and supporters: You are the quiet heroes behind the scenes, and your contributions are deeply appreciated.

My fellow Board Members: Thank you for your governance, integrity, and unwavering commitment to our mission.

Like many in the disability sector, we continue to navigate a landscape marked by change – particularly around NDIS policy shifts, workforce availability, and increased demand for complex support services.

These challenges have also become catalysts for improvement and innovation and building on the momentum of this exceptional year, our focus now shifts to sustainable growth, a long-term impact and a commitment to:

- Deepening the quality of our services
- Expanding into more communities where our support is most needed
- Empowering our participants to be co-creators in their own journey and to live their best lives and enjoy endless possibilities

As Chairperson, it has been an honour to serve this organisation during such a pivotal and inspiring year.

I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to grow, evolve, and deliver even greater impact in the year ahead.

Warm Regards

**Jodie Beeson**  
Chairperson

# Financial Report

The 2025 financial year was one of strong growth and solid financial performance for Best Lives. The organisation achieved another year of positive results, underpinned by disciplined financial management, operational focus, and the successful addition of a new operating unit for Accommodation Services, which commenced in September 2024.

Best Lives delivered a 77% revenue increase to \$10,920,820 and net profit of \$846,939.43, representing an increase from \$335,304 in 2024. This is a particularly pleasing outcome given the broader challenges facing the sector, including rising operating costs, workforce shortages, and a competitive labour market. The result demonstrates the resilience of our business model and the strength of our core services.

The balance sheet remains robust, with net assets increasing from \$6,566,355 to \$7,413,295, reflecting continued growth and sound stewardship of organisational resources. Cash reserves and liquidity remain at prudent levels, providing capacity to support ongoing operations and future investments.

The introduction of the new accommodation unit has diversified our service offering and contributed positively to both operational and financial outcomes during the year. This strategic expansion aligns with Best Lives' mission to deliver comprehensive, person-centred support and creates a solid foundation for future growth.

Looking ahead, the 2026 financial year will present new challenges and opportunities. The successful retender of the Disability Employment Services (DES) contract, for which Best Lives has been successful, will require significant focus and investment to implement effectively. Additionally, ongoing capital and operational investment requirements, together with sales growth and vacancy pressures, will test the organisation's ability to sustain recent momentum.



Despite these challenges, Best Lives is well-positioned to navigate the transition with confidence. Strong governance, experienced leadership, and a commitment to financial discipline will continue to underpin performance in the year ahead.

The Finance Committee acknowledges the outstanding efforts of our CEO Teeny Lane and the senior management team, and staff for their professionalism, adaptability, and commitment throughout the year. Their collective contribution has been instrumental in delivering another year of strong financial results and organisational growth.

Key financial highlights for FY2025 include:

- Net profit of \$846,939, an increase on FY2024 results
- Net assets growth from \$6,566,356 to \$7,413,296, reinforcing a strong financial position
- Successful launch of a new accommodation houses in September 2024
- Sustained revenue growth and improved service mix across core programs
- Continued investment in organisational capability and service quality

Best Lives enters FY2026 with a strong foundation, a clear strategic direction, and the financial capacity to deliver on its mission and expand its community impact in the years ahead.

**Nigel Alvares**

Finance Committee Chairman





## An Employee's Perspective

### Bo's Story

Before joining Best Lives, Bo worked as a veterinary nurse and ran her own dog grooming business. When she moved to the Wheatbelt, she left behind many loyal clients – and hundreds of dogs.

She was referred to Best Lives in hopes of finding part-time work to supplement her dog grooming income. When she was offered a job, Bo assured the team that her only real skills she could bring to the role were common sense and energy. We decided to hire her.

Her very first customer was Sue. Sue loves eating, and Bo loves feeding – a match made in heaven. Their biggest challenge together? Getting the lyrics right to Dancing Queen!

Bo knows Sue appreciates everything she does (even though Sue sometimes calls her a “crab apple”), because she tells Bo every day. Bo also feels that her efforts are recognised and appreciated by management, noting that, “the flexibility and the fun stuff they plan for us do not go unnoticed.”

There are challenges along the way, but whenever Bo is struggling, she knows her

*“To be able to make a positive impact, for those in need of our help, and to make a difference to people’s lives so they can lead their best lives, is a legacy I’m so proud of, and I’m proud to be a part of that.”*

boss is only a phone call away. They are someone who has a gift for humanising situations and giving Bo the motivation to do her best.

Although Bo has been with the organisation for almost three years, she felt a sense of belonging from the moment she walked in for her interview. That experience ultimately led her to close down her business of 17 years and take on this role as Support Worker.

As for climbing the ladder? Absolutely not. Without sounding ungrateful, Bo loves the level she’s at, “To be able to make a positive impact, for those in need of our help, and to make a difference to people’s lives so they can lead their best lives, is a legacy I’m so proud of, and I’m proud to be a part of that.”



## Accommodation

It's been one year since we opened Koodjal Cottage in Northam, our new purpose-built respite facility for Short Term Accommodation and Supported Independent Living. Koodjal, an eight-bedroom cottage on Burgoyne Street, is designed to enable independence, comfort and exploration.

With a real focus on engagement, the team at Koodjal provide opportunities to access events and activities in the region, develop social and independence skills, and make new friends and new memories. They facilitate accessible excursions for interested residents and guests to experience all the culture, beauty and adventure the Wheatbelt has to offer.

This year we saw our accommodation services expanding to Metro and we were thrilled to move our very first Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) customer to an SDA house in Northam. This has been made possible through our collaboration with Ability Housing. Ability Housing has built 3 SDA homes in Northam to help bridge the gap for housing for people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs in our regional community. We can't wait for our customers

to use these modern, fully accessible homes designed for independence, safety and comfort.

Being able to live in familiar surroundings has a positive effect on people's mental wellbeing and overall health. It provides comfort and reassurance for their families and enforces a strong sense of belonging in our community.

Our accommodation services offer:

- Spacious, accessible rooms
- Garden with BBQ and veggie patch,
- Fun activities, games and crafts.
- Opportunities to connect with local community groups, activities that meet individual interests and passions
- Close to shops, café and other local amenities
- 24/7 support from skilled, experienced and trained staff





## Customer Feature

### Glen's Story

**When Glen moved into Koodjal Cottage in Northam, everything changed for the better.**

After spending time in Perth, Glen found city life wasn't suitable. He loves living the country life. Since making the move, he feels like a completely different person- no longer depressed, and excited about his life and what each day brings.

Glen loves living with his 'flatties' and dinner time is a highlight. He enjoys talking with everyone, and all the laughter and banter make life at Koodjal Cottage lively and never boring.

He enjoys helping where he can and being include in household decisions. Glen has taken on the role of orienting new support workers, making sure they feel welcome and know where everything is kept.

After recently recovering from illness, Glen is feeling better and is looking forward to joining a local quilting group that supports people with cancer. He is excited to meet new people and contribute to the community in Northam at these weekly gatherings. Glen has embraced life in Northam, exploring local places and becoming well-known and well-liked in town.

Music is another big part of his life. With help from his support workers, he's created a shared music and movie room, complete with a projector and his record collection. A sign on the door proudly reads 'Glen's Bedroom and Theatre'. The most played record at the moment is Taylor Swift live in concert.

For Glen, Koodjal Cottage is a place to live and to belong. Surrounded by community, laughter, and support, Glen says he wouldn't change a thing.

# Coordination of Support

Our Support Coordinators offer a personalised service by recognising the individuality of each person's circumstances and prioritising their choice and control over how they use their plan.

Best Lives has a team of Support Coordinators based in Perth, Northam, Moora and Merredin, who assist customers with navigating and implementing their NDIS plan. They collaborate with each person as well as their informal network, to explore the potential of their plan, and connect them with tailored supports that meet their needs.

Our Support Coordinators focus on improving customers' NDIS experience by:

- Coordinating services across various providers ranging from healthcare, housing, education and employment,
- Advocating on their behalf to ensure they receive appropriate support and services through their NDIS plan,
- Providing guidance for informed decision-making regarding their support,
- Provide assistance to build capacity and achieve greater independence,
- Coordinating and collating evidence from various providers for plan reviews to ensure the continuation of adequate funding for services,
- Assisting with the transition out of hospital and into their home, and
- Facilitate early plan review request if customer's need and circumstances have changed and the plan is no longer meeting their needs







## Disability Employment Services

For nearly 40 years, our Disability Employment Services (DES) have been at the core of Best Lives, formally Essential Personnel with our roots in the Wheatbelt region.

Throughout this time, we have consistently delivered high-quality services across the Wheatbelt and into the Perth metropolitan area. As the sole DES provider in the Wheatbelt, our commitment to supporting individuals in finding and maintaining open employment and/or training opportunities of their choice speaks to the exceptional work we do.

We tailor our support to each person's skills, capacity, goals, and personal circumstances,

ensuring a successful journey into employment and improvement in other aspects of life. Over the years, we have established enduring relationships with our customers, their families, employers, training organisations, other stakeholders, and the communities we serve, to secure suitable employment opportunities and outcomes for those we support. We are very proud and excited to be a provider under the new Inclusive Employment Australia, (IEA) contract for the next 5 years.



## Customer Feature

### Daniel's Story

Being the ambitious person that he is, Daniel knew he wanted to be an independent and active member in the workplace, but unsure of what options and opportunities were available to him he contacted Best Lives to help him navigate this new journey.

Before commencing with Best Lives, Daniel wanted to ensure he was working with a consultant who was the best fit for him and requested a meet and greet before commencing his consultation. It was encouraging to see that Daniel advocated for himself by ensuring he met with many service providers, he ultimately decided he would like to work with our Employment Consultant, (EC) Tammy.

Tammy is positive, funny and very encouraging, which must have connected with Daniel's personality. Tammy found it intriguing that Daniel sought the most suitable Employment Consultant rather than simply being referred to our service from an outside organisation. He took his 'Choice' very seriously.

Daniel and Tammy began applying for jobs online together and personally visited local businesses to get a feel for what Daniel's interests were.

Daniel is a young lad, 28 years of age, who in his past has mainly worked within the hospitality industry. He is very enthusiastic, bubbly and showed great initiative and enthusiasm in finding work.

Best Lives had great feedback from his support worker who accompanied him to his first appointment. After a couple of months of Daniel's connection with Best Lives, he expressed to Tammy that he was interested in becoming a house painter and that he would like to complete a traineeship in this field..

With Tammy's support, Daniel has now started a pre-apprenticeship with a local painter and will commence his official apprenticeship in January 2026.

Daniel is very pleased with the support he is receiving from Best Lives and Tammy. He is thrilled to have the opportunity to become a painter, allowing him to create and achieve the goals he sets for himself.





# Employment Buddy Program

This year Best Lives entered its fourth year of the Employment Buddy Program (EBP).

We have now engaged over 200 young adults with diverse abilities and health conditions, aged 15 to 24, to gain the skills and job experience needed to better understand their desired career paths. Funded by an Information Linkages and Capacity Building grant from the Department of Social Services, we successfully secured additional funding to continue delivering the program within our communities.

The EBP offers a twelve-week, hands on, activity-based learning program through supported, facilitated workshops, including two four-hour work experience placements hosted by 'Buddies'. These Buddies are employed in roles that our participants are interested in pursuing as a career. Hosting organisations are offered training and a financial incentive as support to help ensure the young person gains valuable experience during their placement. These employers also benefit from increased disability and inclusion awareness, enhancing

their reputation and reflecting the diversity of the communities in which they operate. Each host employer receives a thank you hamper and certificate of appreciation for advocating for diverse workplaces.

A significant challenge for young people with diverse abilities when entering employment is navigating social and cultural interactions in the workplace, where collaboration and confidence in presenting ideas are essential. This unique program provides participants with individualised development opportunities, boosts their confidence in the workplace, and helps them better understand the type of job they might want in the future. The program has seen fantastic outcomes and has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and their families, resulting in a further 12 months of funding until June 2026. We are excited about the program's future and are actively seeking funding to continue its success after June 2026.





## Customer Feature

### *Nash's Story – LabWest and GrowBro*

When Nash joined The Y in February 2025, he wasn't quite sure if the Employment Buddy Program (EBP) program was the right fit for him.

Nash had a quiet curiosity about laboratory work and a budding interest in science, but no clear path forward. What he did have, however, was commitment – and that made all the difference.

Over the course of the program, Nash became the most consistent participant, attending all ten EBP sessions without fail. His dedication stood out, not just in attendance, but in attitude. While others were still finding their footing, Nash was already thinking ahead. He had a career goal in mind and just needed the right opportunities to get there.

That's where Katie stepped in. Recognising Nash's potential and clarity of purpose, she tailored his work experience placements to align with his interests. His first placement was at LabWest Minerals in Malaga, where he was paired with an Employment Buddy to support him through the experience. There, Nash was entrusted with one of the most critical early steps in the testing process—an essential task that, if done incorrectly, could compromise the entire chain of results, Nash rose to the challenge.

The LabWest contact, immediately noticed something special. She remarked that Nash's enthusiasm and genuine interest in the field were evident from the moment they met.

His second placement at GroBro Hydroponics further reinforced his passion for science and sustainability. Once again, Nash made a strong first impression, demonstrating his consistency, curiosity, and growing confidence.

From hesitant beginnings to hands-on lab experience, Nash's journey through the EBP has evolved and he is now a proud Lab casual employee at LabWest.







## Customer Feature

### *Josh's Story – Welcome Home Gifts & Best Lives – A Growing Partnership*

*Welcome Home Gifts* was born from a thoughtful family tradition. Josh's dad, a builder by profession, would present gift boxes to his clients when they moved into their newly built homes or as a thank you to his valued client base at Christmas. Inspired by this thoughtful gesture, and recognising Josh's love of people and his strengths in communication and technology, we realised this venture could become more than just a kind tradition; it could be the beginning of something special for Josh. The family saw an opportunity to turn it into a microenterprise after Josh finished school.

With a passion for customer service and creativity, Josh now runs *Welcome Home Gifts*, sourcing products, assembling hampers, and personally delivering them to clients and local businesses.

Josh first linked in with Best Lives back in 2023 where we supported him in building his capacity for employment. Through this collaboration, Josh creates and delivers thank-you hampers to our Employment Buddy Program host employers who provide work placements for our valued customers. This partnership continues to help strengthen community ties and promote inclusive employment.

Best Lives is pleased to have supported Josh by promoting his business, providing him with opportunities for growth, and recognising the strengths he brings to each interaction with us and his clients





# NDIS Employment Supports

When Best Lives introduced NDIS employment-related supports, we prioritised appointing a dedicated and experienced Employment Coach to lead this initiative.

The result of this appointment allows our Disability Employment Consultants to work with the Employment Coach and customers across all locations, harnessing their expertise in employment-related supports. We collaborate to provide learning opportunities, skills, and experiences that empower individuals to confidently enter the workforce or pursue further training in a related field.

There are currently two pathways to access employment assistance through the NDIS:

1. *Finding and Keeping a Job Employment Support* or
2. *School Leaver Employment Supports*.

For those who don't yet have a NDIS plan or who lack the specific funding in their plan, Best Lives assists them in applying for the funding, or they have the option to pay for the service directly.

## Finding and Keeping a Job

Here we help to prepare our customers for the workforce by supporting them to build the skills needed to thrive at work, while supporting their journey to employment. Whether our customers prefer a more tentative approach or are more confident in their decision making, we work with them to become work-ready, focus on their self-belief and ultimately help them to achieve their goal of finding sustainable, long-term employment that they enjoy.





## School Leaver Employment Supports

This service supports young people to transition smoothly from school to employment. Whether they choose to study, gain work experience, or dive straight into work, we're here to support them every step of the way. Our focus is on helping school leavers develop the employability skills, knowledge and experience they need to succeed in the workplace.

### What does it mean to get work ready?

Stage one of getting work ready with Best Lives, involves embarking on a Discovery Journey. This journey involves collaborative sessions with our customers where we brainstorm and narrow down passions, likes and dislikes, skills, and ambitions. After completing the Discovery Evaluation, we utilise 20 easy workbooks to learn and develop essential skills such as:

- Creating a resume and cover letter,
- Job seeking and interview skills,
- Marketing yourself effectively,
- Understanding work ethics and workplace behaviours,
- Communicating effectively when something feels wrong,
- Career counselling and guidance,
- Strategies to build confidence,
- Travel training, budgeting, and numeracy skills, and
- Enhancing confidence, social, and communication skills.

In today's competitive job market getting a foot in the door can be challenging, and everyone's journey is unique. That's why we're here to support anyone, with or without funding, through our Employment Support programs.



## Customer Feature

### Nicholas' Story

Nicholas (aged 28) contacted Best Lives in mid-2024, eager to find meaningful work and build a stable future. He initially secured a role as a patio builder, contracting to a larger construction company. But just as things were gaining momentum, an unfortunate hand injury sidelined him for several months, forcing him out of work and into recovery.

By July 2025, healed and ready to re-engage, Nicholas was invited to join a cold canvassing trip. Nicholas took initiative, researching potential employers and compiling a list. Together, they drove through various suburbs of Perth, visiting the businesses and making introductions.

During the trip, Nicholas shared that he had previously worked in a car wrecking and parts workshop – a job he genuinely enjoyed. He expressed a strong desire to return to that line of work, feeling it aligned well with his skills and interests.

They visited seven employers that day, and the final stop proved to be a turning point. Superoo, a wrecking yard in Armadale just a stone's throw from Nicholas' home, saw something special in him. Impressed by his initiative and enthusiasm, they invited him to complete a short work trial.

Nicholas was thrilled. Having just become a young father, he was more motivated than ever to secure full-time employment and support his growing family. During the trial, he demonstrated not only technical ability but also reliability and a strong work ethic. The employer was impressed – and offered him a permanent full-time role as a wrecker.

To help make the transition smooth, Best Lives stepped in with practical support. We arranged a government wage subsidy to kick in after Nicholas completed 13 weeks of employment and purchased specialised work boots and pants.

Soon after starting, Nicholas was asked to renew his forklift licence, which had expired years earlier. Best Lives covered the cost, ensuring his employment wouldn't be disrupted. At the same time, Nicholas was struggling with rental arrears. The support he received allowed him to clear his debts and focus fully on his new role.

Throughout the journey, his Best Lives employment consultant Tarn, played a vital role – checking in fortnightly with both Nicholas and the employer to ensure everything was running smoothly.





## Customer Feature

### Eric's Story

Eric aged 20, joined Best Lives in 2023, initially showing limited interest in social interactions outside of activities with his family or support worker.

During his Employment Support Coach (ESC) appointments, he was often reserved, occasionally keeping his hoodie up and was selective in his willingness to engage, especially when topics did not capture his interest. Despite some initial uncertainty about the type of work he wanted, Eric's primary motivation was earning money.

The ESC focused initially on NDIS workbooks that covered foundational employment skills such as building resumes, workplace communication, and stress management, gradually progressing to job exploration. Eric expressed that his ideal job would involve minimal interaction with co-workers, focusing on basic, repetitive tasks.

Two work placements were organised at Woolworths Thornlie Square in 2024: one replenishing shelf stock in April and another in the bakery department in May. Although Eric anticipated preferring solitary work, he found the bakery environment enjoyable, even with the increased interaction with staff. Despite his positive experience, post-placement employment was not offered at that time. After some time to reflect, Eric indicated interest in working at a bookshop, Coles, or Woolworths, ideally in a role with minimal social interaction.

The ESC reached out to the manager at Woolworths, who remembered Eric positively and offered a four-week work experience, with the potential for casual employment afterward. Eric approached his first shift with confidence, greeting the bakery staff warmly.



He started with tasks he enjoyed, such as packing biscuits – a repetitive and independent activity. Gradually, he took on new responsibilities, including using a labelling machine, checking fridge temperatures, and preparing baked goods.

Initially, the ESC provided close support to ease Eric's anxiety. As he became more comfortable, support visits reduced to weekly check-ins. Eric began to build connections, even joking and laughing with colleagues.

Throughout Eric's work experience, the ESC maintained open and clear communication with all staff members involved. This proactive approach ensured that any issues or concerns could be promptly identified and addressed, fostering a positive experience for both Eric and the employer. This collaborative support helped Eric feel more at ease in his role and contributed to a productive and encouraging work environment.



## Lifestyle Services

We all want a life filled with happiness, purpose and opportunities to pursue our goals and dreams. Our Lifestyle Services assist people to turn this vision into reality by supporting them to enjoy social, recreational, educational and employment experiences and embrace a life connected within their community.

These supports can assist people to build new life skills so they can enjoy greater independence and have a new world of possibilities.

Our team works with our customers to carefully design services to achieve their goals and proudly live the life they want.

Some of these services include:

- Assistance with activities of daily living,
- Assistance with acquiring new life skills to improve independence,
- Support with building friendships and social connections,
- Enabling social and community participation, and
- Empowering people to actively engage in decision-making that positively impacts their life outcomes.





## Customer Feature

### Corey's Story

**Progress often happens one small, courageous step at a time. For Corey, those steps have led him into the kitchen – a place he used to find overwhelming.**

Corey has lived with severe food aversion and anxiety around eating for much of his life. Preparing or trying new foods and even eating in front of others was something he avoided.

With gentle encouragement from his Support Worker, Delaney, and the supportive environment our Merredin Lifestyle Services team create, Corey has been taking part in cooking classes hosted by Best Lives. These classes are about more than learning to cook – they're about building confidence, independence, and trust.

In his second class, Corey not only helped prepare and cook a meal, but also sat down

to enjoy it with others – a milestone that represents years of patience, progress, and courage.

"It has been a long journey with Corey to get him to where he is today," said Taylia, former Program Coordinator for our Merredin and Hyden Lifestyles teams, "This is a very proud moment for us here at Merredin as this is a huge deal and achievement for Corey & his support worker."

Delaney used her excellent support skills and understanding to make Corey's experience with food as comfortable as possible.

Corey's progress is a great example of what Lifestyle Services are designed to achieve – supporting people to build practical skills, develop independence, and be more confident in their everyday lives.



## Customer Feature

### Duane's Story

**With Best Lives, Duane is being supported to do volunteer work at the Nungarin Museum.**

Accompanied by his support worker, Duane has been working alongside a group of local volunteers who meet regularly to restore and preserve pieces of local history. He enjoys the hands-on work, the friendly banter, and the shared morning teas that have become a highlight of his week.

One of his proudest achievements has been restoring a "widow maker," a large tree-cutting tool once used in forestry. Thanks to his dedication and hard work, the restored piece is now proudly on display at the museum!

He has already started his next project – restoring an old butcher's meat saw. When it is completed, this piece will also get a spot among the museum's historical exhibits.

Through his volunteer work, Duane has found a rewarding way to connect with his community. This support has helped him build meaningful connections, contribute to his community, and take part in preserving the region's history for future generations.







## Customer Feature

### Raymond's Story

Raymond lives in a regional town in the Wheatbelt, four hours from Perth, where options for activities and outings can be limited. He experiences additional barriers to participating in activities due to his combined neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions.

Raymond has always loved water and enjoyed swimming. However, due to behavioural challenges that led to an incident while driving, the Best Lives Lifestyles team paused participation in activities that required long-distance travel.

With the support of a Positive Behaviour Practitioner, Raymond's family, and the Best Lives program coordinator, a plan was developed to gradually reintroduce swimming into his schedule.

The process began with additional staff accompanying Raymond and a family member to the pool to ensure he felt as safe and comfortable as possible. The Best Lives program coordinator attended the initial outings to observe and make informed adjustments to the plan, helping to ensure that swimming could safely become part of Raymond's routine again.

Raymond's love of swimming was evident from the very first outing. He now regularly goes swimming with his support worker in Corrigin. The Structured approaches that were put in place to meet Raymond's sensory needs, have allowed him to engage in activities in ways that prevent over-stimulation and help him feel confident and safe.



The success of this coordinated and collaborative approach to getting Raymond swimming again, has had a ripple effect for Raymond and the people who support him. He is now participating in outings to Merredin, enjoying bushwalking, playing croquet and even took a trip to Perth.

Raymond's complex needs require thoughtful planning and support. This tailored and comprehensive approach to his support has made it possible for him to engage in meaningful and enjoyable activities safely, and connect more fully with his community.





## Property Care

Property Care is our gardening and maintenance service which was established over 20 years ago. The primary purpose of Property Care is to offer employment opportunities to people with disabilities who require more on-the-job support than those in open employment.



Unlike other regions, Northam and surrounding Wheatbelt towns do not have the benefit of Australian Disability Enterprises, which typically provide such support.

Our Property Care team includes nine people with varying disabilities who are employed to work alongside their Best Lives supervisors at numerous locations in and around Northam. There are five dedicated supervisors with horticultural expertise to ensure that the gardeners continually acquire new skills while delivering valuable services to the community.





## Customer Feature

### Mark's Story

Mark, affectionately known as "The Boss," has been a dedicated member of the Property Care team for 16 years. He takes great pride in his mowing duties, however, in recent years, physical limitations have made it increasingly difficult for him to operate the heavy mowers.

Fortunately, Bendigo Bank helped us make work more accessible for Mark and our Property Care team! Thanks to the Bendigo Bank, we were able to purchase new, lightweight mowers that have allowed Mark to return to mowing with confidence. The new equipment has not only enabled him to perform his duties more efficiently but also had a profound impact on his self-esteem and sense of purpose in the workplace.

We sincerely thank Bendigo Bank for enabling us to invest in equipment that supports the wellbeing and capacity of our Property Care team members. This grant has helped us increase accessibility in the workplace and support our awesome crew.

The benefits of the amazing work done by the team is evident as Best Lives consistently secures tenders from various government departments including TAFE, Muresk Institute, DPRID, and other businesses and organisations such as Aboriginal Health Services, Glen Roy Chaff and Northam Glass. They even undertake smaller jobs for local families.

Many of our Property Care Gardeners stay with us for years because they draw a deep passion and purpose from their work. We have several long-serving team members with tenures ranging from 1 to 16 years.

# Our Commitment to Excellence



**The Best Lives Quality and Compliance team have strengthened the organisations commitment to high-quality services and continuous improvement, ensuring compliance with regulations, monitoring performance, and identifying opportunities to improve service delivery. This year, our organisation continued to deliver high-quality services while driving efficiencies and exceeding compliance expectations.**

We have successfully retained our Right Fit for Risk (RFFR) certification, reflecting our strong governance and adherence to protecting the collection of sensitive information, ensuring all information and assets are stored and managed securely.

In partnership with our Board, we continue to maintain and review our Risk Management Framework to ensure it remains effective in the changing environment, with a focus on quality, customer choice, participation, safety, and sustainability.

Earlier in the year, our Disability Employment Services (DES) was successfully audited and not only was this service registered as compliant with the requirements of National Standards of Disability Services (NSDS), we received another highly commended rating from the auditors for our Service Management. Scope of this registration includes provision of employment services, including personalised support services to people with disability in an open employment environment. We were able to achieve - 95% compliance in Q3 [FY24-25], 95% compliance in Q4 [FY24-25] and 85% compliance in Q1 [FY25-26].

Our collaborative approach to drive a culture of continuous improvement across all areas of the organisation supports best practice and the maintenance of high standards, ultimately building trust with customers, families and other stakeholders.



# Our Functional Structure



# Our Board and Leadership Teams

## Board



**Jodie Beeson**  
Chair of the Board



**Debbie Cameron**  
Deputy Chair



**Paul Vivian**  
Board Member



**Ross Polis**  
Board Member



**Les Pettitt**  
Board Member



**Nigel Alvares**  
Board Member

## Leadership Team

*Left to right:* Marian Zhao (Finance Manager), Navneet Kaur (General Manager – Operations), Teeny Lane (CEO), Shelley Warne (Business Services Manager), Nicki McKenzie (Enterprise and Development Manager), Sue Peacock (Strategic Coordinator)





# What Our Team Say About Us

Our Annual Team Engagement Survey is a valuable tool for our leadership team to understand the experiences, opinions, and suggestions our staff have for the organisation.

Their honest responses help us identify areas of improvement, celebrate successes, and enhance the overall working environment. It assists us to ensure services provided by our staff are of high quality and that our team feel empowered and supported to provide the right services and supports.

Teamwork and interdepartmental cooperation have improved, with effective collaboration among co-workers. There is a strong sense of accomplishment, with many finding their work engaging and feeling committed to giving their best effort. Our organisation's positive impact on people's lives is widely recognised.



**98%**

*"I get a sense of accomplishment from my work."*



**93%**

*"Our work positively impacts people's lives."*



**88%**

*"We have a work environment that is accepting of diverse backgrounds and ways of thinking."*



**87%**

*"I am encouraged to suggest improvements to better serve our customers."*



## Team Tenure

We would like to celebrate the following employees who have been in our organisation for many years and thank them for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the people we support at Best Lives.

Alana Cox - 5 Years

Margaret Huteau - 5 Years

Jacinta Churms - 10 Years

Bruce Clark - 15 Years

Mark Wilson - 15 Years

Teeny Lane - 15 Years

Wendy Hoare - 15 Years

# Celebrating Our Team Members

We are committed to recognising the people whose work makes our progress possible. Our recognition program ensures team members are celebrated for innovation, collaboration, and exceptional performance. From service awards and peer-nominated accolades to organisation-wide celebrations, we create opportunities for employees to feel valued, supported, and inspired to continue delivering excellence.



## WA Disability Support Awards 2025 - Celebrating Our Amazing Team!

Some of our team, along with valued customers Sue and Dyllan, were lucky enough to attend the WA Disability Support Awards at the Crown Ballroom in May.

It was a night to remember, featuring a delicious meal, drinks, inspiring speeches, and the presentation of awards – all capped off with some energetic dancing to tunes spun by DJ Incredible.

We are incredibly proud to celebrate the achievements of our team:

**Tayliah Boysen and the Merredin team** – nominated in the *Inclusive Communities* category.

**Liz Lockley-Deypalan** – received a *Highly Commended* award for *Excellence in Regional & Remote Support*.

**Bo Kinnell** – finalist in the *Excellence in Disability Support Work* category.

Congratulations to all! Your dedication and impact are truly inspiring.



## Employee Recognition Awards

Our Employee of the Quarter program highlights exceptional contributions throughout the year, with each quarterly recipient becoming a finalist for our Employee of the Year award. This tiered recognition approach celebrates excellence and reinforces the values that guide our organisation.

Award winners for this financial year are:



**Jon Cheyne –**  
Property Care Supervisor



**Michael Bishop –**  
Head Office Receptionist



**Bo Kinnell –** Support Worker in Northam

Bo was awarded the 'Employee of the Year'. She was recognised for her exceptional dedication and compassion in supporting customers to live their best lives. Bo helped rebuild personal relationships, fostered community involvement, and created meaningful social opportunities. Bo also expertly managed the complex process of supporting a customer through two house moves, making a lasting, positive impact on their wellbeing.



**Property Care Team**

# Special Thank You

A Cats Holiday Home  
Ability Housing  
Accessibility Belmont  
Agri quip  
Amity Health  
APM Communities  
Audit Partners Australia  
Australian Grain Technology  
Avon Valley Dental  
Bendigo Bank (successful  
grant application)  
Bennetts Law  
Best & Less Cockburn  
Bridgeley Community Centre  
Bunnings Northam  
Carers WA  
Certification Partner Global  
Chorus Community Services  
City of Swan (organisers of  
Midland March that Matters)  
Coastal Direct Promotional  
Products  
Coles  
Community Resource  
Centres across the Wheatbelt  
Connect reality  
Country Realty  
Country wide power  
equipment  
Crosslinks  
Cuddly Animal Farm  
Danzalin Kennels  
Deborah Costello Consulting  
Department of Communities  
Department of Health  
Department of Social Services  
Department Primary Industries  
and Regional Development

Development WA  
Directions  
Dream Builders Church  
Dulux Wearhouse Maddington  
Duncraig Library  
Ellenbrook College  
ES2  
Evelyn court  
Explorability  
Foodbank  
Football Futures  
Frameswest  
Fremantle Hospital  
Glenroy Chaff  
Greenwood College  
GroBro Hydroponics  
Head to Health  
Hollett and Lawrence  
Holyoake  
IGA  
Indigo Junction Midland  
Its Personal  
Jamaica Blue Livingston  
Jobs & Skills Centre  
JP Employee Relations  
JP Promotions  
Juniper  
Keogh Bay  
Key2creative  
KMart Armadale  
Landcorp  
Lifestyles solutions –  
Quenda house  
Little Olive Leaf café  
Lollipops Jandakot  
Lotterywest  
Main Roads Head Offices  
Max Thore

Mc Donalds Ascott  
Mc Donalds Ellenbrook  
'The Promenade'  
Melville Mazda  
Michael Banks  
Midland mowers  
Midland Trophies  
MLC Mia Davies  
Moora Men's Shed  
Moorditj Koort  
Mosaic  
Mr Ian Steadman  
Mr Richard Altham  
Muresk Institute  
National Disability Services  
Native Animal Rescue  
NDIA  
Newtrend IT  
NMT Projects  
Northam Central Regional  
TAFE  
Northam Centre For  
Accessibility  
Northam Districts Glass  
Nostalgia Box  
Numbers and Solutions  
Nutrien Ag  
Office Works Armadale  
Office Works Cannington  
Planit  
Professionals  
Prosperit  
Public Trustee  
rebel Whitford City Sports  
Store  
Red Dot Bentley  
Rich Minds





Ridges at Esplanade  
 Hotel Fremantle  
 Rise  
 RSM Australia Pty Ltd  
 Salvation Army  
 Sam Garrone Training Alliance  
 Share and Care Shire  
 of Northam – Magnolia  
 Women's centre  
 Shawn Boyle & Associates  
 Shire of Dandaragan  
 Shire of Merredin  
 Shire of Northam  
 Silk Logistics  
 SMYL  
 Sonshine Radio  
 Square Peg Community  
 Support  
 Stan Perron Foundation  
 (successful grant application)  
 Superoo Wreckers Armadale  
 Sussex Street Disability  
 Advocacy and Legal Centre  
 Swansea Street Market  
 Tafe lecturers at Muresk  
 Tammy Tansley Consulting  
 Telethon Community Cinemas  
 (EOY staff gathering)  
 The Vines Golf Resort  
 Training Alliance Group  
 Violet Bekkers  
 Visibility WA  
 Vision Counselling  
 Webb Project Services  
 West Coast Promotions  
 Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health  
 Wheatbelt Mental Health  
 Service  
 Woolworths





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