

# Annual Report 2022-2023

living learning Growing

"A healthy social life is found only when in the mirror of each soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living".

Rudolf Steiner

#### **Acknowledgement of Country**

In the spirit of reconciliation, Warrah Society acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



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About Marrah

#### Values

Our values of **Community**, **Respect**, **Integrity**, and **Excellence** are fundamental to everything we do at Warrah.

#### **Our Ethos**

Our work is imbued with deep respect for each person and seeks to provide opportunities to fulfill that destiny, meaning a sense of belonging, acknowledgment, and dignity are experienced in a living way.

Warrah staff translate our ethos into living practice through building strong connections, positive relationships, and purpose in daily living and work. This is made even more possible through our rich cultural life and beautiful natural environment.



Our Vision

Our Vision is for Warrah to be known for its unique approach, innovative delivery, and outstanding results in the provision of support that serves the needs and aspirations of individuals with intellectual disability.

Our Mission

Warrah is a Rudolf Steiner organisation providing a range of engaging, responsive services for children and adults with intellectual disability that maximise each person's capacity for self-determination, creativity, and contribution.

Warrah at a Glance



53 residents supported across13 houses



**2,600** hours of in-home support provided



750 sunflowers picked



The **only** Steiner based Specialist School in Australia



4,500 bread loaves baked



2,000kg bananas sold

264 passionate and

engaged staff



**96** candles made and sold by Micro-Enterprises



Over **100,000** lids washed, sorted and donated to Lids4Kids



**129** volunteers donated **5,198** hours of time

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**1,200** produce boxes picked, packed, and delivered by participants

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5 major annual festivals and20 social events held including discos, lunches, and activities



#### Chair Update

Yesterday I spent the day enjoying the Warrah annual Spring Picnic alongside the families and friends of our participants and our staff (many of whom were volunteering their time for free). Organic produce from our biodynamic farm, our own freshly baked artisan bread, and a range of hand-crafted products from our participants and school and our recently launched Micro-Enterprise initiatives were on sale. The Harris Road campus was alive as families enjoyed the surroundings, entertainment, and great food while relaxing together in the sunshine. For me at least, this was the epitome of everything that is Warrah. It does not fit conveniently inside any one 'departmental box' and it is sometimes difficult to articulate but it is unique, and its essence is very special.

The past year has not been without its challenges and the reality is that in the year ahead we will face more. However, alongside every obstacle, headache, rule change, and threat that we face, the underlying commitment and belief that we are 'doing the right thing' will not change. As you read the rest of this annual report and get a full perspective on the year, I hope you will feel the same sense of pride in the organisation's achievements that I do.

#### **Finances**

Our headline numbers for last year are strong but again these need to be tempered and viewed in context. The organisation benefitted from a couple of "oneoff" government payments which flattered what was essentially a flat result operationally. We are concerned that in the absence of these kinds of "one-offs" and the failure of NDIS price rises to keep pace with costs, the year ahead will see us dip into the red operationally. Longer-term organisational sustainability will be a key focus for our executives and the Board going forwards.

#### **Strategy & People**

People are a critical part of our organisation. As our number of employees continues to grow in line with increased service delivery, the Board has focussed closely on the robustness and quality of our organisational leadership. For any Board the selection of a CEO is a major undertaking. Warrah had been operating without a CEO in place for several years and whilst the executive team had been performing admirably, we felt it was the right time to make a new appointment given the mounting strategic challenges ahead. We were delighted to welcome Delia Gray into the re-created CEO role. To say that Delia has hit the ground running would be an understatement and her qualities and collaborative leadership skills are already shining brightly.



Strategic planning, particularly how we tackle our unfunded, bushfire threatened and ageing infrastructure remains front and centre on the priority list and the Board continues to work closely with Delia and her executive team to evaluate our options and move forward where we can.

I would personally like to acknowledge the contribution of David Forfar who informed us at the start of the year of his desire to move on after nearly10 years at Warrah. Although we were sad to see him leave, we are extremely grateful to him for his significant contributions to the organisation over his tenure and wish him luck in all his future endeavours.

#### **Board Changes**

We warmly welcome Kerry Taylor and Sam O'dell, our new Board members, who joined us during the year. Their respective expertise in property management, finance, and the NDIS, complement the Board's skills matrix, and we are already appreciating their contribution to our strategic decision-making and governance. We said goodbye to Peter Gurrier-Jones who informed us that he was stepping down due to his additional commitments and we wish him well.

#### **Partnerships & Thanks**

As Chair, I am immensely grateful for the unwavering support and dedication of the Warrah community. The level of collaboration between the Board, management, staff, parents, students, participants, volunteers, and supporters is our key strength. The significant generosity and support of Urban Taskforce Australia to our fundraising efforts is once again acknowledged with our sincerest gratitude.

On behalf of the Board, I extend our heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to the remarkable achievements over the year. Together, we are making a lasting impact on the lives of our participants and their families.

Steve Malin Chair

### *CEO* Welcome

I am deeply honoured to welcome you to Warrah's 2022/2023 Annual Report, my first as the Chief Executive Officer. Looking back at the past year, I am profoundly impressed by the incredible achievements of our participants, residents, and students. Equally, I am grateful for the dedication of our exceptional staff who continue to foster growth and learning, enabling each individual to lead their best life.

Undoubtedly, the year posed formidable challenges on personal and organisational fronts. Our transition out of COVID-19, coupled with the ongoing reforms in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and disability sector, demanded steadfast resilience. Additionally, the implications of climate change on Warrah have been a significant focus, prompting strategic planning and foresight for the well-being of our community.

#### The People we Support

At the heart of Warrah are the individuals we support with intellectual disabilities. Our commitment to their well-being, goal attainment, and enriched lives remains resolute. In this report, you will meet some of the remarkable members of our Warrah community, each telling their unique story.

I am proud to acknowledge the consistent praise we receive, highlighting the professionalism, engagement, and commitment of our staff in supporting participants at various events, appointments, and during training sessions. Such compliments, echoing from parents, the community, and fellow health professionals, underscore the unparalleled quality of support provided by the Warrah team.

#### **Challenges and Successes**

Amidst a backdrop of challenges, including global economic uncertainties and the pressing concerns of climate change, our team has exhibited remarkable adaptability and resilience. United by our shared mission and community, we weathered these storms, emerging stronger and more united than ever.

The evolving climate has also prompted critical considerations for our safety protocols and evacuation plans. With the reclassification of areas surrounding our campus as flame zones, we have diligently enhanced our safety measures, ensuring regular practice evacuations and the establishment of an offsite evacuation site and communication procedures for potential eventualities.

#### Impact of Government Funding and Policy Changes

Amidst the prevailing economic challenges in Australia, the Fair Work Commission's decision to increase the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) Award staff wages by 5.75% in the upcoming financial year is a positive development that we deeply appreciate. However, it is imperative to address the challenges that lie ahead. The annual NDIS price increase, regulated by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), is inadequate, only covering the staff wage increments but falling short of meeting the rising demands of incremental staffing, and CPI increases in running our homes, business, and property costs.



Survey data commissioned by the National Disability Services (NDS; Peak Body) has highlighted the concerns within the sector. A striking 83% of service providers express concerns about their capacity to deliver disability services within the constraints of the new price limits this financial year. Additionally, 32% of providers have encountered difficulties in accessing the necessary insurance for sustaining their disability services over the past year.

In the previous financial year (2022-23), 64% of participating providers reported financial losses within the first six months, and the trajectory for the ongoing financial year (2023-24) suggests that over 76% of benchmarking providers may face operational losses by year-end. While we have not yet encountered challenges in obtaining insurance, our Board is actively monitoring and discussing these emerging concerns.

In collaboration with the disability sector peak bodies and NDIS provider representatives, we are engaged in efforts to ensure accurate information dissemination and advocacy for a fairer pricing structure. Our proactive involvement aims to contribute to the ongoing NDIS review, slated for release in late 2023, and to inform policymakers and the NDIA about the urgent need for a more sustainable pricing framework that supports highquality service delivery.

The disability sector is acknowledged as a 'reformrich environment', with service providers displaying commitment despite the persistent challenges. There is a collective aspiration to advocate for a more participantcentric NDIS, one that not only serves the best interests of the participants, but also supports the providers in delivering exemplary services.

#### Hope and Optimism for the Future

Our distinction as Sydney's only biodynamic farm holds immense value, bringing joy and fostering a strong sense of community among our participants, residents, and students. Our commitment to maintaining this unique asset while ensuring sustainability remains a top priority for us at Warrah in Dural.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed Board, Members, and all our supporters, whose belief and trust in our mission continue to encourage us. To our staff, your relentless dedication and compassion are the bedrock of our success, and it is a privilege to lead such an exceptional team.

As we look towards the future, I am filled with hope and optimism. Our commitment to our mission remains resolute, and our dedication to crafting a better future for those in our care remains unchanged. We will continue to encourage and support people to do what they want and need to do in determining and achieving their capability, purpose and independence.

Thank you for your continued support and belief in our journey.

Warm regards,

Delia Gray Chief Executive Officer

### Marrah Board of Directors

The Warrah Board of Directors give their time voluntarily and work together to guide the strategic direction and leadership of Warrah. Each Board Director is highly skilled and brings a diverse range of experience to the team.



Steve Malin, Chair

Joined 2018 Financial and Investment, Key support of NDIS participant



Annet van Kesteren, Deputy Chair Joined 2019 Financial and Anthroposophical



Kerry Taylor

Joined 2023 Property and Construction



Annette Waterson Joined 2017 Financial



David Ghannoum Joined 2017 Property and Construction



John Williams Joined 2017 Business Management





Samuel O'dell

NDIS participant

Joined 2023

Civil Engineering, Key support of NDIS participant





Peter Gurrier-Jones 2021 - 2022

Financial, Key support of

#### In Memoriam Michael Bauer

Michael joined Warrah in his teenage years, a time when his vibrant spirit and boundless enthusiasm enriched our community. As a young man, he dedicated himself to our farm, embracing every task with a resounding "yes" and an eagerness to learn.

Michael's zest for life was infectious. He fearlessly explored new activities, from swimming to knitting, woodworking to karate. There was nothing he wouldn't try. His love for cooking, especially German cuisine, was a source of pride.

He shared the joy of getaways and even ventured to New Zealand. His dedication extended beyond Warrah, as he proudly worked with Disability Services Australia.

Michael's exemplary character shone brightly. He never complained, never said no, and always extended a helping hand. He treasured his belongings and the memories they held, much like his deep knowledge of Warrah's history.

Michael's absence leaves a void in our hearts, but his legacy as the "king of Emily Cottage" will forever remind us to embrace life with the same positivity and love for one another.



We remember Tony, a cherished Life Member, former Chair, and dedicated Board Director. Tony and the Molloy family became an integral part of our community in 1981 when his daughter, Rebecca joined Warrah Specialist School as a live-in student. From that moment on, Tony's unwavering commitment to Warrah shone brightly.

Tony's contributions were vast and invaluable. He initiated our cherished annual fair, and spearheaded various fundraising activities. Tony's dedication extended to leadership roles, serving on committees, notably the Finance Committee, where his professional guidance was invaluable.

Tony's deep faith and commitment to our anthroposophical based organisation were unwavering. He tirelessly supported our growth and sustainability, devoting thousands of volunteer hours.

Tony's legacy of love and dedication to Warrah will forever live on in our hearts.



### In Memoriam Robert Semler

Robert's journey with Warrah began at the age of 8, and for 53 years, he graced us with his endearing presence. Robert was a man of heart, strong will, and cheeky humour.

As one of the first children to join Warrah, Robert actively participated in shaping our community. He lived and attended school on the Harris Road campus, and was one of the first residents to move into one of the offcampus homes. He participated in Warrah's Castle Hill work programs, on the farm and a range of day and therapeutic programs, including Riding for the Disabled, music therapy, cooking, and artistic activities.

He loved his family, his fellow Warrah friends, and the many staff members who supported him to do what he loved and to be the best person he could be. He wanted to be involved in everyday household tasks, especially preparing meals and putting things in order. He was curious and adventurous, took initiative, was a risk-taker, and challenged everyone he met. He learned patience as he defied his disabilities and the ageing process, always finding ways to participate and be actively involved, even while sitting and listening or observing what was going on around him.

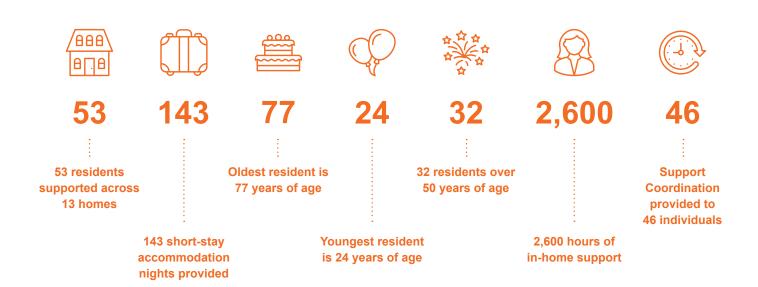


He really enjoyed being in the wider community, attending music concerts, and festivals from an early age. His favourite adventures were long bush walks, excursions, holidays to different places, and even camping. He really enjoyed travelling on public transport, long drives, and picnics with fellow residents or family.

For the Jacaranda family and all those who supported him in his day programs, Robert was a much-loved source of sunshine, a resilient, adaptable, and strongwilled sensitive soul. His presence, though missed, will forever be cherished.

In Robert, we didn't lose a friend, we gained an angel. He will forever brighten all our hearts and our shared memories.

# Misability Support Services







### Disability Support Services

Warrah's Disability Support Services offers tailored support for individuals with disabilities, emphasising individual needs and aspirations. Our Supported Independent Living (SIL) program enables community living with 24/7 support. Purpose-built or modified homes cater to different support needs, with Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) options available. In-home support promotes independent living, while shortterm accommodation offers breaks and skill-building. Our expert Support Coordination Team assists with NDIS plans, ensuring choice and control. We prioritise transparency, honesty, and respect in empowering individuals to reach their goals and lead fulfilling lives.







### Embracing Anthroposophy

Early 2023, Warrah had the privilege of welcoming Kathryn Bannister to its Executive Leadership Team. With her rapid adaptation and commitment, Kathryn has seamlessly built upon the strong foundations laid down by her predecessor, David Forfar.

David's remarkable tenure of nearly ten years at Warrah played a pivotal role in establishing a robust framework for our Disability Support Services. He adeptly steered us through the complexities of the ever-evolving NDIS landscape and the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic. His exceptional leadership and managerial guidance have left an unforgettable mark on Warrah, even as he now extends his expertise to other endeavours.

In her brief time at Warrah, Kathryn has harnessed her extensive industry experience to further develop and enrich our home and living programs. Her primary focus has been on refining policies and procedures, ensuring that they align seamlessly with our mission and objectives.

Kathryn's flair for identifying innovative opportunities that drive continuous improvement and deliver meaningful outcomes for our participants is evident. Despite being relatively new to anthroposophy, she has wholeheartedly embraced its principles and has initiated a comprehensive training program for our staff, revitalising social therapy in our day-to-day practices. Kathryn succinctly encapsulates the essence of anthroposophical social therapy, emphasising, "It is about holistically understanding a human being, seeing the person rather than the disability, and recognising the spiritual essence within each individual, irrespective of their physical form".

Warrah has commenced regular anthroposophical meetings open to all staff members. These gatherings provide a platform to delve into the profound principles and teachings that underpin our organisation. They serve as an invaluable opportunity for knowledge expansion, lively discussions, and active participation in a dynamic community dedicated to upholding the ideals of anthroposophy.

As we reflect on the transition of leadership from David to Kathryn, Warrah stands poised for a future defined by compassionate care, continuous improvement, and commitment to our mission.





#### Friendships flourish at Warrah's Short Stay Program

At Warrah, we offer NDIS-funded Short-Term Accommodation or what we refer to as Short Stay. Short Stay provides a rejuvenating break, fosters independence, and assists in building social connections. Nestled within our picturesque 12-hectare bushland campus, our 'home away from home' accommodation is fully equipped, with round-the-clock staff support. Guests can immerse themselves in a plethora of activities, from bush walks to arts and crafts, enjoying both our vibrant community and serene surroundings. Our flexible approach caters to regular and one-time visitors alike, ensuring a diverse range of experiences for all.

Ben and Jim are two of the guests who regularly participate in the short-stay program. They share a unique and heartwarming friendship. These spirited sports enthusiasts, known for their humour and sociability, first crossed paths at a Special Olympics tennis program 17 years ago. Since they met, they have formed and continued an unbreakable bond both on and off the tennis court. Their friendship extends beyond the bounds of sport, with occasional visits to each other's homes and weekly tennis matches. Now, they have added a Thursday night ritual to their repertoire, courtesy of Warrah's Short Stay program. It's a weekly highlight where they engage in lively dance classes, sports, cook delicious butter chicken, and share countless laughs.





# Meet Ben

Ben's passion for sports has been with him from a young age. He's a dedicated tennis, basketball, and dancing participant, earning recognition as a celebrated athlete in the Special Olympics alongside his dear friend Jim. Ben lives with his mother, who set a goal to foster his independence early on. This objective serves as the foundation for Ben's activities at Warrah.

Ben spends four days a week at Warrah, actively participating in the Discovery, Micro-Enterprise, and Short Stay programs. On Mondays and Tuesdays, he is supported by Warrah's Micro-Enterprise team to operate a small-scale lawn-mowing service, which includes mowing the lawns at some of Warrah's Supported Independent Living houses. Dressed in his lawn mowing uniform, Ben, and his support worker, have established a solid routine and recently, he expanded his services to include taking care of the lawns at Warrah Specialist School.

Ben takes immense pride in keeping some of Warrah's vehicles spotlessly clean when he's not tending to lawns and on Thursdays, he is dedicated to assisting with the delivery of organic produce to various locations, including Billabong Retreat. Ben receives an honorarium payment towards his spending goal for his contribution to the Micro-Enterprises.

Fridays are devoted to travel training, as Ben endeavours to enhance his independence further. Armed with his Opal card, he and his support worker confidently navigate Sydney's extensive bus and train network.

Yet, amidst his busy schedule, Thursday nights are the undisputed highlight of Ben's week. It's the night he gets to spend with his closest friend, Jim.

eet Jim

Jim embodies an easy-going and cheerful disposition, coupled with a strong sociable streak. From a young age, his mother was resolute in nurturing his independence. To this end, she initiated a fruit packing and delivery service, where both Ben and Jim were employed. Although Ben has since moved on to other ventures, including Warrah's Micro-Enterprises, Jim continues to deliver fresh produce throughout Sydney.

Four days a week, Jim travels independently by bus and train to his job at a disability employment service, where he works with friends he's known since their school days. On weekends, you might find Jim hitting the waves with his trusty boogie board, guided by his supportive uncle.

Ben and Jim's friendship is a genuine connection, akin to that of brothers. Their families have played a pivotal role in nurturing this extraordinary bond over many years, creating an unbreakable connection. At Warrah's Short Stay program, their unique friendship continues to flourish. Even from their adjacent rooms at night, their spirited conversations carry on through the walls, demonstration of the enduring strength of their bond.





Narrah's

#### New Supported Independent Living Website Hub

In 2023, Warrah took a significant step forward by enhancing its online presence with the introduction of a comprehensive Supported Independent Living (SIL) vacancy section on its website. This exciting development reflects our desire to make information readily accessible to prospective families and individuals seeking the ideal living arrangements within our supportive community.

Navigating the supported housing landscape has never been easier, as our website now provides a user-friendly platform for individuals and families to explore available properties and vacancies with a simple click. Each listing offers a comprehensive overview, including property details, features, and suitability for prospective residents, accompanied by a wealth of property photos to facilitate informed choices.

Warrah's current SIL program encompasses 13 houses supporting 53 individuals, fostering a sense of independence, meaningful connections, skill development, and self-discovery. Six of these houses are nestled within our Dural campus, while the remaining seven are strategically located throughout the Hornsby and Hills area.

Supported Independent Living, funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), offers individuals the opportunity to thrive in a shared living environment. Within these homes, our dedicated support teams provide round-the-clock assistance, equipped with individualised support plans and a wealth of experience in implementing recommendations from allied health professionals and clinicians, tailored to each participant's unique needs.

Over the past year, Warrah has proudly supported the transition of two new participants into our SIL services. Our meticulous transition planning process ensures that both the participant and our service provider are well-prepared for a seamless move. This includes familiarisation visits to their new homes, meetings with housemates, and getting acquainted with the local community. Such meticulous planning is pivotal in ensuring the comfort of participants and their support networks, familiarity with specific support requirements, and the establishment of meaningful rapport among all stakeholders.

In addition to our SIL services, Warrah also extends its support to an elderly gentleman under the Disability Supporting Older Australians (DSOA) program, funded by NSW Health. This program ensures that individuals with disabilities who were over 65 at the inception of NDIS continue to receive uninterrupted support services.

As we look back on the progress made in 2023, the launch of our Supported Independent Living vacancy section is a significant asset to the team and prospective families in the community.

Saturday Connect

#### Fostering Social Bonds for School Leavers and Young Adults

Saturday Connect is a dynamic social program crafted specifically for school leavers and young adults seeking engaging experiences that nurture meaningful social connections. In the wake of the pandemic, we've witnessed a remarkable surge in program participation, and we anticipate a steady, purposeful expansion in the coming years to ensure more young adults can embark on rewarding journeys of self-discovery.

Over the past year, our participants have embarked on many uplifting and enriching adventures. They've ventured to local hotspots, explored new horizons through the transport network, and revelled in the enriching tapestry of on-campus activities—all within the tranquil embrace of our sprawling 12-hectare bushland campus. From invigorating bush walks that awaken the senses to the boundless creativity of arts and crafts, from spirited games that ignite laughter to harmonious music sessions that soothe the soul, our program is a dynamic mosaic of opportunities designed to foster social interaction and personal growth.





Hayden, a cheerful and playful 16-year-old, has a love for the outdoors and a fondness for indulging in French fries during rides in his big brother's car. He loves engaging in water play, playing ball games, swinging to his heart's content, and lounging on the trampoline.

As Hayden is nearing the end of his school years, his mother, Sarah, embarked on a quest to find a place that could seamlessly accommodate his spirited, natureloving personality throughout his adulthood. A swift Google search led her to the Saturday Connect program at Warrah, where they eagerly enrolled.

Typically, Hayden isn't one for surprises. Careful planning and consideration for his comfort have been key in fostering his ability to socialise and participate in activities. To ensure his smooth transition into the Saturday Connect program, some of his most cherished items awaited him on his very first day – his favourite music (Mumford & Sons and One Direction), balls, pillows, and sensory items. Hayden's immediate affection for his new Saturday program warmed the hearts of his parents, who deeply appreciated the attention to detail and thoughtful preparation. To them, Warrah has proven to be everything they had ever envisioned, and more.

The sight of Hayden's contentment from day one, his smile, and his eager anticipation of Saturdays at Warrah provided great relief to his family. Sarah shared her thoughts, stating, "Many places claim to offer a personcentred approach, but Warrah truly embodies it 100%. Hayden's parents have always valued him as a person with unique interests and preferences, and they've gone to great lengths to ensure his success".

Sarah has thoughtfully created a visual weekly schedule for Hayden, prominently displayed in their family room. When Hayden points to the Warrah segment with a big smile, Sarah gently reminds him "Not today. It will be Saturday soon".

We are so pleased to welcome Hayden into our Saturday Connect program and we will ensure that it will continue to be a place of fun experiences, joy, and comfort.



Social and Community **Programs** 

Warrah's Social and Community programs are committed to empowering individuals with disabilities to thrive. In the past year, we've expanded our program offerings, improved accessibility, and prioritised sustainability.

We offer flexible, tailored activities across five program areas, catering to the diverse interests and needs of our 88 participants. Our commitment is to help participants make choices that align with their goals, develop essential life skills, and become active contributors to their local communities.





**88** Community Support Service participants



**20** individuals joined the Micro-Enterprise program



Over **100,000** lids were washed, sorted, and donated to Lids4Kids



Waaia Cafe baked over **900** scones



**476** boxes wrapped for The Philippines Project



**5** projects completed at the Dural Men's Shed (toolbox, planter box, book ends, cup stand, noughts and crosses game)





### Unleashing Potential through Micro-Enterprises

In February 2023, Warrah proudly introduced Micro-Enterprises, an innovative program aimed at unleashing the limitless potential within each of our participants. This initiative empowers individuals or groups to transform their passions into meaningful work, fostering personal growth and community vitality.

Micro-Enterprises is a distinctive venture within Warrah that offers every participant the opportunity to engage in an existing small business or create one tailored to their interests. The income generated from these endeavours supports personalised spending goals, further boosting our participants' self-determination.

We offer a diverse range of opportunities at Micro-Enterprises, ensuring inclusivity for individuals of all abilities. The growing variety of enterprises includes precision box packing, hands-on work on our biodynamic and organic farm, honing communication and organisational skills through deliveries, mastering outdoor maintenance with lawn care, excelling in maintenance and customer service through pool cleaning, crafting with creativity in leatherworking, expressing artistry through essential oil-scented candle making, gaining insight into the workings of a real bakery at our commercial artisan bakery, creating soothing atmospheres with diffuser making, and providing invaluable support for office and school operations through administrative tasks. Micro-Enterprises exemplifies our commitment to nurturing abilities and dreams, emphasising our belief in the boundless potential of every individual. By providing diverse, purpose-driven opportunities, we empower participants to cultivate their entrepreneurial spirit, enhance their skill sets, and embark on a journey toward realising their aspirations. In doing so, we contribute to a more vibrant and inclusive community where everyone can shine.





## Meet Rohan

Rohan is a warm and welcoming 62-year-old man. He thrives on meeting new people and enthusiastically greets old friends and new acquaintances. He has been a respected member of the Warrah community for over two decades, where he calls Waratah, one of Warrah's Supported Independent Living houses his home.

For the past 20 years, Rohan has been an active participant in Warrah's Social and Community Programs. Four days a week you can find him engaged in a diverse array of activities, including various art programs, literacy sessions at the library, swimming in the Warrah pool, workouts using the local outdoor gym equipment, and regular hydrotherapy sessions.

Earlier this year, Rohan embarked on a new adventure by joining the Dural Men's Shed, where he crafts items like wooden tables and book stands. He relishes the hands-on work. After a productive afternoon at the shed, Rohan heads to the café with his fellow Men's Shed friends. A cup of tea, his favourite, is always on the menu. Independently making this purchase each week is one of Rohan's spending goals through Warrah's Micro-Enterprise program where he participates in a share economy as one of the Artisan crew. The Micro-Enterprise program aims to create work opportunities and foster independence among participants. This is achieved by providing graded assistance and encouraging participants to make as many choices as possible. Rohan actively participates in every aspect of his venture, from selecting scents and label designs to handcrafting candles, including the pouring and placement of wicks, and crafting bath salts. He handles orders, packaging, and deliveries, and together with his support worker even helps to manage the financial side of the candle-making business.

Rohan's sister, Louise, is a great source of pride and inspiration for Rohan. When deciding on products, Rohan will often consider if it is something his sister would like. If the answer is yes, then he feels confident he has a great product. Rohan loves his sister, and they talk regularly on the phone. Rohan's accomplishments fill us with great pride, and we are honoured to have him as part of our Warrah community.



### Fostering Sustainability

Warrah's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship is a cornerstone of our mission. We believe in empowering our participants to play an active role in creating a positive impact on our planet. Through a variety of recycling initiatives, we've not only reduced waste but also nurtured a sense of community engagement and responsibility.

**Plastic Lids:** One of our notable initiatives involves collecting, cleaning, and sorting plastic lids, which are then sent to *Lidz4Kidz* for recycling. Our participants take pride in contributing to this effort, knowing that they are diverting plastic waste from landfills.

**Bread Tags:** Warrah serves as a collection point for plastic bread tags, diligently sorted by our participants into colours. These tags are sent to *Aussie Bread Tags for Wheelchairs*, where they are recycled to fund the purchase of wheelchairs, demonstrating how recycling can have a direct, positive impact on people's lives.

Blister Packs: Medication blister packs are collected for recycling, reducing waste, and encouraging responsible disposal practices. This initiative underscores our commitment to not only ecological but also societal well-being.

**10c Refund Containers:** We actively participate in bottle and can collection for recycling, with all proceeds reinvested in participant activities, reinforcing recycling practices within our community.

Shoe Boxes and Christmas Wrap: Our participants take part in wrapping shoe boxes for *The Philippines Project*, spreading joy and reducing paper waste simultaneously. The Street Library: Our community is encouraged to donate books to our Street Library, which our participants diligently maintain. This initiative not only reduces paper waste but also fosters a culture of book sharing and community involvement.

Beyond these recycling initiatives, we've actively engaged in broader community activities, including Clean Up Australia Day, World Environment Day, National Tree Day, and National Recycling Week. These events not only bolster our commitment to sustainability, but also provide opportunities for our participants to connect with the larger community and advocate for environmental responsibility.

At Warrah, we firmly believe that small actions lead to big changes. We invite the broader community to join us in making a difference. Together, we can pave the way for a more sustainable future for ourselves and the generations to come. Our dedication to recycling and community engagement is just one step towards achieving that vision.





### Community Participation

Stephanie is a vibrant and friendly young lady who has been a cherished member of the Warrah Social and Community Program for two decades. Daughter to Ping and Darby, Stephanie also has a sister named Jessica, who works as a primary school teacher. Since graduating high school, while living with her family in Cherrybrook, Stephanie travelled each weekday to participate in Warrah's Day Program. She also enjoyed the occasional weekend sleepover at Warrah's Short Stay Accommodation.

With a curiosity that extends to people and her surroundings, Stephanie is a very friendly, talkative, and bubbly person. Crowded spaces can be challenging, however, that doesn't diminish her enthusiasm for community outings. With attentive support from her carers, Stephanie actively participates in the things she loves – like dances, library visits, walks, and supermarket trips. Stephanie's zest for life is evident in her love for ten-pin bowling, Zumba workouts on YouTube, dancing, and seeking out new experiences.

Writing, tracing words, colouring, and painting are some of her passions. She has an extraordinary memory – recalling names and faces, even weeks after an introduction. Her love for 500-piece jigsaw puzzles is another remarkable aspect. She can effortlessly complete and re-complete puzzles with speed. These activities provide her with a sense of calm and engagement. Stephanie embraces daily opportunities to make her own choices and voice her preferences. In June 2023, Stephanie achieved a remarkable milestone by transitioning to live full-time at Emily Cottage, one of Warrah's Supported Independent Living homes, a move she embraced seamlessly. Her connections with future housemates formed during many years of shared transport journeys and Social and Community Program activities, fostering a sense of belonging that eased her transition. It's lovely to witness Stephanie's happiness in her new environment, as she adjusts to living with four housemates, including an old school friend called Nicki.

It brings us great joy to provide a safe and harmonious home for Stephanie and continue to accommodate facilitating her involvement in her passions, allowing her vibrant spirit to radiate. We are very lucky to have Stephanie as part of our Warrah community.





#### Progress and Enhancements

We are thrilled to share our remarkable improvements over the past year, made possible by the generous support of our donors and supporters. These enhancements reflect our commitment to creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community.

#### A New Kiln: Fostering Creativity and Skills

One of the most exciting additions to our facilities is the acquisition of a brand-new kiln. This invaluable resource opens up endless opportunities for our participants to explore their creativity through clay. Creating functional and beautiful objects not only allows them to express themselves, but also promotes the development of fine and gross motor skills, tactile understanding, and a sense of accomplishment.

#### Bathroom Renovation: Ensuring Accessibility and Dignity

In our ongoing efforts to improve accessibility, we embarked on a comprehensive renovation of the bathroom in the north wing of our Banksia Community Centre. This transformation guarantees that every member of our community, regardless of their mobility, can enjoy our centre's amenities with ease and dignity, reinforcing our commitment to inclusivity.

#### Pathway Upgrade to Waaia: Enabling Freedom of Movement

We reached a significant milestone with the upgrade of the Waaia pathway, aligning perfectly with our dedication to inclusivity and accessibility. This enhancement ensures that the pathway meets all accessibility standards, enabling everyone to move freely and comfortably around and to both the Waaia and Kinta buildings.

#### Kinta Flooring and Fresh Look

We are committed to creating a welcoming environment by enhancing comfort and aesthetics in our facilities. Recently, we replaced the flooring at Kinta and gave the space a fresh coat of paint.

These service improvements reflect our commitment to creating a more inclusive and enriching experience for everyone who walks through our doors. We are deeply grateful to our donors and supporters whose generosity has made these enhancements possible. Together, we are creating a brighter, more accessible future for our community.

#### Biodynamic Farm, Organic Farm Shop and Artisan Bakery

Warrah's Biodynamic Farm, Organic Farm Shop, and Artisan Bakery are pivotal components of our social enterprises, providing meaningful engagement for Warrah's students and participants while directly supporting our disability services. Our biodynamic farm lies at the heart, supplying the Farm Shop with an array of top-quality organic and biodynamic produce. This unique approach to farming not only yields exceptional products but also fosters a deep connection to the land and sustainable agriculture principles.

The Farm Shop, open to the public six days a week, proudly displays our certified Biodynamic Farm's produce and our artisan bakery goods. Our Warrah participants play a vital role in the farming and baking processes.

In addition to in-store shopping, we distribute our fresh produce to collection points and local restaurants committed to organics.

Our Bakery is a hub of traditional baking methods, specialising in artisan sourdough bread. We offer eight distinct lines of organic bread, available for purchase fresh on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Farm Shop. This bakery also serves as an invaluable learning experience for our Social and Community Program participants and Warrah Specialist School students, who engage in every step of the baking process.

Through our Bodynamic Farm, Farm Shop, and Bakery, we continue to nourish our community, both by offering exceptional products and by providing transformative opportunities for individuals with disabilities to actively participate in meaningful work and skill development.





### The transformation of our Humble Shed

For years, our participants and school students have taken immense pride in their role of preparing and delivering fresh seasonal produce boxes to collection points across Sydney's Lower & Upper North Shore. Thanks to a generous \$20,000 grant from the NSW Government Community Building Partnership, this work has now become even more enjoyable and efficient.

With the substantial financial contribution from the grant, our shed has undergone a remarkable transformation. What was once an ordinary space has now evolved into a vibrant and highly functional packing and distribution centre. This revitalised space is fully insulated, climate-controlled, and brightly lit, creating an optimal environment for our participants and students who actively contribute to feeding our broader community each week. The participants and students engage in a range of activities within this facility, from bagging salad mix to weighing fruits and vegetables, packing produce boxes, and loading the delivery van.

Our revamped distribution centre not only helps us to empower our participants and students, but also fosters a profound sense of purpose and unity as we come together to serve our community with the freshest and finest produce available.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the NSW Government Community Building Partnership for their invaluable support, which has made this incredible transformation possible. Through their generosity, we have turned an ordinary space into something truly extraordinary, enabling us to further our mission of community service and inclusivity.



### Marrah Specialist School

Warrah Specialist School provides education with a difference for Kindergarten to Year 12 students with moderate to severe intellectual disability and complex learning needs. We follow Rudolf Steiner's pedagogical philosophies and provide a unique and creative outdoor curriculum. Our school provides a natural and idyllic environment where students thrive.

We offer high-quality, personalised education with a focus on Individual Learning Plans, which ensures learning is optimised and tailored for each student. Key Learning Areas, including literacy, numeracy, science, and physical development are integrated with traditional arts, weaving, woodwork, music, life skills, cooking, and farming. This approach fosters academic learning while developing physical and social skills.





### Fresh New Approach

In the past year, our School's Leadership Team has been diligently working to introduce innovative internal structures, ushering in a fresh approach that has revitalised our school. These transformative changes have allowed us to optimise our operations, enabling each member of our staff to wholeheartedly concentrate on their core strengths: teaching and fostering meaningful connections with our exceptional students.

Our standing as a provider of exceptional education and support has continued to flourish, leading to a notable surge in demand for our school. In fact, we have been actively managing a waiting list of eager students and families, a clear reflection of the trust and value our school has earned within the community.

Amidst a national teacher shortage in Australia, we count ourselves fortunate. Our school is home to an exceptional team of teachers and teacher assistants who have consistently maintained our high staff-to-student ratio. This dedication ensures that we can sustain our personalised and nurturing learning environment, a defining characteristic of Warrah. The past year has been a journey of continuous learning and growth for all of us. In 2022, we placed a strong emphasis on Steiner Education training, and in 2023, our professional development focus shifted towards the realm of Special Education. We made significant investments in training, encompassing the use of communication devices with our students, data collection and analysis, and the implementation of positive behaviour support strategies. This commitment to professional development is our pledge to remain at the forefront of educational excellence.

We also allocated time to familiarise ourselves with the new NSW K-2 Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum, released at the end of 2022. Our teachers incorporated the curriculum's outcomes and access points into their programs, ensuring that we were fully prepared for its implementation at the beginning of 2023.



#### School Ground Improvements and Innovative Spaces



The past year has witnessed a transformation in our school's infrastructure. Notably, we have embarked on the construction of a specialised sensory room, a safe and nurturing space designed to help our students with self-regulation and well-being.

In addition to this, we've implemented significant improvements across various areas of our school grounds. Our playgrounds and primary play areas have received substantial enhancements, making them more engaging and enjoyable for our students. We've invested in expanding our parking facilities, upgraded roofing, and installed a state-of-the-art fire system to ensure the safety of our school community. We're delighted to announce the latest addition to our collection – a fleet of new bicycles that offer students even more recreational opportunities. Additionally, we've made substantial upgrades to our woodwork shed equipment, creating a more conducive environment for hands-on learning and creativity.

A particularly exciting development is the establishment of a newly designated "Loom Room", in which our master weaving volunteer has been actively engaged in weaving projects with our students. Our weaving program takes place every Tuesday with our new loom, allowing students to graduate to more complex projects.





### Empowering Students Through Enriched Educational Experiences

In the past year, we have restructured our outdoor curriculum to offer Primary and High School students with a comprehensive array of activities. The new structure offers a rotating schedule, to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in weaving, woodworking, farming and cooking on a term-by-term basis.

To enrich our farming experiences, we collaborated with Warrah's skilled farmers, who conducted an engaging farming program throughout the year. Students were actively involved in this program, participating in two sessions every Tuesday to ensure they had ample time to see farming projects through from start to finish. They received hands-on education in various aspects, including the proper care and use of farming tools, planting techniques, composting, and harvesting.

We formally reintroduced cooking classes after the COVID-19 pandemic. These classes not only taught students how to cook but also familiarised them with locating equipment, understanding its functionality, measuring ingredients, and following recipes. The program concluded with a bake sale, allowing students to showcase their culinary skills and giving others an opportunity to practice their shopping skills by making purchases from the sale.

In a bid to foster a more holistic learning experience, we introduced Integrated Units into our curriculum, predominantly focused on science. These units integrate subjects such as numeracy, literacy, creative arts, and practical arts, providing students with a deeper understanding and a more meaningful connection to the subject matter.

Emphasising life skills, which are integral to our curriculum across all classes, this year saw the formalisation of the Life Skills program for senior students. The selected students in their final years of schooling had the unique opportunity to hone their bed-making, cooking, cleaning, and general household maintenance skills under the guidance of our qualified teaching assistants. Additionally, we continued to offer the Endeavour Foundation work experience program, which provides valuable onsite job training, to our senior students. Our students remained actively involved in contributing to the Warrah Bakery and Farm Shop, where they assisted in tasks like packing organic produce boxes and supporting the shop and bakery operations.



### Our People



264 passionate and engaged staff



129 volunteers donated 5,198 hours of time



2,368 training courses completed



35% of our staff have proudly worked at Warrah for over 5yrs



10 TAFE Disability Support Worker student placements at Warrah



More than 24 different languages spoken



36% male and 64% female staff



### *Aiversity* and Inclusion

For over 50 years Warrah has proudly embraced diversity within our community, fostering an environment where differences are celebrated so that everyone feels respected, connected, and empowered to contribute to our collective success. This year marked a pivotal moment in our Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) journey, with Warrah joining the Diversity Council of Australia. This reaffirms our commitment and dedication to ensuring every voice is heard, every perspective valued, and every person can thrive.

Our membership provides access to contemporary bestpractice approaches and resources for creating an even more inclusive and equitable workplace, and all staff can take part in online training, webinars, workshops, and events. We were excited to deliver our first Diversity and Inclusion 101 workshop to over 80 staff during our faceto-face training day in April 2023 and we look forward to introducing more initiatives in the future.





#### A Gear of Growth and Enrichment

Warrah's unique employee value proposition sets us apart from other disability services providers. Our natural bushland campus serves as the heart of our vibrant community, with every day buzzing with activity, from the lively school playground to our farm, farm shop, bakery, and various enterprises within our day programs. Our dedicated staff often remark, it's not just work it's a way of life.

It's this distinctive value proposition that has allowed us to thrive, expanding our staff from 230 to 264, even in a challenging and highly competitive employment market. This 14.8% growth has bolstered our ability to provide personalised 1:1 supports, offer enhanced roster flexibility, and better manage staff absences and leave.

Over the course of the year, we welcomed 90 new staff members across the various services offered by Warrah. Among these additions were two Executive appointments in January 2023: a new Chief Executive Officer, Delia Gray and an Executive Manager for Disability Services, Kathryn Bannister. Notably, we reintroduced our face-toface induction program in our post-COVID-19 landscape offering new staff members a structured introduction to Warrah. These induction sessions were thoughtfully designed to acquaint them with our community, foster meaningful connections, and ensure comprehensive training was completed before they commenced their roles.

The positive feedback received from our new staff members underscores the value of this program and motivates us to further refine and expand it in the future. Looking ahead, we are already in the planning stages to transform this induction program into a full-day orientation experience next year, solidifying our commitment to an engaging and enriching onboarding process.







#### Step Out of the Office and Into Your Boots

In a world reshaped by the challenges of a post-COVID-19 landscape, where digital screens and remote administrative and support services have become the norm, Warrah unveiled an innovative program known as Gumboot Day. While the message is straightforward "it's time to step out of the office and into your boots", this initiative is not merely about getting one's feet dirty. It's a compelling invitation to embrace the profound health and social benefits inherent in farm activities.

With a steadfast commitment to the mental health and well-being of our staff, Gumboot Day encourages those who typically work within office confines to step out of their daily routines and immerse themselves in the farm environment. This program offers staff members a unique opportunity to participate in a variety of farm activities, fostering teamwork and establishing a deeper connection with the roots of our responsibly farmed food products. The dedication and hard work of our farm team have yielded remarkable results, making Gumboot Day a highly anticipated monthly event. Such resounding popularity prompted us to extend the invitation to our corporate partners, who enthusiastically embraced the initiative. This expansion not only magnified the event's success but also forged stronger connections with our invaluable business partners. Gumboot Day has become a unifying force, allowing office-based staff to step out of the office and into their boots, fostering an enriched perspective and renewed vitality.



### Volunteering at Warrah

At Warrah, the spirit of volunteering has returned with enthusiasm, creating a positive effect that extends across all our services.

We initiated a dedicated volunteering program, supported by our membership to the Centre for Volunteering, to enhance the lives of individuals living with disabilities. This program has grown steadily, and we have ambitious plans for further expansion in the coming year, including the recruitment of a Volunteer Coordinator to oversee this transformative process.

Warrah's growing volunteer program opens its doors to individuals, local schools, corporations, and community organisations, all eager to make a meaningful contribution.

We were delighted to welcome enthusiastic student volunteers from local schools such as Pacific Hills Christian School, Redfield College, and Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School. Corporate organisations like Deloitte and cherished partners such as the Master Weavers' Guild and Dural Men's Shed who have all generously offered their support, and actively engaged in our mission to create positive change.

This year, we were thrilled to reintroduce the international exchange program through the "Friends of Waldorf." We welcomed three remarkable German volunteers, each bringing a global perspective and invaluable support to our school students and the broader Warrah community.

One of our volunteers, 18-year-old Lena, shared her experience: "I volunteer with students of all ages, from kindergarten through high school. I help with art projects, assist in the classroom, and even contribute to gardening, weaving, woodwork, and cooking. I am learning so much about education, culture, and myself. I do miss my family and friends from time to time, but I love exploring this amazing country in my spare time. Even the creepy crawlies aren't enough to stop me".

Volunteering at Warrah has become a journey of giving and growth, with the efforts of volunteers from various backgrounds collectively creating a positive, lasting impact within our vibrant community.



Community Engagement



5 major annual festivals celebrated



20 social events held i.e. discos, lunches, and activities



4 nature table craft events



Attended 6 disability focused expos



12 participants performed at the Christmas Carols



200 bowls of soup served at the Harvest festival



#### Embracing Fresh Adventures Behind the Wheel

We are pleased to share that, thanks to your invaluable support along with that of other compassionate contributors in our recent fundraising drive, we have successfully acquired a new vehicle.

Our latest addition, a sleek Hyundai i30 sedan, has already been secured, with a number of participants eagerly enjoying the opportunity for more outings. This new vehicle is set to broaden the horizons for more of our residents, students, and program participants, enabling them to engage in more activities they cherish within the wider community.

These activities encompass a wide array of possibilities, from delving into newfound interests and hobbies to fostering meaningful social connections and embarking on an exploration of novel life experiences. The potential is limitless. We would like to express our sincerest gratitude, on behalf of everyone at Warrah, to each and every individual who contributed to all of our fundraising campaigns over the past year. Your support has made a significant impact to everyone at Warrah.

Once again, we extend our heartfelt appreciation for helping us turn this vision into a reality. Together, we are enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities.





### In the Spirit of Togetherness: Reflecting on Festivals

Festivals hold great significance in the Steiner philosophy. They provide opportunities to connect with nature, embrace cultural traditions, and nurture personal and spiritual growth. At Warrah we embrace seasonal and Christian festivals throughout the year as a way to celebrate our shared humanity, and foster a sense of wonder and reverence. Each festival carries its own unique significance, providing our community with an understanding of nature's rhythms and a sense of belonging. In the wake of the post-pandemic era, we are thrilled to have reopened our doors, reinvigorating our enthusiasm for these cherished festivities.

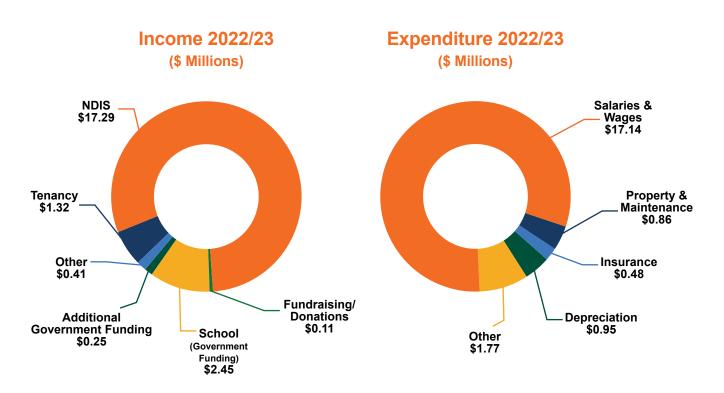
Our calendar is not limited to the observance of major events such as Easter, Harvest, Winter Spiral, Spring, and Christmas. We also take pleasure in organising and commemorating a myriad of smaller, yet equally meaningful occasions. These include but are not confined to Mother's Day, B-Kinder Day, lively discos, enjoyable pizza nights, interactive nature table events, and the vibrant Harmony Day. These enriching events are meticulously orchestrated and supported by our dedicated Warrah staff, who actively volunteer on various planning committees. Their commitment and passion are truly commendable, as they often don fun hats and lead the dance floor with energy.



"To celebrate a festival really means to unite oneself in spirit with the cosmic spirit."

Rudolf Steiner

Financials



Visit the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) for detailed financial records of Warrah's 2022/2023 financial year.



Thankyou

We are grateful to all of our donors and supporters, many of whom choose to remain anonymous. Thank you for giving so generously and enabling Warrah to provide the services and supports to enrich the lives of people with disability.

#### **Donors**

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living learning

Growing

#### Enriching the lives of people with disability

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