



# Annual Report

## 2024—25

COLLABORATION | COMMITMENT | CREATIVITY | DIVERSITY | EMPOWERMENT | FLEXIBILITY | RESPECT | FUN

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## Acknowledgements

One of ARC's values is collaboration because it fosters innovation, strengthens the community and ensures that we can provide the best services we can to the people we support.

Throughout the year, our collaborators have been instrumental in our successes and we extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every organisation that has provided their invaluable contributions and support.

We also say a big thank you to all of ARC's staff, parents, carers, volunteers and placement students who worked with us in 2024-25.



# About ARC

Established in 1976, ARC Disability Services Inc. has grown to be Cairns' largest independent disability services provider. ARC was created and designed by people with lived experience, and for 49 years, have been committed to providing person-centred supports.

We work collaboratively with our participants, their support networks and the community to facilitate a range of opportunities that promote active participation for all. Our vision is that people who have a disability are empowered to reach their full potential and aspirations, enabling them to enjoy a fulfilling life of their choosing as valued members of the community.

ARC's services are delivered in line with our values of:

- Collaboration
- Commitment
- Creativity
- Diversity
- Empowerment
- Flexibility
- Respect
- Fun

Our services include:

- Short Term Accommodation
- Direct Support
- Supported Independent Living
- Programs
- Coordination of Supports
- Plan Management
- Inclusive Education Resource Centre

ARC's key funding bodies are the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Specialist Disability Support in Schools Program.

We have multiple locations in Cairns and surrounds including our main office and community hall in Manunda, our south-side office in Edmonton, plus our art studio and Coordination of Supports office in Portsmith. All of our offices are multi-purpose and fully accessible. In the spirit of collaboration, we offer hire of our spaces to community organisations and groups. This year, we're proud to have supported over 620 hours of in-kind support to local not-for-profit organisations through usage of our meeting rooms and spaces.

## Our Organisation Structure

ARC's organisation structure ensures strong oversight, clear accountability and effective coordination across all service areas. And most importantly, keeps the participant at the heart of all that we do. Specialised managers and staff oversee the operation of each of our services, supported by teams who deliver finance, health and quality and frontline outcomes. Our organisation structure is designed to ensure we deliver high-quality, person-centered services to the community.



# From the Chair



**Lorraine Carroll**

*B.App.Sc(Sp.Path), MBA, GAICD, CPSP*  
Chair

**It is with great pride that I present this year's review, reflecting on the achievements and milestones that have shaped ARC Disability Services from July 2024 to June 2025. This year has been defined by innovation, resilience and a deepened commitment to inclusive community engagement.**

Most notably within the Governance of ARC, at a Special General Meeting held after the 2024 Annual General Meeting, the members of ARC unanimously voted 'yes' to ARC transitioning from an incorporated association to a company limited by guarantee. From an outside perspective, there will be little change in the organisation and its operations; however, this shift is reflective of the growth and size of the organisation. By becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee, the organisation adds an additional level of maturity and accountability to our governance.

The ARC Board has been undertaking a journey of growth over the past few years which has shifted the overarching governance structure and ensured that ARC remains agile for current and future changes. The Participant Voice Representative Group has already been established serving as an integral link between ARC's Board and service users and their families.

Over the past 12 months we have established the Finance, Audit and Risk Management (FARM) Committee.

We welcomed two new Board Directors: Robin Giason and Aidan Lang. Both bring a wealth of experience in both the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. I also want to acknowledge and farewell to Peter Aitken from ARC's Board. Peter has been associated with ARC for many years and joined ARC's Board in 2019. Over this time Peter was a driver of the establishment of ARC's Participant Voice Representative Group, ensuring the mechanisms for ARC's participants to have a direct connection to the organisation's governance within the constitution.

This year ARC built on hosting our annual Disability Support Worker Conference and looked at how we support parents, carers and people with disabilities in our community.

To achieve this, we hosted our first annual conference for parents, carers and people with disability as part of International Day of People with Disability. This conference, presented by people with lived experience of disability, for people with disabilities, was well received and will now be part of ARC's annual events.

Looking forward, ARC is entering the next phase of strategic planning, informed by stakeholder input and guided by an ongoing vision of excellence.



We are also establishing our Quality, Safety and Care Governance Committee to ensure that ARC continues to provide services that are safe, high quality and focused on the needs of the people they support.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our CEO Benjamin Keast, whose leadership has been both visionary and steadfast. His ability to navigate complexity with clarity, foster a culture of collaboration, and remain deeply committed to our mission has been instrumental in driving the organisation forward.

On behalf of the Board, I extend sincere thanks to all staff, volunteers, partners and community members. I am deeply honoured to acknowledge the unwavering dedication, integrity and passion demonstrated by our leadership team and staff throughout the year. Their commitment to our mission and values has been evident in every decision made, every service delivered and every challenge overcome. It is through their tireless efforts that we continue to grow, innovate, and provide meaningful support to those who rely on us.

As we approach the remarkable milestone of 50 years as a not-for-profit service provider for people with disabilities, we look forward to celebrating the courage, compassion and commitment to community that has shaped a legacy that continues to inspire.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Board of Directors, whose commitment, strategic insight and personal support have been instrumental in guiding our organisation through another impactful year. Their dedication goes far beyond governance – they bring wisdom, compassion and a deep belief in our mission to every decision and discussion. I am deeply thankful for the strength and unity they bring to our board.

Finally, and most importantly, our service users. Thank you for placing your trust in us. Your choice to engage with our organisation inspires us daily and reinforces the importance of the work we do. We are privileged to walk alongside you, and we remain committed to providing services that are respectful, empowering and responsive to your needs.



# Our Board

ARC is governed by a Board of Directors who oversee the strategic operations of the organisation. The Board is elected from the members of the organisations at the Annual General Meeting, which took place on 4 November 2024.



**Lorraine Carroll**  
Chair

Board meetings attended: 8/9  
Strategic meetings attended: 1/1



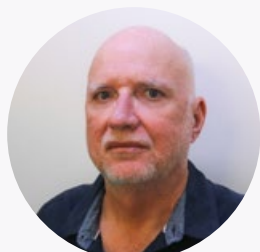
**Elizabeth Brown**  
Vice Chair

Board meetings attended: 8/9  
Strategic meetings attended: 1/1



**Graham Caldwell**  
Treasurer

Board meetings attended: 6/6  
Strategic meetings attended: 1/1



**Peter Aitken**  
Member

Board meetings attended: 5/6  
Strategic meetings attended: 1/1  
(Resigned February 2025)



**Lino Bruno**  
Member

Board meetings attended: 8/9  
Strategic meetings attended: 1/1



**Megan Edwards**  
Member

Board meetings attended: 9/9  
Strategic meetings attended: 1/1



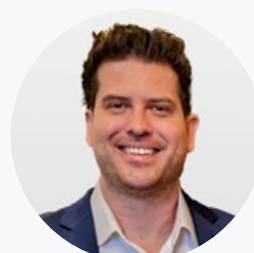
**Aidan Lang**  
Member

Board meetings attended: 7/7  
Strategic meetings attended: 1/1  
(Joined September 2024)



**Robin Giason**  
Member

Board meetings attended: 7/7  
Strategic meetings attended: 1/1  
(Joined September 2024)



**Michael Koczyrkewycz**  
Member

Board meetings attended: 1/1  
Strategic meetings attended: N/A  
(Resigned August 2024)

# From the CEO



**Benjamin Keast**  
Chief Executive Officer

ARC has continued to build momentum this year, driving growth, sparking innovation and deepening our impact across the community. As Cairns' largest independent disability services provider, we continue to be shaped by the lived experiences of our participants, their families and our dedicated team. Our commitment to person-centred support and inclusive opportunities is reflected in everything we do.

Guided by our strategic pillars – innovate, influence and improve – we've embraced a period of transformation and maturity. Transitioning to a Company Limited by Guarantee marked a major milestone, reinforcing our growth, governance and accountability. The creation of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management (FARM) Committee, alongside our Participant Voice Representative Group (PVRG), ensures participant voices remain central to our decision-making.

Our advocacy and leadership continue to drive sector-wide change. This year, we launched our inaugural annual conference for parents, carers and people with disability – led by those with lived experience – setting a new benchmark for inclusive community engagement.

Operationally, we've delivered over 10,500 hours of direct support each month. We've expanded Supported Independent Living to 53 participants across 28 arrangements and coordinated more than 1,180 hours of support monthly for over 250 participants. Our workforce remains our greatest asset, with strong staff retention, representation from 46 countries, and ongoing investment in professional development, technology and wellbeing.

We've proudly celebrated the achievements of our participants – whether that's building independence, exploring creative passions or forging community connections. Programs like the School Holiday Program, All Abilities Rugby League and ARC Arts have continued to grow, offering meaningful experiences and opportunities for empowerment.

The Inclusive Education Resource Centre has supported thousands of loans and resources, helping students and people with disabilities across Far North Queensland access the tools they need to thrive. Our partnerships with local organisations, universities and community groups have further enriched our services and amplified our impact.

As we approach ARC's 50th anniversary, we're entering a new phase of strategic planning, shaped by stakeholder input and a shared vision of excellence. The establishment of the Quality, Safety and Care Governance (QSCG) Committee will ensure our services remain safe, high-quality and responsive. We remain committed to embedding the principles of the Child Safe Organisations Act and championing inclusive opportunities for all.

Amid ongoing sector changes, the future holds exciting opportunities. ARC will keep innovating, influencing and improving – empowering people with disabilities to live the lives they choose.

Thank you to our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, partners, and most importantly, our participants and their families. Together, we're shaping a future where everyone is valued, included and empowered.

# Our Strategic Plan

ARC's Strategic Plan is active from 2022 through to 2025.

The plan has 3 pillars that define our commitment to **innovate**, **influence**, and **improve** by investing in our future, engaging in our community and inspiring a quality workforce. Our vision is one where those with a disability are empowered to reach their full potential, goals and aspirations.



## Innovate

- 1.1 ARC will create new service options for people with disabilities and their families
- 1.2 ARC will invest in broadening the organisational footprint
- 1.3 ARC will transform our engagement and introduce research strategies to develop new and improve existing opportunities



## Influence

- 2.1 ARC will advocate at all levels to ensure the voices of people with disabilities are heard
- 2.2 ARC will lead, engage and participate in opportunities, to contribute to a community of constant improvement
- 2.3 ARC will invest in positively influencing the sector and the people we support



## Improve

- 3.1 ARC will facilitate a culture that ensures strong and effective governance and continual quality improvement
- 3.2 ARC will invest in efficient and quality systems to support future innovation and responsiveness
- 3.3 ARC will inspire an organisation of continuous learning, creating opportunities for everyone to evolve and be the best they can



# From the CFO



**Seranie Eecen**  
Chief Financial Officer

The 2025 financial year has been a period of consolidation, investment and stable financial performance. We reported modest monthly surpluses culminating in an overall margin of 4.2% for the past 12 months.

While the Disability Sector as a whole is struggling with surging wage and operational costs and reduction in margins of the NDIS pricing structure, we are pleased to report we have managed to operate our services within our annual budget projections.

ARC has achieved strong revenue growth which has flowed through to higher profits. We've seen effective cost controls are evidence across the majority of expense categories and enhanced returns from financial assets.

ARC maintains a robust equity buffer and liquidity positions which put us in a sound position to continue to operate in a sector that is under financial duress.

## Financial Performance Analysis

### Revenue

Revenue increased by 11.80%, rising from \$31.31M in 2024 to \$35.01M in 2025. This reflects strong top-line growth and diversification of revenue streams.

### Profitability

Increased profit margin indicates improved operational efficiency and stronger financial performance.

### Return from investments

Notable improvement related to times and higher returns from financial interties indicative of diversified cash management practice and historic higher interest rates.

### Operating Expenses

Most expenses areas saw moderate increases in line with revenue growth, in response to controlled cost management.

Wages continue to be the primary cost driver: an increase of 12.19%, which is slightly higher than revenue increases resulting in an overall reduction in the operational margin.



Scan the QR code to read the Financial Reports

# From the Chief Operations Officer



**Sarah Dart**  
COO

ARC concluded its three-year strategic plan emphasising staff milestones, professional development, mission values integration, job security and future workforce planning. The organisation fostered employee engagement through the revitalised Employee Representative Group and hosted key events for staff development and industry connection. Investment in student workplace experience and technology upgrades supported operational efficiency and future workforce growth. ARC also enhanced employee support programs and introduced industrial relations improvements, acknowledging the vital contributions of our employees in our strategic success.

This year, our Operations team focused on building stronger pathways, smarter systems and a more connected workplace. From recruitment innovations to leadership development, we've made meaningful strides — and it's all thanks to the energy, ideas and commitment of our team members. Here's a snapshot of what we've achieved together.



## Workforce and Wellbeing

- A new Recruitment Video Campaign was launched in 2024 showcasing the heart of our work.
- We trialled recruitment and reference validation software that align to our values, and they have streamlined hiring and reference checks whilst maintaining quality of candidates – and they're here to stay.
- We've engaged in partnerships with Allied Health providers to expand injury prevention and management processes.
- Roll out of the Supervision, Training and Development Framework
- Implemented feedback about the employee experience of starting at ARC and have improved the On-boarding Map with more meaningful key milestones of support.
- Over 20 student placements coordinated this year – with strong engagement from quality training providers.
- Our volunteer program continues to thrive in the Toy Library and Programs.

***"We're not just filling roles – we're shaping futures."***

## Safety and Quality Improvements

- Positive Duty Training delivered to all corporate supervisors and operations/support team members.
- We've begun reforming supervision and onboarding to better support Disability Support Workers.
- Akuety Resource Hub launched for easy access to policies, EAP, and contacts.
- Medication Admin Trial: New documentation process launched at SIL house to reduce errors.
- Advanced documentation and reporting systems for improved compliance and transparency.

*"Positive Duty isn't just a policy – it's now part of our culture."*

## Growth and Learning Investments

- Ongoing learning through upgrades to iInduct (Learning Management System) and internal training libraries, and more ways to be heard with supervision and feedback loops.
- Improved career pathways with 15+ active secondments throughout the year.

*"We're investing in people – not just positions."*

## Systems and Information, Communications & Technology

- Upgrades to our Server for future proofing digital needs.
- Enhanced cybersecurity practices, training and resources to protect everyone's data
- We worked hard with Akuety and iInduct to make our platforms more accessible and to digitise as many paper-based forms as possible.
- New features implemented such as digital signatures, photo and attachment uploads, and voice-to-text functionality in as many software platforms as possible.
- More mobile and accessible operations workforce – office staff can work at multiple sites without any disruptions to availability or data access.

*"We're building a smarter, safer and more connected workplace – where innovation meets accessibility."*

Every achievement this year reflects the passion and professionalism of our team. You're the everyday legends making extraordinary things happen. Whether it's navigating care plans, championing independence, or you're wrangling spreadsheets, solving compliance rules or tech bugs – thank you. Your ideas, your efforts, your commitment – they shape our culture and drive our success. Thanks for making a difference – more than just support.



# Staff Years of Service Recognition



## 5 Years

|                   |
|-------------------|
| Lisa Walmsley     |
| Mick Tregoning    |
| Jaxon Fitzsimmons |
| Ivy Querubin      |
| Brenton Spencer   |
| Belle Joury       |
| Sam Cook          |
| Mel Dezilva       |
| Kat Hannam        |
| Michelle Clarke   |

|                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| Anita Bryars                    |
| Shona Bird                      |
| Tara Crawford                   |
| Jo Sevilleno                    |
| Lloyd Clode-Roberts (Separated) |
| Lou McClure                     |
| Rose Cusbert                    |
| Tanja Simpson                   |
| Leanne Sampaklis                |



## 10 Years

|               |
|---------------|
| Devika Dhakal |
| Gordon Will   |
| Julia Bell    |

|               |
|---------------|
| Bernie Fallon |
| Telita Sailor |



## 15 Years

|               |
|---------------|
| Nicole Brown  |
| Rodney Wilson |

|               |
|---------------|
| Christine Dhu |
|---------------|



## 25 Years

|           |
|-----------|
| David Lee |
|-----------|

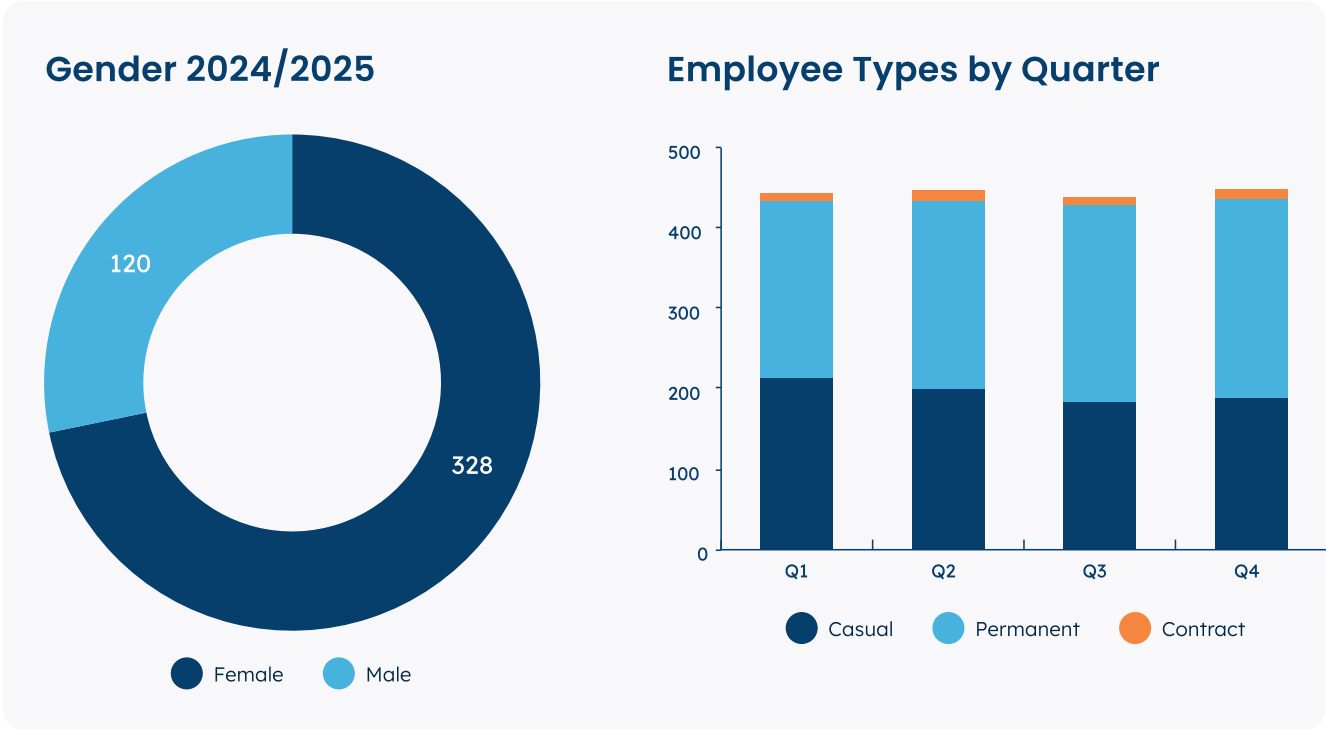


## 35 Years

|               |
|---------------|
| Seranie Eecen |
| Wendy Young   |



Our workforce represents commitment and diversity. On average, our team members stay with us for 4.29 years, showing strong staff retention. 30% of our workforce is linguistically diverse, representing 46 countries across Europe, Asia, Oceania, North America, South America and Africa. This diversity brings different perspectives and experiences, strengthening service delivery to ARC’s participants.



## Student Placements

Since 2011, James Cook University and ARC Disability Services have fostered a meaningful and enduring partnership that has significantly contributed to student learning and community engagement. Over the years, ARC has hosted a total of 13 Social Work students and 5 students from other disciplines for placement opportunities, offering invaluable hands-on experience in a supportive and inclusive environment.

This collaboration not only reflects a shared commitment to professional development and social impact but also highlights the strength of community-based learning. It is truly a partnership to be celebrated, showcasing the power of collaboration in shaping future practitioners and enriching local services.

### Laura Marsland

Student Placement Manager  
James Cook University



### Thecla

My experience working with ARC Disability provided me insight into a community I had never given much thought to previously. What I learnt was that ARC Disability Services provides vulnerable community members with the necessary supports and resources to build stronger, unified, visible and dignified individuals who can participate in and be a part of their community.

I came to recognise the connection between social work theory and organisational practice, which was my intention to complete my placement successfully.

I was happy to observe and participate in the methods through various roles, as well as having the opportunity to visit the Holiday House, which is a valuable resource for a community needing support with taking care of loved ones living with complex needs.

ARC practices in such a way that demonstrates dedication, strives to achieve a common goal throughout the organisation, and, most importantly, demonstrates compassion, which I witnessed from all staff members.

I would recommend ARC to social work students as an ideal workplace to observe and learn how a not-for-profit, disability services provider organisation operates. To identify the theories and frameworks associated with the disability sector and work in an organisation which offers a unique experience.

# From the CSO



**Natasha Rivett**  
Chief Services Officer

**The 2024–2025 year at ARC Disability Services has been marked by growth, innovation and a deepened commitment to inclusive, person-centred service delivery across Direct Supports, Home and Living, Coordination of Supports (COS), Intake and Rostering.**

In Direct Supports, we consistently delivered over 10,500 hours of support monthly, expanding in-home and community-based options that prioritised participant autonomy and wellbeing. The delivery of active supports has strengthened our approach to empowering participants, though we acknowledge staffing pressures remain an ongoing challenge and did have an impact on our service provision through this year.

Supported Independent Living services supported 53 participants across 28 arrangements. ARC's SIL service transitioned to ARC Home and Living and now also supports young people under the age of 18 who have complex disabilities with their home and living supports. Many participants who have chosen ARC for these holistic supports service have shared with us their stories of successes in achieving their individual goals of becoming more independent, making more meaningful friendships and having a community presence.

COS continued to play a vital role in navigating NDIA complexities, supporting families through collaborative planning, connection and implementation of services. This was a year where we saw an increase in providing discretionary funded supports to ensure consistency for those in crisis or whose funding did not meet their individual need.

A major highlight of the year was the continued development and embedding of the Participant Voice Representative Group (PVRG), a collective of participants, carers and stakeholders who actively shape the quality and scope of ARC's services. Facilitated by the Chief Services Officer and supported by Board members, the PVRG ensures that participant voices underpin strategic decisions and organisational planning. The group met regularly throughout the year, with agendas and minutes shared to promote transparency and engagement. The PVRG has become a trusted interface between participants and leadership, contributing to improved communication, fairness and strategic alignment.

ARC continued to champion inclusive opportunities for everyone associated with the ARC community, with a strong focus for our parent carers. Events such as the Queen show at CPAC, Limberlost morning tea and planting workshops were well attended and celebrated diversity and connection. These initiatives were complemented by the launch of a dedicated website section for carers and participants, offering NDIA resources, guides and event information. The culmination of these efforts was the inaugural Participant, Parent & Carer Conference held on 3 December 2024 – International Day of People with Disability. This landmark event provided a platform for information sharing, networking and celebration, and will now be held annually to honour and support the vital role of carers in our community.

Before I ask you to turn your attentions to the reports provided by our dedicated Team Leaders, I would like to thank the individuals and their families and community networks who choose ARC for their supports and services, those who have ridden the bumpy road of change and challenges with us through 2024–2025, we appreciate your trust and dedication to ARC.

# Direct Services



**Nicole Brown**  
Direct Services Team Leader



**200+**  
participants

**11,500**  
hours per month

Over the past year, the Direct Supports team has continued to grow and evolve, supporting more than 200 participants with personalised 1:1 in-home and community access supports.

The team has focused on helping people build independence, have more say in how and when they receive support, and enjoy greater flexibility to suit their individual needs.

Highlights include organising overnight trips so participants could celebrate special occasions and providing in-home care that allowed people to stay safely at home while their families were away. Support hours have steadily increased, now averaging over 11,500 hours each month.

We have also adapted to changes in NDIS pricing and compliance requirements, ensuring services remain high-quality and aligned with participant goals.

Most importantly, the participant voice continues to guide everything the team does, with supported decision-making and regular feedback built into everyday practice.





## Direct Services Participant Stories



### Robert

Robert enjoys weekday supports with Direct Supports to assist him with his Activities of Daily Living as well as Community Access. Robert has been mastering his DIY and fixing skills. Since joining the Bunnings and Woodwork program in March 2023, Robert has found an opportunity to really explore Woodwork & Maintenance whilst accessing some Programs during his day.



### Mark

Mark's artwork was displayed at the Cairns Show. He said, 'it was exciting to see them and to have them put up there, I liked showing my Support Worker the painting.' In talking about his creative process he shared that, 'the workers take me to my painting activity at ARC Programs and help me at home with drawings and ideas.'



# Home and Living



**Renee Bell**

Supported Independent Living Team Leader

This year marked a quiet but meaningful transformation for our team as we stepped forward under a new name: 'Home and Living'. While the name may be new, the essence of what we do remains the same. Previously known as Supported Independent Living Services, this shift reflects more than a name change – it's a time for renewed commitment to creating spaces where individuals feel safe, respected and empowered to shape their own lives.

Over the past year, our Home and Living team has continued to deliver high-quality services that promote autonomy, inclusion and personal growth. We supported 53 participants across 28 arrangements, reflecting steady growth and a deepening of our person-centred approach.

Our dedicated Home and Living Coordinators and Disability Support Workers have worked side-by-side with participants to help them reach their goals – whether that's learning new skills, building social connections or exploring new experiences. We've seen incredible moments this year: someone cooking their first meal, navigating public transport independently or simply sharing a laugh. These milestones are the true markers of progress, independence and belonging.



**28**

living arrangements

**53**

participants

In response to evolving community needs, ARC has begun accepting referrals for young people in Child Safety who require disability support. This marks a significant and meaningful expansion of our services, ensuring that vulnerable young people receive the care and stability they need.

Looking ahead, ARC is committed to embedding the principles of the Child Safe Organisations Act across our operations. We are actively implementing the 10 Child Safe Standards and the Universal Principle, ensuring our services are not only safe and inclusive, but also uphold the rights and dignity of every child and young person we support.

This year, we've also focused on strengthening how we support our teams – not just with training, but with insight. We're fostering a culture where learning is ongoing, and where support is thoughtful, responsive, and attuned to each person's evolving needs. It's about equipping our teams with the confidence and capacity to support participants in meaningful ways.

In a sector that's always shifting, one thing remains constant: our commitment to showing up with drive, passion, and a genuine focus on being part of the everyday moments that help someone feel capable, seen and heard.

We invite you to enjoy reading some of the stories and moments that have been shared with us – each one a testament to the power of support, choice and community.

## Home and Living Participant Stories



### Delphine

Hi, my name is Delphine and this year I've been focusing on becoming more independent – especially when it comes to getting around on my own. On my days off, I've been catching the bus into the city with my support worker. I really enjoy walking along the Esplanade and having a quiet picnic in the shaded spots near the lagoon. On hot days, we sometimes hop off at Cairns Central to wander through the shopping centre so I can check out a few things I might like for myself. These outings have been a great way for me to build confidence and practice my everyday skills like talking to people, handling money and keeping track of receipts. One of my favourite parts of the trip is just sitting on the bus and watching the world go by.

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### Hugh

I've been working really hard on healthy eating. I found it really difficult at first, but it became easier over time. I regularly went to see my dietitian and talked about the foods I liked and didn't like, and she helped me make a plan of how I can still eat those foods but with healthier options. With assistance from my support workers, I have lost around 15kg! I feel so much better and healthier. I am very proud of myself!

---



### Rhys

This is Blue, one of the dogs down at the dog park for Adoption Day that I went to and had a great time chatting with people and meeting all the dogs. I felt relaxed and happy being there, and I even started a few conversations myself. It was nice to be part of the group activities and connect with others who love animals. The day really helped me build confidence and practice my social skills in a fun and comfortable setting.

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### Sam

I help host 2 breakfast morning shows a week with Bala Matty down at BBM Radio. It's such a great experience, it gives me a chance to practice my communication skills, build confidence in a group setting, and feel more connected to the community. Here I am with the crew down at the Cairns Pride Festival.

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### Alex

My old roommate came by for a visit recently, and it turned out to be a great night. We stayed in, had fish and chips, and spent time catching up on all the good old memories. After the visit, I felt happy and grateful. It reminded me how important it is to stay connected with people who've been part of your life. Sharing those laughs and stories made me feel supported and brought a real sense of joy.

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## Glen

I've been really focused on my goal to lose weight and improve my health. With renewed determination this year, I have lost over 20kgs. With support from my team, I've been sticking to my meal plan and making healthier food choices every day. I've also built a regular exercise routine that includes daily walks. I feel more energetic and confident, and I'm proud of how far I've come. My family are proud of me too, and most importantly, I'm proud of myself. Staying committed to my health goals has made a big difference in my life. Fishing is an activity I love, and as you can see from my photo, I am pretty darn good at it!

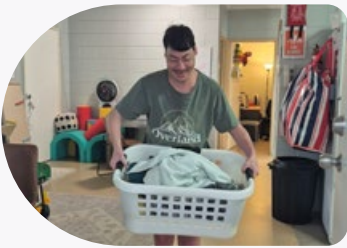
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## Jane

Moving into my new Specialist Disability Accommodation has been a fantastic positive change in my life. It's a home that's been built with my needs in mind—clean, bright, and fully accessible. Everything is set up so I can move around easily and can participate more. I have my own big bedroom and ensuite, which gives me privacy and comfort. It's a space that feels like mine, and I'm starting to make it my own with my favourite things and personal touches. I'm really looking forward to getting furniture and beautifying the space in a way that reflects me. For the first time in a long time, I feel like I have a home that truly suits me.

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## Howei

Hello, I am Howei and I live in a supported independent living arrangement. This year I have been supported to gain independence with my household tasks and laundry has always been a challenge for me as there are just so many steps to remember in order! This year I have been able to achieve my goal of independently completing household tasks of laundry from start to finish.

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## Rob

This year I was involved in Shakespeare at the Tanks for 2025, Richard III. All of our rehearsing and performances took place over two weeks, but our efforts were shown off when we started performing. I really enjoyed being a part of this performance and being able to really play the part by dressing up. I am looking forward to more opportunities with ARC to get back up on stage!

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## George

I have taken a new shine to cooking at home for myself and my housemate this year. The first meal I chose to cook this year was Lasagne from start to end. I really enjoyed following the recipe, chopping vegetables, and layering the ingredients in the baking tray. Since then, I have successfully cooked tuna bake and spaghetti bolognese, and I'm now exploring other pasta dishes that I can try in the future. My goal is to start cooking 2 nights per week as I like to contribute to my household and build my independence and culinary skills in the kitchen!

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## Adam

One of my favourite adventures of the year took me to Brisbane for a week-long cruise with my housemates, where we enjoyed a jam-packed itinerary full of luxury and exploration. I definitely made the most of my time on board indulging in the ship's amenities and discovering the stunning Whitsunday Islands. I may have stolen the spotlight by winning a dance competition on the main deck with my moves and the crowd went crazy! By the time we returned home, it was safe to say I was exhausted but so happy from the unforgettable experience.



## Solomon

Something I am really proud of and what I enjoy doing is working at BBM. I have been working there for about 15 years! I have a lot of responsibility at work, and this includes being a board member. Another thing I enjoy is the flexibility I have working with BBM which includes working from home as well as going into the office. Here is a picture of me in action at an outdoor broadcast.



## Mona & Sonja

Hi our names are Mona and Sonja, we live together in supported independent living. We have both been working on our cooking skills within our home and we made a delicious batch of cookies together. With this new confidence in our cooking skills we were able to enjoy a beautiful day on the Cairns esplanade and cook ourselves a BBQ!



## Michael

I have a strong passion for everything food related, especially dining out at my favourite spots like Grill'd and Burger Urge. This year, I decided I really wanted to expand my skills in the kitchen by exploring multicultural cooking, including preparing a chicken curry. It's really important to me to increase my independence and skillset in the kitchen and I enjoy methodically following recipes and putting a meal together. My favourite part of the process is taste-testing the final dish! I'm excited to continue to expand on these skills and try some more delicious recipes.



## Trent

I've had an exciting year filled with adventures and new experiences. I have achieved my goal of going on a holiday – in fact, I went on multiple holidays! My housemates and I wrapped up 2024 with a relaxing week in Palm Cove staying in a beautiful Air BnB. Each day was shaped by my own chosen adventures, including a visit to Hartley's Crocodile Farm and I even took on the challenge of the Wangetti Trail hike and conquered it! I found it to be the perfect way to unwind after a big year and enjoy some quality time with my housemates before the festive season.

# Short Term Accommodation



**Michele Townson**

Respite and Short Term Accommodation  
Coordinator

ARC has welcomed several new participants to the Holiday house during 2025. Many trialling one-night stays and then transitioning into longer regular stays. We have a number of participants that have weekly overnight stays at the house. Some of our guests are local and others come from areas including Thursday Island, Kuranda, Innisfail and Mission Beach so that they can enjoy spending time with others and participating in social activities in Cairns.

Several participants have utilised the Holiday house and Flat for long-term emergency stays while waiting to return to families or transitioning to Home and Living Accommodation.

The Holiday house and the Holiday house flat has also provided NDIS approved longer term accommodation during this past year, with stays of up to 28 days. These stays have given the participants family members the opportunity to have down time and enjoying trips away, putting their trust in the Holiday house team to support their loved ones in their absence as they would.



**1,143**

overnight stays at 1:3 ratio at the  
Holiday House

**147**

stays at 1:1 ratio at the Holiday House flat

The Holiday house team continue to empower participants to adapt and improve their daily living skills giving them the opportunity to be supported to assist with meal preparation and other household tasks. Fine tuning these skills prepares participants for a smooth transition into their own home.

This year brought a change in supports with participants having the opportunity to enjoy ladies only and men only weekends where both parties had the opportunity to plan in house and social activities of their choice. These nights were popular between both groups.

Holiday House and Flat bookings continue to grow. The total of Holiday House bookings actioned for this financial year are 1143 overnight stays at 1:3 STA. The Holiday house flat had a total of 147 overnight stays at 1:1 STA.

## Short Term Accommodation Participant Stories



### Chantal

This year we said goodbye to one of our most familiar faces, Chantal. Chantal was a long-term visitor over many years and we loved having her stay each week, supporting and sharing in day-to-day tasks, outings and activities. Most of all, it's been amazing to see Chantal build her independence to the point where she was able to move into a permanent Home and Living arrangement. Chantal is missed by all at ARC, but we share excitement and congratulations for her next chapter in her own home.



# Coordination of Supports



**Chloe-Ann Fitzgerald**

Coordination of Supports Team Leader

The Coordination of Supports (COS) team has had a dynamic and impactful year. Over the past 12 months, we've navigated staffing transitions, farewelling familiar faces and welcoming new talent into the fold. The team comprised of eight dedicated coordinators, collectively supporting over 250 participants with tailored support coordination services.

In response to the release of the Royal Commission and NDIS Review reports, the COS team has remained proactive in guiding participants through emerging changes, including the rollout of the new NDIS systems.



**1,180+**

hours of support per month

**250+**

participants

We continue to focus on capacity building and empowerment, helping participants gain greater independence in their daily lives. This includes:

- 1,188.25 hours of support coordination delivered monthly
- Strategic engagement with long-term stakeholders such as the Office of the Public Guardian and Child Safety

The COS team's efforts are underpinned by a commitment to person-centred practice, compliance with evolving NDIS standards and a culture of collaboration and adaptability. As we move into the next phase of NDIA in 2025–2026, we remain focused on strengthening participant outcomes, refining internal processes and preparing for future sector shifts.



# Inclusive Education Resource Centre

The ARC Inclusive Education Resource Centre (IERC) provides a comprehensive resource loan service to support the diverse learning needs of students and other people with disabilities across Far North Queensland. Our extensive and continually updated collection enables schools and organisations to deliver an inclusive curriculum that reflects current curriculum developments and adjustments.

Through a rotational service model that combines centre-based access, school deliveries, and an online catalogue, we ensure resources are accessible, efficiently circulated, and tailored to the specific needs of students and people with disability. Catalogue usage has steadily increased over the past 12 months. To strengthen this service, we have been continuously working on the improvement and upgrading of the catalogue by adding safety alerts to resources and recording the contents of each item. These enhancements assist in tracking missing pieces and provide borrowers with clear information on incomplete or temporarily unavailable resources prior to placing a loan request.

We have reached out to many schools from all education sectors (State, Catholic and Independent) who do not currently access the service and have offered promotional visits to those schools who are interested in receiving a service. As a result, we had an extra school delivery trip during the second semester of 2024, finishing off the year with 12 school delivery trips.

In summary, the ARC IERC remains dedicated to facilitating an inclusive educational and sensory regulated environment by providing tailored resources, professional support, and convenient access to ensure that students and people with disabilities in Far North Queensland have the tools they need to succeed.



**3,565**

total resources available

**5,187**

total loans issued

**357**

total borrowers

"The ARC IERC provided access to targeted literacy and numeracy resources for a Year 6 student with non-verbal autism. These resources, including communication games and interactive mathematics activities, were incorporated into the student's daily learning routine. Tailored strategies utilised the student's AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) device in conjunction with maths, literacy, and communication activities, all designed around the student's individual interests and learning goal. The service enabled the student to communicate needs more effectively, engage meaningfully in learning tasks, and interact with peers during group tasks. Regular use of ARC IERC resources resulted in greater focus and increased inclusion in classroom activities."

**Specialist Disability Support in Schools (SDSS) Program**

# Programs



**Sheridan Lawton**

General Manager Programs and Health  
Facilitator RN

Over the past year, ARC Programs has continued to grow and evolve across its diverse program areas, reaffirming our dedication to delivering meaningful services and support to our community.

ARC Programs is deeply rooted in the local community through collaboration, partnerships, and the use of mainstream services wherever possible. We believe in empowering individuals to choose how they spend their time, where they go, and who they connect with—ensuring choice is central to every experience.

ARC Programs is supported by an immensely valued team of workers both through the coordination and support worker team. These individuals strive to ensure participants achieve their goals and aspirations whilst having fun with their friends.

Throughout the past 12 months, our Programs have celebrated a wide range of highlights, marked by both individual and group achievements. Join us in celebrating the vibrant mix of accomplishments, partnerships, joy and friendships that define ARC Programs.



## ARC School Holiday Program

Our School Holiday Program has continued to grow from strength to strength throughout the 2024–25 period, with future plans now in place to ensure its ongoing development in a more inclusive and engaging environment for all participants.

This program has become a space for young people to explore new skills, make connections and build confidence. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from families, many of whom were eager to return, has reinforced the importance and transformative impact of this initiative.

Looking ahead, we are committed to continuing this momentum—creating safe, empowering, and enriching school holiday experiences that meet the evolving needs of both young participants and their families.

## ARC All Abilities Rugby League

For years now, we've proudly shared the incredible partnership between ARC and Brothers Leagues Rugby Club, and the amazing All Abilities Rugby Program that has grown from this collaboration. Each year brings new energy, new participants and powerful moments of inclusion and personal empowerment through sport – and this year has been no exception.

This year marked a significant milestone as our teams took to the field at the recently updated Brothers Leagues Club Stadium at the new Stan Williams Park. The atmosphere was electric, with a huge turnout of fellow participants, families and ARC staff all showing up in full force to cheer the teams on.

The support from the community has been nothing short of inspiring, and it's been incredible to witness the continued growth of our players' confidence, skills, leadership and sense of belonging. What started as an opportunity for inclusion has evolved into a powerful platform for empowerment, resilience and teamwork.

As we continue to build on the strong foundations of this partnership, we're excited about what the future holds for the ARC and Brothers Leagues All Abilities Rugby Program.







## ARC Arts

This year, ARC Arts has offered a vibrant and empowering space for artistic expression and community engagement at the City Hub Studio. A standout moment was winning First Place at the 2024 Cairns Festival Parade, where participants crafted sea-themed props from recycled materials and paraded their creations with confidence and pride. This celebration of creativity and sustainability empowered artists to take centre stage in one of the city's most visible cultural events.

In July 2024, Studio artists entered an array of artworks into the 2024 Cairns Show, receiving multiple awards. These achievements speak to the growing recognition of the artistic excellence and empowered expression cultivated at the Studio.

Throughout the year, participants showcased their work in exhibitions including the Cairns Artchies, the Mental Health Week Art Exhibition, the Wish You Were Here Postcard Exhibition and Thomas Den Englesman's solo exhibition at the TANKS Art Centre.

Engagement in the Bunnings Community Markets gave participants the chance to sell their creations, manage a market stall and develop entrepreneurship skills. The Creation Station at the Cairns Children's Festival capped off the year, inviting children into a world of imagination – facilitated by ARC participants.



## The ARC Creatives

The ARC Creatives had a transformative year, filled with bold creativity and meaningful recognition. Highlights include:

- The Beyond the Waves animation project told a uniquely FNQ story about courage and belonging. Its national festival selections and Diversity Award win celebrated the team's creative power and collective voice.
- The We Move You project saw participants translate emotions into movement, giving form to vulnerability, grief and joy – an act of courage and self-expression.

Live theatre continued to shine with:

- 'True Friends', a crowd favourite, co-directed by ARC participant Aaron Lee.
- 'Richard III', a Shakespeare at The TANKS, our 14th collaboration with Tropical Arts.

The ARC Creatives Children's Books Project brought personal stories to life in book and theatre forms, supported by RADF and RAF grants. The ARC Choir continued to uplift and connect through music, empowering performers to bring joy to aged care residents and school communities, culminating in a heartwarming performance at Carols in the Park.

Individual achievements were equally inspiring:

- Aaron Lee was accepted into JUTE's WriteSparks Program.
- Hayden Keable won Best Supporting Actor for his role in Chesters.

The year concluded with our End of Year Showcase, a celebration of everything our community has created.



# Our Year in Events



## AusACPDM Biennial Conference

1 & 2 August 2024

We proudly sponsored and attended the 12th Australasian Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine (AusACPDM) Biennial Conference which was held here in Cairns. ARC team members attended workshops and sessions on the latest research, early intervention and culturally responsive care. Many attendees travelled from interstate and overseas to attend. It was fantastic to join the event and have conversations with attendees about ARC and the disability sector in Cairns.



## Cairns Festival Parade

24 August 2024

A highlight for the year was the ARC Artists incredible display at the Cairns Festival Parade. The Parade is always a vibrant celebration showcasing the diverse Cairns community. ARC's float joined a procession along the esplanade that drew over 30,000 spectators. Working in with the parade's theme of "embracing the rich diversity and the vibrant tapestry of colours, cultures, beliefs and traditions that create the kaleidoscope that is the FNQ community" the ARC City Hub strutted their fun creations that embodied the colourful marine environment that surrounds Cairns. To top it off, the ARC crew took out first place for their float.



## Halloween

31 October 2024

Halloween at ARC is always a fun day with our place based staff and participants dressing up for the occasion, trick or treating and closing out the day with a themed disco.



## Staff Development Day

21 and 22 November 2024

Held at the Pullman International, ARC's Staff Development Days brought together over 150 Disability Support Workers for an afternoon of professional development and networking. Presentations from guest speakers included the topics of cultural inclusivity and accessibility from a lived experience perspective and the art of creating and keeping accurate support records.



## Participant & Carer Conference

3 December 2024

In celebration of International Day of People with Disability, we hosted a conference for parents, carers and participants in the community. It was a fantastic opportunity for participants and their support networks to come together to learn and talk about the Queenslanders with Disability Network, navigating the NDIS, the rights of people with disability, employment pathways, home safety, hiring private support workers and about the services our Local Area Coordinator offers.



## Christmas Disco

5 December 2024

ARC's annual end-of-year Disco was held at the Pullman Reef Hotel Casino. Participants, staff and families danced the night away, enjoying music, food and a visit from Santa himself. This event is a highlight of the ARC social calendar, bringing together all corners of the ARC community for a night of festivities.



## Harmony Day

19 March 2025

ARC celebrated Harmony Day with a staff social event. Organised by the Employee Representative Group, the event was an opportunity to share and learn about the different cultures that colour the ARC community through food and conversation.



## Programs Easter Bonanza

16 April 2025

The Easter Bonanza brought seasonal cheer to ARC's programs with themed activities, treats, and community connection. After a social sausage sizzle, the crowd gathered around to watch the contestants strut down the runway for the Easter Fashion Parade and Easter Bonnet Competition, with the lucky winners taking home a prize.



## Biggest Morning Tea

3 June 2025

We hosted our annual Biggest Morning Tea fundraiser for the Cancer Council at both the Manunda Community Hall and ARC51 in Edmonton. The event featured all the morning tea staples including tea, coffee and delicious baked goods, raising funds and awareness for a worthy cause.



## Cairns Disability Support Worker Conference

5 June 2025

The annual Cairns Disability Support Worker Conference continued to be a major professional development event for ARC staff, and Disability Support Workers in Cairns and surrounds. With over 200 attendees, the conference included keynote presentations, breakout sessions and networking opportunities. Topics our incredible guest speakers covered included supporting people with autism, dysphagia and mealtime support, the power of support work done right and being an ally to empower those we support, team work and making decisions in complex situations.



## Shakespeare at the Tanks

26, 27 and 28 June 2025

ARC's collaboration with Tropical Arts culminated in a three-night performance of the Shakespeare at the Tanks production, Richard III. After thorough preparations and rehearsals, participants took to the stage to showcase their talents in a fully inclusive production, celebrating creativity and community.

