

Royal Rehab Group

Annual Report



Royal Rehab Group

EMPOWERING INDEPENDENCE

“Independence
is happiness.”

Susan B. Anthony





*A guest at Sargood on Collaroy
savouring the thrill of mountain biking.*

Contents

A Message from our Chairman and our CEO	04
01 Highlights	09
02 Our Services	37
03 Our Customers	43
04 Our People	63
05 Research	71
06 Our Foundation	77
07 Our Leadership	83

**The Royal Rehab Group acknowledges
Traditional Owners of Country throughout
Australia and recognises the continuing
connection to lands, waters, and
communities. We pay our respect to
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
cultures, and to Elders past and present.**



A message

from our Chairman and our CEO

What a truly remarkable year it has been, marked by outstanding achievements and significant progress. As we look back on the journey of the past year, we are proud to share with you the key accomplishments that have shaped our path forward.

The launch of our Advanced Technology Centre in Ryde

On July 1, 2022, we celebrated a significant milestone as we unveiled our state-of-the-art Advanced Technology Centre within our Ryde campus. This accomplishment was the culmination of meticulous planning and exceptionally hard work. We express our deepest appreciation to everyone who played a role in bringing this vision to life, including our generous donors, dedicated partners, and supporters.

At the core of this centre, you'll find cutting-edge technology tailored to rehabilitation and disability services. This innovative hub is revolutionising therapy by introducing a spectrum of advancements, such as robotic exoskeletons and augmented reality, effectively establishing a new benchmark in Australia. The feedback we've received from both clients and clinicians has been overwhelmingly positive. By seamlessly integrating advanced technology into our therapeutic approaches, we are equipping our clients with the latest breakthroughs in rehabilitation. This, in turn, opens doors to greater independence and an enhanced quality of life.

Revitalised community hubs for our customers

We also made a significant investment in our community hubs to better support our disability communities in Rydalmere and Dubbo. These hubs go beyond providing just a gathering space; they are warm and supportive places where our clients can connect socially, learn new skills, access employment support, or participate in various engaging activities.

In Rydalmere, our new hub, opened in August 2022, has also paved the way for the first collaborative effort between our Breakthru and Royal Rehab disability services teams, who now share the same location. This collaboration has led to improved services and enhanced collaboration, benefiting our customers.

In the Dubbo region, our hub has undergone a complete transformation, offering fully accessible and inclusive environments. Equipped with new computers and high-speed internet to aid job seekers, this hub can now support a broader range of programs, playing a vital role in serving our disability clients throughout the Dubbo area.



Sargood on Collaroy guest, David, relishing the joy of returning to the waves.



“Freedom lies
in being bold.”

Robert Frost

Breaking ground, one brew at a time

Recognising the unique challenges faced by individuals with disability, particularly in the realm of employment, we took a pioneering step this year by introducing our very first fully accessible and inclusive café on the Central Coast of New South Wales, aptly named Breaking Grounds.

Breaking Grounds offers more than just excellent coffee and delicious food; it places accessibility as a top priority. We've meticulously designed it with adjustable benches, inviting entrances, and peaceful areas. However, it's not just a place to enjoy; it's also a space for learning and growth. It serves as a training ground where individuals with disability can gain hands-on experience and receive instruction in the hospitality sector. This experience opens doors for them to discover meaningful employment opportunities.

We're thrilled to announce that our first group of students has already successfully completed training in customer service and hospitality, and some have even secured positions within the hospitality industry. Breaking Grounds embodies our commitment to breaking down barriers and forging pathways to success for people with disability.

Improving our sustainability

As a leading provider within the rehabilitation and disability space, we know that our actions and practices can have an impact on the environment and on the communities we serve.

This year we implemented sustainable practices to decrease our carbon footprint by reducing the amount of waste and energy used across our business.

We are also exploring opportunities to switch to renewable energy, further reduce our use of plastic across our business, and ensure we have appropriate reporting systems in place to track our progress.

From a social governance perspective, we have re-affirmed our deep commitment to respecting and upholding human rights with the publishing of our first Modern Slavery Statement highlighting the actions we will take to prevent modern slavery in our business and supply chains.

A time to reflect

Ensuring that our Indigenous patients and customers receive inclusive and equitable healthcare experiences continues to be a priority. Over the past year, we've made strides in our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) by actively enhancing our awareness and comprehension of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and rights.

Through investments in cultural awareness training and educational initiatives for our staff, we've embarked on a journey to deepen our understanding of the unique challenges and disparities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face. Our aim is to foster an environment of cultural sensitivity, respect, and dignity.

Forging new connections

Collaboration, a fundamental element of innovation, played a prominent role in our endeavours this year.

We've been fortunate to establish new and meaningful connections with the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai in New York, led by the visionary Dr. David Putrino, the Director of Rehabilitation Innovation. Dr. Putrino and his team are renowned for their pioneering work in the realm of rehabilitation and disability, making them a hub of innovation.

Through reciprocal visits, we've cultivated a culture of knowledge exchange, and it was our pleasure to host Dr. Putrino in March this year, where he delivered a series of engaging and insightful workshops to our teams.

United by a shared commitment to innovation in the fields of rehabilitation and disability, we eagerly look forward to further strengthening the bond between our two organisations.

Expanding our reach in Far North Queensland

We're gearing up for the opening of a brand-new allied health hub in Cairns – Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns – scheduled for July 2023. Recognising the increasing demand for high-quality allied health services in the Cairns region, this new hub is designed to cater to a diverse range of clients. It will offer comprehensive therapy programs and a wide array of services including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, exercise physiology, speech pathology, psychology, and behavioural support.

Our aim is to establish ourselves as the foremost destination for rehabilitation and disability services, elevating the standard of care in the region.

Supported accommodation boost

Ensuring greater choice and control for people with disability lies at the heart of what we do, and this year, we took significant steps to expand our network of supported independent living homes.

We acquired a new four-bedroom home in Atherton in Queensland and partnered with Good Housing, a dedicated provider of disability accommodation, to offer support to clients in Dee Why in New South Wales.

Everyone has the right to live with dignity, and we are proud that we can offer support to even more people through the expansion of our specialist disability accommodation services.



Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, and Mr. Dennis Wilson, with Royal Rehab Group Chairman and CEO.

Congratulations

We congratulate our colleague, Jane Spring AM, for her appointment as a member of the Order of Australia in this year's King's Birthday Honours List. This is terrific recognition of her high-profile advocacy for people with disability.

Special thanks

To our patrons, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, and Mr. Dennis Wilson, as well as our valued partners and donors – your unwavering support and exceptional generosity fuel our determination and help drive our success.

We extend heartfelt gratitude to our customers – your trust in us motivates our continuous efforts to provide exceptional care and services that truly make a difference.

To our fantastic staff, your compassion and dedication form the heart of our achievements. Your hard work has enabled us to accomplish so much and provide exceptional care. With exciting projects ahead, we're eager to see what we can achieve together next year.

Tony Staveley AM
Chairman

Matthew Mackay
Chief Executive Officer



“ The greatest gift you can give yourself is the freedom to be who you truly are. ”

Anonymous

Breakthru client, Joshua, having a playful time, monkeying around.

01

Highlights

In this section, we invite you to join us in celebrating the **milestones we've reached**, the challenges we've overcome, and the strides we've made towards our organisational goals. These achievements serve as a testament to the dedication and hard work of our people and our unwavering commitment to excellence. Let's dive into the highlights of a year filled with success and promise for the future.

Devising a comprehensive brand map

Establishing a framework for the future

In line with our commitment to continuously expand our innovative disability and rehabilitation services, Royal Rehab is undergoing a transformative period through strategic acquisitions and mergers, while continuously seeking new opportunities.

Recognising the need for our branding to keep pace with our evolving organisation, we identified misalignment between our visual representation, naming structure, and brand architecture, with our overarching objectives. This discrepancy posed several hurdles that could ultimately hinder our pursuit of sustainable growth.

To address this misalignment, we devised a comprehensive brand map by segmenting our services based on common customer needs and characteristics, with a view to achieving the following through our branding efforts:

Enhancing the relevance and value delivered to each customer

Efficiently reaching, engaging, and attracting customers

Cultivating stronger and more meaningful relationships

Establishing enduring and robust brands for the long term

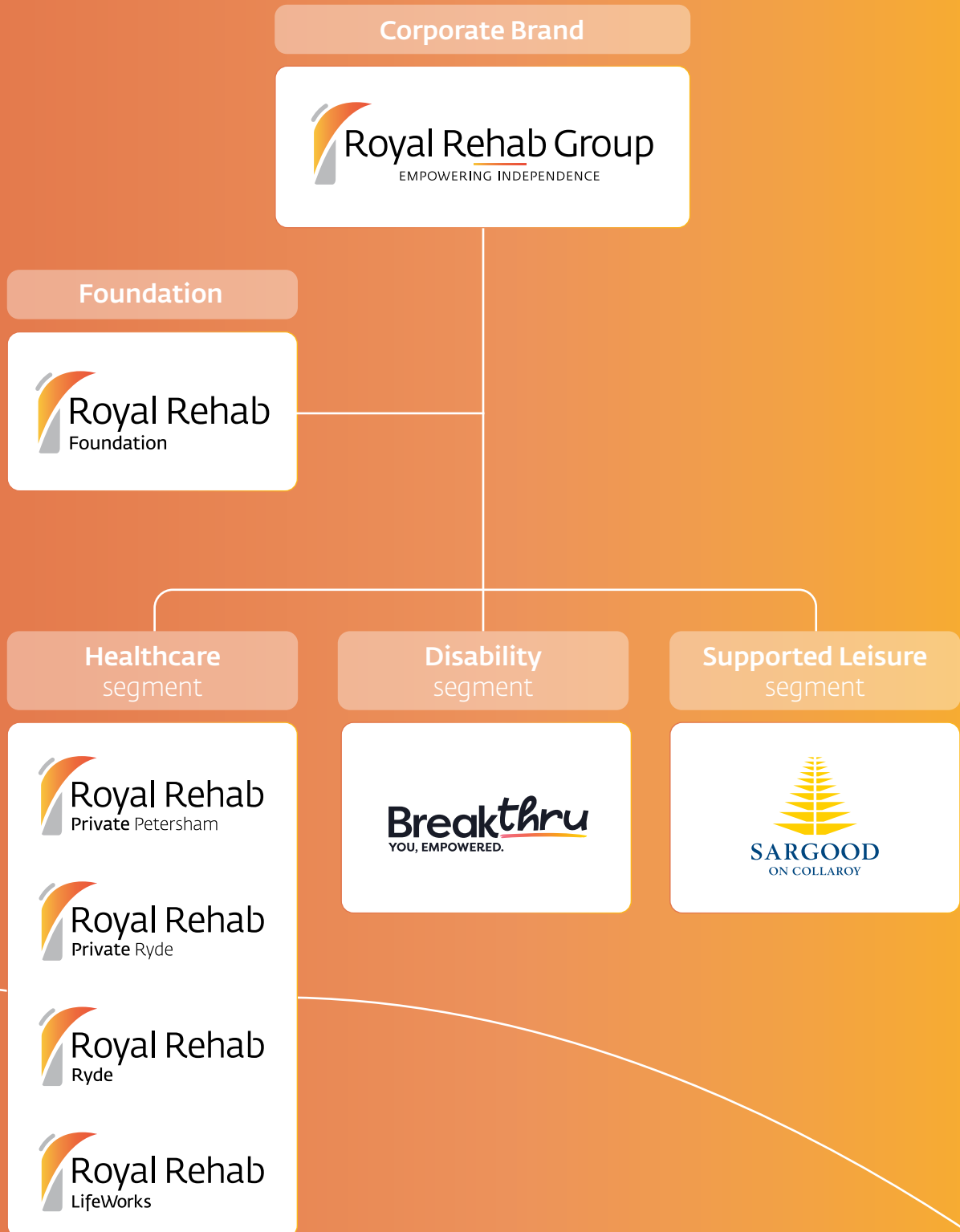
Through this approach, we segmented our services into three distinct categories: Healthcare, Disability, and Supported Leisure, with Royal Rehab serving as our Healthcare brand, and Breakthru becoming the dedicated Disability brand.

In keeping with our strategic brand map (page 11), in February 2023 we successfully rebranded MetroRehab as Royal Rehab Private Petersham. We also rebranded Breakthru's allied health services to Royal Rehab LifeWorks. Looking ahead to the next financial year,

we plan to rebrand Royal Rehab's disability services under the banner of Breakthru, while simultaneously rebranding Club Sargood as Royal Rehab LifeWorks.

All our brands will receive the endorsement of a corporate brand, namely the Royal Rehab Group. This corporate brand will play a vital role in establishing a unified ethos for our organisation, reflecting our unwavering dedication to our vision of creating a world without limits for individuals with disability, illness, and injury.

Our brand map



Driving operational enhancements

Streamlining systems for enhanced efficiency and growth

Our ongoing efforts to improve and consolidate our key information systems are bringing us closer to our objective of replacing legacy systems with modern, cloud-based solutions. This strategic initiative is aimed at optimising our operations, enhancing customer and staff experience, and fostering growth.

As part of this continuous process, we have initiated the implementation of our new Customer Relationship Management System (CRM), which has already been adopted by several business units in a phased manner. The CRM serves as a centralised hub for managing the customer journey, starting from the initial enquiry, all the way through to onboarding. It helps us improve our operations by streamlining the client onboarding process, while enhancing visibility of crucial customer data. We anticipate that as we continue to use the CRM, it will enable us to gather valuable customer insights, granting us the capacity to anticipate customer behaviour and make informed decisions to improve the overall customer experience.

In addition, we're making significant headway in consolidating our Payroll and HR systems into a unified platform, and we anticipate completing this transition by FY23/24. This integration will bring about further improvements in efficiency and effectiveness within our organisation, providing our teams with seamless access to fast data and a wealth of information, enabling them to make well-informed decisions.

By enhancing our systems, we are continuously bolstering our business performance to support our vision and our growth aspirations.

Driving excellence in quality and safety

Strengthening governance and reinforcing continuous improvement

A commitment to quality and safety is deeply ingrained in our organisation, underpinned by a robust clinical governance framework and a focus on continuous improvement. This framework, implemented across various settings, serves as the cornerstone for providing safer and superior care to our customers.

Throughout this year, we introduced several initiatives aimed at strengthening our clinical governance systems and processes. We established an online clinical governance knowledge and resource hub for our staff, which provides essential information and key insights into aspects of clinical governance such as safety, quality enhancement, governance, risk management, environmental and social responsibility, and customer experience.

Quality and Safety Walkarounds were introduced in April 2023 and have been a collaborative effort involving the Quality Team (the Executive Team and Board) as well as leaders, managers, and quality leads from across the organisation. These *Walkarounds* involve actively engaging with frontline staff, customers, and their families to identify risks and areas for improvement,

and to gain valuable insights into the challenges faced in delivering high-quality care.

The *Walkarounds* have received widespread support from frontline staff and leaders alike, yielding benefits such as the early identification of emerging risks and areas of concern, as well as shifting safety conversations from reactive to proactive.

An innovative cloud-based incident and policy management system, DatixCloudIQ, is also nearing completion, with a scheduled launch in March 2024. This new software is designed to support healthcare and human services teams to proactively prevent incidents. Incorporating multiple modules, the software aims to drive service improvements and identify positive changes that will elevate customer safety and staff wellbeing.

These new initiatives collectively reinforce our dedication to continuous improvement, **further securing customer safety, experience, and outcomes.**

Revolutionising rehabilitation

The Advanced Technology Centre

On July 1, 2022, Royal Rehab marked a momentous occasion with the official opening of our purpose-built Advanced Technology Centre in Ryde. Declared open by our patrons Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, and Mr Dennis Wilson, the facility is home to over 25 groundbreaking pieces of advanced technology, setting a precedent in Australia. Among these devices are robotic exoskeletons, body weight support systems, upper limb robotics, communication systems, and virtual reality technologies – some of which are a first in Australia. By investing in these advancements, we continue to solidify our position as an innovator in the fields of rehabilitation and disability.

Fast forward 12 months, and our new Advanced Technology Centre has already made an impact on the therapy outcomes of many of our clients. By seamlessly integrating cutting-edge devices with traditional therapies, our clinicians aim to deliver focused and motivating exercises to a wide range of patients and clients, including those recovering from stroke, or living with a neurological condition such as brain or spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease, or Parkinson's disease, just to name a few.

Recognising how important repetition is in therapy, especially following neurological injuries or illnesses, our cutting-edge devices are revolutionising how clients get involved. These devices turn repetitive exercises into engaging and motivating activities that can boost motor function, strength, and coordination, with the ultimate goal of promoting greater independence and quality of life.

After a year of learning and building upon valuable insights, our clinicians continue to innovate. By using advanced technology in creative ways, and finding new and smart methods to use these devices, including combining devices, our clinicians continue to push boundaries in the pursuit of better outcomes.

In May 2023, our clinicians shared their learnings with 28 colleagues and clinicians from various clinics and hospitals across New South Wales through a clinical workshop. The workshop showcased advanced technology products from the Hocoma and Tyromotion ranges and featured real-life case studies from Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde.

Going beyond theoretical discussions, the workshop offered hands-on practical sessions that allowed participants to directly engage with the advanced technologies. The response from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive, with Jessica Beaman, an occupational therapist at Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde, describing it as a “light bulb moment” for many clinicians who recognised the collaborative potential and value of utilising our Advanced Technology Centre as a resource for their patients’ therapies.

With the success of this workshop laying the groundwork for future initiatives, we are dedicated to promoting ongoing knowledge exchange and collaboration, empowering clinicians to explore the frontiers of technology-assisted therapy. Our ultimate goal is to drive innovation and improve patient and client outcomes across the rehabilitation and disability sectors.



Above: The official opening of Royal Rehab's Advanced Technology Centre in Ryde, showcasing a selection of our cutting-edge technological innovations.

Making history

The Central Coast's first ever fully inclusive and accessible café

Breaking Grounds, the first fully inclusive and accessible café on the Central Coast, launched in February 2023, demonstrates Royal Rehab's commitment to fostering inclusivity and accessibility.

The introduction of Breaking Grounds also coincides with the Central Coast Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan, which seeks to promote comprehensive community inclusion for individuals with disability, ensuring equal opportunities for all.

The café is thoughtfully designed to create a welcoming atmosphere that caters to all, with inclusive features seamlessly incorporated into the design. These elements include adjustable seating, user-friendly utensils, quiet spaces and easy-access entrances.

Breaking Grounds café also provides employment and training opportunities for people with disability, including those facing challenges such as mental health, physical health, long-term unemployment, unmet educational goals, and homelessness. The first batch of students recently completed nationally accredited units at the café as part of the Certificate II in Workplace Skills, funded by the NSW Department of Education and Training's Summer

Skills Program.

Plans are also in the pipeline to deliver training in customer service and hospitality, offering potential work experience and employment opportunities at Breaking Grounds.

In addition to providing employment and training opportunities for people with disability, we believe that initiatives like Breaking Grounds can also help resolve the issue of hospitality staff shortages on the Central Coast. People with disability face high levels of unemployment, and we encourage local businesses to open their minds to employing someone with a disability. A diverse workforce is a strong workforce.

With high-quality, locally sourced food and excellent coffee, Breaking Grounds has quickly become a favourite destination among locals. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive as the café continues to welcome people of all abilities to its inclusive space.



Above: The launch event of Breaking Grounds.

A commitment to Western NSW

Breakthru Dubbo hub receives a significant investment

The commitment to improving access to high-quality services for individuals with disability in regional areas of Australia served as the driving force behind the significant upgrade of our Dubbo hub, which was ceremoniously relaunched in March of this year.



Above: The relaunch event of the Dubbo hub, including the newly renovated kitchen and a welcoming common space.

The renovation was purposeful, with the clear goal of transforming the hub into a more inclusive and accessible space. We introduced various features to achieve this, including automatic doors, wheelchair-friendly kitchen facilities, new appliances, accessible bathroom fixtures, and height-adjustable furniture throughout. These changes have completely transformed the space.

In addition to enhancing the physical environment, we recognised the importance of equipping our clients with essential tools to improve their IT skills to assist them in finding employment opportunities. As a result, we made a substantial investment in new computers and high-

speed internet.

The response from the Dubbo community has been overwhelmingly positive. One of our longstanding clients, Sarah, expressed her appreciation for the improvements, saying, "The entire space feels fresh and new, and there's plenty of room to move around. I'm excited to catch up with my friends in our new hub."

Our investment in Dubbo is just one example of how we are fulfilling our vision of creating a world without limits for individuals with disability, as we strive to empower them in their daily lives.

Expanding our reach

Royal Rehab LifeWorks extends services to Far North Queensland

Following the successful launch of Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde in July 2022, and as part of our strategy to expand Royal Rehab LifeWorks' allied health footprint, we are excited to be progressing our plans to extend our services to Cairns.

Driven by the community's need for excellent allied health services, our purpose-built hub will serve a diverse clientele with a variety of needs. We will offer a range of services such as speech therapy, physiotherapy, exercise physiology, psychology, behaviour support, and occupational therapy, conveniently accessible either at the hub or within the community.

In addition to these main services, we will also provide extra support for our clients, including NDIS report writing, home modifications, out-of-hospital rehabilitation, group programs, and general strength and conditioning programs, among other offerings.

In keeping with our commitment for innovation, we will incorporate specialised equipment and therapeutic expertise that exceeds the current offerings in Cairns and the surrounding regional communities. In addition,

we will capitalise on the relationships developed within the region by absorbing the existing Breakthru allied health team under the Royal Rehab LifeWorks banner.

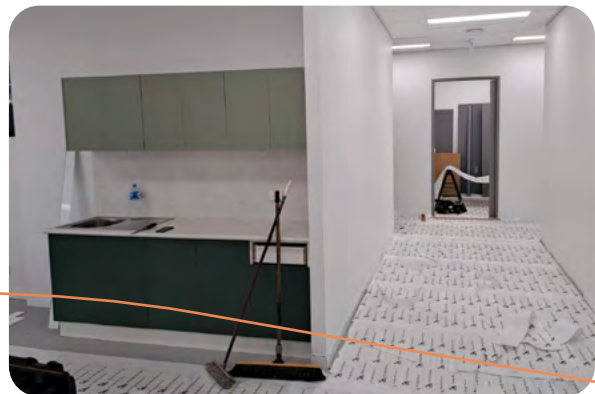
Our hub is currently undergoing site preparations and will feature versatile functional spaces, including individual consultation rooms, a waiting/reception area, group rooms, and a gym and technology space.

With plans to open in July 2023, we are confident that Royal Rehab LifeWorks will become the premier destination for high-quality allied health services in the region. This expansion also presents the blueprint for establishing community-based service offerings throughout the eastern states of Australia.

We are thrilled about the possibilities that this expansion presents and are eager to serve the Cairns community and beyond.



Above: Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns hub under construction.



“The best way to
predict your future
is to create it.”

Abraham Lincoln



Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns

Rydalmere clients, Cammie and Edwina, having a relaxed music session.



Celebrating a vibrant social space

Rydalmere community hub

Following its opening in August 2022, our brand-new community hub in Rydalmere has been busy delivering a wide range of programs and activities, providing a much-needed social hub for our clients.

The hub's convenient location near the Parramatta River has introduced exciting opportunities for group outings, with ferry excursions along the river becoming popular.

Additionally, our recent collaboration with the Vikings Sports Club has expanded our range of social activities, while Breakthru's School Leaver Employment Supports program has tapped into local business networks to organise industry visits, offering our clients valuable exposure to diverse workplace environments.

In an organisational first, disability services staff from both Breakthru and Royal Rehab are now co-located within the

new hub, which has enhanced collaboration and resulted in more streamlined services for our clients.

We're thrilled to witness our hub truly making a positive impact by empowering individuals, fostering connections, and cultivating a vibrant and inclusive community. Looking ahead to FY23/24, we eagerly anticipate expanding our services to offer even more opportunities for everyone involved.

Enhancing knowledge and capability to advance client outcomes

A successful training pilot by Breakthru College

Our disability support teams play a vital role in providing compassionate care and support to our clients, empowering them to lead fulfilling lives and attain greater independence.

To uphold our commitment to providing excellent care and services for our clients, we understand the importance of continuous staff training and development. It plays a crucial role in enhancing staff skills, quality, and motivation.

As part of our efforts, we launched a 13 week training pilot for 15 staff members at our Dubbo and Coonabarabran sites, with the following objectives:

- Achieve high course completion rates; a critical performance indicator.
- Create a replicable model.
- Evaluate the operational viability for our organisation.

During the 13 weeks, commencing in October 2022, we conducted comprehensive training sessions delivered by our fully accredited Registered Training Organisation, Breakthru College, allowing us to tailor the education content and approach to meet the needs of our workforce. The sessions covered a variety of topics, such as personal care, safety, infection control, and working with a diverse client base, addressing the unique needs to empower independence.

The success of the pilot relied on several key factors. Firstly, securing funding from the New South Wales Department of Education's Smart and Skilled program was paramount, and Breakthru College's high-performance ranking as a Registered Training Organisation made this possible. Secondly, we provided compensation to our staff for their time and made sure they could attend the training in person during regular business hours. To facilitate this, we organised other staff members to cover their duties, thus minimising any disruptions to our operations.

Thanks to these efforts, all participants completed the training program and provided extremely positive feedback. Additionally, they have continued to apply what they learned in the workplace, leading to a more consistent approach to person-centred care.

Overall, the success of the pilot program was a testament to the importance of securing funding, providing flexible training options, and supporting staff to participate in training without impacting daily operations.

Given the success of the pilot and our learnings, we have expanded training to additional support workers, providing Certificate III and Certificate IV training in Disability.



Above: Course participants from Dubbo and Coonabarabran.

A year of transformation and exciting new services ahead

Royal Rehab Private Petersham

During the financial year 22/23, our private hospital in Petersham, formerly known as Metrorehab Hospital, underwent significant improvements and service enhancements. These positive changes coincided with the appointment of a new General Manager and Director of Clinical Services.

To create a fresh and vibrant atmosphere, the hospital underwent renovations, including painting and new carpeting throughout the facility. These upgrades were carried out in conjunction with the hospital's rebranding and name change. Our hospital is now known as Royal Rehab Private Petersham, which is part of a strategic realignment following the merger between MetroRehab and Royal Rehab in 2019. This alignment has brought together our staff, operations, vision, and strategy.

In March 2023, the two-year collaboration between Sydney Local Health District and Royal Rehab Private Petersham in response to the COVID-19 pandemic reached a successful conclusion. Throughout this period, our hospital played a pivotal role in supporting the district's pandemic response efforts. We admitted and managed nearly 300 public patients during both the FY21/22 and FY22/23 periods. This collaborative effort was crucial in ensuring the highest quality care for patients in the region, considering the global healthcare challenges at the time. The successful conclusion of this partnership stands as a testament to the dedication and hard work of both organisations in combating the COVID-19 pandemic.



Above: Royal Rehab Private Petersham nursing team.



“Self-reliance is the only road to true freedom, and being one’s own person is its ultimate reward.”

Patricia Sampson

Royal Rehab Private Petersham patient, Geraldine, pictured with her physiotherapist, Ruth Lambert.



A short-term accommodation room at Royal Rehab Private Petersham.

Ensuring peace of mind and wellbeing

Introducing exceptional short-term accommodation and respite services at Royal Rehab Private Petersham

In June 2023, Royal Rehab Private Petersham was thrilled to announce the introduction of a new service offering short-term accommodation and respite care. The foremost priority with this service is to ensure a safe and high-quality level of care and support.

Participants will enjoy comfortable accommodation and high-quality care, creating a pleasant experience during their stay.

Additionally, our expert allied health team will be on-site to provide a range of allied health services, including

physiotherapy, occupational therapy, exercise physiology and hydrotherapy.

This comprehensive approach ensures that clients have access to specialised care that meets their individual needs.

Broadening horizons

Sargood on Collaroy engaging roadshows

To enhance our positive impact and reach a wider audience, Sargood on Collaroy embarked on roadshows to Tamworth and Orange this financial year. The objective was two-fold: forge connections with private allied health clinics and clinicians, and showcase Sargood's comprehensive range of services to individuals living with spinal cord injuries (SCI).

Equipped with kayaks and bikes, our team offered those in rural communities living with SCI and local clinicians, an immersive full-day experience of exhilarating recreational activities, followed by a community barbeque. Over 60 clinicians, along with their clients with SCI and their families, participated, fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange and a strong sense of camaraderie and community-building. The overwhelming feedback from both clinicians and clients was extremely positive, resulting in the formation of new peer-to-peer networks and a significant outcome: ten new guest bookings for Sargood.

Looking ahead to FY23/24, our team will be taking our roadshows to more regional centres, including

Newcastle, Coffs Harbour, and Dubbo, as well as venturing even further afield and partnering with the Spinal Outreach Service at the Australian and New Zealand Spinal Cord Society Conference (ANZCOS) in Adelaide in November 2023. Outside of the conference, the team will also visit Adelaide-based rehabilitation facilities to raise awareness about our service offerings.

These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to expanding our positive impact and fostering a supportive community for people with SCI. Through engaging roadshows and networking, we will continue to forge connections, facilitate knowledge sharing, and provide life-enriching experiences for people with spinal cord injuries.



Sargood on Collaroy's regional roadshows.



Creating workplace pathways

An innovative paid internship program

Navigating the journey of returning to or seeking employment after experiencing a spinal cord injury can be challenging. To address some of these obstacles, Sargood on Collaroy introduced an innovative paid internship program, where individuals with spinal cord injuries can gain invaluable work experience in a supportive and inclusive environment. Launched in February 2023, the 12-week internship program, generously funded by the Sargood Foundation, has already welcomed its first intern, 20-year-old Alex Richter.



Previously, Alex had only worked casually on campus while pursuing his degree in Human Sciences. However, upon discovering the internship advertisement, he was motivated to act.

"I spent five months in the spinal cord injury unit at Royal Rehab Ryde and I've visited Sargood many times, both as a guest and a regular gym user," says Alex. "I thought an internship there would be a great chance to gain full-time work experience."

Throughout his internship, Alex actively contributed across various areas, including administration, guest interaction, and assistance with the weekly activities program.

Fuelled by his passion for gaming, Alex also developed a project focused on creating an adaptive gaming course that enables participants to explore a range of adaptive video gaming controllers.

Alex explains the importance of the course, stating, "There are countless controller options available, making it challenging to identify the most suitable one. Controllers can be quite expensive if you were to try them all individually, so the course will allow people to experiment with different controllers, enabling them to identify the equipment that best suits their needs, before making a purchase."

Scheduled for later this year, Alex is planning to lead the three-day course, offering a wide range of controller options for trial; from chin-activated controllers to those catering to full hand function and everything in between. Alex emphasises that the selected controllers will allow for "almost unlimited combinations," allowing participants to mix and match.

Gamers from within the spinal cord injury community with their own setups are also encouraged to attend. Alex believes that the course duration over three days will provide time for participants to explore various setups, interact with one another, learn collaboratively, and try different approaches.

Alex has also been actively collaborating with one of Sargood's occupational therapists, Dave Simpson, to pioneer and conduct experimental trials with adapted control systems for flying drones. Together, they have developed a ground-breaking system that allows people with limited or no hand function to operate drones – a technology that, to their knowledge,

has not been developed previously. Dave Simpson says that having Alex trial various system configurations has been "incredibly valuable."

Through Alex's feedback, they have been able to refine and enhance the system, and the initial results have shown great promise.

For Alex, the internship experience has been transformative, equipping him with new skills and valuable real-life work experience. Additionally, it has provided him with insights into the realities of working, which are particularly significant for someone with a spinal cord injury. Alex reflects on the internship, saying, "I had to figure out the physical aspects of working – waking up in the mornings, getting to work and completing a full day, using computers, and returning home at the end of the day. It was an opportunity to experiment with, and understand this whole daily routine, which is a crucial part of the internship experience."

Alex also recognises the value that the internship program brings to Sargood on Collaroy. "I genuinely enjoyed chatting with the guests and sharing my experiences and ideas. I think people get a lot out of that as well – coming from someone with lived experience. Having that perspective in the workplace is really valuable."

Clinical Operations Manager Jessica Allen agrees, "Alex has the ability to confidently take on a challenge and follow through with exceptional delivery, and the mutual learning among his peers has been amazing."

Building on this success, and thanks to the wonderful support from the Sargood Foundation, a second internship is already in the pipeline and is scheduled to commence in mid-July 2023.



Alex collaborating with his occupational therapist, Dave Simpson, to experiment with adapted control systems.

Enhancing independence

Colostomy – a viable option for bowel care

At Sargood on Collaroy, nurses Rita Cusmiani and Stephanie Henzlik have firsthand experience with the time-consuming and complex nature of bowel care routines for individuals living with spinal cord injury (SCI). “We are attuned to guests struggling with their bowel care,” Rita shares. “It impacts their ability to participate in activities and overall quality of life.”



Nurses, Stephanie and Rita.

Through their interactions, Rita and Stephanie have seen guests with a colostomy, a procedure to manage a neurogenic bowel, experience the most significant improvements in their quality of life. Rita explains, “A colostomy can significantly enhance independence for those facing bowel challenges. It reduces the time spent on bowel care from up to 1.5 hours, often with the assistance of a carer, to just 5 to 10 minutes.

Over a lifetime, these time savings are remarkable, allowing people with SCI to devote more time to activities they enjoy.”

Seeking to dispel myths and taboos surrounding colostomies, Rita and Stephanie decided to capture the experiences of five guests with a colostomy who regularly stay at Sargood. Their goal was to present colostomy as a viable option earlier in the treatment journey. “Colostomy is often portrayed as a last resort,” Rita says, “but we know it can significantly improve the quality of life for those struggling with their bowels. If we can improve quality of life, why not present it as a viable option sooner?”

By sharing the lived experiences of colostomy users through film, Rita and Stephanie have made a powerful impact. “Seeing someone similar to you is incredibly influential,” says Rita. “It opens up discussions and helps people realise there’s a valid option for them. Capturing these voices was essential.”

To further support their work, Rita and Stephanie created a discussion paper titled *Colostomy – It’s a No Brainer*, which they presented alongside the video at the Spinal Injuries Nurses Association conference in Sydney.

The presentation was well-received, sparking discussions about the right time to approach colostomy as an option for people with SCI, as well as the importance of peer support for those considering this choice.

The success of the presentation has led to an invitation for Rita to speak at the upcoming Australia and New Zealand Spinal Cord Society Conference (ANZSCoS) in November 2023.

Rita and Stephanie are deeply committed to advancing their mission to advocate for colostomy as a legitimate method of bowel care management, empowering a broader range of individuals with SCI to achieve enhanced independence and a greater quality of life.

A photograph showing two men from behind, sitting in wheelchairs and walking along a wooden boardwalk. The man on the left is wearing a white tank top, and the man on the right is wearing a brown t-shirt. They are surrounded by lush greenery, including large trees with thick branches and dense bushes. The scene is captured during the golden hour, with warm sunlight filtering through the trees.

“You have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

Harriet Tubman

Guests at Sargood on Collaroy heading to the beach.

Making a pledge for a greener future

Sustainable practices for a healthier planet

While the healthcare industry in Australia plays a critical role in the health and wellbeing of our community, it is also responsible for approximately 7% of the country's carbon footprint.

As a leading healthcare and disability service provider, we recognise that our operations have an impact on the environment. We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and promoting sustainable practices across our organisation.

A key priority is cutting down on waste and identifying ways to decrease energy consumption or tap into renewable energy sources. By using less energy and water, we're taking steps to lessen our environmental footprint and play a part in making our planet healthier.



A worm tunnel

Over the past 12 months we have undertaken a number of initiatives to improve our environmental practices including:

Installing underground worm tunnels to help reduce the volume of food waste going to landfill and growing the volume of worms, with more worm tunnels to be installed over the next 24 months across different sites.

Identifying opportunities for renewable energy use and solar panel installations.

Identifying opportunities to remove plastic from the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

Undertaking a group-wide staff survey to gather feedback from team members about where they would like to see the organisation prioritise environmental issues.

Investigating electric vehicles and hybrid solutions for future fleet vehicles.

Undertaking a scope and review of appropriate reporting systems and organisational memberships to support our environmental strategy.

We firmly believe that a thriving environment is crucial for the overall wellbeing of our customers, our team, and the larger community. Recognising the importance of enhancing our sustainability, we acknowledge that this is a

journey of continuous improvement. Our commitment to safeguarding and nurturing our environment for present and future generations is strong, and we're dedicated to consistently refining our environmental efforts.

Addressing modern slavery

Proactive measures to uphold human rights

Modern slavery, a widespread human rights issue that affects millions globally, often remains hidden. However, organisations have the power to make a significant impact by actively managing and reporting on the risks of modern slavery within their operations and supply chains.

Taking a firm stance, Royal Rehab submitted our inaugural Modern Slavery Statement in December 2022, demonstrating our commitment to joining the international effort to combat this issue.

At our core, we deeply value and prioritise the upholding of human rights and are dedicated to working collaboratively with others to put an end to modern slavery. Our goal is to foster an environment where every individual is treated with dignity and respect, free from exploitation.

Over the next three years, we will fortify our governance, due diligence, risk management, and compliance processes across all aspects of our operations. This includes the development of a comprehensive procurement plan that focuses on eradicating modern slavery within our network of partners and suppliers.

With determination and cooperation, we aim to make a tangible difference in the fight against modern slavery and contribute to a world where fundamental human rights are safeguarded for all.

Modern Slavery
Statement
December 2022

Royal Rehab Group
Sustaining Communities

Breakthru staff and clients enjoying a music session in the park.

Building cultural understanding

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

Creating a safe and inclusive environment for Indigenous Australians, where cultural differences are respected, improves the quality and accessibility of services. To support this, we must ensure we acknowledge and respect Indigenous cultural values, strengths, and differences, and eliminate issues of racism and inequity.

Throughout the first year of our inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), our primary focus has been on deepening our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through dedicated cultural learning initiatives. This journey has taken various forms, including the introduction of comprehensive cultural awareness training and educational programs. We have also been proactive in identifying opportunities to enhance our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access our services.

In partnership with the NSW Health Northern Sydney Aboriginal Liaison Office, our team took part in the incredibly valuable *Respecting the Difference* cultural awareness training. This training aims to empower healthcare professionals by helping them recognise and

comprehend the specific challenges and disparities faced by Aboriginal people in accessing healthcare. By providing valuable insights into why some Aboriginal individuals may feel uneasy when interacting with healthcare providers, the training has proven to be enlightening.

The feedback received from our staff who participated in this training has been overwhelmingly positive, prompting us to plan more sessions in the coming financial year. This demonstrates our commitment to continuously enhancing our understanding and cultural competence, ultimately ensuring that we provide the best possible care and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

We are also proud to announce our investment in an online platform called *Your Mob Learning* to enhance Indigenous cultural awareness and learning among our employees.

Launched during National Reconciliation Week, this platform offers a wide array of resources that facilitate effective engagement with Indigenous Australians.

A standout feature of the platform is the Indigenous Cultural Awareness Foundations Course 2023. The comprehensive five-part course aims to elevate awareness of Indigenous history and culture, provide guidance on appropriate engagement with Indigenous individuals in the workplace, and foster a deeper understanding of how we can contribute to reconciliation within our work environment and the broader community.

By equipping our employees with the cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to engage respectfully and meaningfully with Indigenous communities, we aim to break down cultural barriers, fostering a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

We aim to break down cultural barriers, fostering a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Above: Various Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremonies across our organisation.

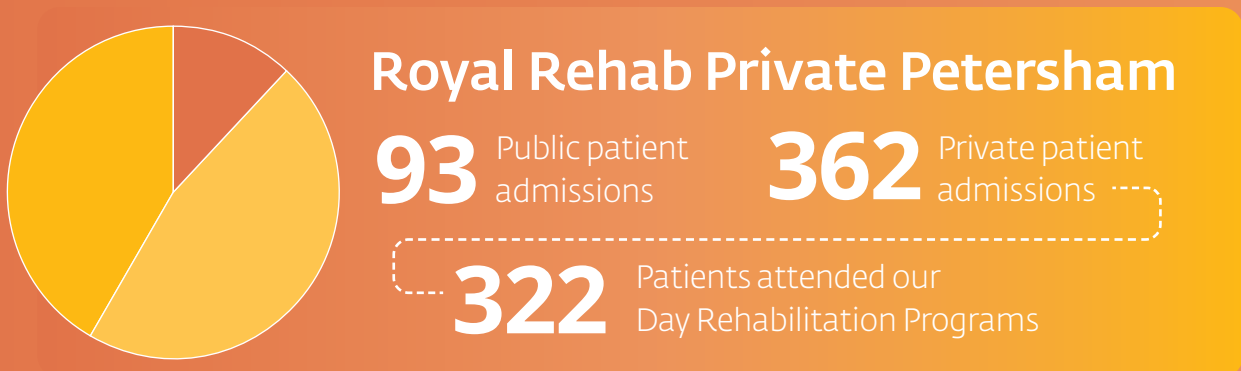
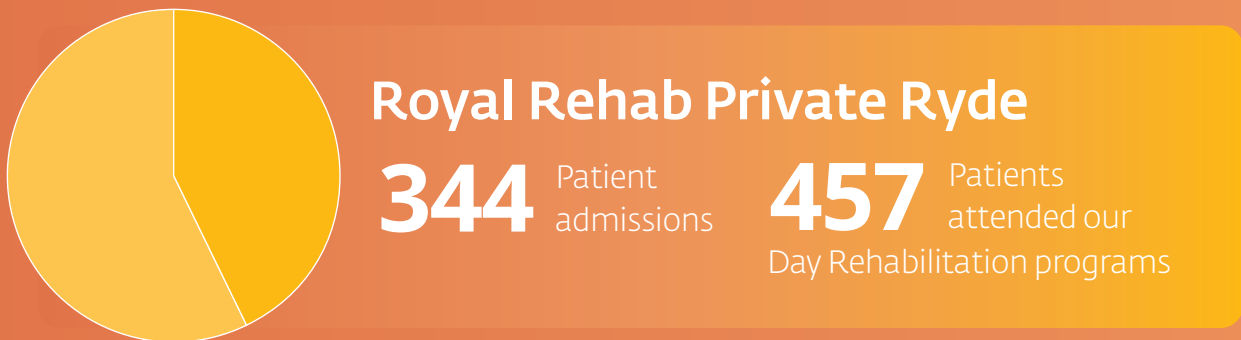
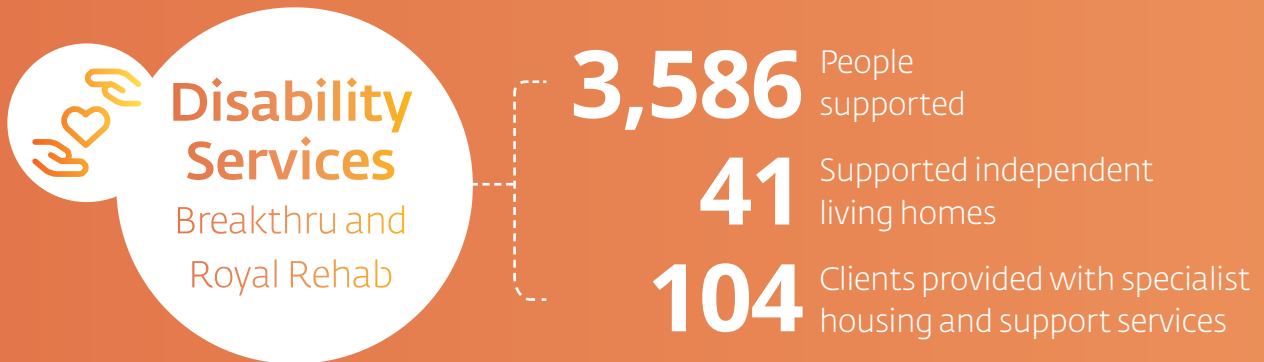
At our Ryde campus, we are also actively implementing the *My Rehab My Journey Gadjigadji* project, developed by the Agency for Clinical Innovation. The word “Gadjigadji” translates to “regrowth” in the Gamilaraay language, and the project aims to enhance the experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by providing healthcare services with the necessary resources and tools to create culturally safe environments.

As part of this initiative, we organised three *Lunch and Learn* sessions where our staff had the opportunity to learn directly from the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals throughout their healthcare journeys. These sessions not only provided valuable insights but also offered training in therapeutic yarning and introduced practical tools that can be implemented in our units and services.

The Gadjigadji team is currently working diligently behind the scenes to implement long-term initiatives and strategies. This includes fostering community engagement and integrating Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing, and being within our services at Ryde.

In our commitment to promoting cultural competency and fostering culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we will extend our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for an additional 12 months. Our main focus continues to be addressing disparities and ensuring that our Indigenous patients and customers receive the necessary care and support for healthier lives. By extending our Reflect RAP, we reaffirm our dedication to inclusive and equitable experiences.

FY22/23 at a glance



Team



Total number of employees

1,507

Royal Rehab Foundation

Received

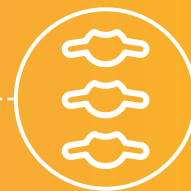
\$508,323

from

341 donors and assisted hundreds of patients and customers



Royal Rehab Ryde Public Services



Brain Injury Unit

48 Patient admissions

Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation

75 Patients supported

Brain Injury Outpatient Clinic

116 Patients provided with specialist brain injury outpatient services



Spinal Cord Injury Unit

53 Patient admissions

Spinal Outreach Service

292 People provided with spinal outreach services

Spinal Injury Community Rehabilitation

563 Patients provided with community rehabilitation services

INVOC

78 Patients provided with vocational support services

Spinal Injury Outpatient Clinic

57 Patients provided with specialist spinal cord injury outpatient services



“You are never alone when you are comfortable with who you are.”

Anonymous



Breakthru client, Annie, and staff member, Emma, engaging in a friendly competition while playing Uno.

02

Our Services

The Royal Rehab Group provides a **wide array of rehabilitation and disability services.** In this section, you'll find our primary service categories and associated brands.

Breakthru

Breakthru offers a wide range of disability services in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

Services include:

- **Support Coordination:** Assistance to help participants understand their NDIS plan, connect with service providers, and develop the skills to manage their supports more independently.
- **Specialist Support Coordination:** Highly specialised support coordination services for participants with complex needs.
- **Social and Community Participation:** Support to help participants meet new people, explore new activities, and regularly participate in the community.
- **Supported Independent Living (SIL):** Assistance with daily living needs like personal care and cooking, ensuring participants can live comfortably and independently in their homes.
- **Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA):** Support in the form of specially designed housing for individuals with high support needs.
- **Respite & Short-Term Accommodation (STA):** Respite assistance for participants who want to live away from home for a brief period.
- **Psychosocial Recovery Coach:** Specialised assistance provided by someone with lived experience to help individuals with psychosocial disability achieve their goals and take greater control of their lives.
- **School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES):** Specialised employment support for individuals about to leave high school or recent graduates.
- **Finding & Keeping a Job:** Tailored job-seeking support under the NDIS, including on-the-job assistance, to help participants secure and maintain employment.
- **Disability Employment Services (DES):** Tailored job-seeking services designed to assist individuals of working age in preparing for, finding, and maintaining employment in the open job market.
- **Family Mental Health Support Services:** Early intervention support for vulnerable families and children displaying early signs of, or at risk of developing, mental illness.

We also offer accredited and non-accredited training through Breakthru College, our Registered Training Organisation.





Breaking Grounds café

Breaking Grounds is more than just a café; it's a Central Coast destination that embodies inclusivity.

With accessibility as a core principle, Breaking Grounds café boasts adjustable benches, accessible cutlery, quiet spaces, and easy entryways seamlessly integrated into its design. This ensures an environment that caters to everyone, allowing patrons to savour high-quality, locally sourced food and coffee in a warm and inviting atmosphere.

What's more, by providing employment and training opportunities for individuals with disability, Breaking Grounds emphasises its commitment to being an inclusive space for all.

Royal Rehab **LifeWorks**

Royal Rehab LifeWorks provides a wide range of multidisciplinary allied health services across the eastern states of Australia.

At Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde, we specialise in neurological rehabilitation, harnessing the support of our Advanced technology Centre*. Meanwhile, our Cairns hub offers high-quality generalist allied health services. We also extend our services to Penrith, Brisbane, Townsville, and Melbourne, with a specific focus on behaviour support.

What sets us apart is our unique offerings, including sexuality services, which address the often-overlooked impact of sexual wellbeing and participation following illness or injury. Additionally, our commitment to innovation is evident through our investment in technology, ensuring we provide the best care possible to our clients.

*Our purpose-built Advanced Technology Centre in Ryde boasts 25 of the most advanced technology aids for rehabilitation, including robotic exoskeletons, body weight support systems, and virtual reality technologies. With these world-leading technologies, we provide Australians with unparalleled access to innovative solutions to help them achieve their rehabilitation and wellbeing goals.

Royal Rehab **Private Ryde**

Our private rehabilitation hospital in Ryde specialises in neurological conditions, including stroke, Parkinson's disease, brain injury, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, and more.

We provide both inpatient and outpatient treatments, including orthopaedic rehabilitation, reconditioning, and post-operative care.

Royal Rehab Private **Petersham**

Our private rehabilitation hospital in Petersham, offers both day and inpatient services, specialising in neurological, orthopaedic, reconditioning, cancer, and pain-management programs.

Recognised as an accredited rehabilitation teaching hospital with the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, our Visiting Medical Officers provide invaluable support to registrars attached to Royal Rehab Private Petersham.

Royal Rehab Ryde Public Services

Royal Rehab Ryde Public Services specialise in brain and spinal cord injuries as part of the NSW government-funded affiliated health network.

Our offerings encompass inpatient and community rehabilitation for brain injury (BICRT), as well inpatient and Spinal Outreach Service (SOS), which provides statewide support for those with spinal cord injuries, caregivers, and local clinicians across metropolitan Sydney and rural New South Wales.

Additionally, our specialised vocational rehabilitation program (InVoc) aids individuals in exploring opportunities in working, studying, and volunteering. We provide comprehensive support, including career exploration, planning, skills development, job-seeking strategies, return-to-work assistance, and assistive technology.

The Be Pain Smart Service, a statewide initiative funded by icare and hosted by Royal Rehab's BICRT team, is managed by the Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI). Its goal is to mitigate the impact of chronic pain on individuals with spinal cord or traumatic brain injuries through a multidisciplinary assessment and management approach.

Sargood on Collaroy

Sargood on Collaroy is an award-winning, fully accessible resort designed specifically for people with spinal cord injury, their families, and their carers.

Recognised as a global leader, our resort offers fully accessible and fun holidays as well as short-term accommodation, providing the care and equipment necessary to make each stay an enjoyable and supportive experience.

The resort is proudly operated by Royal Rehab and is a collaboration with icare and a private benefactor.





“Independence is not about making it on your own. It's about making it on your own terms.”

Anonymous

Royal Rehab Private Ryde
patient, Emma, with her
physiotherapist, Lesley
Hannah.

03

Our Customers

Every customer we support has their unique aspirations and goals, and their own story to share. Through our programs and services, we aim to **empower each person to unlock their full potential.**

In this section, we invite you to discover some of these inspiring stories.

Conquering challenges with Breakthru

Glenn's triumph

Glenn, a warm and positive individual, had faced challenges with his confidence – particularly when it came to meeting new people and navigating unfamiliar situations. With little knowledge of the job search process and no prior experience in paid employment, having only experienced volunteer work, Glenn reached out to Breakthru's Disability Employment Service (DES) in October 2022 for assistance in finding a job.

The Breakthru team set about working with Glenn, providing interview preparation support and techniques to boost his confidence.

Rod Freiberg, Breakthru's Employer Account Manager, describes Glenn as a young man with a thirst for learning. Once Glenn and the DES team felt confident in his readiness to embark on the interview process, they arranged his first interview with Belbaker Bus Charters.

"I had the privilege of assisting Glenn and accompanying him to his first interview," says Rod. "Glenn didn't say many words during the interview; he simply walked around with a smile and nod."

Despite his quiet demeanour, Glenn's enthusiasm shone through in everything he did, impressing the team at Belbaker Bus Charters so much that they hired him on the spot for a trial period. This allowed both Glenn and the company to make sure they were a good fit for each other. It had only taken Glenn a month to find a job since walking through the doors of Breakthru.

During Glenn's first few weeks at Belbaker, he received regular support from Kevin Green, an Employment Development Consultant from Breakthru. This support was invaluable for Glenn, boosting his confidence and helping him overcome any challenges he faced.

According to Adam Baker, the Managing Director of Belbaker Bus Charters, Glenn's smooth transition into paid employment was made possible through open and continuous communication between Belbaker, Breakthru, and Glenn himself. Adam expresses his gratitude, saying, "Breakthru has been amazing in terms of communication. They regularly reach out to check on Glenn's progress and offer support, although we rarely need it because he's excelling."

"A typical shift for Glenn involves cleaning the inside and outside of the buses," shares Aiden Lowe, the Supervisor at Belbaker. He adds, "It's truly remarkable to see how much joy this work brings him and the meticulous care he puts into it."

Glenn not only takes pride in his work but also enjoys the results of his efforts. He has quickly built strong bonds with his co-workers. It didn't take long for him to go from being a shy young man, to someone who actively engages in light-hearted banter with his colleagues.

Kevin Green, who has been there to witness Glenn's journey, finds immense fulfilment in seeing him learn new skills and adapt so beautifully to his paid employment. Kevin remarks, "It's truly amazing to see how something as simple as cleaning buses has positively transformed Glenn's life."

“It’s truly **remarkable** to see how much joy this work brings him and the meticulous care he puts into it.”

Kevin Green,
Breakthru Employment
Development Consultant

A young woman with brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark grey t-shirt and a black apron with "Breaking Grounds" written on it, is smiling and holding a black tray filled with bruschetta. The background shows a modern cafe interior with large green plants and other people.

Hannah, putting her newly acquired skills into action at the launch of Breaking Grounds café.

“I enjoy talking to customers and working in the café.
I really love it.”

Hannah

From shy beginnings to success

Hannah forges a bright future

In May 2022, 22-year-old Hannah reached out to Breakthru's Tuggerah office. Hannah had recently graduated from school and was spending most of her time at home drawing and being with her mother. She admits she had no idea how to go about finding a job.

With the help of Breakthru's Support Coordination and Capacity Building Community Services, Hannah received guidance in creating a NDIS plan tailored to her career aspirations and pursuit of independence. She also tapped into valuable resources such as occupational therapy and transportation, and made use of Breakthru's programs to improve her social skills and connect with her peers. "I've made new friends through these groups," says Hannah.

Kate Swain, Breakthru's NDIS Regional Manager, recalls, "Hannah was quite shy when she first started with us, but she's come out of her shell since then."

Participating in Breakthru's employment programs for school leavers equipped Hannah with essential job market skills, including travel training, problem-solving, resume writing, and interview preparation. Her exposure to various industries helped her refine her career aspirations, particularly in customer service. Kate notes, "Hannah's passion for communication and customer service really shines. She has a natural talent that sets her apart from others."

Taking her new skills a step further, Hannah enrolled in Breakthru College and completed three accredited customer service modules.

This accomplishment gave her knowledge and confidence, and made her more employable, giving her an edge in the job market.

Following her training, Hannah spent six weeks doing a student placement at Breaking Grounds, Breakthru's new inclusive café venture. During this time, she fully immersed herself in every aspect of the café, including customer service, handling the cash register, and preparing food orders.

Initially, she was quite nervous, especially during the café's grand opening event. Hannah shares, "I was so nervous my legs were shaking." However, despite her initial apprehension, she quickly became an independent and a motivated team member, impressing both colleagues and customers.

Recognising Hannah's clear talent for hospitality, her infectious enthusiasm, and her valuable contributions, Kate was excited to offer her a position at Breaking Grounds café.

Hannah now sees herself building a future in the hospitality industry. With a big smile on her face, she says, "I enjoy talking to customers and working in the café. I really love it."

From grief to empowerment

David finds his voice

David's story unfolds in early 2017, a year defined by a historic milestone – the legalisation of same-sex marriage. David and his partner, Peter, were passionate advocates for equal rights, actively participating in numerous events and rallies championing marriage equality. The moment the government legalised same-sex marriage, they joyfully exchanged their vows.

However, their joy was short-lived – soon after their wedding, Peter fell seriously ill and was diagnosed with a severe form of leukaemia.

In 2018, Peter sadly passed away. David's life was turned upside down as he spiralled into a deep depression. Struggling with grief and mental anguish, he found himself unable to resume his role as a nurse, which had been his profession prior to dedicating himself to Peter's care.

Turning to his doctor for help and guided by a supportive psychologist who encouraged self-expression, David discovered a unique coping mechanism rooted in something Peter had always loved in him – his voice. Inspired by this revelation, David made the decision to record his own songs at a music studio.

Creating music helped David regain his confidence, and he eventually felt ready to re-enter the workforce. "Music was my therapy," says David. "Through music I found my voice."

It was at that point that Centrelink referred David to Breakthru's Disability Employment Service (DES). Julie Page, an employment consultant at Breakthru, worked closely with David to understand his job goals and created a plan to help him find work.

Julie played a crucial role in supporting and guiding David, helping him learn job-seeking skills, create a resume and online job profile, and practice interview techniques. David regularly visited Breakthru's offices to search for jobs and, with Julie's help, submitted multiple job applications where he received positive responses from potential employers with promising job interview opportunities.

David's main goal continues to be to find stable employment and contribute to the community. He also aspires to showcase his musical talent on a TV show like *The Voice*, to advance his music career.

Feeling more positive and grateful for the support he has received, David acknowledges that Breakthru not only boosted his confidence, but also pushed him to put in the effort needed to overcome his grief. He values Breakthru's personalised approach to understanding clients and recognising their potential.

David chatting with Julie at Coogee Beach.



Overcoming stroke and heart surgery

John's hard work and determination leads to remarkable results

In late February 2023, 84-year-old John paid a visit to his GP for a regular heart check. He had no idea what was to come.

The ultrasound revealed a startling truth – his arteries were severely blocked, and his aortic valve was leaking. He was urgently referred to the hospital by his cardiologist where he underwent emergency surgery, marking the beginning of a lengthy hospital stay that would stretch over many months.

Regrettably, during John's heart surgery, he experienced a stroke, which added to his health challenges. The stroke primarily affected the right side of his body, resulting in a significant loss of strength and limited movement. Everyday tasks like getting out of bed, moving to a chair, using the toilet, showering, and dressing became reliant on assistance from two people. John also had to rely on a wheelchair for mobility. Additionally, the extended time spent lying on his left side during surgery led to the loss of sensation in three fingers of his left hand, affecting his fine motor skills and coordination. Using his arms to support himself was risky.

After spending three and a half weeks in the hospital, John was transferred to Royal Rehab Private Petersham in late March 2023 to start his rehabilitation. John worked closely with a dedicated rehabilitation team to outline his goals, which included regaining independent mobility, managing personal care and household tasks on his own,

returning to independent living at home, and, ultimately, regaining the ability to drive.

John's rehabilitation plan centred around intensive physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Physiotherapy aimed to rebuild his lower body strength, restore range of motion, and improve mobility. Occupational therapy focused on enhancing John's self-reliance in daily activities, such as personal care, meal preparation, and household chores. This therapy also aimed to refine his fine motor skills and maximise the use of his arms and hands.

John's determination was evident as he dedicated two hours a day, seven days a week, to work with the physiotherapy team. Over time, his strength improved, allowing him to transition from a wheelchair to a walker, and eventually, to using a single Canadian crutch for support. With time, he even ventured into the community, walking to a nearby café to enjoy a coffee and read the newspaper.

With hard work and determination, John made remarkable progress at Royal Rehab Private Petersham, and the focus gradually shifted to planning his return home. To ensure his safety and independence, the occupational therapy team assessed his home and guided the necessary

modifications, including installing a stair rail, grab rails in the showers, and equipping the bathroom for independent use.

Working closely with John's two adult children, the social worker determined the extent of family support and arranged for support workers to assist with more challenging household tasks and to provide transportation.

On July 7, John was discharged home, and navigating the steep path to his front door marked a moment of triumph. Reflecting on his journey, John expresses gratitude to the caring staff who have been with him every step of the way. "They were great people," John says. "They did everything they could to help me. I've told everyone I would return to Petersham anytime. They had expertise in stroke recovery, and they were just fantastic. I'm forever grateful."



Rebuilding life

Fiona's journey back from brain injury

In early September 2022, 55-year-old cycling enthusiast Fiona was participating in the National Masters Cycling Championships near Mt Keira when she was involved in a crash. Her last memory of the day was speaking to the other cyclists just before the race started.

Following the accident, Fiona was airlifted to St. George Hospital. Although her injuries seemed relatively minor – a shoulder injury, facial wounds, and a few fractured ribs – the real challenge emerged with 24 days of post-traumatic amnesia, a clear sign of a significant traumatic brain injury. A month-long stay at St. George Hospital was followed by a transfer to the Brain Injury Unit (BIU) at Royal Rehab Ryde.

“Right from the start, I felt safe and supported in the Brain Injury Unit,” Fiona recalls. “It was so peaceful and calm, and all of the staff were incredibly caring and encouraging.”

During her time at the BIU, Fiona worked with a team of therapists to address issues stemming from the accident, including her walking speed and balance. Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy played a crucial role in helping her regain her speed, balance, and overall fitness. The speech pathology and occupational therapy teams also worked diligently to enhance Fiona's verbal and non-verbal communication skills, auditory attention span, and cognitive abilities.

Senior Speech Pathologist Janine Mullay noted changes in Fiona's speech, emphasising the need to make it sound more natural, as it had become slower, louder, and more monotone. Janine also helped Fiona with producing natural facial expressions appropriate for various contexts. “The majority of what we communicate as humans is not in the words we say,” Janine explains, “it's in the way we say it – our facial expressions, our tone of voice, our body language. We worked a lot on those non-verbal communication skills.”

With a comprehensive approach involving speech practice, feedback through audio and video, self-assessment, learning, and imitation of appropriate facial

expressions, Fiona made substantial improvements in her communication skills. She also joined the BIU's weekly coffee and news groups to improve planning and communication abilities. Janine highlights the benefits of group therapy, which allowed Fiona to practice communication goals in a more natural and less clinical setting. Fiona prepared news summaries each week, a task that required planning, memory, and the use of reminders.

Fiona's steady progress was evident to both her and her husband, Michael. “Both Michael and I could see the improvements I was making week on week,” Fiona shares. “From not being able to walk well, to walking around and navigating stairs, and doing physiotherapy twice a day, it was amazing. I also loved the hydrotherapy – it was a highlight.”

In early December 2022, seven weeks after her admission, Fiona was ready to go home. “When I left, I felt confident they had put in place everything I would need to be able to re-integrate home,” says Fiona. “It was really comprehensive, the way the occupational therapist prepares you for returning home.”

Following her discharge, Fiona continued to receive at-home and community support from Royal Rehab Ryde's Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation Team (BICRT). The team provided assistance with recreational therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy.

Fiona continues to make remarkable progress, acknowledging the pivotal role Royal Rehab played in her journey. “It was being at Royal Rehab Ryde that really gave me the confidence. It set the foundations for getting back into life. Now, I'm just enjoying my second chance at life.”



“ Right from the start,
I felt safe and supported in
the Brain Injury Unit. ”

Fiona

Fiona continues to make remarkable progress.

Kicking goals

Jamal's rehabilitation success story

Two years ago, 55-year-old Jamal was driving back from Canberra with his boss when he was involved in a serious car accident. Jamal's injuries were significant, and he experienced a stroke when his C4 to C6 vertebrae crushed an artery to his brain. After an overnight stay in Canberra Hospital, Jamal was moved to Royal North Shore Hospital where he remained for two months, followed by a further three months in the spinal unit at Prince of Wales Hospital.

Jamal's wife, Amal, says it was an incredibly stressful time for their family, but Jamal was determined to do everything he could to get better, always asking for more hours of therapy. No stranger to hard work and training, Jamal was extremely fit having played professional soccer for his hometown in Syria before emigrating to Australia 20 years ago. Since then, Jamal had played in a local community competition and was passionate about watching and supporting his three soccer-playing sons who love the game as much as he does.

Following his discharge from hospital, Jamal initially received home-based private physiotherapy and occupational therapy. He was supported by Royal Rehab's Spinal Outreach Service for nursing advice regarding continence management and occupational therapy. In June 2021 Jamal's occupational therapist recommended an intensive therapy program, following which Jamal started working with Royal Rehab LifeWorks' occupational therapist, Jessica Beauman, to focus on improving his upper limb strength, co-ordination, and functional re-training. "At first Jamal's goals centred around being more involved in feeding, self-care, and improving cognition," says Jessica.

"He was unable to hold onto or dispense his medication, additionally he was unable to recall when medications were due.

"He also wanted to improve his ability to complete daily living tasks such as making a cup of coffee for himself and carrying it to the couch without help," she adds.

Jamal's therapy incorporated cutting-edge technology

devices. The Tyromotion Suite played a pivotal role in enhancing his strength, range of motion, and coordination. Additionally, the Amadeo was instrumental in improving finger strength and fine motor coordination, particularly in relation to the pincer grasp. The Pablo hand sensor, in conjunction with pressure exerted through the Myro system, facilitated the refinement of Jamal's grasp maintenance and control.

Jessica comments, "Jamal can now confidently handle 1.5kg weights during shoulder exercises and navigate an obstacle course while holding and transporting a cup of coffee.

"He is also able to self-administer his medication punctually with the aid of an alarm, and skilfully manages his catheter for toileting. These are all accomplishments he couldn't have imagined when he began his journey at Royal Rehab LifeWorks," she adds.

Amal agrees that her husband has been making good progress. "Jessica's done wonders with Jamal," she says.

Eager to build upon his progress, Jamal was motivated to improve his walking ability, with aspirations to rejoin his boys in soccer games and to even play soccer himself. After receiving approval from icare to include physiotherapy at Royal Rehab LifeWorks in his program, Jamal's physiotherapy sessions were tailored to enhance his walking technique and balance. They began by using advanced technology devices, starting with the EksoNR robotic exoskeleton to provide feedback on his walking pattern and break down the components needed for outdoor walking.



Jamal enjoying therapy with allied health assistant, Natalie Pedler.

Always striving to improve, Jamal progressed quickly and moved on to using the Zero G body weight system to help him with the advanced balance skills required for walking and running. He also used the C-Mill treadmill which has bodyweight support and virtual reality and augmented reality to simulate everyday activities using engaging games. This enabled Jamal to practice his balance and walking in a safe environment.

A favourite C-Mill game for Jamal was a soccer-based game. He embraced the competitive aspect of the game, which motivated him to consistently improve his scores during each play session. As a result, he has significantly refined his walking stride and can now even jog within the Advanced Technology Centre. Assessments of his walking speed, stamina, and overall dynamic balance clearly indicate his continued progress, as he now walks both faster and covers greater distances compared to his previous achievements.

For Jessica, there are multiple benefits associated with integrating advanced technology into therapy programs.

“One advantage of the devices,” says Jessica, “is that they can be used to address cognition and physical therapy simultaneously.”

“The advanced technology provides more engagement and variety, and clients can do more in a session, as their fatigue is managed using the device weight support systems as they begin to tire, allowing them to complete a higher number of repetitions required for motor recovery.”

“The adaptability of the different devices and the range we have available allows us to offer therapy to clients of any functional ability.”

A big win for Jamal earlier in the year was being able to go on a beach holiday with his extended family. Jamal walked on the sand, played volleyball with his family, and went fishing.

Jamal is now translating what he did in therapy into everyday life. He is proud of his achievements saying, “I need to show people what you can achieve through hard work.”

Turning dreams into reality

Bryn and Alana's unforgettable stay at Sargood on Collaroy

This year, we teamed up with the popular ListenABLE podcast for a campaign with the aim of spreading the word about Sargood on Collaroy.

Hosted by Dylan Alcott, the former Paralympian and 2022 Australian of the Year, and co-host Angus O'Loughlin, the campaign entailed a competition featuring a \$10,000 prize package, including an all-expenses-paid one-week stay at Sargood on Collaroy, complete with return airfare. To enter, participants were asked to tag the person they wanted to share the prize with and explain their reasons. The competition received 120 entries, with Bryn Bradford and his partner, Alana Bethune, from Brisbane winning the grand prize.

Bryn was just 22 when an accident caused significant and permanent damage to his spinal cord, fracturing both his C5 and T6. According to Sargood on Collaroy's General Manager James Dakin, "When we read Alana's entry, the couple's enthusiasm shone through. Rain, hail, or shine, we knew they were going to make the most of their time."

Bryn says that both he and Alana were 'blown away' by the facilities and the accommodation at Sargood on Collaroy. "Traveling is never really easy for people with disabilities," Bryn explains, "a lot of holidays you focus on your disability and your needs and there's usually a huge checklist that you have to go through. Knowing that everything was going to be taken care of was a huge barrier reducer."

During their stay, Bryn and Alana took full advantage of the beach and went for strolls, swam, and even surfed – something Bryn had not been able to do since

his accident. "The recreational team took me out for a paddle and a surf in the ocean, and that was very special for me, as I haven't done that in 10 years. I just felt like myself out there – it was amazing," says Bryn.

Being at Sargood on Collaroy also allowed Bryn and Alana to enjoy activities together that were not normally possible on their holidays, such as kayaking and snorkelling. "Having the recreational team there to

support us meant there was no pressure on Alana to take on a caring role. She was able to just be my partner, have fun and just enjoy doing things with me," says Bryn.

Meeting guests and connecting with the spinal cord community was another highlight of their stay. "Everyone was so nice, the staff and the specialists were

kind of like family, and chatting with the other guests. Everyone's got a bit of a story. There's that compassion there. We talked about the day's activities as well as the kinds of solutions people might have for their day-to-day living which was really good," says Bryn.

Reflecting on their experience at Sargood on Collaroy, Bryn says that having access to a facility like Sargood on Collaroy was 'pretty incredible.' "We've never stayed anywhere quite like it. I consider myself very lucky," he says.



Sargood on Collaroy GM James with Bryn and Alana.

A photograph of three people at a playground. In the foreground, a young man with glasses and a blue sweatshirt sits on a wooden bench, smiling. Behind him, a man with sunglasses and a black hoodie sits on a swing. To the right, a woman in a grey floral shirt stands, also smiling. The background shows green trees and a clear blue sky.

Breakthru clients and a staff member
enjoying a delightful time in the sunshine.

“Independence is about having the freedom to be your authentic self and to make choices that align with your values.”

Oprah Winfrey

Recovering against the odds

Nele's fighting spirit in reclaiming her life

Complaining of a severe headache and neck pain, 36-year-old Nele was admitted to Royal North Shore Hospital (RNS) for tests, when an MRI and lumbar puncture led to a diagnosis of Encephalitis; an inflammation of the brain, often caused by infection.

Despite receiving antibiotic treatment, Nele's condition progressively worsened, with a significant decline in her coordination and speech within just three days.

Complications ensued and Nele was diagnosed with Cerebellitis, plunging her into a life-threatening situation. Unable to speak clearly or walk, and experiencing extreme fatigue, Nele's coordination was significantly impacted. Swallowing also became increasingly difficult, and she experienced severe bouts of vertigo and excruciating headaches. After a number of relapses Nele finally turned the corner and was discharged to commence her recovery as an inpatient at Royal Rehab Private in Ryde.

Describing her arrival at Royal Rehab, Nele says she was 'euphoric.' "I had my own room with a balcony, and I felt immediately relaxed. The staff were so respectful and attentive. Right from the start I felt well taken care of."

Employing a multidisciplinary approach, the team developed a program tailored to Nele's needs, encompassing occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech pathology. "When Nele was admitted she was very weak," shares Royal Rehab Private Ryde's senior physiotherapist, Jane Liu. "Whilst she was able to walk, her balance, coordination, and endurance were greatly reduced, and she was unable to negotiate stairs without using the hand railing. The therapy was focused on improving her overall fitness, stamina, strength, and balance."

Nele participated in two physiotherapy sessions daily, pursuing high-level balance, endurance, and fitness enhancement. Stationary bike and treadmill sessions targeted cardiovascular fitness, navigating uneven terrains during outdoor walks addressed high-level balance, while hydrotherapy concentrated on core and leg strengthening, alongside balance exercises.

Occupational therapy zeroed in on improving upper limb strength and refining fine motor skills. "I even had to learn how to write again," Nele explains. Sessions extended to memory enhancement and quicker information processing, both of which had been hampered by Nele's extreme levels of fatigue.

For speech therapy, strategies included articulation and word retrieval. Nele describes her experience as being akin to 'words being erased from your memory.' Techniques ranged from lip and tongue exercises, amplified sound articulation, and one-syllable components for clarity. Word retrieval tactics included picture naming, cues, semantic associations, and naming tasks. An accompanying home exercise regimen contributed to Nele's progress.

Nele made great progress as an inpatient with her speech, strength, balance, and endurance all improving. Her balance had improved so much that she started to practice slow jogging on the mini tramp and was able to walk up and down stairs without a rail.

Now back home with her husband and two young children, Nele attends Royal Rehab Private Ryde's Day Program twice weekly to consolidate the gains she made as an inpatient. "I love attending the day program," Nele says. "They challenge me in great ways and get me to do things I wouldn't normally do at home. I feel like I'm making great progress every week."

With aspirations to resume her senior HR role later in the year, Nele is confident that opting for rehabilitation at Royal Rehab over a direct return home from RNS has been instrumental in her recovery."

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is standing on a green yoga mat outdoors. She is in a salutation pose (Urdhva Dhanurasana), with her hands pressed together in a prayer position above her head and her right leg bent, with the foot resting on her left thigh. She is wearing a black sleeveless top with a pink and white graphic design and black leggings. The background is a lush green landscape with trees and a clear blue sky.

“I feel like I’m making **great progress** every week.”

Nele

Practicing her yoga exercises and showing gratitude for all she has, Nele stands in a salutation pose.

From limits to living life

Russell's path to independence

Meet Russell, an avid sports watcher who can't get enough of footy and cricket on television. When he's not immersed in sports, Russell indulges in his other passion – watching Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan work their martial arts movie magic! For the past nine years, Russell has been a loyal client of Royal Rehab's supported accommodation service, and he firmly believes that this move changed his life.

Before coming to Royal Rehab, Russell lived on his own with some home care support, but he heavily relied on assistance from his parents. He recalls, "It was very hard for them. My parents had to provide a lot of my support, and it was a lot to manage."

However, everything turned around when he moved to Royal Rehab's Supported Independent Living Accommodation. With a range of supports in place, Russell was able to enjoy a newfound level of freedom, actively participating in community life and pursuing various activities, like hitting the gym and having regular massages.

Today, Russell is thoroughly enjoying his life. Each Wednesday he goes out for a club lunch where he cherishes the opportunity to meet new people and socialise.

One of the significant changes since moving to Royal Rehab was also the ability to go out on his own, like visits to his local park.

As Russell explains, "Before, I couldn't do that. I have a lot of freedom here. In many other places, you don't have that kind of freedom."

These positive things continue to be made possible thanks to the dedicated support workers at Royal Rehab. They provide valuable assistance to Russell in his daily living activities, such as showering, dressing, meal preparation, and eating.

Additionally, an external community participation worker ensures that Russell remains actively engaged with the wider community.

The team's commitment has truly made a difference in Russell's life and he is immensely grateful for the support he receives that allows him to live independently.

He says, "I love living on my own. I can do my own thing, and with the help I get, it's fantastic!"

“ I love living
on my own.
I can do my own
thing, and with
the help I get,
it's fantastic! ”

Russell



Russell enjoying his freedom and his life.

Rising above challenges

A rugby legend's story of determination

Daniel Anderson, a well-known rugby league figure with an impressive coaching career, had a life-changing experience while body surfing during a family holiday. A powerful wave caught him off guard, dropping him on his head, causing him to lose consciousness. Thankfully, his brother acted quickly, bringing him back to shore where off-duty paramedics and lifeguards who happened to be there provided crucial help to keep him stable. Daniel was then taken to the Royal North Shore Hospital (RNS) by helicopter, where he received emergency medical attention.

While at the Royal North Shore Hospital, Daniel remained unconscious initially, requiring the support of a ventilator. As he gradually regained consciousness, Daniel was confronted with the reality of quadriplegia caused by an incomplete spinal injury.

After spending six weeks at RNS, Daniel was transferred to a specialised spinal bed at Royal Rehab Ryde to undergo intensive rehabilitation therapy. Initial assessments brought to light some key findings about Daniel's physical condition. While his legs showed strength, he struggled with coordination and had a limited sense of proprioception, making it challenging to perceive the position of his legs in space. Additionally, his arms and hands lacked strength, with his left hand having minimal movement and sensation. His diaphragm was also affected, impacting his breathing.

These valuable insights played a pivotal role in shaping Daniel's tailored therapy plan, as explained by physiotherapist, Jennie Sung: "Knowing his strengths and weaknesses helped us set achievable goals together, so our therapy sessions were tailored around helping him achieve as much function as possible."

Daniel closely worked with physiotherapists to better understand his legs and learn new techniques for improved coordination and balance. Utilising resources like parallel bars and state-of-the-art tools such as the Zero G body weight support system, he could practice different aspects of his mobility without worrying about falls or injuries. The EksoNR robotic exoskeleton also played a crucial role, helping him work on weight transfers and retrain his gait.

In the beginning, Daniel needed assistance transferring with a hoist and the support of two people. A major goal for him was to gain independence in transfers. Through physiotherapy sessions, as he gained strength and familiarity with his changed body, Daniel progressed from slide board transfers to Sara Steady transfers – a device that facilitates safe, swift, and effortless sit-to-stand transfers – eventually advancing to step transfers – a technique to move from one surface to another. Jennie also helped him master car transfers, a vital skill for his role involving visits to various football grounds.

“Jennie, Kaila, Rachel, and Jacinda are **really good at what they do.**”

Daniel



Daniel and his physiotherapist, Jennie Sung.

Occupational Therapy focused on strengthening Daniel's upper limbs, refining his dexterity, and enhancing his fine motor skills through repetitive practice. Occupational therapist, Kaila Rodriguez notes that, initially, Daniel used an arm support for all upper limb activities, but he has since achieved some movements independently. Daniel shares, “We worked a lot on being independent, getting ready for when I return home. I can now pick up a flat coin from the table; achieving that level of dexterity seemed nearly impossible in the beginning.”

Kaila, along with Rachel Harper from Royal Rehab's specialised vocational rehabilitation service INVOC, ensured a smooth transition for Daniel back to work. They assisted in choosing software and hardware, including an adaptive mouse, headset, and arm support, helping Daniel work effectively from his computer.

Speech pathologist, Jacinda Choy provided practical techniques to help Daniel manage his throat and diaphragm for effective communication. Daniel shares,

“Jacinda gave me some great ideas on how to adjust my voice as part of my work practices.”

For Daniel, a standout aspect was the strong communication and collaboration he built with the therapy team. He says, “Jennie, Kaila, Rachel, and Jacinda are really good at what they do. The relationships felt natural, which made the training easier. We set goals in every session, both small and big, like walking. Some significant goals were reached, and now we're setting new ones.”

With improved function, more independence, and the ability to walk short distances, the next phase involves getting ready for Daniel's transition home.

As Daniel prepares for life after Royal Rehab, Jennie reflects on the strides he's made, noting, “Daniel's hard work is paying off. And now, he's seeing the positive outcomes of his efforts.”

A photograph of a man and a woman outdoors in a park. The man is seated in a motorized wheelchair, wearing a grey hoodie, glasses, and grey pants. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman is standing next to him, wearing a black blazer over a floral top and black pants. She is also smiling. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

*Breakthru client, Drellan, with Breakthru
National Practice Lead for NDIS Support
Coordination, Katie Sinnerton.*

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

Jane Goodall

04

Our People

With a dedicated team of over 1,000 professionals **committed to excellence**, our organisation places high value on diversity and actively works towards fostering an inclusive workplace culture that mirrors the communities we serve.

Katie Sinnerton

Leading excellence in support coordination

Katie's journey with Breakthru began in 2012 as a transition consultant on the 'Transition to Work' program. Over the following five years, she embraced a range of roles in the areas of support coordination, customer service, and management. After a two-year break, Katie returned to Breakthru in 2020 as a support coordinator before becoming the National Practice Lead for NDIS Support Coordination in May 2021.

As the National Practice Lead, Katie is a subject matter expert, providing invaluable support and advice to the 40+ team of front-line support coordinators and their leaders across Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. Katie also leads complex case reviews and ensures the teams stay informed about any changes to the NDIS. Katie's passion for support coordination is evident when she says, "I decided that support coordination was my calling, it's something I truly excel at."

Katie's responsibilities extend beyond leadership. She is involved in staff onboarding, running workshops and delivering non-accredited training. She ensures that best practice processes are in place to both support staff and deliver exceptional outcomes for clients.

"I've always had a passion for training and building staff capacity so they can continuously improve and strive to be better, which goes hand in hand with the outcomes we achieve at Breakthru," says Katie.

"What I love the most is being involved in participants' journeys and empowering them to build their capacity, whatever that means for them.

"We are supporting people with their entire life goals. We're not just supporting them to get a job or to get the daily personal care that they need. We're looking at all aspects of their life and whatever their goals mean for them."

Katie's goal is to ensure that Breakthru clients receive consistently high-quality service, regardless of their location. She partly attributes her return to Breakthru to its unique culture and exceptional people. "Breakthru's values align perfectly with my own," says Katie. "When you spend so much time at work, you want to be in a place where you feel comfortable and supported.

"Our leadership team and colleagues share the same values, fostering an environment where respectful challenges are welcomed, and clients' wellbeing is always at the forefront."

“The remarkable outcomes we achieve in the disability space make me **truly proud to be a part of Breakthru.**”



Michael Trimble

Fostering success and growth

Meet Michael, a dedicated and long-serving member of the Breakthru team, with an impressive 16-year track record with the organisation. Throughout his career at Breakthru, Michael has assumed various team leader roles and currently holds the position of Service Manager for North and Far North Queensland – covering Townsville, Atherton, Cairns, Mossman, Port Douglas, Innisfail, and Ingham.

With three team leaders and 40 staff under his guidance, Michael takes on the crucial responsibility of equipping them with the necessary tools to deliver services effectively. From providing essential customer information and data, to overseeing budget tracking and offering staffing and customer support in times of need, Michael is focused on the success of his team.

Michael is also a skilled relationship builder, working with external stakeholders and forging valuable partnerships. As a representative of Breakthru in numerous external provider networks and interagency groups spanning health, aged care, disability, and regional council sectors, Michael makes a valuable contribution to the communities in which we operate.

Recently, Michael has been supporting preparations for the opening of Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns, a much-anticipated allied health hub offering a wide array of therapies and services. From NDIS report writing to home modifications, NDIS Therapy Services, out-of-hospital rehabilitation, and a range of allied health services, this facility will cater to a diverse range of clients. Michael will play a pivotal role in developing streamlined pathways for Breakthru clients to access allied health services, ensuring a seamless experience for both clients and referrers alike.

The response from regional networks to the new facility has been overwhelmingly positive, according to Michael. “They’re excited,” he shares. “The region is in dire need of support, and the new centre will definitely provide some much-needed services.”

Michael is also planning for the expansion and modification of Breakthru’s offices in Atherton and Cairns, which will enable Breakthru to provide additional services and programs to even more people in the region. “In Atherton in particular we’ll be able to run various group-based programs, such as life skills and school leaver employment initiatives, and provide a social hub for people to gather and enjoy a simple cup of coffee. There’s a lot of potential for growth in the region and I’m looking forward to being able to improve the services we offer,” Michael enthusiastically states.

For Michael, remaining dedicated to Breakthru has been an easy choice. He praises the organisation as an exceptional place to work, emphasising the support we provide in helping employees progress. “Their purpose and values are truly uplifting for me,” he remarks. “Unlike many companies, Breakthru stays true to its promises. When it comes to supporting clients, Breakthru always thinks outside the box. What I like is that we don’t make a customer fit a program. We always try to tailor the program to fit the customer”.



Jessica Beauman

Pioneering upper limb rehabilitation with advanced technology

With 12 years of experience as an occupational therapist, Jessica Beauman has primarily focused on neurological and stroke rehabilitation in public hospitals. As a senior occupational therapist in the Royal Rehab LifeWorks team at Ryde, she works closely with clients both in the Advanced Technology Centre and in their homes. Additionally, Jessica trains other Royal Rehab occupational therapists on integrating advanced technology into therapy pathways.

Jessica has been part of the Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde team since the inception of the Advanced Technology Centre. Reflecting on her journey, she shares, "Occupational therapists often face limitations in conventional therapy when it comes to the upper arm. So, when the opportunity arose to be part of something new and to harness the power of technology, I knew I had to seize it. It has been a significant learning curve, but I am thoroughly enjoying it."

What drives Jessica's passion for her work is the ability to provide active therapy to clients who previously had limited access to such technology. In the past, these clients would have returned home with compensatory strategies or supportive equipment. However, with the integration of technology, Jessica believes her clients now have the best opportunity to improve their functional abilities. "We can now provide active upper limb therapy post-discharge, giving them the best chance to maximise their functional independence," she explains.

Being part of the technological innovation at Royal Rehab has been a source of immense inspiration for Jessica. Joining the Advanced Technology Centre during its establishment has allowed her to shape the role of occupational therapy within the centre and contribute to its operational framework.

Jessica also highlights how her perception of the capabilities of advanced technology expanded significantly as she delved deeper into its integration with conventional therapies. The more she utilised the technology, the more her confidence grew, enabling her to approach therapy sessions with greater creativity. She shares, "I didn't realise how well the technology could integrate with conventional therapies until I started

using it. It has truly been eye-opening. Making upper limb gains can be a slow process, but with the support of technology, we can expedite our clients' progress, leading to remarkable achievements."

Working at Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde has proven to be a rewarding experience for Jessica. The multidisciplinary collaboration and supportive atmosphere fostered by the team have made a lasting impression on her. She emphasises, "Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde is an amazing team, and we have a seamless collaboration among different disciplines, which is not always the case in my experience. We are constantly encouraged to learn and improve, and the organisation invests in our education and professional growth."

"I truly believe that joining Royal Rehab is the best professional decision I've made. Witnessing my clients make gains and building relationships with them is incredibly fulfilling," she concludes.



Achini Wimalaweera

Compassion in action

Achini is a dedicated disability support worker at Royal Rehab, providing exceptional care and support to clients residing in one of our female-occupied Supported Independent Living (SIL) homes.

For Achini, assisting clients extends beyond mere employment. She shares, “I truly believe that helping our clients goes beyond a job. It feels like taking care of family.”

Achini is involved in almost every aspect of her clients’ lives. Two days a week, she offers one-on-one support within the home, while the remaining three days are dedicated to ensuring the entire household receives the care they need. Whether it’s assisting with personal care, cooking, cleaning, organising community-based activities like shopping or going to the movies, or arranging transportation for medical appointments, Achini attends to every detail.

Regardless of the activity, Achini emphasises the importance of providing choice and empowerment to her clients. She explains, “When I spend time with my clients, I make sure to engage them and seek their opinions and input. Even with our non-verbal clients, I never think that they can’t understand. We always find a way to involve them.”

Achini also finds joy in the culture and strong sense of camaraderie among her colleagues. She shares, “We communicate together so well. Everyone is very supportive and helpful.”

What makes Achini’s journey truly unique is her personal background. Initially starting as a catering assistant at Royal Rehab six years ago, Achini felt a calling to work in disability support. Her inspiration came from her own experience caring for her mother during the last three months of her life.

“When I joined, I didn’t have formal disability experience, but I had nursed my mother, and that experience comes from the bottom of your heart. I shared that experience during my interview for the disability support worker role two years ago and was successful in obtaining the role,” Achini reveals.

Following her appointment, Achini immediately enrolled in a Certificate IV in Disability Support and completed the practical components on the role, an invaluable experience that further honed her skills.

Achini wholeheartedly believes there is no other job she would rather do, and her dedication and devotion shine through as she says, “I’m always thinking of ways to further support my clients. My focus is always on their wellbeing.”

“When I spend time with my clients, I make sure to engage them and seek their opinions and input.”



Jessica Allen

Empowering lives

Jessica, Clinical Operations Manager at Sargood on Collaroy, has dedicated her entire career to working with people with spinal cord injury. With vast experience as an occupational therapist in the spinal units of Prince of Wales and Royal North Shore hospitals, Jessica joined Sargood in 2016.

The challenge of building the business from scratch appealed to Jessica's love for creativity and venturing into uncharted territory. She describes the experience as akin to working for a start-up. "We had to create everything from scratch and develop a business model that included providing care, allied health services, recreational support, course development, structuring fees, as well as staff training," she says.

For Jessica, the allure of working at Sargood lay in the opportunity to explore and offer people with spinal cord injury a better quality of life. While inpatient settings primarily focus on essential services and reuniting individuals with their families, Sargood offers the chance to break down barriers and push boundaries.

Now, six years later, Jessica oversees the day-to-day operations, ensuring that the teams taking care of our guests are well-prepared and that the right services and equipment are in place for each individual. She proudly states, "What we do is unique, specifically for people with a spinal cord injury. You come, you stay, and you just bring your suitcase. We look after everything else".

In addition to her managerial role, Jessica has been instrumental in developing Sargood's highly successful internship pilot program. Generously funded by the Sargood Foundation, this program provides a 12-week paid internship at Sargood for individuals living with spinal cord injury, offering them real-world work experience in a supportive environment. Jessica explains her motivation behind the program, saying, "I wanted to give people a true experience and a head start to get back into the workforce. I wanted to give people a reference and a CV while providing a safety net."

The program's success has led to plans for a second internship opportunity in July 2023.

Looking to the future, Jessica's aspirations continue to soar, and she dreams of creating a rural Sargood location with mountains and a lake, offering a whole different array of activities. Currently, Jessica and the Sargood team are working on the development of a ski camp in Thredbo and exploring the possibility of offering scuba diving in Cairns.

For Jessica, one of the most rewarding aspects of her role is working with the dedicated Sargood staff. She expresses her enthusiasm, saying, "We have something so special to offer, and I work with people who are constantly trying to think of new ways of giving people with a spinal cord injury an experience that they probably can't get anywhere else. When we get all our brains together in a room, it feels pretty magical. The enthusiasm and the passion that we all share, it's the number one thing I love about my job. I've landed exactly where I want to be."



Alex Cockburn

Leading the way in neurological rehabilitation

Alex, a dedicated physiotherapist, joined the Royal Rehab Private Petersham team 18 months ago. His passion for neurological rehabilitation led him to start assisting with leading the weekend therapy service and ensuring high-quality patient care is maintained over a seven-day rehabilitation service.

With over eight years of experience in various healthcare settings, including acute care and aged care, Alex has always had a keen interest in helping people who have experienced stroke regain their ability to walk.

In the inpatient gym, Alex works closely with patients, focusing on improving their strength, functionality, balance, and providing gait retraining. Collaborating within a multidisciplinary team, he actively engages with occupational therapists, social workers, and speech pathologists.

Alex emphasises that the role extends beyond physical rehabilitation, saying, "We not only focus on the physical aspects but also provide emotional support. We are committed to the overall wellbeing of our patients, ensuring they have everything they need to safely transition back home."

Creating a positive and energised environment is important for Alex. He brings an enthusiastic attitude to work, encouraging patients to interact and have a laugh while they participate in their rehabilitation.

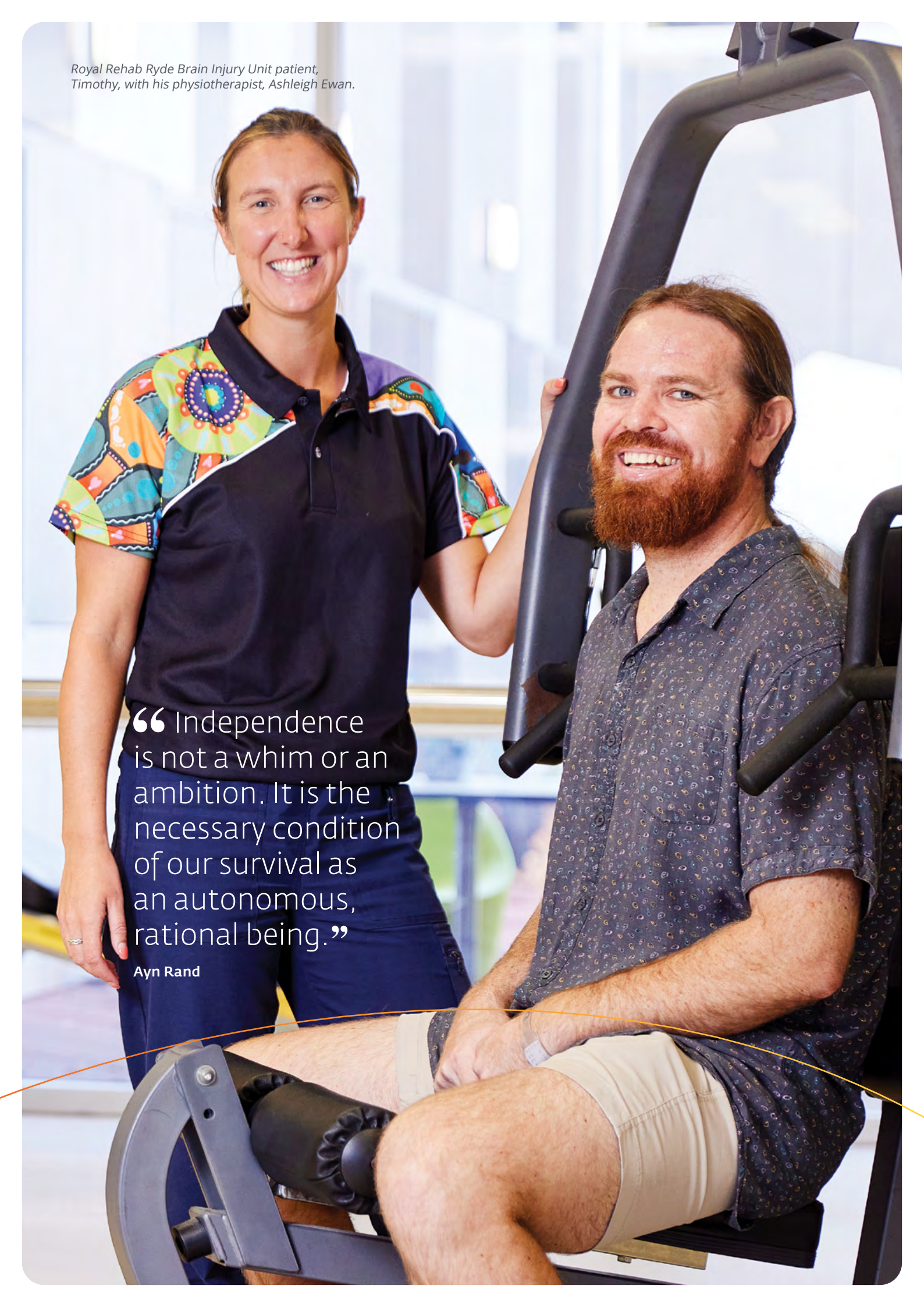
He also appreciates the team environment, saying, "The allied health team here is amazing – full of youthful energy, and there are so many brilliant nurses. We all work well together."

Alex is also involved in student education, supporting physiotherapy students during their clinical placements. He finds great joy in this aspect of his role.

When reflecting on his work, Alex finds it incredibly satisfying to witness the progress patients make, especially after extended hospital stays. Making a positive impact on peoples' lives motivates him to come to work every day.

“The allied health team here is amazing – full of youthful energy, and there are so many brilliant nurses. We all work well together.”





Royal Rehab Ryde Brain Injury Unit patient,
Timothy, with his physiotherapist, Ashleigh Ewan.

“Independence
is not a whim or an
ambition. It is the
necessary condition
of our survival as
an autonomous,
rational being.”

Ayn Rand

05

Research

We have a **long and rich history of encouraging critical thinking and enquiry** to advance knowledge and understanding in the fields of rehabilitation and disability, in service of enhancing the quality of life of those we serve.

Dosages of swallowing exercises in stroke rehabilitation

Current practice, challenges, and dose-response relationship

Swallowing problems (dysphagia) post-stroke are known to be common and can have a significant impact on both physical and psychosocial health. While swallowing exercises can improve swallowing function, little is understood about the optimal delivery or ideal dosage of these exercises. In her recent doctorate on the topic, Royal Rehab's Senior Speech Pathologist Jacinda Choy argues that optimising swallowing dosage in stroke rehabilitation has the potential not only to reduce post-stroke disability and improve quality of life, but also save millions of dollars in healthcare costs.

Jacinda explains, "There is limited research on the optimal dosage of swallowing exercises for post-stroke patients in swallowing therapy. While we recognise the significance of dosage in exercise and stroke rehabilitation, its application to swallowing exercises remains unclear. This is the aspect I aimed to investigate in my research."

Jacinda commenced her PhD in 2019 while working as a speech pathologist at a general rehabilitation hospital in Sydney. Embarking on her research just as the COVID-19 pandemic escalated meant that Jacinda had to navigate unforeseen challenges and adjust her research

approach. "Originally, we were going to undertake an intervention study with patients in order to explore how different dosages impacted swallowing outcomes," says Jacinda. "But COVID-19 lockdowns meant that getting the number of participant responses was difficult, so we adjusted our methodology and turned the data we had collected into an intervention case study."

Jacinda's methodology comprised of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches, including systematic review, medical record audit, focus groups with speech pathologists across Australia, interviews with patients

to capture their perspectives, and a patient-based intervention case series study.

Partway through her research Jacinda saw that Royal Rehab was advertising for a senior speech pathologist and decided to apply. Jacinda says that she had undergone her final student placement at Royal Rehab and really enjoyed the experience, citing her placement as being the catalyst for her interest in working in adult rehabilitation. "I saw the role at Royal Rehab as an opportunity to extend my skills and experience, and when I told them about my research project, they were so supportive it allowed me to make the change."

“I look around and I see other people doing research and I can see that it’s **clearly a priority** at Royal Rehab.”

Jacinda



Jacinda says the working environment at Royal Rehab while she has been undertaking her PhD has been both flexible and encouraging. "They appreciate the importance of research and acknowledge that my work could make a meaningful contribution to the clinical care of patients. There is readiness for me to share and utilise my research, whether it's presenting it to the team internally or showcasing it externally."

Through her research, Jacinda has found that the reporting and prescribing of dosages of swallowing exercises in current practice is inconsistent, highlighting the need for improved and consistent dosage reporting.

She has also discovered that high dosages of swallowing exercises may

improve outcomes, but again, due to the paucity of data available in this area, more research is needed to further investigate the dose-response relationship.

Interviews with speech pathologists and patients pointed to the complexities involved for both clinicians and patients with multiple factors having been found to influence dosage, including variability in patients, access to resources and research, workplace settings, as well as professional relationships.

During her research, Jacinda pointed out that speech pathologists were increasingly recognising the significance of dosage and were becoming more diligent in tracking their interventions. However, it's not yet common practice.

She emphasises that the qualitative research revealed the complexity of this issue, stating, "We agree that these principles are important, but, in practice, clinicians and patients face numerous challenges. We are actively investigating the barriers and facilitators in clinical practice and exploring general principles that can help make it more feasible to optimise prescribed dosages."

Jacinda has been sharing her research with her team at Royal Rehab Ryde through a series of mini-services and she says the feedback from staff has been that it has made them more conscious of dosage and how they apply the principles with their patients. Royal Rehab's Professional Leader in speech pathology Kate Makin agrees. "The Speech Pathology team has really benefited from Jacinda's expertise."

Dosages of swallowing exercises in stroke rehabilitation ... continued

She's challenged us to consider dosage in our swallowing interventions and has suggested a helpful structure for documenting dosage. She's also worked across a number of units at Royal Rehab, taking on some of the more complex swallowing cases."

Jacinda has published some of her work, and, with Royal Rehab's support, will be sharing her research on the international stage at the International Association of Communication Sciences and Disorders World Congress in Auckland in August 2023.

More research is on the horizon for Jacinda, who says she's keen to stay in the research space and to apply her learnings and new skills in clinical practice. Additionally, she's eager to explore opportunities for collaboration with other hospitals.

"So much research is needed," she says. "In particular, intervention studies that recruit patients and then provide them with swallowing therapy at different dosages and comparing those outcomes. We also need more people keeping track of data, what dosages are applied, and the associated outcomes. Potentially collating all of that clinical data to contribute to more retrospective research could be helpful too."

Publications

Choy J, Pourkazemi F, Anderson C, Bogaardt H. Dosages of swallowing exercises prescribed in stroke rehabilitation: a medical record audit. *Dysphagia*. 2022;1-14.

Choy J, Pourkazemi F, Anderson C, Bogaardt H. Dosages of swallowing exercises in stroke rehabilitation: a systematic review. *Eur Arch Otorhinolaryngol*. 2023;280(3):1017-45.

Accepted with revision

Choy J, Pourkazemi F, Bogaardt H, Anderson C, Chai SY, Pebdani RN. "One of the biggest grey areas": a focus group study exploring dosage of swallowing exercises from speech-language pathologist perspectives. Submitted for publication. 2022.

Paper under revision

Choy J, Pourkazemi F, Bogaardt H, Anderson C, Chai SY, Pebdani RN. Factors influencing speech pathology practice in dysphagia after stroke: a qualitative focus group study. Submitted for publication. 2023.



Advanced technology
in rehabilitation and
therapy.

Research project highlights

- 1.** Metagenomics based diagnostics for control of urinary tract infections
In collaboration with University of Technology Sydney with funding from NSW Health
- 2.** Clinical decision-making of nurses in relation to hygiene, dressing, and grooming in inpatient rehabilitation
A Royal Rehab led project in collaboration with The University of Sydney
- 3.** User-based testing of virtual reality applications for assessing cognitive-communication disorders following traumatic brain injury
In collaboration with The University of Sydney and University of Technology Sydney
- 4.** A mixed methods exploration of the uptake, experiences, and perceptions of using advanced technology in rehabilitation and therapy from the perspectives of clinicians and patients
A Royal Rehab led project in collaboration with The University of Sydney
- 5.** Recreational therapists' understandings of their role in advanced technology rehabilitation
A Royal Rehab led project in collaboration with Western Sydney University
- 6.** Communication connect
In collaboration with La Trobe University, University of Technology Sydney University of Queensland, and The University of Sydney
- 7.** Exploring the relevance of health coaching principles and practices for nurse facilitation of learning in clients with traumatic brain injury
In collaboration with ABI Rehabilitation and Auckland University of Technology

Journal articles
published:

7

Conference
presentations:

7

“Giving is not just about making a donation. It's about making a difference.”

Kathy Calvin



Supported Independent Living client Andrew, with Royal Rehab Group CEO, Matt Mackay.

06

Our Foundation

From its inception, **philanthropy has been a cornerstone** of Royal Rehab's philosophy, with founder Susan Schardt reaching out to potential donors to assist individuals with disability, marginalised by society.

The enduring visionary spirit of our founder continues to guide us on our journey toward a more inclusive and compassionate world.

Our Foundation's commitment

Our Foundation, through its fundraising endeavours, enables us to extend services to those who might lack the necessary funding or financial resources to access them.

Thanks to the thoughtful generosity of our donors, our Foundation:

Acquires vital equipment that might not be covered through funding sources or doesn't meet government support criteria.

Eases the financial strain for those experiencing economic hardship, by covering therapy expenses.

Supports individuals through grants, delivering extra assistance to those in difficult circumstances.

Enhances the wellbeing of residents in Royal Rehab's supported living accommodations by offering enriching experiences.

Another year of immense generosity

FY22/23 came to a close with our Foundation receiving a total of \$508,323 from 341 donors. We are particularly thankful for the generous bequest we received for Breakthru, and we're excited to announce that our dear friends from the Ducati Owners Club of New South Wales made an unprecedented donation of \$100,000, their largest contribution to date!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our donors, as your generosity is what makes our work possible.

Through the Foundation, we were able to:

- Purchase furniture and equipment for those in need, as they transitioned to independent living.
- Fund counselling and psychiatric support.
- Purchase assistive technology and return-to-work tools.
- Support accommodation and travel for those in need.
- Provide critical equipment for Royal Rehab and Breakthru services.
- Make Christmas a special time for hundreds of Breakthru clients and Royal Rehab's supported accommodation clients.

Spreading Christmas cheer

Once again, our Foundation embraced the festive spirit, bringing joy to our clients through a series of initiatives.

Royal Rehab's supported accommodation clients were delighted to receive thoughtful gifts that included books, food hampers, games, pamper packs, and \$50 gift vouchers.

Not stopping there, the Foundation also extended the Christmas spirit to hundreds of Breakthru clients through specially hosted Christmas parties and lunches organised at multiple Breakthru locations, creating an atmosphere of fun, laughter, and togetherness.





Royal Rehab patient, Ted, using Eye Gaze Technology guided by senior speech pathologist, Jacinda Wong.

Eye Gaze technology helps those with communication and physical impairment find their voice

Often taken for granted, the ability to communicate effectively can pose a tremendous challenge for those with complex physical impairments. Yet, with the advent of innovative tools like Eye Gaze technology, we can now begin to open a world of possibilities for those facing communication challenges, empowering them to achieve greater independence.

Comprising a screen, camera, and wearable sensor, Eye Gaze technology enables users to utilise the movements of their eyes or intentional muscle actions to communicate through a computer or tablet. The device's interface empowers users to communicate independently by directing their gaze or muscle movements, effectively using them as a cursor to navigate specific words or commands displayed on a video screen.

The acquisition of this life-changing technology for Royal Rehab's speech pathology service clients and customers was made possible with the generous support of our Foundation.

Called the NeuroNode Trilogy, the device offers multiple control options, including eye gaze, muscle control, or movement control. It also has customisable features that can cater to the unique needs of each individual, making it a versatile and inclusive solution.

The NeuroNode Trilogy will become an important part of the suite of communication tools the speech pathology team can offer, enabling them to explore and trial more options with patients and clients to enhance their communication skills and independence, all made possible by our kind donors.

“The only person you should try to be better than is the person you were yesterday.”

Anonymous



Royal Rehab LifeWorks client, Natasha, with her physiotherapist, Alexa Joshua.

“Great leaders are willing to sacrifice their own personal interests for the good of the group.”

John C. Maxwell



Royal Rehab Private Ryde patient,
Annette, engaging in therapy.

07

Our Leadership

Royal Rehab's leadership team and Board of Directors are a group of **highly talented and exceptional individuals**, each bringing with them a wealth of experience and diverse perspectives.

Our Board



Tony Staveley AM
MCOMM GRAD DIP (LAND
ECON) FAPI FRICS MAICD JP
CHAIRMAN



Marilyn Speiser
BEC FCA CHAHRI
VICE CHAIR



Steven Faux
FAFRM FFPMANZCA GAICD
DIRECTOR



Clara Cutajar
BBUS CA
DIRECTOR



Paul Billingham
MBA (AGSM) FCA GAICD RITF
DIRECTOR



Clive Austin AM
LLM FAICD
DIRECTOR



Greg Anderson
ACA CA
DIRECTOR



Katrina Williams
BEC LLB GAICD
DIRECTOR



Alex Gillan
BBUS(IT) GAICD
DIRECTOR



Jane Spring AM
BEC(HONS) LLB MPA FAICD
FGIA FIPAA
DIRECTOR

Our senior executives



Matt Mackay
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER



Denise Thomas
CHIEF OPERATING
OFFICER



Phil Dibley
CHIEF PEOPLE
OFFICER



Glen Stoddart
CHIEF FINANCIAL
OFFICER

“ We are **passionately committed to our organisation's purpose and vision.** Working tirelessly to remain at the forefront of innovation, we constantly push boundaries to ensure that the organisation continues to inspire and deliver the **highest quality care and services possible.** ”



Special thanks

To our patrons, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, and Mr. Dennis Wilson, along with our valued partners and donors – your ongoing support and generosity truly mean the world to us.

We extend our thanks to our customers, whose trust in our services motivates us to continually provide the best care we can.

And to our dedicated staff, your compassion and hard work are the heart of our accomplishments, enabling us to provide exceptional care and support.

We're eager to see what we can achieve together next year.

“The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself.”

Michel de Montaigne



Beautiful Breakthru client, Drellan.



Suite 10.01, Level 10, 52 Alfred St, Milsons Point NSW 2061

royalrehabgroup.com.au