



Annual Report

23/24



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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

At Royal Rehab Group, our commitment to a world without limits for people with disability, injury and illness remains the driving force behind everything we do.

As a not-for-profit organisation, our dedication to this purpose is reflected in our continuous investment in the business, ensuring that our services evolve and expand to meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

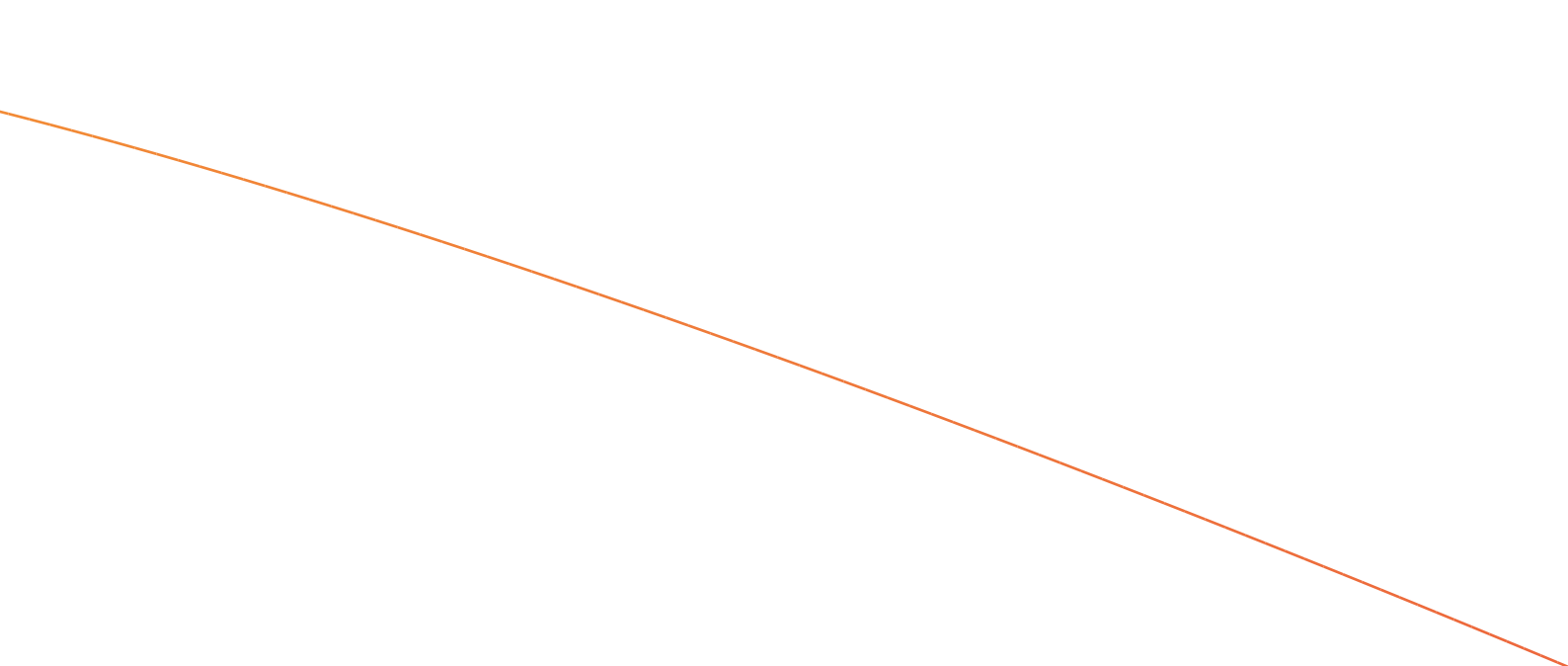
The past year has been one of adaptation and careful planning, particularly as we navigate evolving government funding and economic pressures. The disability sector, integral to our purpose, has seen adjustments in funding as the government works to ensure the long-term sustainability of programs like the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). While these changes are necessary for the broader system, they require us to be more strategic in managing resources to continue delivering high-quality services to those who need them most.

In the private healthcare sector, private hospitals are also facing financial challenges. Rising costs related to medical supplies, equipment, and staffing have put pressure on these institutions, especially as private health insurers work within their frameworks to keep premiums manageable

for consumers. While this dynamic requires hospitals to be more efficient, it also highlights the importance of strong partnerships between providers and insurers to maintain the high standards of care that Australians expect.

Given these economic realities, maintaining financial sustainability is more crucial than ever. Despite these challenges, we remain dedicated to upholding the core values of Royal Rehab Group while balancing our actions with thoughtful commercial pragmatism—ensuring we continue our purpose with integrity and commitment.

To safeguard our future and extend our reach, we are exploring new opportunities and innovative approaches. We aim to ensure that Royal Rehab Group can continue to deliver on its purpose, expanding our services to touch the lives of more Australians. This strategic focus is crucial not only for our sustainability but also for our ability to adapt and thrive in an increasingly complex and demanding environment.



Central to our efforts this financial year has also been the development of our next five-year strategic plan. This plan is more than just a roadmap; it is a commitment to the future of Royal Rehab Group, guided by four key principles that encapsulate our vision:

- **Driving healthcare and disability innovation**

We will continue to pioneer new approaches and technologies that enhance the lives of those we serve. Our goal is to remain leaders in rehabilitation, wellbeing and disability services, ensuring that our clients receive the highest standard of care and support.

- **Nurturing a culture of thriving**

Across Royal Rehab Group, the wellbeing of our people is fundamental to delivering on our purpose. We are committed to fostering an environment where our staff, clients, and their families can thrive, supported by a culture of respect, inclusion, and empowerment.

- **Designing for scale**

As we look to the future, we recognise the need to refine our processes, embracing innovation and growth without compromising the quality of our services.

This approach ensures that we remain agile and responsive to the needs of our clients.

- **Driving sustainable growth**

Our focus is on identifying and targeting areas of need within the rehabilitation, wellbeing and disability sectors. By aligning our efforts with these needs, we can drive sustainable growth that benefits both our organisation and the communities we serve.

Over the past 12 months, we have initiated several projects to bring these principles to life. These efforts represent our commitment to not only maintaining, but enhancing the quality of our services, ensuring that Royal Rehab Group remains at the forefront of innovation in healthcare and disability care.

By being strategic in our focus, we are positioning Royal Rehab Group to continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of people with disability, illness and injury, now and into the future.

This progress would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, whose contributions we deeply value, and the unwavering support of our Board. Together, we have celebrated significant milestones, including the recognition of Prof. Steven Faux AM as a Member of the Order of Australia. At the same time, we bid a heartfelt farewell to Mr. Clive Austin AM, whose remarkable 30 years of leadership as Chairman and Director leave a legacy of service and profound contributions.

As we move forward, we do so with confidence, guided by a clear purpose and a strong strategic direction. Together, we are committed to creating a world without limits.

Tony Staveley AM
Chairman

Matthew Mackay
Chief Executive Officer

“Some see things
as they are and
ask why. Others
dream things that
never were and
ask why not.”

- GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



01

Highlights

In this section, we invite you to join us in celebrating the milestones we've reached and the challenges we've overcome. 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.

Positive findings from our 2024 Employee Survey

We're thrilled to share that Royal Rehab Group has been awarded a Great Place to Work Certification™ which recognises employers who create an outstanding employee experience.

This certification reaffirms our commitment to building a culture where our team members and clients can flourish.

Great Place to Work, a globally recognised leader in workplace culture, uses employee surveys and a proprietary Trust Index to assess the quality of employees' experience at a company. The survey results help Great Place to Work determine if a company is a great place to work.

Why we conducted the survey

At Royal Rehab Group, our goal is to empower individuals to live independently and meaningfully. Achieving this starts with fostering a workplace where our staff can thrive. Conducting the survey would provide us valuable insights, helping us to:

- Evaluate our strengths and identify areas for improvement
- Understand variations in employee experiences across different parts of the organisation
- Highlight values and behaviours that strengthen our culture
- Shape initiatives to support leadership development

Survey highlights

- A total of 484 employees participated, resulting in a 31% response rate—an excellent demonstration of strong employee engagement.
- We achieved an overall score of 69%, surpassing the 65% threshold required for certification. This result highlights our strong organisational culture and employee satisfaction.
- Notably, 71% of respondents agreed with the statement, "Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work," significantly higher than the 56% average for typical Australian companies.

Royal Rehab Group

71%

Typical company

56%

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all employees who participated and contributed to this significant achievement. Together, we will build on this success and strive for excellence in all that we do.

Next steps

- Sharing the results - We have presented the survey findings to staff and leadership teams, focusing on areas which can be improved.
- Running focus groups - We will hold focus groups with staff to refine and formalise our organisational values and behaviours further.
- Implementing continuous improvement strategies - We will use the valuable insights gained to enhance our workplace culture and address any identified challenges.



Boosting services in Far North Queensland

In February 2024, Royal Rehab Group proudly announced a strategic partnership with FNQ Health and Fitness in Atherton.

This partnership represents a significant step in expanding access to high-quality health and wellbeing services across Far North Queensland, reinforcing our commitment to the region's healthcare and community wellness.

FNQ Health and Fitness, known for its expertise in community allied health, fitness, and wellbeing, has a strong presence in Atherton.

Under the Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns banner, Royal Rehab Group offers specialised allied health services that complement FNQ Health and Fitness' local offerings. Together, we are better positioned to meet community needs with an expanded and comprehensive range of services.

Through this collaboration, FNQ Health and Fitness will also gain support and resources from Royal Rehab Group, benefiting from our national leadership in rehabilitation, healthcare, and disability services.

"Our collaboration with FNQ Health and Fitness in Atherton represents a significant milestone for our organisation in enhancing health and wellbeing across Far North Queensland.

"By combining our resources and expertise, we aim to deliver an expanded range of high-quality health services to the community." - Matt Mackay, CEO of Royal Rehab Group.

This partnership offers numerous benefits, including:

- Shared expertise and knowledge exchange
- Enhanced service offerings
- The co-creation of new health and fitness programs tailored to the unique needs of the FNQ community

We are excited about the positive impact this partnership will bring, as we continue to elevate healthcare standards and support the wellbeing of communities across the region.



The dedicated FNQ Health and Fitness team.





Royal Rehab Group CEO Matt Mackay (far right) stands alongside members of the Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde Team and representatives from DIH.

Leading innovation in rehabilitation

In September 2023, Deliver Inspiration & Health (DIH), a global leader in robotics and virtual reality technology for rehabilitation and human performance, recognised Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde Advanced Technology Centre as a Centre of Excellence.

This prestigious recognition is part of DIH's program to honour strategic global partners that showcase best practices in rehabilitation robotics, contributing to the ongoing development of advanced rehabilitation technologies.

The partnership with DIH recognises Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde's cutting-edge robotic gait therapy for clients with a wide range of needs. As demand for rehabilitation services grows, the role of robotics in therapy becomes increasingly crucial. These technologies support our physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and clinical specialists in delivering effective treatments that enhance our clients' quality of life.

At Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde Advanced Technology Centre, we utilise DIH's leading robotic rehabilitation technologies, including Hocoma's Lokomat®Pro and Andago systems, alongside Motek's C-Mill VR+ for gait therapy. Additionally, we offer Hocoma's Armeo®Power for upper limb rehabilitation, providing a comprehensive approach to care.

We are proud to be the only recognised Centre of Excellence in the Asia-Pacific region. This accolade not only celebrates our impact on neurorehabilitation but also reflects our commitment to improving clients' wellbeing, independence, and quality of life through innovative technology and compassionate care.

Delivering exceptional care

Our commitment to quality drives us to implement initiatives that empower our staff, streamline processes, and enhance the delivery of exceptional care.

Empowering staff to drive quality and collaboration

We recognise the vital role our staff play in fulfilling our commitment to delivering exceptional care. To strengthen this partnership, we have introduced Quality Walk Rounds, led by our dedicated Quality, Safety, and Risk team. These Walk Rounds promote collaboration and transparency by enabling both clinical and non-clinical staff to engage directly with the quality lead of their business unit.

By actively valuing the insights of our frontline teams, amplifying every voice, and empowering staff to contribute to quality initiatives, we reaffirm their critical role as partners in driving exceptional outcomes.

Driving innovation in quality and risk management

Innovation is at the heart of our commitment to excellence. We are proud to have introduced the Royal Rehab IQ System, a groundbreaking initiative that streamlines incident reporting and enhances quality management. This system reflects our dedication to delivering safe, effective, and high-quality services by transitioning from reactive responses to proactive strategies.

Royal Rehab Group's IQ System is a scalable, comprehensive solution that integrates Incident Management, Feedback Management, Enterprise Risk Management, Recommendations and Controls, Claims Management, and Business Intelligence Dashboards.

Complementing this initiative, the implementation of PolicyStat centralises policy management within a unified system. This advancement further enhances our ability to streamline processes, mitigate risks, and drive continuous quality improvements.

Enhancing clinical governance and quality standards

We recently updated our Quality, Safeguards, and Clinical Governance Framework to strengthen clinical governance and drive continuous improvement. This framework defines the roles and responsibilities of clients, carers, staff, managers, and the Board, ensuring a clear structure for quality and safety.

By outlining the principles that support safe, effective, and high-quality services, we reaffirm our commitment to regulatory compliance and enhancing client outcomes.

Enhancing access in regional and remote areas

Across Royal Rehab Group, we recognise the unique challenges faced by individuals in regional and remote areas, particularly in accessing high-quality support coordination services.

These communities often experience severe workforce shortages, making it difficult for residents to receive the care and assistance they need. To address these challenges, we leveraged the scale and capability of our disability services arm, Breakthru, to extend access to clients in remote and regional areas.

Expanding access to support coordination

By tapping into Breakthru's extensive support coordination network, individuals in remote and regional areas are receiving the same high-quality support as those in urban centres.

Promoting employment in remote areas

We have actively promoted Breakthru as an employer of choice in regional and remote areas. This strategy was designed to attract and retain talented professionals who are passionate about making a difference in their communities.

On 31 January 2024, we held a successful online recruitment event which attracted 21 candidates.

This event was instrumental in identifying and engaging potential employees from regional and remote areas.

Offers of employment were extended to 8 candidates from Tullamore NSW, Warragoon NSW, Buxton NSW, Cowes VIC, Dubbo NSW, Park Ave QLD, Kempsey NSW, and Herberton QLD.



Clare Jarvis, Regional and Remote Support Coordinator, Condobolin

Refining our service model

To better serve remote communities, we are continually reviewing and refining our business model and processes. This ensures that services are tailored to meet the specific needs of these areas, providing the most effective support possible.

Addressing capacity constraints

Our service also functions as a temporary overflow solution for referrals that cannot be allocated for face-to-face support due to capacity constraints in various locations.

This flexible approach allows for timely assistance regardless of location.



Achievements

Since February 2024, 52 regional clients have been successfully serviced, demonstrating the impact and reach of these efforts.

Implementing these strategic solutions and taking proactive steps demonstrates our dedication to supporting remote communities, enhancing access to essential services, and creating valuable employment opportunities in these areas. These initiatives aim to make a lasting impact on the lives of individuals and families across Australia.



Empowering lives through new initiatives

Through new partnerships and collaborations, we continue to empower the people we serve.

Breakthru and Good Housing partnership

Breakthru, Royal Rehab Group's disability services offering, partnered with Good Housing, specialists in disability housing, opening two new homes in FY23/24.

The Dee Why home

This home is now fully occupied, providing a supportive environment for five residents. The home is designed to offer a comfortable and nurturing space where residents can thrive.

The Macquarie Fields home

Opened in April 2024, this home currently accommodates four residents. The home is equipped with modern amenities and is designed to support the residents' independence and wellbeing.

The collaboration with Good Housing will expand the high-quality housing options available to those we serve.



Dee Why home



Macquarie Fields home



Client-created cookbook initiative

Launched in early 2023, the Client-created cookbook initiative empowers our clients by engaging them in the joy of cooking.

Recipes by our clients

Featuring diverse recipes from our clients, the cookbook promotes healthy eating while building a sense of community across our homes. Now available for purchase, the cookbook offers clients the chance to share their favourite dishes, taking pride in their contributions.

Supporting future initiatives

Proceeds from sales will fund further client-led programs, enhancing opportunities for clients to lead fulfilling, independent lives.

Responding to increased demand

Providing crucial care to clients with spinal cord injuries in rural areas.

The Spinal Outreach Service (SOS) at Royal Rehab, including the Rural Spinal Cord Injury Service (RSCIS) operates a 'hub and spoke' model with rural coordinators based in six local health districts across rural NSW.

In recent years, the RSCIS has faced increasing demand for services due to the over subscription of rural spinal clinics and a growing population of individuals with spinal cord injuries in rural communities. This has highlighted the ongoing need to upskill clinicians in specialised spinal cord injury management.

Traditionally, education sessions were conducted alongside RSCIS rural clinics. However, COVID-19 and the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme prompted the RSCIS to evolve its education services into a hybrid model, encompassing face to face and virtual sessions. This has allowed for greater reach and accessibility.

Rural education

A multidisciplinary team including medical, nursing, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and social workers play a vital role in delivering both virtual and face-to-face education. Covering the psychosocial and physical aspects of supporting clients with spinal cord injury, this approach is instrumental in bridging knowledge gaps for clinicians working with spinal cord injury clients in rural settings.

A notable recent example of the RSCIS's efforts was the Rural Education Project in Mudgee. Recognising the ongoing need for

capacity building and limited spinal cord injury knowledge among clinicians in the area, the RSCIS ran a face-to-face specialist spinal education session, which attracted 55 rural clinicians from across the Western local health district.

Virtual education

Virtual 'Lunch and Learn' sessions have been successful in reaching a broader audience.

Number of clinicians attending virtual sessions from 7 NSW health districts and the ACT:

- Introduction Part 1 - 150 attendees
- Introduction Part 2 - 119 attendees

Tailoring education programs

To ensure ongoing development, the RSCIS also conducts regular surveys among rural clinicians to identify current needs which allows the service to tailor programs to the changing healthcare environment. Through this initiative, the RSCIS identified skills gaps among rural clinicians including:

- Pressure injury management
- Wound care
- Equipment prescription
- Bladder and bowel management
- Addressing psychosocial issues including isolation and bed rest

By identifying knowledge gaps and evolving its services, the RSCIS is working towards ensuring people with spinal cord injuries and their clinicians in rural areas receive access to the specialised support they need, regardless of location.



Broadening access to services

Since its inception in July 2021, Royal Rehab LifeWorks has experienced significant expansion. Today you'll find us in Ryde, Cairns, Collaroy, Petersham, Penrith, Brisbane, Townsville, and Melbourne. This strategic growth aims to provide high-quality, evidence-based, clinician-led health and wellbeing services, reflecting our commitment to improving community health outcomes.

Ryde centre of excellence

Our Ryde facility is recognised as a centre of excellence for neurological rehabilitation and therapy. Located within our state-of-the-art technology centre, featuring over 25 pieces of advanced rehabilitation equipment—unmatched anywhere else in Australia—Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde takes a multidisciplinary approach, offering services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, exercise physiology, speech therapy, dietetics, and more.

Over this financial year, we served more than 750 clients, continuing our commitment to delivering cutting-edge care.

Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns

Officially opened in August 2023, our Cairns facility has quickly established itself with a team of 15 clinicians and a comprehensive range of services. The centre integrates advanced rehabilitation technologies like the Ergo Trainer and Smart Fit system, enhancing patient outcomes. Virtual reality technology further enriches therapy sessions.

Over the past year, we served over 600 clients, introducing new services in exercise physiology, physiotherapy, psychology, occupational therapy, and speech pathology. In June 2024, the centre launched health and wellbeing products, bridging clinical therapy with general health and fitness, and expanded its Parkinson's disease offerings.

Royal Rehab LifeWorks at Sargood

The transformation of Club Sargood into Royal Rehab LifeWorks at Sargood has allowed us to enhance our gym and recreation programs.

Located in the scenic surroundings of Collaroy, Royal Rehab LifeWorks at Sargood offers specialised services for individuals with neurological conditions. Our expert team provides activity-based therapy, developmental movement pattern training, and strength conditioning to support optimal outcomes.



Royal Rehab LifeWorks Petersham

In April 2024, we launched specialised rehabilitation and allied health services to the Inner West community. Located within Royal Rehab Private Petersham, we leverage our multidisciplinary expertise to ensure comprehensive care. The centre also offers specialised group programs targeting Parkinson's disease and osteoarthritis.



Our New Graduate Program

Launched in January 2024, our New Graduate Program has achieved an impressive 86% retention rate, with the first cohort now independently providing various allied health services.

Revolutionising accessibility

New hands-free initiatives at Sargood on Collaroy are creating a more inclusive and empowering environment for our guests.

Our team at Sargood on Collaroy is dedicated to developing solutions that allow all guests, especially those with unique mobility needs, to independently access and use the lift. This effort particularly focuses on guests who use a chin control to operate their power wheelchair or those who face difficulties with standard lift buttons.

In collaboration with Schindler Lifts Australia and The Home Automation Company, our team successfully developed a cutting-edge hands-free lift experience. This innovative upgrade incorporates sensor-based technology, allowing guests to simply approach one of two sensors corresponding to their desired floor. Once detected, the lift is automatically summoned, the doors open seamlessly, and guests are transported to their selected floor—all without any manual input.

We are thrilled to announce the successful implementation of this pioneering technology, marking the first of its kind at Sargood.

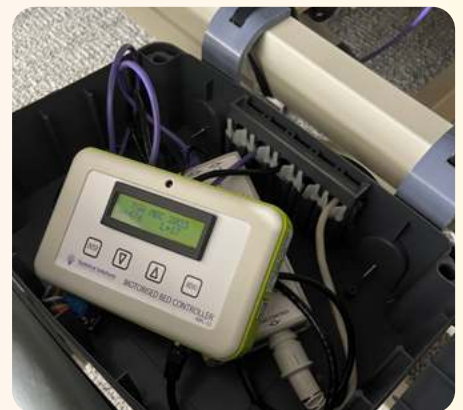
Our team at Sargood also embarked on an exciting project to upgrade all adjustable beds with voice control capabilities.

This enhancement empowers guests to independently adjust their beds using simple voice commands, an iPad, or their own smartphone. The technology is especially beneficial for guests with limited upper limb mobility, offering them greater autonomy and comfort.

Our team initially collaborated closely with the Technical Solutions team in Melbourne, who provided customised bed control and sensor kits for all 17 adjustable beds. Each kit is carefully housed in a bespoke control box, using 3D-printed components for easy attachment to the bed bases.

Looking ahead, the team is partnering with home automation expert John Frost from The Home Automation Company to integrate the bed controllers into our RTI Home Automation System. This integration will provide guests with a seamless experience, enabling them to control all aspects of their rooms—such as lighting, temperature, and bed adjustments—simply with their voice.

These initiatives represent our ongoing commitment to enhancing accessibility and creating an inclusive, empowering environment for our guests at Sargood on Collaroy.



A treat for over 65s

We were thrilled to host our first Golden Oldies Camp at Sargood on Collaroy, offering a group of over-65s the chance to experience the fun and inspiration of Sargood.



Many individuals over 65 are unable to attend Sargood due to the lack of NDIS funding for this age group. Additionally, spinal cord injuries in older adults are often caused by non-traumatic factors such as tumours or degenerative disorders, which do not qualify for funding. As a result, many rely on personal savings to access Sargood's services.

To address this gap, the Golden Oldies Camp, fully funded by the Sargood Foundation, provided a group of over-65s with the opportunity to experience Sargood at no cost. The camp prioritised rural and regional participants who often face limited access to specialised services and are at higher risk of social isolation due to their location.

This special week offered guests the assurance of receiving the highest standard of care, accessibility, and support, all while being treated with dignity. Guests were introduced to new adaptive recreational activities and benefited from peer-to-peer support. Many shared stories of being overlooked in the past, with some living with a spinal cord injury for over 40 years.

Activities included fishing at Narrabeen Lake, adapted cycling, equipment trials, yoga, and beach excursions using eight 4x4 electric wheelchairs. Social events, such as a Paint and Sip class, group dinners, and a leisurely lunch at Long Reef Golf Club, allowed guests and their partners to connect, relax, and share experiences. Partners also had the chance to meet others who understood the challenges of full-time care giving.

The Golden Oldies Camp fostered a renewed sense of adventure, empowering guests to push boundaries in a supportive environment. We deeply thank the Sargood Foundation for making this experience possible.

“The visit of Sir Peter Cosgrove and Rod McQueen and their wives and the talk Sir Peter gave, just topped off a perfect weekend.”

– LYNNE - GOLDEN OLDIES PARTICIPANT

FY23/24 at a glance

Breakthru
Community

1,978 NDIS clients supported

FMHSS

1,111 Families supported

175 Outreach activities

DES

844 Clients supported

131 Employment outcomes

Breaking Grounds

37K Hot drinks made

22 Student placements

Pathways

39

Clients supported between 2 concurrently run programs

Breakthru College

794 Students enrolled

370 Students graduated



Royal Rehab **Private Ryde**

315 Patient admissions

452 Patients attended Day Rehabilitation programs

Royal Rehab **Private Petersham**

412 Patient admissions

336 Patients attended Day Rehabilitation programs



Royal Rehab **LifeWorks**

Clients supported

813 Ryde

1,818 Community

191 Sargood

Sargood on Collaroy

762 Guests stayed

Team



Total number of employees

1,628

Royal Rehab Foundation



Received

\$373,160

Donors

283

Total payments

\$256,900

Beneficiaries

33



Royal Rehab Ryde Public Services



Brain Injury Unit

47

Patient admissions

Brain Injury Community Rehabilitation

45

Patients supported

Brain Injury Outpatient Clinic

103

Patients provided with specialist brain injury outpatient services

Spinal Cord Injury Unit

67 Patient admissions

Spinal Outreach Service

277 People provided with spinal outreach services

Spinal Injury Community Rehabilitation

568 Patients provided with community rehabilitation services

INVOC

68 Patients provided with vocational support services

Spinal Injury Outpatient Clinic

75 Patients provided with specialist spinal cord injury outpatient services

“ The best way to
find yourself is to
lose yourself in the
service of others. ”
- MAHATMA GANDHI



02

Our Services

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

Breakthru

Under the Breakthru brand we provide a comprehensive range of disability services in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Services include:

- **Support Coordination:** Helping 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:** Helping 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):** 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 support from those with lived experience, designed 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 high school leavers and 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 (FMHSS):** Early intervention support for vulnerable families and children displaying early signs of, or at risk of developing, mental illness.



Breakthru Penrith clients hanging out after a busy day working on their employment skills.



The Breakthru Brightstars performing at the Manning Entertainment Centre.

Royal Rehab LifeWorks

Royal Rehab LifeWorks operates multiple centres across the eastern states of Australia, each tailored to its community's unique needs and the expertise of its staff.

At Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde, located within our Advanced Technology Centre*, we specialise in neurological rehabilitation, blending advanced technology with our expertise to elevate care outcomes. In addition to our full range of allied health services—including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, exercise physiology, and dietetics—we also offer unique services like sexuality support, addressing vital yet often-overlooked aspects of wellbeing.

Our Collaroy centre stands out with a similar focus on neurological rehabilitation. We offer specialised allied health services designed to meet the needs of the Collaroy community, ensuring comprehensive and personalised support.

In Cairns, we provide high quality general allied health services, complemented by personalised, evidence-based exercise classes led by experienced clinicians.

Our services extend to Penrith, Brisbane, Townsville, and Melbourne, where we focus on wellbeing programs and behaviour support tailored to meet the diverse needs of each community.

Our Petersham centre delivers high quality allied health services and evidence-based group classes and programs led by experienced clinicians.

*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.

FNQ Health and Fitness

In Atherton, we work with local doctors and health professionals to offer customised exercise programs for chronic disease management, specialist rehabilitation, and general fitness.

We also support funded programs like Medicare, DVA, Workcover, NDIS, and others.

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

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 as 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, 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 support and equipment necessary to make each stay an enjoyable and supportive experience.

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



Faces from across Royal Rehab Group.



Breaking Grounds café

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

Designed with accessibility at its heart, Breaking Grounds café features adjustable benches, accessible cutlery, quiet spaces, and easy entryways, all seamlessly integrated to create a welcoming environment for everyone. Patrons 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 is deeply committed to being an inclusive space for all.

“ It always seems
impossible until it's done. ”
- NELSON MANDELA



03

Our Customers

Every individual has their own stories, dreams, and goals. Our programs and services are designed to empower each person to reach their full potential.

Here, we invite you to explore some of these inspiring stories with us.

Rediscovering mobility and confidence after injury

In April 2023, Mark's life changed dramatically when an accident resulted in an incomplete spinal cord injury.

The aftermath was a challenging period for Mark and his family, compounded by a misdiagnosis and inadequate rehabilitation. Facing this new reality, Mark felt overwhelmed and unsure of how he would manage the future.

Confined to his home in Brisbane and dependent on his family for daily care, Mark began to withdraw, feeling isolated and burdened by his circumstances. He struggled to see a path forward.

A turning point came when a support coordinator introduced Mark to Sargood on Collaroy. Initially, he saw it as an opportunity for his wife, Naomi, and daughter, Emma, to have a break, and planned a 10-day respite stay. Little did he know, this decision would shift his perspective and ignite a sense of hope.

When Mark first entered his room at Sargood, he was moved by the thoughtful design features, all aimed at promoting dignity and independence. With a tear in his eye, he felt a glimmer of optimism.

Guided by physiotherapist Kierre Williams, Mark began to rediscover his strength and potential. Kierre's personalised approach and encouragement reignited Mark's motivation and boosted his self-esteem.

Together, they focused on small, manageable steps to rebuild his mobility and confidence.

The supportive environment, skilled therapists, and beautiful setting inspired Mark to extend his stay at Sargood. For the first time, he felt he was making real progress. It also became a sanctuary for his family—Naomi and Emma—offering them a well-deserved break from their roles as full-time carers.



For Mark, Sargood was more than just a place for respite; it was a place of renewal. The man who once felt defeated was now ready to embrace life's possibilities. Naomi reflected on their experience:

“ The experience at Sargood was life-changing, transforming Mark from a 'no guy' into a 'yes guy'. ”

Mark, Naomi, and Emma look forward to the future, grateful for the support and empowerment they found at Sargood.

Exploring new possibilities with assistive technology

When Rob was diagnosed with motor neurone disease, he and his wife, Sue knew that the vibrant life they had built in Brisbane was about to change.

Rob had to give up his fulfilling volunteer role, where he transported life-saving blood on his motorbike. It was a tough farewell, especially as the disease continued to progress. Yet, even as the challenges grew, Rob's spirit remained unbroken.

At Royal Rehab LifeWorks Brisbane, occupational therapist Brooke Thorsen became a key support, helping Rob adapt to the changes in his life. Through the NDIS, Rob accessed a range of supports and assistive technology that opened up new possibilities.

A smartwatch now enhances his safety by alerting him to potential falls, and a specially designed bed provides comfort for both he and Sue.

A custom gaming keyboard allows him to continue his adventures in the virtual world through his favourite game, World of Warcraft, keeping him connected to friends and maintaining precious social ties.

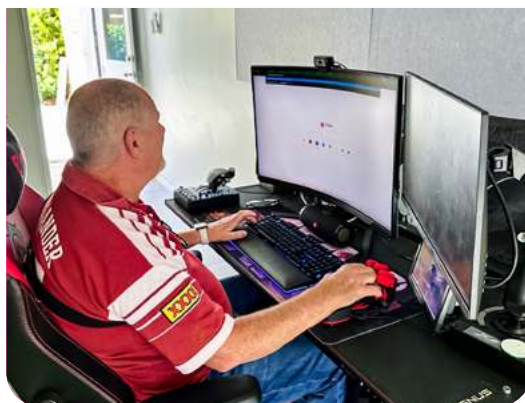
With modifications, their home has transformed from a reminder of limitations into a space of independence. A tilt-in-space wheelchair enables

Rob to navigate their steep driveway, while bathroom adaptations make daily routines easier. Simple but impactful items like an over-bed table, adaptive cutlery, and crockery also support his independence.

Perhaps the most powerful symbol of Rob's determination is the wheelchair-accessible van, secured with the help of senior occupational therapist Lauren Maloney, who facilitated NDIS approval for its modifications. The van has given Rob and Sue the freedom to travel once more—from the sunlit beaches of the Gold Coast to the vibrant streets of Sydney. It embodies Rob's refusal to let his condition hold him back.

Rob's journey is a powerful testament to the strength of the human spirit. Despite the physical challenges, his courage, love, and passion

for life continue to inspire those around him, proving that resilience can transform obstacles into opportunities.



Championing disability support through lived experience

Breakthru College client Julia Hurst, named Equity Student of the Year by the North Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) at the DESBT Awards held at Quayside Terminal, Townsville, in recognition of her exceptional journey and commitment.

Driven by her own experience with bipolar disorder, Julia decided to change her career path after six years in the beauty industry. She pursued a Certificate III in Individual Support through Breakthru College, following her passion for helping people with disabilities, including those in the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Today, Julia works as a support worker in palliative care with MiAbilities, making a meaningful difference to the lives of others.

She was nominated for the Equity Student of the Year Award by Breakthru College, an award that recognises individuals who have overcome significant challenges to succeed in their studies. Julia's dedication and resilience earned her the title of North Queensland's Equity Student of the Year, standing out among a competitive group of nominees.

Julia's remarkable journey and commitment continue to inspire and are truly worth celebrating.





*Julia, third from the left, alongside
members of the Breakthru College team.*

From internship to full-time employment

In the bustling kitchen of Ibis Styles Sydney, two dedicated workers move with confidence and skill.



Alex and Thomas, once interns, skilfully manage the kitchen's fast-paced flow, expertly adding the finishing touches to dishes. It's hard to believe they've only been with the hotel for a year. For both, securing employment once felt like a distant dream. Despite their passion and capabilities, living with a disability made securing full-time employment challenging—they encountered unfair stereotypes, limited opportunities, and periods of self-doubt.

When COVID-19 lockdowns left hotels short-staffed, Stephanie Lopesi, Director of Talent and Culture, was tasked with filling positions for the newly rebranded hotel. Determined to diversify the workforce, she introduced "People with a Purpose," a five-week paid internship program for individuals with disabilities to experience the hospitality industry.

Breakthru's Disability Employment Service partnered with the hotel, to provide candidates like 21-year-old Alex, a student of commercial cookery. Despite his skills and determination, Alex had struggled to find opportunities due to his disability. The internship allowed him to showcase his potential. In just five weeks, Alex became an invaluable member of the kitchen team.

"We wanted another Alex," Stephanie recalls. "That's how we got Thomas."

While Alex thrived in the kitchen, Thomas began his journey in a front-of-house role. Fresh out of school, he used the opportunity to build his confidence. Over time, he honed the skills needed to succeed and eventually transitioned to a full-time role, handling tasks that once seemed daunting.

The supportive environment at Ibis Styles played a key role in the success of both young men. Early on, Chef Dennis frequently reminded Alex and Thomas to stay positive, advice that deeply resonated. One hectic day, as the stress mounted in the kitchen, Alex noticed the tension. Stepping in to calm his mentor, he said, "Chef, relax. Remember to stay happy and positive." Chef Dennis took Alex's advice, and together they restored order in the kitchen.

Today, Alex and Thomas are full-time employees, showing that with the right support, opportunities, and belief, individuals with disabilities can thrive and achieve their full potential. Their journey highlights the life-changing impact of inclusive initiatives and the importance of creating opportunities for all.



Harnessing strengths and building connections

Bright, passionate, and enthusiastic, Emily has a remarkable ability to connect with others. Yet despite her vibrant personality, Emily faced significant challenges transitioning from school to employment.

This shift can be daunting for anyone, but for Emily, who lives with a disability, it felt particularly overwhelming.

After completing her HSC in 2022, Emily felt uncertain about her future. She had the potential to succeed but lacked direction. The turning point came in 2023 when she joined Breakthru's School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) program.

Breakthru has been a cornerstone of the Dubbo community for nearly two decades, empowering individuals with disabilities through programs like SLES. The program provides clients with the tools and support needed to secure long-term employment, focusing on developing life skills and exploring various career pathways.

From the moment Emily joined Breakthru, she found a supportive environment that celebrated her achievements and helped her manage her uncertainties. Her friendly nature quickly led her to form close connections with other clients, creating a strong network of friends.

Emily's journey has included exploring career pathways and gaining job readiness skills through a variety of activities. She participated in work placements and volunteer roles, including with the Salvation Army, and engaged in community events to broaden her experience.

Her creative side has also flourished—Emily showcased her singing talent at The Rockstars of Breakthru concert, an annual event that celebrates client talents. As a member of Drama Club Dubbo, she values Breakthru's support in nurturing her theatrical skills.

Driven to make an impact, Emily now serves on the Breakthru Client Leadership team, acting as a liaison between the organisation and clients. Recently, she presented information about SLES to students and staff at Dubbo College, demonstrating her growing confidence and leadership abilities.

“I really enjoy being at Breakthru and learning new things. We learn about different industries and jobs, and we role play real-life scenarios to practice employability skills.”

— EMILY

Looking ahead, Emily's goal is to secure paid employment. With her growing skills, confidence, and the robust support network she has developed through Breakthru, she is ready to take the next step toward her bright future.



Developing skills and confidence for the workplace

Connor's future felt uncertain - facing unfair barriers, his dream of securing long-term employment seemed distant. But Breakthru Townsville's School Leaver Employment Support (SLES) program became the turning point he needed, helping him transform fear into confidence.

With our team's support, Connor crafted a professional resume, practiced interview techniques, and developed essential life skills for his path to employment. He also began building the social skills and confidence needed to navigate the workplace.

A breakthrough came when our team introduced Connor to Shane, a supportive and understanding employer at Bridgestone Select Townsville. Shane didn't just offer Connor a job—he created an environment where Connor could thrive.

At first, Connor faced several challenges. His knowledge of the tyre industry was limited, and he needed time to build the strength and fitness required for the manual tasks. As a newcomer, he also had to adjust to the expectations of the role. However, his determination and eagerness to learn quickly became clear. He earned his driver's license, enabling him to move vehicles in and out of the workshop. He also took on responsibilities like checking paperwork for accuracy.

Connor's enthusiasm led Shane to entrust him

with more tasks. "Although he hadn't used rattle guns, jacks, or torque wrenches before, he jumped in with both feet, giving it everything to learn," Shane recalls.

A year on, Connor's transformation is truly inspiring. He now manages duties across the entire tyre shop and even assists in training others, showing his remarkable growth and dedication. His hard work, combined with

the support from Breakthru Townsville, has enabled him to flourish in his role.

Connor's success extends beyond the workplace. His confidence has blossomed, improving his overall wellbeing and opening new opportunities. His story is a powerful reminder of how

inclusivity and personalised support can transform lives.

By providing the right support and fostering an adaptable work environment, Breakthru and Bridgestone Select Townsville have shown that unlocking potential is possible for individuals living with disabilities, helping them lead fulfilling, independent lives.



*Connor managing duties across
Bridgestone Select Townsville.*





Terry expressing his creativity through painting.

Achieving independence with tailored support

In December 2023, Terry, a Breakthru client living with cerebral palsy, began an exciting new chapter in his life. He moved into a supported independent living unit in Dee Why, marking a major step toward greater independence and personal growth.

Previously, Terry lived in a shared home, which he found too noisy. Now, in his own unit within a supported living arrangement, he enjoys the peace and quiet he values. This move has allowed him to create a space that suits his needs and preferences perfectly. With drop-in support from Breakthru, Terry has found a great balance between independence and assistance. His home is brightened by his cat, Emerald, and three goldfish, providing companionship and warmth.

Terry's week is filled with activities that keep him energised. He loves visiting the local pool for exercise and enjoys the freedom of being in the water. He also takes trips to the nearby mall, where he keeps up his social life.

Terry is also an accomplished boccia player with several medals, showcasing his dedication and talent.

Beyond sports, he expresses his creativity through painting, with regular visits to the beach serving as inspiration. His passion for painting began during sessions on the beach with his support worker, which eventually led him to join local art classes. These classes have helped him grow as an artist while also creating new friendships.

Recently, his talent earned him a commission from Good Housing to create a painting—a milestone in his journey as an artist.

Moving into supported independent living has opened up a world of possibilities for Terry, greatly enhancing his quality of life. His story shows the transformative power of the right environment and support, empowering people living with a disability to live fulfilling, independent lives.

Nurturing wellbeing with individualised support

Margot's journey is one of resilience and faith.

After devoting 22 years as a nun serving the poor in the Philippines, Margot has now settled in Cairns, embracing a new chapter in her life.

Despite facing health challenges, including peripheral neuropathy and Charcot foot, which resulted in two unsuccessful surgeries, Margot has chosen to forgo further operations. Instead, she relies on customised orthotic shoes and the expert support of Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns to help manage her condition and maintain her independence.

Living with reduced mobility and chronic shoulder pain had made daily activities increasingly difficult for Margot until she found Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns, a not-for-profit organisation that resonates with her values. What started as attending one group class per week has blossomed into a routine of two in-clinic group sessions, one hydrotherapy session, and two physiotherapy groups each week.

Margot also meets regularly with our psychologist, Matthew, and exercise physiologist, Thanasi, to work on her personalised goals.

Her primary objectives are ambitious yet inspiring: she aims to walk up to one kilometre without walking sticks and dreams of embarking on a pilgrimage through Europe, particularly to Croatia and Medjugorje in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For Margot, these goals symbolise not just physical achievements but also a way to reconnect with her spiritual journey. She reflects, "It's made me hopeful for the future because I would never have thought of going on a pilgrimage, but I feel I've progressed quite a lot under their care."

Now, living independently again, Margot has also rediscovered her passion for gardening. "This last month I've been able to get in and do gardening, and it's looking good!" she says with a smile. She speaks highly of the Royal Rehab LifeWorks Cairns team, describing the centre as her "happy place".



*Margot enjoying her time
tending to her garden.*



Resilience in recovery

Michelle's journey through two significant health challenges and her path to recovery highlight the strength of supportive care.

Before facing her own health battles, Michelle was dedicated to healthcare, managing programs for discharging hospital patients. Despite living with asthma, she led an active life—until an unexpected diagnosis changed everything.

On the morning of August 3rd, 2020, a routine check-up with her GP revealed an issue in her left lung. This was later confirmed as stage 4 lung cancer, leading to several weeks of hospitalisation at Royal North Shore Hospital. The cancer treatment significantly impacted Michelle's mobility. After her discharge, she sought rehabilitation and, wishing to be closer to her daughter, relocated to Petersham.

There, she was referred to our Royal Rehab Private Petersham facility, where her journey toward recovery began.

Initially, Michelle felt hesitant about therapy, especially the exercise component, which she had always found daunting. However, the supportive and encouraging environment changed her outlook. As she engaged in physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, exercise physiology, and speech therapy, her reluctance gave way to enthusiasm. Her family witnessed her newfound motivation and joy as she began to embrace the rehabilitation process.

In November 2023, Michelle faced another challenge—a stroke that led to her admission as an inpatient at our Petersham facility.

During her stay, she worked on regaining mobility in her right leg and hand while also receiving cognitive and speech therapy.

With the guidance of Jess Dyball, a speech pathologist, Michelle made remarkable progress, improving her speech. Jess provided exercises for her to continue at home, encouraging patience and persistence.

“Michelle's rehab progress has been truly inspiring to me. Each session, I watched Michelle grow stronger and more confident,” shared Carla Colagrossi, an Exercise Physiologist at Royal Rehab Private Petersham.

Now discharged, Michelle continues to focus on improving her mobility and independence at home, diligently practicing the exercises given by her rehab team. Her experience at Royal Rehab Private Petersham has been transformative, and she remains grateful for the exceptional support she received.



Michelle, third from the left, with members of the Royal Rehab Private Petersham team.

Finding strength through sport and rehabilitation

Eliza, a vibrant young woman from Bathurst, has always been passionate about sports, with netball, touch football, and long-distance running playing a huge part in her life.

But her world changed when she began noticing a tingling sensation in her left hand. Then came the worsening headaches and the growing weakness on her left side.

As her condition deteriorated, Eliza was rushed to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA) in Sydney, where doctors diagnosed a serious condition—bleeding in her brain caused by a malformed artery. Eliza underwent surgery and spent four challenging weeks in intensive care, followed by eight weeks in a hospital ward.

Leaving RPA was bittersweet. Upon discharge, Eliza was unable to stand or walk, beginning a challenging journey of rehabilitation ahead. Her parents, wanting the best for her recovery, visited a number of rehabilitation centres before choosing Royal Rehab Private Ryde. They were drawn to the facility's warmth and capabilities.

When Eliza first arrived at Ryde, she was apprehensive - the thought of being away from her parents weighed heavily on her. But she soon discovered the support she needed within Royal Rehab. The staff's kindness, compassion, and attentiveness made her feel safe and well cared for, both physically and emotionally. Her parents could stay when she needed them most, which helped ease the transition.

"The whole time at Ryde, it didn't feel like a hospital to me. It just felt like such a nice environment. I guess that's what I loved about it," Eliza shared.

Eliza's rehabilitation journey was intense, with twice-daily physiotherapy sessions focused on walking and daily occupational therapy to help regain movement in her left hand and arm. During her time at Ryde, she formed a close bond with her occupational

therapist, Veronica, and her physiotherapist, Lucy, whose enthusiasm and dedication made each session feel more manageable and even enjoyable.

After ten weeks of hard work, Eliza achieved her biggest goal—she was able to walk again and regain movement in her left arm and hand. Her progress was remarkable.

Now back home, Eliza has slowly returned to the activities she loves, including playing netball, touch football, and running. Though she's still working toward her previous level of performance, she's filled

with gratitude for being able to get back into the sports she treasures.

Reflecting on her experience, Eliza feels incredibly fortunate. "Walking out of Royal Rehab on my own two feet after coming in on a bed was an amazing achievement". For Eliza, the journey may have been intimidating, but with the care, support, and encouragement of the Royal Rehab Private Ryde team, she has overcome more than she ever thought possible.



A path to renewed mobility and confidence

Elle's experience highlights the impact of supportive care and her determination to overcome significant health challenges.

After eight months of hospitalisation—three at Royal North Shore and five in rehabilitation at Ryde Hospital—Elle was finally discharged home. It was only then that she discovered she had also sustained a spinal cord injury, adding new challenges to her recovery journey.

Impressed by the advanced technology and reputation, Elle requested a referral to Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde, where her rehabilitation program included weekly physiotherapy and exercise physiology sessions, along with occupational therapy as needed.

Her occupational therapist, Kate, was pivotal in choosing the right equipment for her needs, such as a pressure-relieving mattress, a custom shower chair, and motorised wheels for her wheelchair. Kate also assisted Elle in transitioning from an electric wheelchair to a more practical manual chair, greatly improving her mobility and comfort.

Working closely with Elle, her exercise physiologist, Bethany, designed a personalised gym program aimed at strengthening her upper body for wheelchair use.

Meanwhile, physiotherapist Sonia utilised the Erigo®Pro robotic device to support Elle in achieving standing positions and facilitating leg movements. This advanced technology was crucial in maintaining her muscle function, preventing atrophy, and fostering steady

progress, helping Elle rebuild her strength and confidence.

“ Sonia saw me at the very beginning when I was struggling and in tears, unsure of how I would ever move forward. To see where I am now, and to have Sonia see that progress too, has been incredible. ”

- ELLE

Elle's goals included extending the time she can comfortably sit in her wheelchair and eventually returning to driving, particularly for her commute to work. Although her recreational activities are currently limited, she finds joy in knitting and building Lego sets at home, both of which keep her engaged and positive.

Reflecting on her experience at Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde, Elle describes the centre as a supportive and proactive environment where staff continuously adapt therapies to suit her evolving needs.

Despite the complexities of her injuries, Elle's journey is a testament to resilience and the transformative impact of specialised rehabilitation services.



*Elle soaking up the fresh air
and sunshine outdoors.*

“ The strength of the team
is each individual member.
The strength of each
member is the team. ”

- PHIL JACKSON



04

Our People

Our organisation is proud to have a dedicated team of more than 1,000 professionals who are committed to excellence. We place a strong emphasis on diversity and are actively focused on creating an inclusive workplace culture that reflects the communities we serve.

Leading with passion and purpose

Carla Colagrossi, a Senior Exercise Physiologist, at Royal Rehab LifeWorks Petersham brings a deep passion for health and fitness to her role.

With a keen interest in health, fitness and sport, Carla pursued a Bachelor's degree in Exercise and Sport Science, followed by a Master of Clinical Exercise Physiology. Her experiences volunteering in a brain injury rehab unit as well as working with cancer survivors revealed to her that exercise could be a form of 'medicine'. This insight solidified her decision to specialise in this field, blending her passion with purpose.

Carla has been with Royal Rehab Group for over six years, beginning as an Allied Health Assistant at Royal Rehab Private Ryde. She gained valuable experience as an Exercise Physiologist at our Ryde and Petersham facilities, ultimately advancing to a senior role at Royal Rehab LifeWorks Petersham.

Carla enjoys the variety her role provides, working across diverse settings like the gym and hydrotherapy pool. She is particularly interested in neurorehabilitation, focusing on how exercise can promote neuroplasticity to benefit people with neurological conditions. This focus drives her to create innovative and engaging exercise programs that enhance recovery and function for individuals with neurological conditions such as stroke, Parkinson's disease, and spinal injuries.

Working alongside like-minded professionals keeps Carla inspired and passionate, allowing her to bring creativity into her exercise prescriptions.

She finds reassurance in her supportive team, who play a vital role in motivating clients and celebrating their achievements.

"The most rewarding aspect of my work is seeing clients become empowered to incorporate exercise into their daily routine independently"

Two standout programs that Carla passionately supports are the PD Warrior® and GLA:D® programs. The PD Warrior® program is designed specifically for individuals with Parkinson's disease, incorporating targeted exercises to improve mobility and cognitive function. Carla's certification as a PD Warrior instructor allows her to provide specialised care that helps clients gain control and confidence over their condition.

Similarly, the GLA:D® (Good Life with osteoArthritis: Denmark) program addresses hip and knee osteoarthritis, offering education and personalised exercises to alleviate pain, enhance mobility, and boost activity levels. Carla's role in these programs is crucial in building a supportive community and advancing the services Royal Rehab provides.

Carla's dedication and innovative approach to exercise physiology exemplify the values and impact of Royal Rehab LifeWorks Petersham, making her a vital asset to our team and a driving force in advancing client care.

“ The most rewarding aspect of my work is seeing clients become empowered to incorporate exercise into their daily routine independently. ”

- CARLA COLAGROSSI



Driving excellence through education and training

On June 6, 2024, Gil Sabarre, an Employment Trainer at Breakthru College, received the prestigious NSW Training Award for South-West Sydney, along with the prestigious Ken Downie Award.

This recognition is given to trainers who demonstrate exceptional dedication to vocational education and training, and Gil's commitment was celebrated by all who know him.

Having joined Breakthru College as an employment trainer in 2015, Gil's passion for teaching and ability to inspire change in his students is what sets him apart.

"I love training because I can see the immediate impact on my students' lives—their interests and their willingness to learn. It's a humbling experience, and I never expected such recognition. Education is a teacher's legacy, and I hope to keep making small but meaningful changes in people's lives," says Gil.

Isabelle Durkin, Breakthru College's National Training Manager, has worked closely with Gil for several years and praises his influence: "This award reflects Gil's dedication and the positive impact he has on both students and colleagues. His passion for nurturing talent and helping others grow is inspiring.

"Gil's influence extends far beyond the classroom, earning him respect and admiration from everyone he works with."

His students echo these sentiments, appreciating his drive to turn potential into achievement. His classroom is known as a dynamic and supportive space where learning is engaging and enjoyable.

Wenqian Cen, one of Gil's students, says: "I feel honoured to have Gil as a teacher. He's a leader, helping us see through the fog of the future"

Young Joo Lee, another student, notes: "Class was always fun. He made learning easy, even for those of us who have English as a second language."

Gil's award not only celebrates his past achievements but also highlights the lasting impact he continues to make. His passion for education exemplifies the profound difference one dedicated individual can bring.

“ I love training because I can see the immediate impact on my students' lives. ”

- GIL SABARRE



Finding his calling

Wahib Al Hawli, Service Manager at Breakthru Home and Living, has carved an inspiring path since his arrival from Lebanon in 2019.

Initially uncertain about his career path, Wahib's journey began when he applied for a support worker position at Royal Rehab's disability services in December 2019.

This decision would prove to be a turning point, as he quickly fell in love with both the role and our organisation.

From the outset, Wahib was struck by the supportive environment cultivated by his managers, benefiting both staff and clients alike. A pivotal moment came during a 2020 staff meeting when our CEO shared his journey to leading an organisation. This story resonated with Wahib, igniting his ambition.

August 2023 saw Wahib acting as Service Manager, a position he officially assumed in September of the same year.

In this role, he brings a unique perspective, drawing from his experience as a former support worker to empathise with the challenges faced by his team.

Wahib's leadership philosophy is centred on the belief that client satisfaction is intrinsically linked to staff wellbeing. He prioritises the growth and empowerment of his team, focusing on nurturing future leaders within the organisation.

Reflecting on his rapid rise within Breakthru, Wahib attributes his success to his passion and eagerness to embrace new opportunities. His journey from a student volunteer in Lebanon to a leadership position in Australia is a powerful example of what can be achieved through dedication.

For Wahib, Breakthru is more than just a workplace—it's a calling. His story serves as an inspiration to others, demonstrating that with the right attitude and support, one can transform a job into a fulfilling career.



Pioneering adaptive recreation

Sebastian (Seb) van Veendaal is the Business Development and Program Manager at Sargood on Collaroy.

Since joining Wheelchair Sports NSW in 2012, Seb has become a driving force in adaptive recreation in Australia. His career began with wheelchair rugby, quickly rising to Team Manager for the Australian Wheelchair Rugby Team. His expertise expanded to supporting Paralympian teams across various sports, but his passion for community recreation is what sets him apart.

At Royal Rehab Group, Seb spearheaded the 'Return 2 Sport' program, organising an annual expo at Sydney Olympic Park and developing adaptive tennis and cycling initiatives. In 2017, he joined Sargood on Collaroy as a program leader, where his vision for group activities flourished. Recognising the benefits of peer learning, camaraderie, and confidence-building, Seb transformed the program into a comprehensive adaptive recreation initiative.

Now serving as Business Development and Program Manager, Seb oversees a team, creating innovative programs in cycling, mountain biking, surfing, snorkelling, ocean swimming, and bushwalking. His philosophy centres on enabling people to pursue their passions or discover new recreational interests, positioning him at the forefront of adaptive recreation in Australia.

Seb's success stems from his deep understanding of the spinal cord injury community and his strong communication skills. He appreciates staff members who demonstrate a can-do attitude, enthusiasm, and willingness to learn.

Seb has achieved remarkable milestones. The introduction of Kids Camp, where families take over Sargood on Collaroy for a week, stands out as a highlight. The Golden Oldies Camp, offering new adventures for over-65s, is also a resounding success.

Seb's approach has led to the launch of roadshows, bringing adaptive recreation to regional New South Wales. The introduction of trips to UrbnSurf, a surf park, has provided year-round surfing opportunities in controlled conditions.

Looking ahead to 2025, his vision for growth includes monthly peer support community BBQs, expanded roadshows, kids' camps for different age groups, and the introduction of new activities.

Seb's journey in disability sport and adaptive recreation is marked by dedication and ground-breaking achievements. His tireless efforts continue to push boundaries and break down barriers for inclusion, bringing the joy of adaptive recreation to as many Australians as possible with spinal cord injuries.



Bringing joy through recreational therapy

Taleah Critchley is passionate about helping clients discover—or rediscover—the leisure activities they love.

Taleah started her career in recreational therapy at an aged care facility, before joining Royal Rehab LifeWorks as an Allied Health Assistant.

Taleah's work is diverse and dynamic. Based at the Advanced Technology Centre in Ryde, she incorporates innovative technology devices to enhance her clients' therapy programs. She also visits clients in their homes and local communities, including pools, beaches, and even go-kart tracks. At the Newington Armory cycling hub, Taleah conducts cycling assessments on recumbent bikes, working closely with physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech therapists to create safe, effective ways for clients to return to the activities they enjoy.

Taleah witnesses firsthand how recreational therapy can positively impact mental health. She finds great satisfaction in helping clients regain joy, build social connections, and engage with their community through regular activity programs. "It's amazing to see the transformation when someone returns to an activity they love or discovers a new passion," she says.

One of her clients, Deni, who has paraplegia, dreamed of returning to surfing. Taleah designed a step-by-step program to help him rebuild his skills. They started with transfers between his wheelchair, the floor, and the pool, then worked on balancing on the surfboard and paddling techniques. They even did underwater safety drills to prepare him for waves. Today, Deni is back in the water, surfing with family and friends—something he once thought was impossible.

Taleah is inspired by her clients' progress and enjoys hearing about their leisure goals. She also appreciates the collaborative environment at Royal Rehab: "Our team is amazing at supporting each other. If you're stuck with a problem, they help you see it from a different perspective."

Taleah is excited to see how recreational therapy is becoming an essential part of the multidisciplinary approach to rehabilitation. For her, it's not just about physical activity—it's about enriching lives and creating moments of joy.

“ At Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde, I have the opportunity to work with diverse technologies and collaborative teams, to expand my knowledge. ”

- TALEAH CRITCHLEY



Pioneering force in rehabilitation medicine

Dr Anuka Parapuram is making strides in Parkinson's disease rehabilitation at Royal Rehab Private Petersham and Ryde.

Originally from Malaysia, Dr Parapuram earned her medical degree from the University of Wales, UK, and became a Rehabilitation Physician in 2008. Her passion for enhancing patients' quality of life through comprehensive care has shaped her career.

Her focus on Parkinson's care began a decade ago when she met a patient facing significant challenges early in his diagnosis. Motivated to make a difference, she established a multidisciplinary program for early diagnosis and intervention, initially at Metro Rehab Hospital (now Royal Rehab Private Petersham). Collaborating with Movement Disorder expert Prof. Simon Lewis, she expanded the program, emphasising quality of life improvements for her patients.

Dr Parapuram stays at the forefront of her field through her membership with the Movement Disorder Society and collaboration with the Westmead Movement Disorder Team. She also provides inpatient and day programs for patients undergoing deep brain stimulation surgery, addressing both motor and non-motor symptoms like anxiety and cognitive decline through a holistic approach.

Incorporating cutting-edge technologies, her team at Royal Rehab Private Ryde now uses the C-Mill, a body-weight support system with virtual reality for gait improvement, and the ZeroG Gait and Balance Training System, which supports patients' body weight during therapy to boost confidence and reduce fall risk. These advancements are unique to Royal Rehab and have significantly elevated rehabilitation practices.

Dr Parapuram also contributes to education as a Trainee Supervisor for Advanced Rehabilitation Trainees and a Clinical Tutor at the University of Sydney Medical School. Her commitment to mentoring the next generation of specialists ensures ongoing innovation in rehabilitation.

Through her work, Dr Parapuram continues to transform patient lives, blending clinical expertise with compassionate care and advancing the field of rehabilitation medicine in Australia.



Celebrating a decade of dedication

Katrina Hammond has been a vital part of Breakthru since rejoining in September 2014, marking nearly a decade of exceptional service.

Originally starting her journey as a Business Trainer and Project Officer in 2007, she returned when Breakthru acquired the Workwise RTO, bringing a wealth of experience back to our organisation.

In her current role as National Practice Lead for NDIS Employment Supports, Katrina oversees and supports over 90 Employment Support workers and leaders across Australia. Her role involves sharing best practices, ensuring high-quality service delivery, developing resources, and engaging with clients, schools, and providers. She plays a major part in recruitment, coaching, and training, making a significant impact nationwide.

Katrina's contributions to Breakthru have been invaluable. She introduced the "Discover My Career" tool for School Leaver Employment Support (SLES) clients, helping them match their interests with over 1,500 Australian job options, guiding them toward their ideal careers.

She also launched the "Ahoy to Employ" initiative, which helps younger clients gain part-time work experience while still in school, building their skills and confidence. Additionally, Katrina has organised national online sessions for the SLES program, engaging nearly 100 clients and staff with industry insights and job training.

Katrina is passionate about the people she works with and the innovative spirit of Breakthru. She appreciates the organisation's commitment to inclusion and its belief that everyone has a place in the workforce. Witnessing clients surpass their goals and experiencing the transformative power of employment fuels her dedication to her work.



Driving positive change in Queensland

Matt Greensill's commitment and leadership have been instrumental in shaping the NDIS team at Breakthru Brisbane. Through his dedication, Matt has created a client-focused and collaborative environment, ensuring that services across South East Queensland continue to grow and thrive.

Since joining Breakthru as a Disability Employment Services (DES) Manager for our Fortitude Valley and Hunter Valley sites, Matt has become an invaluable team member. His exceptional leadership skills earned him the role of DES Partnerships Manager, and in December 2023, he transitioned to his current position as Service Manager for the NDIS team.

In his role, Matt leads a dedicated team that provides support coordination, School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES), employment assistance, and core supports to clients across the region.

Matt has also been a driving force in building a client-centric culture, ensuring that services are aligned with the needs and goals of clients. Matt is dedicated to developing his team, offering mentorship and guidance that empower them to thrive in their roles and make meaningful contributions to the lives of clients.

Matt values the supportive and passionate team at Breakthru, appreciating the organisation's genuine care for both clients and staff. He finds the collaborative spirit and shared commitment to improving clients' lives the most rewarding part of his role.

With a decade of experience in the disability sector, Matt believes in the profound effect of meaningful employment. He finds fulfilment in helping clients achieve goals they once thought were out of reach. As Breakthru continues to grow, particularly in Queensland, Matt is excited about future opportunities and career progression that will allow him to keep contributing to the organisation's success.

We appreciate Matt's dedication, leadership, and positive impact, and look forward to his continued success with us.



“ An investment in
knowledge pays
the best interest. ”
- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



05

Research

We take pride in our extensive history of promoting critical thinking and inquiry to deepen knowledge and understanding in rehabilitation and disability. Our aim is to enhance the quality of life for those we support through this commitment to learning and growth.

Advancing rehabilitation

The opening of the Advanced Technology Centre at our Ryde campus in July 2022 was a fantastic opportunity to examine new technologies in rehabilitation.

Julie Pryor, the Director of Research at Royal Rehab Group, recognised that introducing advanced tools alone wasn't enough to change clinical practice. Julie, with her strong clinical background and deep understanding of Royal Rehab, was well-positioned to design a meaningful research study.

While she knew clinician support was crucial, there was limited guidance in existing literature on how to effectively integrate new technologies. This led to a plan for a study focused on advanced rehabilitation technologies, aiming to benefit not only Royal Rehab, but also other rehabilitation organisations and the broader field of research.

At Royal Rehab, it's common for clinicians to pursue higher degrees. This made it a significant advantage when Louise Pearce, a senior physiotherapist at Royal Rehab LifeWorks Ryde, expressed interest in including this study as part of her PhD, which is funded by a scholarship from The University of Sydney. Consequently, a study was launched to examine clinicians' experiences, perceptions, and adoption of the new technologies during the first year after the Advanced Technology Centre's opening. Conducting research is a routine part of operations at Royal Rehab, and the

site's managers fully supported this study. Louise's academic supervisors, Leanne Hassett and Cathie Sherrington, collaborated with Julie, an experienced PhD supervisor, bringing together valuable expertise and resources.

The study required clinicians from all services at the Ryde campus to document their use of the new technologies. An online template was developed in collaboration with clinicians ensuring ease of use for both parties. This data collection enabled analysis of technology use over a 12-month period, producing detailed utilisation reports for local managers. The ongoing feedback facilitated timely adjustments based on real-time data.

Additionally, the study invited multidisciplinary clinicians at Ryde to share their personal experiences and views on the new technologies through interviews conducted over the year. Participation was voluntary, and researchers ensured the confidentiality and privacy of the data collected, allowing clinicians to speak candidly. The support from managers and the interest of clinicians led to 63 interviews with 25 allied health professionals from various rehabilitation services, providing valuable insights into this new phase at Royal Rehab.



The research revealed that clinicians used advanced technologies 4,208 times with 269 patients in the first year. This extensive use made it one of the largest observational studies embedded in practice concerning advanced rehabilitation technologies.

The data offered new insights into the most frequently used technologies, categorised by clinician discipline, patient type, and rehabilitation service. These findings are useful for selecting devices, implementing technology, and guiding future research.

Interviews with clinicians highlighted the process of integrating technology into practice. The results pointed to practical strategies for addressing contextual factors, supporting clinicians through

practice changes, and fostering a positive organisational culture with strong leadership. Overall, the success of implementing advanced technologies depends on clinicians leading the change within a supportive, people-centred environment.

The study has resulted in two manuscripts currently under review for scientific journals and has attracted attention locally, nationally, and internationally. It has been presented at eight conferences (including two international, five national, and one local), by six Royal Rehab staff members. Additionally, undergraduate and Master's students from various universities have contributed to data collection and analysis, providing excellent feedback on their experiences.

This Royal Rehab project demonstrates the benefits of collaborative in-house research, where local clinical and research knowledge combine to produce valuable, practice-based evidence relevant to our services and the field of rehabilitation.

The project also demonstrates how clinicians pursuing advanced research degrees can undertake meaningful projects within their own workplace. As reflected by Louise, who will submit her PhD at the end of September 2024, "The reward from seeing research directly impact clinical practice provides a deeply fulfilling experience that motivates me to be both a better clinician and researcher."

“ Act as if what
you do makes a
difference. It does. ”
- WILLIAM JAMES



06

Our Foundation

Philanthropy has always been at the heart of Royal Rehab Group's purpose, thanks to our founder, Susan Schardt, who actively sought donor support to assist individuals living with disabilities.

The visionary spirit that Susan instilled in us continues to guide us as we work towards a more inclusive world.

Making a meaningful impact

At Royal Rehab Group, we are committed to improving the lives of our clients. Through our Foundation, we aim to bridge gaps and ensure that those in need receive the support they genuinely deserve.

Our Foundation prioritises funding in key areas such as:

- Equipment purchases for individuals with unique circumstances
- Additional therapeutic needs
- Bespoke services
- Advanced technologies for our LifeWorks centres

We do not fund business expenses, such as salaries or wages, nor do we cover items and services already provided by other sources.

Ways you can help

Your generosity can make a significant difference in our efforts. Here are some impactful ways you can contribute:

- **One-time donations:** A single contribution can provide immediate support for individuals in need, funding anything from therapy sessions to necessary equipment.
- **Recurring donations:** Setting up a monthly or annual donation. This reliable source of funding helps us plan and sustain our programs over time.
- **Corporate sponsorships:** Businesses can partner with us through sponsorships or matching gift programs, amplifying their impact. Collaborating with the Royal Rehab Foundation not only benefits those in need, but also showcases your commitment to social responsibility.
- **In-kind donations:** Contributions of goods or services—such as equipment, technology, or volunteer time—are invaluable. These donations help us to allocate more resources directly to those we serve.
- **Event sponsorship:** Supporting fundraising events, such as our luncheons or community runs, provides visibility for your organisation while helping us raise crucial funds. Your sponsorship can enhance the event experience and draw more participants.
- **Tribute donations:** Honour a loved one or commemorate a special occasion by making a donation in their name. This thoughtful gesture not only supports our cause but also creates a meaningful legacy.
- **Bequests:** A bequest is a charitable gift made through your will or estate plan. It allows you to designate a specific amount, a percentage of your estate, or particular assets to the Royal Rehab Foundation.
- **Fundraising:** Get involved in our upcoming fundraising events by participating as a runner, baker, or volunteer! You can also create your own fundraising initiative—like a concert or sports tournament—using your unique talents. Engage your networks through social media to raise awareness and funds and share personal stories about how our programs have made a difference. Your time and enthusiasm can help to inspire others to contribute.

Another year of incredible support

FY23/24 was a year of remarkable generosity, with the Royal Rehab Foundation receiving a total of \$373,160 from our generous supporters. We are particularly grateful for the major bequest of \$150,000, and the incredible \$100,000 donation from our friends at the Ducati Owners Club of New South Wales—their support continues to make a transformative impact.

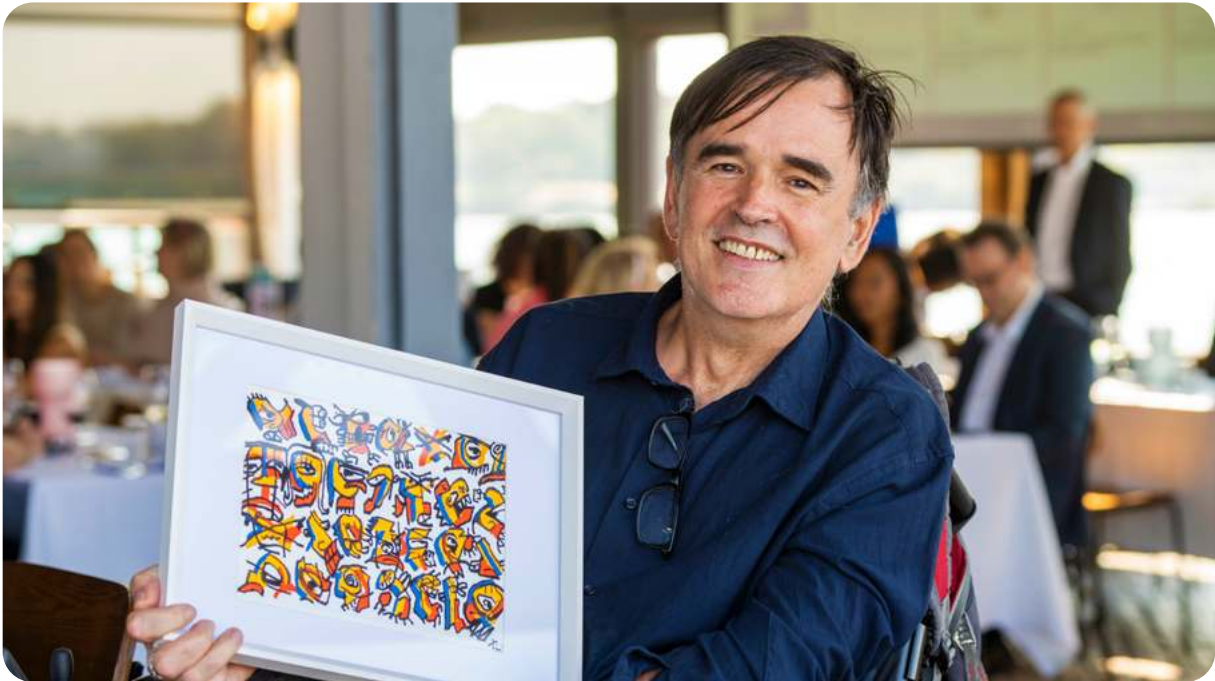
We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our donors. Your contributions enable us to make a real difference in the lives of those we support.

Over the past financial year, the Foundation approved 33 grants, including 27 grants directly supporting individuals and 6 grants for broader services. These grants, averaging \$6,000 each, helped fund essential needs like:

- Furniture for individuals transitioning to independent living
- Assistive technologies and work-related tools for people returning to employment
- Travel support for clients accessing vital services
- Counselling and psychiatric support
- Supportive equipment

The Foundation distributed \$256,900, thanks to your generosity. Your support helps bridge gaps and provide essential resources to our clients. We're immensely grateful and look forward to an even greater impact in the year ahead.





A day of generosity and inspiration

We were thrilled to raise over \$35,000 at a fundraising lunch, held at the iconic Sydney Theatre Bar. With its unique warehouse-style charm and breathtaking views of Sydney Harbour and the Bridge, the venue provided the perfect backdrop for a day filled with camaraderie, delicious food, and heartwarming stories.

Guests enjoyed a two-course lunch while soaking up the sunshine and bright blue skies. A highlight of the event was the live demonstration of the EksoNR, an advanced exoskeleton technology demonstrated by a Royal Rehab client who courageously shared his story of overcoming a spinal cord injury and the transformative impact of cutting-edge rehabilitation technology.

Our CEO Matt Mackay explained that such technologies are made possible entirely through the generosity of our supporters.

The event featured an exciting raffle, offering great prizes such as a corporate suite for 18 guests to Sam Smith's Gloria the Tour at Qudos Bank Arena, a luxurious beachside holiday stay, a signed Wallabies jersey, exquisite wines, and an original artwork personally signed by the event's MC, Tim Ferguson.

Tim Ferguson, well-known Australian comedian, director, and author, hosted the event and shared his personal experience of living with multiple sclerosis (MS) since the age of 19, offering an insightful and touching perspective on the importance of rehabilitation. His humour and openness made for an unforgettable afternoon that celebrated the power of community and generosity.



“ Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence. ”

- SHERYL SANDBERG



07

Our Leadership

Royal Rehab Group's leadership team and Board of Directors comprise of highly talented individuals, each bringing 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 AM
MBBSBA FRACGP FAFRM
FFPMANZCA GAICD
DIRECTOR



Clara Cutajar
BBUS CA
DIRECTOR



Paul Billingham
MBA (AGSM) FCA GAICD RITP
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

“ Our goal is to provide the highest quality of care and services, ensuring that everyone we serve receives the exceptional support they deserve. ”



Special thanks

To our patrons, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, and Mr. Dennis Wilson, your unwavering support is greatly appreciated.

To our valued partners and donors, your ongoing support and generosity truly means the world to us.

We sincerely thank our customers for their trust in our services, which inspires us to consistently strive to deliver the best possible outcomes.

To our dedicated staff, your compassion and hard work are at the core of our success, enabling us to deliver outstanding support and services.





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