noah's ark



Annual Report 2026

Think Bigger

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Cover Image:

Sam Forster, Untitled (detail), 2024. Acrylic on paper. Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia.

Acknowledgement:

Noah's Ark Inc. acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to Elders both past and present.

01



Welcome and Strategic Overview

A Shared Organisational Compass for the Future

In preparation for the development of Noah's Ark's 2026–2030 strategy, we revisited our Organisational Compass to ensure it continues to reflect who we are, why we exist and the future we are working towards.

Noah's Ark's Organisational Compass was informed by the concept of collective ambition described by Douglas A. Ready and Emily Truelove in the Harvard Business Review. Their work presents a compass as a way of bringing an organisation's purpose, vision, priorities, promise, values and leadership behaviours into one connected framework. Rather than treating these as separate statements, the model shows how they work together to create shared direction and guide everyday decisions. The original model places purpose at the centre, supported by the other elements needed to turn shared ambition into action.

Our revised Organisational Compass retains this central idea while updating the language to reflect Noah's Ark today and the future we want to help create.

At its centre is our purpose: to build better future for children with disabilities and additional needs. Our vision describes the future we are working towards, where children and families thrive in inclusive communities. Our mission explains how we contribute to that future by building the capability of families, professionals and communities to support the development, wellbeing and participation of children of all abilities through evidence-informed services, programs and learning.

The Organisational Compass also describes what success looks like for Noah's Ark. This includes knowledgeable and capable professionals, a strong culture of learning and shared values, leadership in practice and research, sound governance and a thriving, reputable and financially sustainable organisation. These foundations enable us to remain a service provider and employer of choice while increasing the impact we can create for children, families and communities.

Together, our values guide our decisions, relationships and the experience we strive to create for everyone who engages with Noah's Ark.

Our promise makes these commitments practical. We will listen and work in partnership, share current information and knowledge, and be reliable, open and honest. We will support people to build their knowledge, skills and confidence and ensure our purpose, vision and values are evident in all that we do. Our work will remain focused on achieving meaningful outcomes and making an impact.

Our Organisational Compass is reinforced by six leadership behaviours: grow people and capability, deliver quality outcomes, strengthen trust through openness and action, lead with courage and accountability, think beyond the individual and team, and steward risk, compliance and organisational sustainability. Together, these behaviours recognise the role leaders play in translating shared ambition into consistent action.

The revised Organisational Compass gives us a common point of reference as we move into our next strategy. It connects our long-term ambition with the way we work today and helps ensure the choices we make continue to build better futures for children, families and communities.

Our values remain unchanged and continue to define how we work.

1. **Respect** means we listen, collaborate and value every voice.
2. **Kindness** means we lead with empathy, compassion and care.
3. **Optimism** means we focus on strengths and believe in potential.
4. **Quality** means we strive for excellence and continuous improvement.

Year in Review

74,550
Total hours of support

97%
of surveyed families said they were happy overall with our services

Number of children supported by program

930
Preschool Field Officer Program (PSFO)

2,240
Everyday Learning and Therapy (ELAT)

204
Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS)

97%
agree that working with Noah's Ark has achieved their goals

290
Number of staff

90%
said they were provided with information about their rights

97%
said they increased their confidence in advocating for their child's needs

91%
agree that Noah's Ark helped them find ways to support their child's learning and development

89%
said Noah's Ark helped their child to play and connect with other children

"Noah's Ark became involved with my family over 30 years ago. Their programs, including therapy, playgroups, toy library, childcare inclusion support, respite and camping programs provided much needed support, understanding, amazing experiences and lifelong friendships. I'm forever grateful for your organisation! Thank you."

— Noah's Ark family



President's Report

Every child deserves the opportunity to participate, belong and thrive.

As I reflect on the past year, I am reminded of the simple but powerful reason Noah's Ark exists: every child deserves the opportunity to participate, belong and thrive, and every family deserves to feel supported, respected and heard. This purpose continues to guide every decision we make and every service we deliver. It is evident in the work of our teams alongside children, families, educators and community partners, and it remains the foundation of our vision for the future.

This year's theme, **Think Bigger**, challenged us to look beyond growth for growth's sake and focus instead on increasing our impact. It encouraged us to ask how we can use our expertise in inclusion, early childhood, education and family support more effectively to create lasting change for children and families. We know that meaningful change happens through relationships, trust and persistence, but we also recognise the importance of influencing the broader systems that shape children's lives.

Throughout the year, Noah's Ark continued to strengthen its work with schools, kindergartens and early childhood services, while actively contributing to conversations about policy, funding and inclusion. By sharing our knowledge more broadly and building strong partnerships, we are helping create environments where more children can participate and succeed. This commitment to both direct support and system-level influence is central to our future direction.

As the environment around us continues to evolve, we have embraced the need to learn, adapt and innovate. Changes across the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), education systems and broader reform agendas require organisations like Noah's Ark to remain responsive and forward-looking. We are committed to exploring new ideas, testing opportunities and using technology wisely, always with the goal of improving outcomes for children and families. While innovation will be important, the relationships at the heart of our work will always remain our greatest strength.

A significant milestone this year was the appointment of Noah's Ark's next Chief Executive Officer. After a thorough and rigorous recruitment process, the Board was delighted to appoint Penny Callaghan to lead the organisation into its next chapter. Penny demonstrated the qualities we believe Noah's Ark needs for the future: a deep commitment to children and families, strong operational leadership, and the ability to navigate uncertainty while staying firmly connected to purpose. We are excited about the leadership she will bring as we continue to evolve and grow our impact.

At the same time, we acknowledge the remarkable contribution of John Forster, whose 26 years of leadership have helped shape Noah's Ark into the trusted and respected organisation it is today. His dedication, vision and commitment to children and families have left an enduring legacy, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for his service.

Noah's Ark's greatest asset continues to be its people. Every day, our staff bring skill, compassion and optimism to their work with children and families. I would particularly like to acknowledge our key workers, whose close relationships with families provide valuable insight, support and advocacy. Their work, often carried out quietly behind the scenes, makes a profound difference in the lives of those we serve.

I also extend my sincere thanks to our families for their trust, to my fellow Board members for their stewardship and guidance, and to our many partners, supporters and funders who help make our work possible. Together, we are creating stronger opportunities for children and communities. We also farewelled Board members Dr Tim Moore and Nancy Black this year and thank them for their valued contributions and commitment to Noah's Ark.

As we look ahead, we do so with confidence and optimism. While the years ahead may continue to bring change and uncertainty, Noah's Ark is well positioned for the future. We have a clear purpose, strong foundations, a committed Board and leadership team, and a talented workforce dedicated to making a difference. Through our emerging 2030 Strategy, we will continue to diversify, innovate and grow our impact while remaining steadfast in our commitment to children and families.

Thank you to everyone who is part of the Noah's Ark community. Together, we will continue to **Think Bigger**, learn together and create opportunities for every child to thrive.

Vikki Morris
Noah's Ark President

CEO's Report



Noah's Ark has remained committed to evidence-informed practice and ensuring children and families receive effective, inclusive support.

As this is my final Annual Report after 26 years as CEO Of Noah's Ark. I want to acknowledge what an honour it has been to work in an organisation dedicated to improving the lives of children with disabilities and developmental delays and their families. The sense of vocation among Noah's Ark staff, the commitment of families, and the support of educators and the broader community have made it an extraordinary organisation to be part of.

This year has been one of continued progress and achievement while also marking an important leadership transition.

The NDIS has been a challenging environment in which to work over the past decade, and that remains the case. While the challenges and the time taken to respond to major reviews are understandable in a reform of this scale, they are taking a toll on families, service providers and community confidence. It is vital that the NDIS remains focused on delivering its mission for people with disability and their families while addressing the costs and complexities of implementation. The decisions it makes have profound impacts on people's lives.

Despite significant change across the disability and early childhood sectors, Noah's Ark has remained committed to evidence-informed practice and ensuring children and families receive effective, inclusive support.

I am proud not only of what the organisation has achieved, but also of how it has achieved it. Noah's Ark has grown from a respected service provider into a nationally recognised leader in early childhood intervention, inclusion and family-centred practice. Our influence extends well beyond the children we directly support through research, workforce development, policy, and the sharing of practice across Australia and internationally.

This is reflected in our recent inclusion research with the Victorian Government, workshops on child agency, strengthened relationships in New South Wales and the ACT, our expanding professional learning program, and our focus on emerging areas such as Embedded Learning and child attachment. It is equally evident in the daily work of our teams alongside educators and families.

None of this has been the work of one individual. It reflects the commitment, expertise and generosity of our staff, Board members, families, partners, donors and supporters. Together we have built an organisation grounded in respect, innovation, collaboration and the belief that every child belongs and can thrive within their family and community.

Knowing the strength of the Noah's Ark team, I hand over to new leadership with great confidence. The need for Noah's Ark's contribution remains strong, and the organisation is well placed to continue shaping policy, strengthening practice and supporting children and families for many years to come.

It has been an extraordinary privilege to serve Noah's Ark and the community alongside it. Thank you to everyone who has shared this journey. I leave with enormous pride in what we have achieved together, and every confidence that Noah's Ark will continue making a vital contribution to supporting families as they raise their children and helping communities respond in ways that enable every child to thrive.

John Forster
CEO

> "Together we have built an organisation grounded in respect, innovation, collaboration and the belief that every child belongs and can thrive within their family and community.

A conversation with Noah's Ark's new Chief Executive Officer, Penny Callaghan

Our New CEO



After serving as Chief Operating Officer and a member of Noah's Ark's Executive Leadership Group, Penny commenced as CEO in July 2026. Board President Vikki Morris sat down with Penny to discuss the future of Noah's Ark and what excites her most about the opportunities ahead.

Vikki: You've been part of Noah's Ark's leadership team for some time. Why did you want to become CEO?

Penny: It comes back to purpose. Over the past few years, I've seen first-hand the incredible difference Noah's Ark makes in the lives of children, families and communities. Leading an organisation with such a strong reputation, talented people, lived values and clear purpose is both a privilege and an opportunity. Noah's Ark has an exciting future and I want to help shape the next chapter.

Vikki: What should people know about you as a leader?

Penny: I'm optimistic by nature, but also pragmatic. I care deeply about people and relationships, while recognising strong organisations need accountability, clarity and a commitment to quality. I value listening, collaboration and creating an environment where people can do their best work, and I absolutely believe high performance and genuine care for people can and should coexist.

Most importantly, I believe my role is not only to think about today's priorities, but to ensure Noah's Ark remains strong, relevant and sustainable for future generations of children and families.

Vikki: As you step into the CEO role, what will stay the same at Noah's Ark?

Penny: The things that matter most. Our commitment to children and families as the centre of everything we do. Our belief in inclusion and our focus on evidence-informed practice, a family-centred approach and a commitment to delivering high-quality services and supports. Advocacy has always been part of Noah's Ark's DNA and will continue to be an important part of our contribution to the sector.

Vikki: What opportunities do you see for Noah's Ark's future?

Penny: One of our biggest opportunities is to continue building a strong and sustainable organisation in a changing environment. That means diversifying our revenue streams, exploring new opportunities that align with our purpose, and thinking creatively about how we deliver impact. There is such enormous potential to build on our expertise, partnerships and reputation to reach even more children, families and communities.

What excites me most is that Noah's Ark has never been an organisation that stands still. We have very strong foundations, but we also have people who are curious, creative and willing to embrace new ideas. That gives me confidence we can continue to evolve while remaining true to our purpose.

Vikki: What do you see are the biggest challenging factors facing Noah's Ark and the broader sector?

Penny: The pace of change. Ongoing government policy reforms and changes within the NDIS are creating uncertainty for organisations, workforces and families alike. Navigating that change while remaining focused on quality and sustainability will be critical. At the same time, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce continues to be one of the sector's biggest challenges.

Vikki: This year's Annual Report theme is Think Bigger. What does that mean to you?

Penny: To me, **Think Bigger** is about looking beyond today's challenges and considering the broader impact we can have. It's about asking how we use our expertise, partnerships and influence to create more inclusive communities and better outcomes for future generations. I've seen that mindset demonstrated across Noah's Ark this year through innovation, collaboration and a genuine commitment to continuous improvement.

Vikki: What do you love most about Noah's Ark?

Penny: Without doubt, the people. Every organisation has values, but what makes Noah's Ark special is that our people genuinely live them. Kindness, respect, optimism and quality aren't just words on a page, they're reflected in the way people work with children and families, support one another and approach their work every day. Our people don't just talk about the values; they are the values. That's what I love most about Noah's Ark, and it's what gives me confidence about our future.

Vikki: Looking ahead to this time next year, what would success look like?

Penny: Success would mean that we've strengthened both our impact and our sustainability. I'd like to see us growing partnerships, creating new opportunities to share our expertise and continuing to adapt confidently to change. Most importantly, I'd like to know that more children and families are experiencing inclusion, participation and belonging because of the work we do.



02

Think Bigger: for Children, Families, Educators and the Community

Think Bigger In everyday practice

Think Bigger is not only about major initiatives or large-scale change. It can begin in small, everyday moments: a child joining an activity, a family feeling more confident, an educator trialling a new approach, an allied health professional identifying a practical strategy that improves participation, or a community becoming more inclusive.

Across our work with children and families, the programs we deliver and support, and our learning and development activities, we bring specialist knowledge into homes, early childhood education and care services, schools, allied health practices, playgroups and community settings. We work alongside children with disability or developmental delay, families, educators and other professionals to strengthen participation, communication, inclusion, learning and belonging.

Our impact extends beyond direct support. Coaching, training, modelling and practising strategies together build the confidence and capability of families, educators and professionals, helping effective approaches become part of everyday routines and environments. A strategy developed with one child in mind can strengthen wider practice and benefit other children through the application of learning to new situations or different goals. Training can strengthen an entire team or service. A partnership can make support more accessible to many families.

This is **Think Bigger** in everyday practice: using specialist expertise, trusted relationships, coaching, training and partnerships to extend our impact and create meaningful, lasting change for children, families, educators and communities.

Service Delivery Snapshot



20
Sites across VIC, NSW & ACT

4.96
Average years spent with Noah's Ark

121,441
Total hours of support

- **ACT**
  Clients: 67
  Support Hours: 1,688
- **Albury-Wangaratta**
  Clients: 222
  Support Hours: 5,620
- **Bairnsdale**
  Clients: 120
  Support Hours: 2,844
- **Ballarat**
  Clients: 34
  Support Hours: 972
- **Bendigo**
  Clients: 223
  Support Hours: 5,536
- **Casey/Cardinia PSFO**
  Clients: 1,293
  Support Hours: 4,320
- **Echuca & Swan Hill**
  Clients: 146
  Support Hours: 4,995
- **Frankston**
  Clients: 80
  Support Hours: 2,034
- **Geelong**
  Clients: 172
  Support Hours: 4,963
- **Heidelberg & Ringwood**
  Clients: 198
  Support Hours: 5,780
- **Hoppers Crossing**
  Clients: 133
  Support Hours: 3,796
- **Horsham**
  Clients: 32
  Support Hours: 668
- **KIS-Additional Assistants**
  Clients: 285
  Support Hours: 59,038
- **KIS-Specialist Consultancy**
  Clients: 26
  Support Hours: 117
- **Maidstone**
  Clients: 162
  Support Hours: 4,623
- **Malvern**
  Clients: 140
  Support Hours: 3,729
- **Melton**
  Clients: 81
  Support Hours: 1,997
- **Morwell**
  Clients: 88
  Support Hours: 2,363
- **South Morang**
  Clients: 122
  Support Hours: 3,562
- **Springvale**
  Clients: 139
  Support Hours: 2,657
- **Swan Hill PSFO**
  Clients: 55
  Support Hours:139

Think Bigger In action

Strengthening Parent Support Program

In March we launched a private Strengthening Parent Support Program (SPSP) Facebook group. This page was created as a safe, supportive space for parents and carers in the Gippsland region to connect, share experiences, ask questions and support one another.

Since that time, the site has enabled over two dozen families to access information from the SPSP Coordinator, Noah's Ark and government services, as well as opportunities for social connection both in-person and online.



ECIS-CoS

Decades of early intervention experience drives the delivery of the Early Child Intervention Service Continuity of Support program at Noah's Ark.

More commonly known as ECIS-CoS, we provide services to more than 100 families in Victoria through this Department of Education-funded program.

The service provides crucial, evidence-based early intervention support for children with disability or developmental delay in the years before they begin school.

ECIS-CoS supports children and families who are ineligible for NDIS or other funded supports.

Enhancing Playgroup through Allied Health Support

In Geelong, we partnered with Meli to embed an allied health professional in twice weekly playgroups to provide real-time support.

Staff focused on building trusting relationships through play-based interactions such as drawing, singing, building with blocks and games. These interactions created opportunities to model skills and support children's development in a natural, engaging way.

Staff also worked alongside playgroup facilitators to support families, build confidence and share evidence-informed guidance, including supporting bilingual language development.

> "It's been incredibly rewarding to support the families in a space where they already felt comfortable and connected. We've loved working with the children and seeing their growth throughout the term.
>
> **Ailish Glennen, Acting Team Leader**

Bundoora Family Connection Day

In July 2025, our Bundoora team hosted a family meet-and-greet event featuring information from both Noah's Ark and local community networks.

Staff shared our origins as a toy library and highlighted the importance of community connection through events like this. Yarra Plenty Regional Library provided information on library services and supported families with individual enquiries. Advocating for Children with Disability (ACD) contributed resources and showbags, while Grill'd Plenty Valley generously provided lunch through its Local Matters program.

Services for Schools Expo

In February we exhibited at the Services for Schools Expo at Malvern Town Hall and shared how Noah's Ark can support students, staff and school communities.

Our staff explained how Speech Pathologists and Occupational Therapists can complete an observation and then work with the school to plan for their needs and set goals to support determining their funding direction.

Examples of collaboration include deciding which children may benefit from participation-based allied health support, questions around unsettled classes or routines, or extra support on developing a particular academic skillset, such as handwriting.



Our Impact In everyday practice

Who we work with

- 168 Continuity of Support clients
- 3,961 Therapy clients
- 21 Schools
- 9 Universities
- 290 Staff
- 3 Playgroups
- 4 States/ Territories
- 1,028 Preschools/Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Hours of service delivery

ECECs	8,406	Home Visits	15,139	School Visits	8,376
Office Visits	1,070	Telehealth	4,659	Groups	1,172
Community Visits	1,063	Research	3,522	Learning and Development	263

Parent workshops: building confidence to support child agency

Children develop agency through the relationships and experiences around them, and families play a critical role in supporting participation, decision-making and self-expression. Through the Bystanders to Changemakers project, funded through a grant from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, we developed and delivered parent workshops to help families understand child agency and explore practical ways to support it in everyday life.

The workshops focused on translating evidence about child agency and the benefits of involving children as active participants into practical strategies families could use in ways that worked for their child and family context. Through discussion, reflection and real-life examples, parents and caregivers explored how everyday opportunities—such as making choices, expressing opinions, contributing to family decisions and taking on new responsibilities—can help children build confidence, independence and decision-making skills over time. The workshops also created opportunities for families to share experiences and learn from one another.

A consistent message throughout the workshops was supporting child agency is not about expecting children to make all decisions independently. Rather, it is about creating meaningful opportunities for children to participate in ways that reflect their strengths, preferences, communication styles and individual circumstances. Children express their ideas, perspectives and choices in many different ways, and adults can learn to notice, understand and respond to these forms of communication with curiosity, respect and confidence.

Hours by funding source

	Hours
Continuity of Support	3,871
School Visits	6,804
Group	1,172
PSFO	4,594
NDIS	51,993
Research	5,100

Language support

198 Families with a main language other than English

107 Families who required an interpreter

Family survey results word cloud

1. What do you value most about the services provided by Noah's Ark?

2. What does or what do you believe your child would say about the services they have received from Noah's Ark?



Feedback from participating families highlighted the value of practical strategies that could be incorporated into everyday routines. All parents and care givers who provided feedback agreed they felt more confident in their understanding of child agency and why it matters, with 91% strongly agreeing. Many also reflected on the importance of intentionally creating opportunities for participation rather than waiting for children to take the lead.

The impact of this work extends beyond the workshops themselves. By building the capability and confidence of parents and caregivers, we help create environments where children's voices are heard and valued across home, education and community settings. Together with the Child Agency Toolkit (see Page 19) and co-designed child resources, the workshops contribute to a broader culture of participation and inclusion, supporting children to develop the agency and decision-making skills they will draw on throughout their lives.



Quality and Impact Measurement

3.91
goals/plan

7,071
individual client goals were measured

2/3
of goals measured achieved clinically significant change of ≥ 2

65%
for performance

65%
for satisfaction

3.04
change score for performance

1,578
service plans

3.07
change score for satisfaction

Key Word Sign

Building inclusion through communication

Noah's Ark's Key Word Sign workshops equip families, educators and professionals to help people with complex communication needs express themselves, build relationships and participate more fully.

Key Word Sign is a form of augmentative and alternative communication that does not require equipment or technology. It uses selected signs from Auslan, together with natural gestures, facial expression and body language, alongside speech. Signing key words can improve understanding, expression and interaction for children and adults who have difficulty understanding or using spoken language.

Key Word Sign is different from Auslan, which is a complete, natural visual language used by Australia's Deaf community, with its own grammar and vocabulary. Like other living languages, it changes over time. Key Word Sign follows spoken English and uses signs to support communication rather than functioning as a separate language.

Facilitated by Certified Key Word Sign Presenter and Team Leader Alanna Jinks, the workshops build practical skills and confidence to create more inclusive communication environments.

As Alanna explains, the goal is not simply to learn individual signs, but to support rich, back-and-forth interaction and access to language. Key Word Sign can reduce frustration, deepen connection and help people participate more actively in decisions and community life.



Playgroup Partnerships Pave the Way

When allied health professionals join established playgroups, families can access evidence-based early childhood intervention in a relaxed, familiar environment.

Playgroups are familiar, long-established community settings where children and families can learn, connect and share experiences.

In Term 4 2025, Noah's Ark explored how working within established playgroups could help children and families connect with support, in settings where they already felt comfortable and connected. Through the Allied Health in Playgroup Pilot Project, two Noah's Ark Speech Pathologists worked in playgroups in Victoria, bringing their specialist knowledge of early childhood development.

The pilot was delivered in partnership with Communities for Children Bendigo and PlayConnect+ in Melbourne.

The pilot demonstrated how we can partner with established playgroups to provide visiting allied health support in trusted community settings. It also reflected the model proposed by the Thriving Kids Advisory Group, with earlier support delivered through community-based services already used by children and families.

Amanda Lonergan is employed by Noah's Ark to support the delivery of Communities for Children Bendigo's Voice of the Family program. She says allied health professionals can play a valuable role within playgroups by meeting families where they already feel comfortable and connected, while also building the capability of facilitators.

"Playgroups are spaces where families can build friendships, share experiences and grow in confidence as parents and carers" Amanda says.

"Supported playgroups add another layer by offering access to trained early years professionals who can support families and help build their confidence and skills."

Amanda says allied health in playgroups lowers the barrier to accessing services in an environment where families can observe, listen and engage in ways that feel safe for them.

"I've seen how this trusted, informal approach supports rapport, reduces parental anxiety and opens the door to earlier connection and support" she says.

"Playgroups also provide a unique opportunity for allied health professionals to model strategies in real time."

Amanda says working within playgroups also supports a strengths-based and community-focused approach.

In practice, allied health professionals within playgroups can:

- provide guidance and support in a relaxed, everyday environment
- identify developmental or wellbeing concerns early
- connect families with trusted services through warm referrals
- strengthen connections between families, services and community supports
- encourage social connection and inclusion
- build the capability of playgroup facilitators

"Importantly, this approach is not only about supporting individual children or families" Amanda says.

"It is also about strengthening the wider community by building trusting relationships, increasing access to support and creating inclusive spaces where families feel valued, connected and empowered."

Noah's Ark General Manager Impact and Outcomes, Lauren Falconer, says the pilot showed a clear opportunity to partner with other organisations and extend visiting allied health support through established playgroups.

She says the pilot also demonstrated just how well this model of service delivery aligned with the Thriving Kids Advisory Group's proposed model.

"We welcome this opportunity for reform and change and are really excited about the opportunity that Thriving Kids will present as a system that aligns with families and children and best practice in Early Childhood Intervention" Lauren says.

"Noah's Ark has valued the opportunity to share our expertise to complement existing work happening in supported playgroups. We are excited about opportunities to further this work, through continuing to provide in-reach support and by creating our own playgroups where gaps currently exist.

Following the pilot, Noah's Ark is continuing to explore funded and fee-for-service partnerships that extend on this pilot. This creates opportunities to reach more families in familiar community settings while also building the capability of playgroup facilitators and strengthening local support networks.

Inclusion in Action

A school partnership built on trust, expertise and everyday practice

At Dinjerra Primary School in Braybrook, inclusion starts early. Before new Prep students have even settled into their first year, the school is already asking what each child needs to feel safe, welcome and ready to learn, and that is where Noah's Ark has become part of the school's rhythm.

Noah's Ark's Occupational Therapist Kimberly Doidge and Speech Pathologist Mary Lin work closely in the Prep year level, alongside Assistant Principal Catherine Robertson and Prep teacher Nerissa Hatton, thinking through classroom challenges together.

For Catherine, that is the point of true inclusion. "At Dinjerra, we believe every child has the right to be part of their classroom – not just physically present, but genuinely included" she says.





Starting before the first day

Kimberley and Mary observe students during Prep transition sessions, so they can collectively identify what supports a child might require. "In Prep, children arrive with different strengths, needs and ways of engaging" says Nerissa. "Some are ready for the routines of school. Others need more support with regulation, focus, communication and sensory processing."

If Nerissa is unsure what will help, Mary and Kimberley observe together, talk it through and trial strategies in real time. "Sometimes it's as simple as a wobble cushion or some earmuffs" Kim says. "I'll just go and grab something and try it with the child – and if it works, I'll feed that back to the teacher."

A partnership built on trust

The relationship began through support for individual students under the NDIS. When Victoria's Disability Inclusion Funding model was introduced three years ago, the school first engaged Kimberley for occupational therapy support, with a focus on classroom observation, practical strategies and building teacher capacity. "They understand schools. They understand classrooms" Catherine says. "And from day one, they felt like part of the team."

Working alongside teachers

A key strength of the partnership is that the work happens within the classroom, not in isolated sessions. Mary takes the same embedded approach to speech, language and social participation and for her, building teacher capacity is central to the work, because the teachers are the ones in the room every day. “If I can build a teacher’s understanding of what supports communication and participation,” she says, “the impact continues long after I’ve left the room.” For Nerissa, this has turned support into a genuine working relationship. “It’s not just me on my own” she says. “We work together to solve things.”

Noah’s Ark’s role is to add another lens, not replace teacher expertise. “Teachers bring a deep knowledge of curriculum, learning and classroom relationships,” Catherine says. “Noah’s Ark brings specialist understanding of regulation, sensory processing, communication and functional participation – it’s a different lens, and builds teacher confidence to include every child.” Nerissa’s own language and confidence have grown too. “I can describe more clearly what I am seeing in the classroom, write more specifically in reports, and speak more confidently with families” she says.

Outcomes that last

Each week, Kimberley and Mary complete a record of their visit, noting observations, strategies trialled and recommendations made. Over time, those records build a detailed, evidence-based picture of how students are participating and what adjustments are already in place, supporting Disability Inclusion Profile applications. “What’s been the best outcome from working with Noah’s Ark is that we’ve been hugely successful with obtaining funding to take our support to a deeper level” Catherine says. “We’ve been able to employ Noah’s Ark to provide that deeper inclusion expertise alongside our educational expertise.”



To watch the Case Study, scan the QR code



Think Bigger: Helping the Sector Grow



03

Child Agency Toolkit



Supporting children to have a voice

At Noah's Ark, child agency is one of our key practice principles because we recognise supporting children to be involved in decision-making helps prepare them for the future. While child participation is widely recognised as a right, many children—particularly children with disability—continue to have limited opportunities to influence decisions about their goals, supports and everyday experiences. During 2025 and 2026, with funding from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, we developed the Child Agency Toolkit, a blended learning package designed to help professionals who work with children and families strengthen children's participation in decision-making and embed more child-centred approaches in their work.

The toolkit combines online learning with three peer coaching sessions delivered over three months. The online content helps practitioners understand the evidence base and how it can inform their work. The peer coaching sessions include individualised action planning and provide opportunities for participants to trial strategies between sessions, reflect on the outcomes and refine their approach within their own service setting.

A particular focus of the coaching sessions is supporting practitioners to navigate the complexity that often accompanies child-centred practice. This includes exploring how to work in ways that support children to share their ideas and actively participate in decisions, how to seek and respond to the perspectives of children who may not communicate directly, and how to balance child participation with the individual values, priorities and cultural contexts of families.

Bridging the gap between theory and practice remains one of the greatest challenges in professional learning. Understanding a concept does not automatically lead to confident and consistent implementation. By combining online learning with peer coaching, the Child Agency Toolkit is designed to support practitioners to translate ideas into practical strategies that can be sustained in everyday practice.

Evaluation data collected throughout the project showed very large improvements in participants' understanding of children's rights and the benefits of child agency. Participants also demonstrated substantial gains in supporting children and families across different cultural contexts and where people held diverse perspectives. Six-month follow-up data showed these changes were being maintained over time. One participant reflected that they "no longer see a child's behaviour in a session as something to be managed. I now recognise it as communication and a sign to pause and check in about what we're doing." More than 200 people from every Australian state and territory have participated in the training, including allied health professionals, teachers, early childhood educators and library staff.

Importantly, the impact of this work extends beyond practitioners. As professionals who work with children and families adopt more child-centred approaches, children have greater opportunities to express preferences, make choices and contribute to decisions about their supports and services. Practitioners are also better equipped to help families understand and support child agency in ways that align with their own values and culture. Over time, these everyday opportunities help children develop the confidence and decision-making skills that will support them throughout their lives.

This project reflects Noah's Ark's commitment to **Think Bigger** by investing in sustainable practice change that benefits not only individual children and families, but also the broader systems and services that support them.

Participant feedback:

"It's been incredibly rewarding to support the families in a space where they already felt comfortable and connected. We've loved working with the children and seeing their growth throughout the term."

"I am excited to share my learning with my team and also when other colleagues complete the training, so we can discuss as a wider organisation how we can build some of these ideas into our processes and intake."

Noah's Ark at PRECI 2026

Contributing evidence, research and practical approaches to strengthen early childhood intervention across Australia

Noah's Ark contributed to the 2026 National Conference of Professionals and Researchers in Early Childhood Intervention (PRECI) in Adelaide in May, sharing evidence, research and practical approaches that support better outcomes for children and families.

Better practice. Better outcomes. Better futures.

preci2026
3rd National Conference

PRECI connects early childhood intervention practitioners and researchers across Australia, supporting research translation, knowledge sharing, collaboration and high-quality evidence-informed practice. The 2026 conference theme, Better practice. Better outcomes. Better futures., closely aligned with Noah's Ark's purpose and commitment to strengthening inclusion and participation.

Noah's Ark delivered five presentations across four areas of practice, demonstrating how evidence and professional learning can be translated into the everyday places where children live, learn and play.

Connecting early childhood education and intervention

Chief Executive Officer John Forster presented on bridging the parallel systems of Early Childhood Education and Care and early childhood intervention through a multi-tiered system of supports. This approach recognises that children require different levels of support and that inclusive practice can be strengthened across universal, targeted and specialised services.

Operations Manager Sarah Denholm presented Embedded Learning Support as an evidence-based approach to meeting the needs of children with disability and developmental delay within early childhood education and care settings.

Together, the presentations explored how the education and intervention sectors can work more closely to strengthen inclusion and build educator capability.

Bringing relationship-based practice into everyday work

General Manager Research and Innovation Dr Stacey Alexander presented her research into attachment-focused early childhood intervention. She explored how the relationship-based principle within the National Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention can be translated into practical approaches for practitioners working alongside children and families.

Strengthening child agency through coaching

Practice Coach Kylie Matusewicz presented Noah's Ark's work using a blended coaching package to help early childhood practitioners strengthen child agency. The presentation demonstrated how coaching, reflection and practical implementation support can help practitioners create more meaningful opportunities for children to express preferences, make choices and influence what happens in their everyday lives.

Developing functional goals that last

Learning and Development Manager Stephen Carberry presented Functional Goals That Stick: Sustaining Routines-Based Interview Practices. The presentation explored how practitioners can develop meaningful, participation-based goals and sustain the use of the Routines-Based Interview in their work with children and families.





The Noah's Ark exhibition stand provided further opportunities to connect with practitioners, researchers and organisations from across Australia. Conversations with visitors offered valuable feedback about how Noah's Ark's learning and development resources were supporting day-to-day practice. The conference also strengthened existing relationships, created new connections and opened conversations about future collaboration.

The conference reinforced the value of learning alongside others, contributing to the evidence base and translating research into high-quality early childhood intervention. It also created opportunities to strengthen relationships and explore future collaboration across the sector.

"Our attendance embodied the **Think Bigger** mindset by extending the reach of Noah's Ark's research, experience and practice knowledge beyond our own organisation." By contributing to sector conversations and learning from others, we can help build capability and support better experiences and outcomes for children and families.

We look forward to continuing these conversations, building on the connections made in Adelaide and contributing to the next PRECI conference in Melbourne in 2028.

Spreading the word

During 2025–26, Noah's Ark staff delivered 12 presentations and sessions across seven national and international conferences. Alongside our contribution to PRECI 2026, featured to the left, our people shared research, practice knowledge and emerging approaches with audiences across Australia and internationally.

While presenters bring the work to life, every conference contribution is a team effort. Research, practice examples and resources are developed over time through the work of practitioners, leaders, researchers and support teams. Colleagues also contribute by reviewing abstracts and presentations, preparing materials, coordinating submissions and helping communicate the work more broadly.

Conference	Presentation focus	Presenters
EURLYAID & ISEI Conference 2025	Attachment-focused early childhood intervention for children with disability or developmental delay	Dr Stacey Alexander
Early Childhood Australia Conference 2025	Multi-tiered systems of support and embedded learning in universal early childhood services	John Forster and Sarah Denholm
Occupational Therapy Australia Conference 2025	What children want from therapy and how well practitioners are listening	Kylie Matusewicz and Danica Smith
International Attachment Conference 2026	Promoting attachment security for children with disability or developmental delay	Dr Stacey Alexander
International Early Childhood Inclusion Institute 2026	Introduction to an embedded learning framework and its use	John Forster, Stephen Carberry, Pat Snyder (University of Florida), Tara McLaughlin (Massey University)
Speech Pathology Australia Conference 2026	Embedding capacity building and coaching practices in speech pathology	Alanna Jinks

Sharing this collective knowledge helps us extend our impact beyond the children, families, communities and services we support directly. It strengthens professional relationships, encourages collaboration and contributes practical evidence and ideas that others can use to improve inclusion, participation and outcomes across the sector.

Bringing national best practice to life

In 2025, PRECI released the 14-part Bringing the Framework to Life podcast services as part of the launch of the National Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention (Framework). The framework describes what high-quality, evidence-informed support should look like for children up to nine years of age with developmental concerns, delay or disability, and for their families.

Noah's Ark contributed its practice expertise to the framework's development and was strongly represented in the podcast series, with staff featured in four of the 14 episodes. Practice Coach and Speech Pathologist Brooke Serpell explored rights-based practice; Occupational Therapist and Key Worker Claire Inder discussed diversity-affirming practice; Occupational Therapist and Practice Coach Mollie Leetham joined families to consider meaningful participation; and Speech Pathologist and Key Worker Lourdinia Bushell spoke about outcomes-focused practice grounded in family priorities and everyday life.

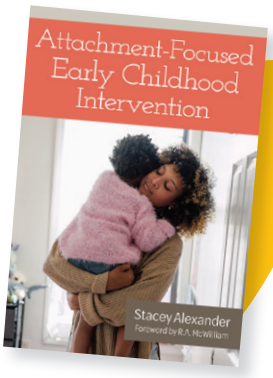
Together, the episodes demonstrated how best-practice principles can be translated into relationships, choices, everyday routines and meaningful outcomes. They also gave Noah's Ark practitioners and families an opportunity to share lived experience and practical knowledge with a national audience.

Our involvement reflects Noah's Ark's commitment to shaping sector-wide practice while keeping children and families at the centre.

Attachment-Focused Early Childhood Intervention

In 2022, our General Manager, Research and Innovation, Dr Stacey Alexander, completed a PhD which explored how Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) professionals could improve the attachment security of children with disability or developmental delay. Her key findings were that children with disability or developmental delay were significantly less likely to form a secure attachment relationship and almost twice as likely to form a disorganised attachment. This is important because disorganised attachment is significantly associated with behavioural and mental health challenges. Stacey identified a wide range of practical strategies for ECI professionals of any discipline or level of experience to support the development of positive parent-child relationships within the context of a best practice approach in ECI.

In March 2026, Stacey's book based on her PhD research, Attachment-Focused Early Childhood Intervention (Alexander, 2026), was published in the United States by Brookes. Stacey has also designed an online course to accompany the book, which Noah's Ark will launch in 2027. The course presents an opportunity for Noah's Ark to extend the reach of Stacey's research, build capability across the early childhood intervention sector and broaden the impact of our Learning and Development programs.



Embedding Learning in Everyday Practice

Embedded Learning Support (ELS), known internationally as Embedded Instruction, is an evidence-informed practice model developed over more than two decades by Professor Patricia Snyder and colleagues in the United States. It supports the learning, participation and development of children with disability or developmental delay by embedding intentional teaching strategies into everyday routines, play and activities within early childhood education and care services.

ELS has been applied internationally in different ways. In California, it supports the inclusion of children with disability in preschool programs, while in Florida it is used as a family-centred approach to help parents and caregivers support their child's development. Before Noah's Ark began this work, ELS had not been formally introduced in Australia. To adapt the approach for Australian settings, Noah's Ark partnered with the Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies at the University of Florida and the Early Years Research Lab at Massey University to develop Embedded Learning Support Australia.



The first Australian pilot

In 2025, Noah's Ark funded the first Australian adaptation and pilot of ELS. The project involved adapting resources developed in New Zealand for Australian use, training a Noah's Ark coaching team in ELS and Practice-Based Coaching, and supporting implementation across four early childhood education and care services.

Two services participated in Victoria through ECMS and two in New South Wales through Koorana Children's Services and Noah's Inclusion Services.

The pilot explored how ELS could be applied within the Australian early childhood context. The approach aligns with the National Quality Framework, the Early Years Learning Framework and current expectations for inclusion and participation.

An independent evaluation report is being prepared by Dr Sam Vlcek from RMIT University.

"Strong organisations create stronger outcomes for children and families."

Noah's Ark adapted and piloted an international evidence-informed approach that helps educators embed meaningful learning opportunities into children's everyday routines, play and activities.

Early indications from the pilot

While the final evaluation is still being prepared, feedback from participating educators and coaches provides early insight into the experience of implementing ELS in Australian early childhood settings.

Participating educators demonstrated growing confidence in supporting the diverse learning needs of children in their classrooms. Early feedback suggested practice was strongest when educators began with each child's strengths and identified an achievable next step that supported the child's participation in everyday routines. It also suggested inclusion was strengthened when educators embedded intentional teaching moments throughout the day and used shared tools to support consistent practice across teaching teams.

Through Practice-Based Coaching, coaches observed educators becoming more aware of how their own practice influenced children's engagement and participation. Educators also developed a stronger understanding of their role in ensuring all children could access meaningful learning experiences.

Extending the impact

The pilot strengthened Noah's Ark's capability to support educators to embed early childhood intervention knowledge into everyday practice. ELS also complements existing inclusion strategies by focusing on practical and achievable learning opportunities within children's everyday routines.

The project strengthened relationships with government and research partners, contributed to Noah's Ark being invited to participate in further disability inclusion research and created opportunities to share the work through conference presentations. These relationships and insights support our broader contribution to training, consultancy, research and systems reform.

What comes next

Although the initial pilot concluded, all participating organisations agreed to continue implementing ELS during 2026. Noah's Ark will provide ongoing coaching and convene a community of practice, with participating organisations contributing to the cost of this work. This will support continued learning, build the evidence base and create opportunities for future research.

Noah's Ark is also seeking funding for a larger multi-site research project to examine the effectiveness of ELS across different cultural and socio-economic settings. Academic partners and an external steering committee would guide the research and strengthen its independence and rigour.

Embedded Learning Support presents an opportunity to strengthen inclusion across early childhood education and care by building educator capability and embedding learning within children's everyday routines. By continuing to test and refine the approach, Noah's Ark can contribute to a practical Australian model that improves children's participation and learning, builds educator capability and strengthens support for families.

Advocacy at Work

Think Bigger: Helping shape better systems

To **Think Bigger** means looking beyond the services we deliver today and considering how Noah's Ark's experience, evidence and expertise can contribute to better outcomes across the broader system.

Policy and funding decisions influence what support is available, how it is delivered and whether children and families can access high-quality help when they need it. Advocacy is an important part of Noah's Ark's work. It enables us to bring the experiences of children, families, educators and practitioners into discussions to shape early childhood intervention, education and disability support across Australia.

During 2025–26, Noah's Ark contributed to seven significant government inquiries, reviews and consultations. Across these submissions, we advocated for coordinated systems, evidence-informed practice, investment in workforce capability and approaches that build the confidence of the adults around each child. We consistently emphasised that children and families should be supported to participate successfully in the everyday places where they live, learn and play.

1 Inquiry into the Thriving Kids initiative September 2025

We called for Thriving Kids to be guided by the National Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention and supported by coordinated policy, regulation, funding and workforce planning. Our submission emphasised family support, measurable outcomes, participation in everyday settings and access to the transdisciplinary Key Worker model.

2 Communities for Children December 2025

We advocated for programs that are accessible and inclusive of children with disability and developmental delay, while recognising that families may also need support in areas such as family violence and mental health. We highlighted the importance of properly funding service coordination, outcome measurement and connections across education, disability and social services.

3 ACT Public School System Resourcing Review September 2025

We encouraged a resourcing model that strengthens the confidence and capability of teachers through professional learning and coaching. We also recommended greater investment in inclusive teaching practice, rather than relying primarily on additional learning support assistants for students with additional needs.

4 NDIS Annual Pricing Review 2025–26

We argued that pricing reform should encourage the delivery and uptake of high-quality early childhood intervention. Our recommendations included commissioning registered providers in rural and regional areas, reintroducing transdisciplinary Key Worker packages and supporting alternative models, including Key Worker Coaches™, where access to specialist services is limited.

5 A new definition for NDIS providers February 2026

We supported the introduction of risk-proportionate regulation while emphasising that the long-term consequences of poor-quality services for children must be recognised. We recommended strong initial registration requirements, balanced with proportionate ongoing oversight and more detailed investigation where concerns are identified.

6 Securing the NDIS for Future Generations Bill 2026

We advocated for access decisions that recognise diagnosis and significant developmental risks without requiring families to wait until substantial functional difficulties emerge. We also called for decisions to consider children's support needs, family circumstances, timely plan reviews and appropriate quality safeguards for services supporting children.

Continuing to invest in influence

Creating lasting change requires more than responding to individual needs. It also means helping improve the policies, funding models and service systems that shape the opportunities available to children and families.

Noah's Ark will continue to invest in advocacy, policy engagement and sector leadership. By combining evidence, practice expertise and the experiences of the people we work alongside, we can contribute constructively to decisions that affect early childhood intervention, inclusion and disability support.

This is **Think Bigger** in action: using what we learn through our everyday work to influence change beyond our own organisation. Through continued collaboration with governments, sector partners, families and communities, we will keep advocating for systems that are inclusive, sustainable and centred on what children and families need to thrive.

04 Think Bigger: Our People, Culture and Organisation



People and Culture

Every child, family and educator we support benefits from something bigger than any individual service or program.

Behind every outcome is a workforce committed to quality, inclusion, innovation and continuous improvement. Throughout 2025–26, our people embraced the challenge to **Think Bigger**. We strengthened our organisational capability, invested in employee wellbeing, celebrated excellence, modernised systems and prepared Noah's Ark for the future.

Together, we continued building a culture and organisation that enables children and families to thrive while ensuring Noah's Ark remains strong, sustainable and ready for the opportunities ahead.

Thinking Bigger together

The impact Noah's Ark creates for children, families and educators begins with our people.

Throughout 2025–26, our workforce continued to demonstrate the values of Respect, Kindness, Quality and Optimism in their everyday work. Across therapy, inclusion, and support services, employees worked together to strengthen outcomes for children while helping build the capability and sustainability needed for future generations.

This year was marked by significant achievement and transformation. We implemented the Noah's Ark Enterprise Agreement 2024, introduced Launch Pad as our new performance and development framework, strengthened our health, safety and wellbeing systems, relocated our Bundoora team to South Morang, redesigned our required learning program and implemented Ready Workforce, our new people and payroll platform. These initiatives reflected a commitment to thinking beyond immediate operational needs and investing in the long-term capability of our workforce.

The year also included important moments of celebration and transition. We recognised outstanding contributions through our inaugural Impact and Recognition Awards, brought employees together at our annual Staff Forum, and farewelled long-serving Chief Executive Officer John Forster following 26 years of dedicated service to Noah's Ark.



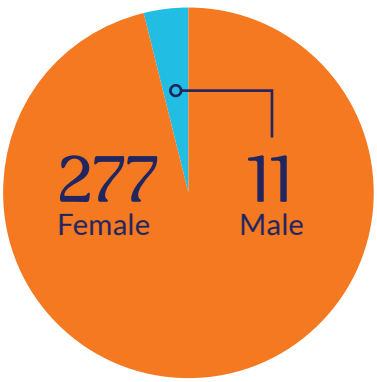
Our workforce at a glance

As at 30 June 2026, Noah's Ark employed 290 people representing 159.9 full-time equivalent positions across Victoria, New South Wales and ACT. Our workforce included therapists, educators, inclusion specialists, program staff and corporate professionals united by a shared commitment to building better futures for children and families.

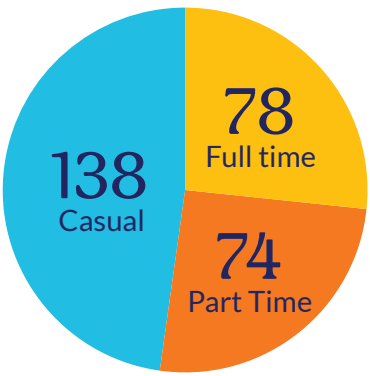
Key Statistics

- **290** employees
- **159.9** full-time equivalent positions
- **41.3** years average employee age
- **4.7** years average length of service

Gender split



Employee type



A strong culture built on purpose

Our 2025 Staff Wellbeing Survey confirmed that Noah's Ark continues to benefit from a strong and values-led culture. Employee engagement remained strong at 75%, supported by positive results in psychosocial safety, wellbeing, flexibility, team culture and leadership communication. Staff also reported high levels of autonomy and clarity in their roles, demonstrating the strength of our workplace culture and leadership environment.

The survey reinforced what many employees experience every day: a workplace built on trust, flexibility, inclusion and a shared commitment to purpose. It also highlighted opportunities to continue strengthening career development pathways, recognition and workforce sustainability, helping inform future priorities and investment.



Building capability for the future

Several significant initiatives during the year helped strengthen employee experience, organisational capability, and workforce sustainability.

Launch Pad

Launch Pad is a unified performance and development framework bringing together goal setting, supervision, feedback, career conversations and learning. By replacing multiple disconnected processes with a single framework, Launch Pad created a clearer and more consistent employee experience while supporting growth and development at every career stage.

Learning reimagined

Our required learning program was redesigned around quarterly themes, combining eLearning with facilitated team discussions and reflection activities. This new approach encourages practical application, shared learning, and stronger connections between learning and day-to-day practice.

Safe, respectful, and healthy workplaces

We continued investing in workplace wellbeing through the development and implementation of a Respect@Work Management Plan, Occupational Violence and Aggression Management Plan and Job Demand and Inherent Requirements Framework. These initiatives strengthened our ability to identify and manage psychosocial risks while supporting a positive and respectful workplace culture.

Supporting our people

The implementation of the Noah's Ark Enterprise Agreement 2024 introduced improvements to pay and conditions and was accompanied by the launch of a comprehensive People and Culture Manual, providing employees and leaders with a clear and accessible source of guidance and support.

Bringing people together

In June 2026, employees from across Noah's Ark gathered for the Staff Forum under the theme **Think Bigger**. The event celebrated achievements, explored emerging opportunities, and reinforced the connection between individual contributions and Noah's Ark's broader purpose.

Investing in our future

The relocation of our Bundoora site to South Morang created a contemporary working environment that supports collaboration, employee experience and service delivery, while positioning Noah's Ark for future growth in Melbourne's north.

Modernising workforce systems

Ready Workforce was more than a system replacement. Guided by the **Think Bigger** mindset, Noah's Ark used the project to create future-ready ways of working that improve employee experience, streamline processes, strengthen workforce data, and support better decision-making. The result is a stronger foundation for organisational capability and future growth.

Farewell to John Forster



After 26 years of dedicated service, including more than two decades as Chief Executive Officer, John Forster concluded his tenure with Noah's Ark in June 2026. His contribution has left an enduring impact on Noah's Ark, the children and families we support, and the broader early childhood intervention sector.

John guided Noah's Ark through significant periods of growth, change, and sector reform while maintaining an unwavering focus on children and families. Under his leadership, Noah's Ark strengthened its reputation as a leader in early childhood intervention, family-centred practice and inclusion, while expanding its influence nationally and internationally.

Beyond Noah's Ark, John made substantial contributions to policy, advocacy, and sector leadership through organisations including Early Childhood Intervention Australia, Professionals and Researchers in Early Childhood Intervention, the Victorian Disability Advisory Council, and the Victorian NDIS Implementation Taskforce.

Perhaps John's greatest legacy is the strong organisation he leaves behind. Noah's Ark enters its next chapter with clear purpose, strong governance, talented people, and a commitment to continuing the work he helped shape.

We thank John for his extraordinary leadership, vision and service, and wish him every success in the next chapter of his journey.



John with management group in 2003



Farewell event, 2026



> John's vision, commitment and unwavering focus on children and families have helped establish Noah's Ark as a trusted leader and innovator, creating a legacy that will continue to benefit future generations.



A Legacy of Leadership

Celebrating Our People

The 2026 Noah's Ark Impact and Recognition Awards celebrated employees and teams whose contributions reflect our values and commitment to excellence. The awards recognised values-led behaviour, sustained impact, innovation, and broader contributions to the organisation. Together, the recipients demonstrated the many ways employees **Think Bigger** to improve outcomes for children, families and educators.

Congratulations to

- Living Our Values Award **Heather O'Hagan**
- Thinking Bigger Award **Ross Williamson & Lois Lin**
- Sustained Impact Award **Tamara Skuja**
- All Rounder Award **Michelle Kenny**

Milestones

5 Years

Bridget Arthur
Liana Benjamin
Claire Inder
Laura Phelan
Aleisha Phillips
Maddison Tognolini
Isabella Whitty

10 Years

Stephanie Collins
Caitlin Devereaux
Rachael Hunter
Zarah Lont
Julie McKail

15 Years

Jane Lockrey

20 Years

Kylie Matusewicz

25 Years

Lou Ambrosy

Thank You

This annual report reflects the dedication, expertise and contributions of many people across Noah's Ark. We sincerely thank everyone who shared their stories, data, achievements and insights, and all employees, leaders, volunteers, partners and stakeholders whose commitment throughout the year helped make a positive difference for children, families and communities.

Contributors

Alisha Pires
Jacqui Ellis
Jen Grant
John Forster
Kylie Matusewicz
Penny Callaghan
Ross Williamson
Scott Haines
Stacey Alexander
Stephen Carberry
Sue Reynolds
Vikki Morris





Governance and Accountability

05

Governance Framework

Operating with integrity, transparency and accountability remains central to Noah's Ark's work. Through its governance framework, the organisation ensures it remains focused on positive outcomes for children and families while responding to a changing disability and early childhood landscape.

Noah's Ark Inc. is a not-for-profit incorporated association governed by a volunteer Board of Management with expertise across disability, early childhood, health, education, finance, law and community services. The Board provides strategic leadership and oversight, working closely with the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leadership Group to achieve the organisation's objectives and mission.

Noah's Ark is committed to:

- **Child safety and safeguarding:** Upholding the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people through robust safeguarding systems and compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards.
- **Governance and regulatory compliance:** Meeting obligations under relevant legislation, regulatory frameworks and governance standards, including the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic)*, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Governance Standards, and the NDIS Practice Standards.
- **Ethical leadership and accountability:** Ensuring decisions are aligned with the organisation's values, purpose and strategic objectives while reflecting the trust placed in Noah's Ark by stakeholders.
- **Risk management and organisational resilience:** Maintaining oversight of strategic and operational risks, including service quality, workforce capability, financial sustainability, cyber security, safeguarding and the impacts of sector reform.
- **Financial stewardship:** Managing resources responsibly and transparently to support sustainability, innovation and the delivery of high-quality services.
- **Quality and continuous improvement:** Monitoring service quality, client outcomes and organisational performance through evidence-informed reporting, stakeholder feedback and continuous improvement processes to ensure services remain responsive and effective.
- **Stakeholder engagement and inclusion:** Valuing the voices of children, families, staff and partners in service delivery, evaluation, advocacy and strategic planning.

The Board of Management is committed to effective governance and continuous improvement in its stewardship of Noah's Ark. During the year, the Board provided oversight of organisational performance, financial sustainability, risk management, safeguarding and service quality, while monitoring progress against strategic priorities and emerging sector reforms. The Board also reviewed key policies, supported governance improvement and invested in Board development and succession planning. Through collaboration with the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leadership Group, the Board continued to promote transparency, accountability and sound decision-making.

A capable, engaged and skilled workforce remains fundamental to achieving Noah's Ark's mission. The organisation continues to invest in leadership development, professional learning, graduate programs, student placements, mentoring and coaching to ensure staff are equipped to meet the evolving needs of children, families and communities.

Through strong governance, evidence-informed decision-making and a commitment to continuous improvement, Noah's Ark continues to build better futures for children with disabilities, developmental concerns and additional needs and the families who support them.

Board of Management

Vikki Morris
President



Technology and business leader with expertise in strategy, partnerships and organisational growth. Vikki brings professional expertise and lived experience as a parent of a Noah's Ark service user.

Campbell Thomson
Vice President



Barrister with more than 30 years' experience in native title, criminal and environmental law. Campbell contributes extensive legal expertise and governance insight.

Malcolm McNab
Treasurer



Finance and capital markets leader with more than 20 years' experience across Australia and Europe. Malcolm contributes strong finance, risk, strategy and not for profit governance expertise.

Robyn Briggs
Secretary



Marketing and product management professional with international experience across diverse industries. Robyn brings communications expertise and a personal connection to Noah's Ark.

Dr Zoe McCallum
Board Member



Consultant Paediatrician at the Royal Children's Hospital (Melbourne) with extensive experience supporting children and young people with disability. Zoe provides valuable clinical expertise.

Fintan Magee
Board Member



Insurance and risk advisory specialist serving corporate and government clients across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Fintan contributes commercial and risk expertise.

Bronwyn Miller
Board Member



Communications professional with extensive not-for-profit experience. Bronwyn brings expertise in stakeholder engagement, government relations and strategic communications.

Sonia Sharp
Board Member



Managing Director of Allen + Clarke Australia and experienced public sector leader. Sonia contributes expertise in education, child and family services, and system reform.

Geoff Webster
Board Member



Chartered Accountant and Director of Webster Corporate Advisory. A former Board President, Geoff contributes extensive financial, governance and advisory expertise.

Carolyn Wilson
Board Member



Educator with more than 30 years' experience across public and independent schools. Carolyn brings a strong commitment to inclusive education and student wellbeing.

Financial Summary

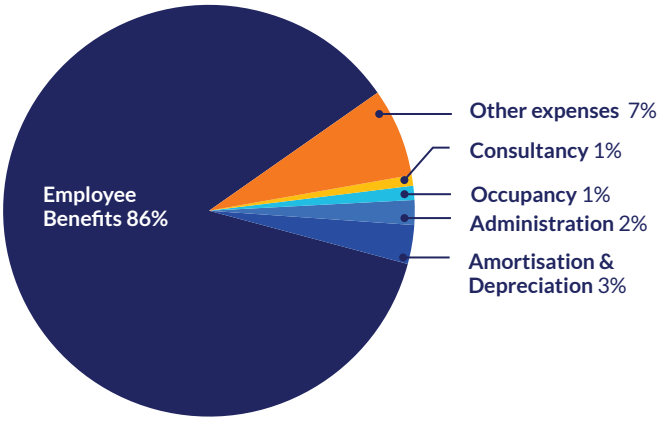
Profit and Loss as at 30 June 2026

Income	2026	2025
Program Fees	10,558,277	11,954,422
Operating Grants	8,920,095	6,775,880
Training	163,196	104,751
Investment Income	655,340	571,124
Other	27,337	84,385
	$20,324,245	**$19,490,562**
Expenses		
Employee Benefits	18,502,341	18,840,544
Amortisation and Depreciation Expense	574,262	629,518
Administration Expense	350,665	199,638
Occupancy Expense	343,909	344,009
Consultancy Expense	213,704	85,150
Other Expense	1,487,987	1,181,960
	$21,472,868	**$21,280,819**
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	**($1,148,623)**	**($1,790,257)**
Gains on Investments	366,529	1,282,466
Comprehensive Income/(Loss)	**($782,094)**	**($507,791)**

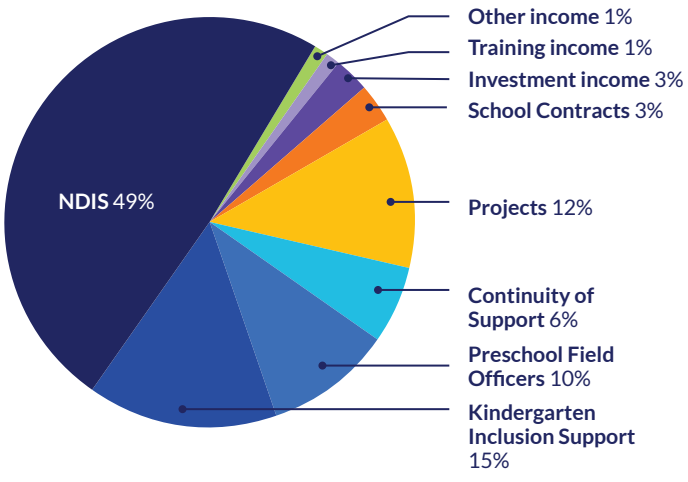
In FY26, Noah's Ark reported total income of $20.324 million, supported by diversified revenue streams and strong financial management. NDIS revenue remained the largest contributor at $9.965 million, followed by government grants of $6.423 million. Projects contributed $2.497 million, while investment income, school contracts and training income provided further diversification.

Total expenses were $21.473 million, including $18.502 million in employee benefits, reflecting the organisation's significant investment in its workforce. Noah's Ark recorded an operating deficit of $1.149 million due to sector-wide cost pressures and funding constraints. Investment income and reserves continue to support the organisation's long-term financial sustainability.

Breakdown of expenses



Revenue by service type



Financial Summary

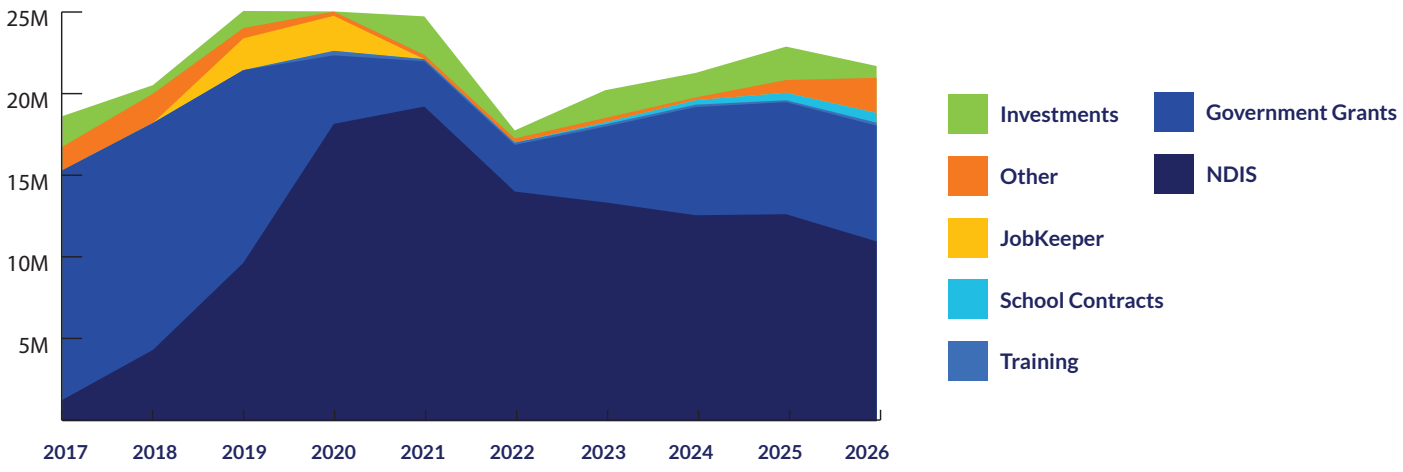
Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2026

Current Assets	2026	2025
Cash/Cash Equivalents	987,348	1,632,410
Trade and Other Receivables	1,192,954	2,836,913
Other Assets	126,654	179,361
Non Current Assets		
Financial Assets	17,482,150	17,445,155
ROU Assets	1,673,537	1,898,607
Property Plant and Equipment	703,572	697,741
	$22,166,215	**$24,690,187**
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	1,470,831	3,118,588
Provisions	2,838,632	2,698,710
Lease Liabilities	434,142	391,967
Non Current Liabilities		
Provisions	771,942	782,779
Lease Liabilities	1,550,586	1,815,967
	$7,066,133	**$8,808,011**
Total Equity	**$15,100,082**	**$15,882,176**

The FY26 results show improved operating performance. The lower operating deficit and decline in liabilities are positive indicators to the organisation's commitment to services and program delivery despite financial pressures, while the fall in program fees and assets reinforces the need for disciplined financial management.

The revenue profile to 2026 (see graph below) shows rapid NDIS growth from 2017 to a peak in 2021, followed by stabilisation to 2025; NDIS income fell 13.2% in FY26 to $9.965 million, while Government grants continued their recovery from the 2021 low, reaching $6.423 million. JobKeeper provided temporary support in 2020 and 2021, while school contracts grew to $0.541 million. Projects rose strongly to $2.497 million, leaving total income 4% above FY25.

Revenue over time



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