

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

LINKED
COMMUNITY SERVICES



[Linked.org.au](https://linked.org.au)

“We are here
to take you there”

Link



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Acknowledgement of Country

Linked Community Services acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, the Birpai, Worimi and Dhanggati people. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture; and to Elders past, present and emerging.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this Annual Report may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.



● MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I am delighted to present the Chairman's report for 2023, this being my fourth. First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest congratulations to the entire team at Linked Community Services for their remarkable achievements throughout the year. The ever changing Aged and Disability sector in our growing region has presented us with both the need and opportunity to diversify and expand. On behalf of the entire Board and myself, I express my sincere gratitude to every staff member and volunteer for their unwavering dedication. Your efforts have played a pivotal role in our recent growth, which we anticipate will continue under the leadership of our committed CEO Carlie Comer, her Executive Team, and the exceptional staff who are committed to supporting them daily.

As a Board our core responsibility is to ensure Linked Community Services follows the strategic direction that has been put in place to maximise our sustainability while minimising our risk, and ensuring compliance and governance of Linked is adhered to. Our driven and cohesive Board has been instrumental in contributing to Linked's growth over the past year, and I would like to extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to all my fellow Board Members. Your volunteerism has been invaluable in helping our organisation to flourish and consistently deliver essential services for our community.

It is important to acknowledge that our success in the past year would not have been possible without your unwavering dedication to everyone involved, who have passion to help others in need by supporting our Linked brand. I eagerly look forward to the next twelve months with a sense of optimism and anticipation, eager to witness the continued progress and accomplishments that lie ahead for us.

Kind Regards,
Alan Watts
CHAIRMAN

THE BOARD



Alan Watts
Chairperson



Ian Skead
Deputy Chair



Russell Stockham
Secretary



Annette Messenger
Director



Ann Rhodes
Director



Ken Heffernan
Director



Susan Judd
Director



Lorraine Heraghty
Director



Carlie Comer
Chief Executive Officer



● MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

The past financial year has been rewarding and eventful, marked by significant progress and numerous changes within our organisation. With an increased workforce and a focused approach to the future, we are well on track to achieve the targets as outlined in our 2022-2024 Strategic Plan.

I am thrilled to share some exciting news! We have successfully acquired Care N Go, a Community Transport provider. This acquisition has allowed us to expand our service operations in and around the Manning Valley region. In this Annual Report, we have dedicated a whole section to provide more information about this exciting expansion. I take immense pride in the efforts of everyone involved in this venture, and I look forward to seeing Linked help more people reach their desired destinations.

In other exciting news, we have secured funding from the Department of Health and Aged Care for an additional three years to continue delivering our Community Visitors Scheme (CVS). Government funding is never guaranteed, so we worked diligently on our application to maximise our chances of success. I am pleased to announce that our submission was not only approved but the requested funding was tripled, and from July 2023, the program will operate under a new name - the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS). This funding allows us to enhance the quality of life for frail and older people in our communities with the support of our exceptional volunteers. Our volunteers bridge the gap for clients who often lack family support and receive limited visits. I extend my deepest thanks to each volunteer for their invaluable contributions to our organisation. Their commitment and dedication



in providing companionship and friendship to our clients every day is truly remarkable. We cannot overstate our appreciation for their ongoing hard work and support.

In 2022, we conducted a thorough analysis of our organisation's identity and direction. We assessed what was working, what needed improvement, and where we aspired to be. This process led to the development of our 2022-2024 Strategic Plan. I am proud of our dedicated team, which consistently achieves positive outcomes and meets the strategic objectives outlined in the plan. Their hard work has been instrumental in achieving our goals and the ongoing positive impact we have in our communities.

The growth of our organisation has been driven by the dedication and focus of our team. We have recognised our potential and eagerly pursued our

goals, knowing that we are working towards a larger purpose beyond ourselves and our jobs. We are driven by the impact and positive outcomes we create for those who are isolated and vulnerable in our communities.

Looking back over the past few years, it is incredible to think that we rebranded and renamed our organisation in 2019. In just four short years, we have established strong brand recognition and maintained an excellent reputation built over nearly four decades. Our clients and the community continue to trust us as a reliable provider of community transport.

I look forward to what is ahead in our journey as we continue to grow our services.

Carlie Comer

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



MESSAGE FROM THE CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER

A new year and a new Strategic Plan. Through a process of staff consultation and market analysis our strategic plan for 2022 – 2024 was born. We already see many of the challenges that were set, being achieved. Our strategy is to provide clarity and focus for collective action and decision making.

The acquisition of Care N Go has expanded our service footprint. We welcome the former staff and volunteers who are now an important and valued part of our Linked team.

In building our culture and our capability, we have targeted the development of our Leadership team through participation in facilitator lead workshops, providing the opportunity to learn and grow, to build trust-based relationships and to create environments which encourage collaborative innovation.

A first for Linked was holding a combined conference in the Hunter Valley with an agenda to share input into building our service and shaping our future as a high performing organisation. Defining our organisational values and norms so they are consistently shared by all our staff, and

encouraging everyone to engage with our clients, understanding their specific needs and preferences and exceeding their expectations.

With growth comes challenges, one of which has been accommodating our office staff in Port Macquarie. Recently we have been successful in securing a lease on a new office location, the fit out of which will provide additional office spaces designed specifically for the tasks being undertaken, creating an environment which facilitates new technology and creative spaces.

Where to from here?

During the past year we have recruited and engaged talented and committed staff, with purpose at their core. Enthusiasm, creativity, collaboration and functional expertise, we are building a team aligned to our shared values, our vision for the future and our common purpose.

We will continue to invest in our people, technology, and fleet to resource services that promote wellness and community connectivity.

David Paff
CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER

OUR MISSION, VISION, PURPOSE AND VALUES



OUR MISSION

We are here to take you there.



OUR VISION

To be recognised as service provider of choice for assisting the community in maintaining connection and independence.



OUR PURPOSE

We take our clients on a journey, creating a unique and positive experience so they can continue accessing our services.



OUR VALUES

Our Organisational Values are an acronym of the word **IMPACT**.

Our **IMPACT** in the community we support is driven by:



Integrity – in everything with say, we do, upholding the integrity of our brand, each other, and our clientele.

Motivation – We employ motivated people who have the passion to work together as one team to deliver on our goals and objectives.

Personable – We personalise our conversations, ask questions, and learn about each other and our customers, creating a unique experience for everyone.

Accountable – We are accountable to deliver on our mission, our goals our promises and our commitment to each other to achieve positive outcomes.

Commitment – We are committed to growing our caring reputation throughout the community where we are the leading source provider for our clients.

Trust – We are an organisation who deliver on our promises through the reliability of our people.



WHO WE ARE

At Linked Community Services our purpose is to provide our clients with a unique and positive experience throughout their journey with us. We are dedicated to contributing to the social, cultural, and overall wellbeing of our community. We offer reliable and safe transport to individuals who are isolated, vulnerable and transport disadvantaged, connecting them with everyday tasks such as shopping, visiting the library, attending hairdresser appointments, and engaging in social outings like lunches, movies, and local community events.

Many of our clients are ageing and face mobility challenges, including those who cannot drive or who have a disability. Therefore, we specialise in providing transportation for medical appointments such as doctor visits, medical treatments, dialysis, cancer treatment, podiatry, pathology, specialist consultations, hospital visits, and physiotherapy sessions.

Our team consists of dedicated staff members and volunteers who are passionate about helping the local community. They engage in conversations with our clients, showing genuine interest in their wellbeing and the welfare of the community. Our goal is to ensure that our clients have a sense of purpose and that we meet the needs of our community effectively.

Our primary objective is to offer high-quality transportation services to elderly individuals, those who are frail, transport disadvantaged, isolated, or living with disabilities. We believe in promoting inclusivity, independence, and fostering connections within our community.

Looking ahead to 2023, we reflect on the significant changes we have witnessed over the past 40 years. Linked Community Services was formed through the successful merger of two community transport organisations in Port Stephens and the Hastings Macleay regions. We are delighted to announce another successful union with the acquisition of Community Transport Organisation - Care N Go. This exciting development enables us to expand our services to the Manning Valley region, reaching even more people in need of assistance. Despite our growth and evolution, we remain a trusted organisation, driven by our commitment to making a positive difference on every person we support as a collaborative team.

Linked Community Services has always been and continues to be a reliable and trusted not-for-profit community transport provider. Our mission, "We are here to take you there," captures our commitment to ensuring that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, stays connected to their local community and maintains their everyday independence. This is the reputation we strive to uphold throughout our region, strengthening our brand.

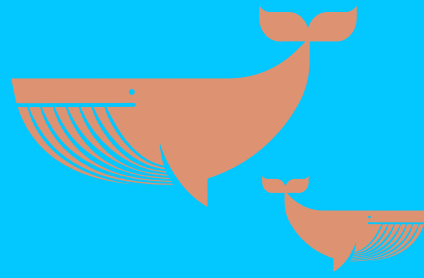
Currently, we have approximately 56 employees and over 100 volunteers who are dedicated to helping our clients in need. As a not-for-profit organisation, our focus is to be recognised as the preferred service provider for assisting the community in maintaining connection and independence.

At Linked, we have a fleet of 75 vehicles to serve our local community. Our service offerings are designed to create a seamless experience for our clients, showcasing our respect for them, our community, and our culture. Joining our services and booking transport for yourself or a group is made easy, and we accommodate special requests such as wheelchair accessibility. Clients can reach us via email, phone, or our website, choosing the method that suits them best. Our customer service team is professionally trained and committed to providing excellent service.

As the proud team of Linked Community Services, we remain dedicated to our mission and committed to making a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.



SERVICE AREA STATISTICS



5,754 TOTAL CLIENTS

**18% INCREASE
SINCE 2022**



82,788 TOTAL TRIPS

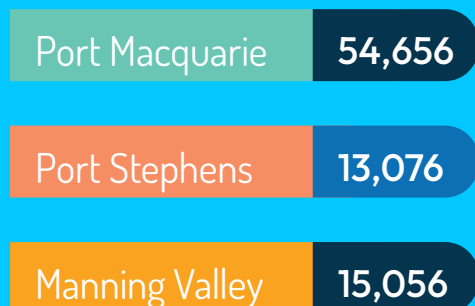
**34% INCREASE
SINCE 2022**

Port
Macquarie

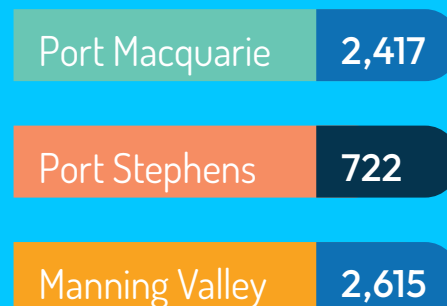
Manning
Valley

LINKED

2023 Trips Completed



2023 Client Numbers



* Values stated for Manning Valley apply only to the period 01/03/2023 – 30/06/2023.

Port
Stephens

100
VOLUNTEERS

25
DRIVERS

56
EMPLOYEES

Fleet of
75 Vehicles



Strategic Plan 2022–2024

Our Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap for enhancing our organisation’s capabilities. It consists of clearly defined goals and objectives that focus on supporting our community and ensuring the long-term sustainability of our organisation. The plan is designed to align with our vision and provides insight and foresight into what needs to be accomplished. It allows us to leverage our strengths while minimising risks. In 2022, our Board and CEO committed to a two-year plan with a three-year vision for strengthening Linked Community Services. **We are driven by passion and determination, acknowledging the challenges and potential obstacles we may face, all for the benefit of Linked.**

The Board and Executive Team of Linked are working cohesively, prioritising key areas such as mission, vision, purpose, and values; organisational strategy; financial sustainability; services offered; people and capability; marketing initiatives; business processes through technology; information, communication, and technologies (ICT); merger and acquisition opportunities; compliance and risk management; organisational goals;

and the agreement and execution of the Business Plan holding everyone accountable.

As we move further into 2023, I am confident in stating that we are executing the plan as anticipated. We are diligently working towards our goals and objectives and celebrating milestones as we achieve or exceed our planned timelines. Our CEO is fully committed to remaining true to the agreed initiatives and ideas. Our organisation embraces high collaboration among employees, led by our leadership team and supported by the Board. This plan was developed with the intention of being aligned with our vision, which is the reason for our existence in serving the community. We must maintain our focus and secure income and growth opportunities based on structured analysis and market potential, all while staying aligned with our mission, purpose, and values.

We are proud of several milestones, particularly our financial stability, and capabilities for future opportunities and improvements. Our primary focus is positioning ourselves in growth areas, diversifying our services, and providing appealing offerings to local indigenous communities. In line with our commitment to reconciliation, our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) incorporates indigenous artwork that tells the story of Linked Community Services. We remain dedicated to contributing to our RAP, providing cultural training to our employees and volunteers, expanding our service reach and being a culturally appropriate organisation. Our commitment to inclusivity and reconciliation represents a fundamental shift in our operations, as we embark on a journey of learning about our indigenous communities to strengthen our dedication to reconciliation and inclusiveness.

Furthermore, our organisation faces industry changes that will affect how we offer transport services. These changes will impose additional cost pressures, and we have considered them carefully in the development of our new strategy. To adapt and thrive, we will advance our growth agenda, expand our service offerings, and seek partnerships with complementary enterprises. This includes providing accredited home care packages for aged care (HCP) and actively engaging with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

We have responded to evolving customer needs by extending our hours of operation to weekends and evenings, enhancing our competitiveness, and improving our service offerings. We are grateful for the enthusiasm demonstrated by numerous employees and volunteers who have stepped forward to support these extended hours, as they align with the schedules of many individuals and enable us to significantly increase our trip numbers, consistent with our plan.

All of the above is encompassed in our Strategic Plan, with the recent acquisition of Care N Go playing a significant role, and we will continue to explore opportunities in the future. We maintain a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that risk and uncertainty are identified and managed in a structured manner through regular identification, assessment, and control reviews.

Linked Community Services is committed to building a strong future for our community, which includes our employees, volunteers, and clients.

Our mission, “We are here to take you there,” drives us to never rest on our laurels. We remain focused on what is relevant, supporting and serving our community throughout our region to strengthen our brand.

Gillian Leek

STRATEGY, GROWTH & INNOVATION OFFICER





ACQUISITION

In March of this year, we embarked on an exciting journey by extending our services to an entirely new region of the Manning Valley. Following extensive consultations, thorough research, and careful consideration, we officially acquired former community transport organisation, **Care N Go**.

Based in Tuncurry, Care N Go has thoroughly served the residents of the Mid Coast Local Government Area, including Tuncurry, Taree, Gloucester, Harrington, and Tea Gardens. With the successful completion of this acquisition, Linked has significantly broadened its reach and now operates seamlessly from South West Rocks to

Port Stephens, covering every Local Government Area (LGA) in between. Our operational scope spans an impressive geographical expanse of nearly 18,000 square kilometres.

Considering the humble beginnings of our organisation, starting with a small fleet of aging vehicles and a dedicated group of volunteers; today, we proudly employ over 50 professionals, and a robust volunteer team of more than 100 individuals, and maintain a fleet of over 70 vehicles. This remarkable growth showcases our commitment to enhancing our impact and supporting the communities we serve.

Why did we pursue this acquisition? It was evident

that we needed to expand our reach to facilitate community connections throughout our corridor while promoting social activities and inclusivity, the decision made perfect business sense. Realising we were over capitalising valuable resources by duplicating overheads and ultimately hindering our ability to assist as many individuals as possible.

Consequently, we asked ourselves crucial questions: How can we enhance our operations? How can we effectively reach out to isolated, vulnerable, and disabled members of our community? How can we connect the elderly and frail with their communities, minimising their feeling of loneliness? The acquisition of Care N Go emerged as the solution, enabling us to streamline our processes, enhance efficiency, and eliminate redundant business expenses. Collaboration simply made more sense.

Through this acquisition, two boards merged into one, our executive-level management underwent streamlining, and a new organisational structure was implemented. By reducing administrative duplications and aligning our knowledge, experience, and resources, we can achieve more and serve a larger population.

Both organisations shared the same goal and purpose, and that is to provide accessible and affordable transportation and socially inclusive events for isolated and vulnerable individuals, ultimately improving their quality of life. Furthermore, from a business standpoint, the acquisition strategically positioned Linked to maintain a presence in the vast area between the Mid-North Coast (from Port Macquarie to the Kempsey Shire) and the Port Stephens region.

This geographical area encompasses the highly sought-after retirement destination of Forster-Tuncurry, warranting our commitment to ensuring the largest population of individuals over 65 in the country has access to transportation and socially inclusive services. Furthermore, this expansion offers future growth prospects as the population continues to rise.

The savings we make at an organisational level from this point means that we can re-direct those savings into bettering our service provision to maximise positive outcomes for our clients.

But the most important point to remember, and what we are driven by, is that by expanding our reach into new geographical locations means we can reach more people who need our help.

The organisational savings achieved through this amalgamation enable us to redirect resources towards enhancing our service provision, thereby maximising positive outcomes for our clientele. And above all, our driving force remains the simple yet profound notion that will expand our reach to new geographical locations enabling us to reach and assist more individuals in need of our support.





MARKETING

In March 2023, a Marketing and Communications Coordinator was employed with the purpose of developing a marketing plan for the organisation in line with the current Strategic Plan. The plan was presented at the Linked Community Services conference held in June, where we invited employees and volunteers to join a marketing committee. This committee's primary goal is to collaborate on ideas and provide support for the approved marketing activities in our geographical area of the Mid-North Coast and the Hunter regions. It comprises knowledgeable and experienced staff and volunteers from each region.

Our organisation recognises the significance of social determinants of health, such as transportation, social connections, income, education, early childhood opportunities, and housing. These factors strongly influence health outcomes and an individual's overall well-being. Hence, the goals for our Marketing Strategy were formulated with this perspective in mind. In addition to increasing trip numbers, raising brand awareness, and fostering partnerships within the community, our overall aim is for everyone in the community to be aware of our presence and purpose, before they need our services.

To achieve this, we want to integrate our mission, vision, purpose, and values into our messages effectively. Our messages should not only convey what we do but also resonate with our audience. Thus, our marketing approach will utilise various methods, including word of mouth, partnerships, client service officers, and drivers. These tactics leverage the power of personal recommendations, which have proven to be highly effective in spreading our message.

Another vital component of our marketing strategy involves running targeted campaigns. These campaigns will have specific project objectives, timelines for preparation and implementation, and evaluations to measure their effectiveness. Examples of such campaigns include volunteer recruitment, special events, and targeting new audience demographics.

This year, we intend to conduct research to better understand the unique marketing requirements of our target audiences. This knowledge will help us tailor our marketing activities, language, and resources to effectively reach them. Additionally, we will also focus on reaching our secondary target groups: the family and friends of those who may need our services and potential community partners.

Each of our marketing strategies and initiatives will have detailed action plans outlining specific activities and tasks. Furthermore, we will include evaluation measures to assess our success throughout the year and identify areas for improvement.

We look forward to your feedback on our new marketing strategies that will be seen by you in our community. We want to ensure that what we say represents us delivering our mission 'We are here to take you there' in delivering outstanding customer service.

Judy Callinan

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR



Client Feedback

"Our driver was excellent. He really looked after us. He was really wonderful and helpful. He jumped up and down for everyone. He was cheery, happy and friendly, which really makes a difference."

Anonymous

"Thank you for all the transport. My husband and I really enjoyed the bus trips. The drivers are wonderful, and the service is fantastic". **Cheryl and Bill**

"I had two different drivers on the same day and both were so lovely. I understand it is their job, but I appreciate them and without Linked I would be stranded".

Anonymous

"I have been on a lot of trips with Linked now and this latest outing, an overnight trip to the Hunter Valley, was the best yet. It's changed my life". **Anonymous**

"We are so grateful for your service. You are lifesavers and you're all beautiful".

George and Angelina

"I had to catch a taxi the other day. It was a large vehicle and I had to open the heavy door myself as there was no driver to assist me. It made me realise how wonderful Linked and your drivers are and how lucky we are to have such a great service". **Evelyn**

"What a wonderful service. The drivers are always so kind and courteous and the girls in the office are always so helpful and patient. I don't know what my husband and I would do without you". **Fran**

"It was my first time using Linked. It is such a wonderful service. The driver was very courteous and professional, and I will tell all my friends and family about Linked. A big thank you". **Ron**

"I was very stressed and needed to book a car last minute. My driver made me feel so at ease and safe, we even enjoyed a few jokes together". **Anonymous**

"Thank you to all your wonderful people. You make life so much easier for me".
Helen

LINKED CONFERENCE 2023





AN INAUGURAL EVENT

From drivers to bus carers, schedulers to booking staff, client service officers to administration, Board members and senior management, the entire Linked team, including a dedicated group of volunteers, and our support networks and stakeholders actively contributed to the three-day conference. The collective effort resulted in the generation of innovative ideas and strategic approaches that will shape our organisation's dynamic pathway for the next twelve months.

Recognising the pivotal role played by each employee in our overall success, it was imperative that we gathered together in a unified setting to focus on our future direction as one team collaborating on the meaningful work we do for the benefit of our organisation. The conference served as a secure and encouraging forum where every participant had the opportunity to confidently share individual experiences and

ideas. As the CEO, I recognised the wealth of knowledge embraced by our staff, and it was crucial to connect this collective knowledge for the advancement of Linked.

True to expectations, the discussions and brainstorming sessions were considered by a free flow of brainstorming ideas, prompting a comprehensive analysis of our operational and managerial practices. We analysed our strengths and identified areas in need of improvement through thought leadership. As CEO, I knew the outcome would be impressive, a collection of new ideas and information that will help take our organisation and services to another level. Additionally, the conference allowed us to build on our team dynamics, encouraging a sense of friendship, engagement, and enjoyable moments not only during the conference, but also in the future for team cooperation and collaboration.





INSPIRING GUESTS

Furthermore, we had the privilege of having great guest speakers, who shared their insights and experiences which left an impact on all attendees. I express my sincere gratitude to the following guests for sharing their invaluable experiences and perspectives with the Linked team:

- **Michael Crossland – Our Motivational Speaker**
- **Colin Wilson – Key Business Advisors**
- **Ross Banno – National Driver Education**
- **Matthew Knight & Ryan Mitchell – Hopscotch Accountants**
- **Dianne Bannister – Lifeline**

Their contributions enriched our conference and further invigorated our pursuit of excellence.





ARTIST Jamie Donovan

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Reconciliation Australia is the primary lead organisation dedicated to promoting and advancing reconciliation in Australia. The term reconciliation involves fostering stronger relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.

Reconciliation represents an ongoing commitment to bring about meaningful change in our society, with the goal of achieving a just and equitable society for everyone.

Reconciliation Australia's vision is based on and measured by five interconnected dimensions: historical acceptance, race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, and unity.

Linked Community Services is proud to take proactive steps to advance reconciliation through the completion and endorsement of our first Reconciliation Action Plan. This plan focuses on three core pillars: relationships, respect, and opportunities.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Building and strengthening mutually beneficial relationships is crucial for the success of reconciliation in our country. Linked Community Services actively establishes genuine and meaningful connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and businesses. We strive to cultivate long-lasting relationships by actively participating in National Reconciliation Week celebrations, promoting reconciliation within our sphere of influence, and encouraging positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.

RESPECT:

Respect entails increasing understanding and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, past institutional prejudices, knowledge, and rights through cultural preservation and education. Linked Community Services demonstrates respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by adhering to cultural protocols and fostering respect for their cultures and histories. We actively engage in and celebrate NAIDOC Week each year.

OPPORTUNITIES:

We acknowledge the significant and unacceptable imbalances that exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians across various social,

health, education, and economic indicators. Linked Community Services aims to bridge these gaps by enhancing employment outcomes, serving as an equal-opportunity employer, and increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.

Linked assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in accessing safe, reliable, and affordable transportation to fulfil their medical, educational, social, cultural and employment obligations. We are dedicated to furthering our commitment to providing

tangible and meaningful benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, promoting economic equity, and supporting First Nations' self-determination.

Linked continually strives to enrich our community partnerships, promoting and acknowledging the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and businesses. We are thrilled to

announce that one of our buses has been enhanced with vinyl artwork that symbolises the connection between our organisation and the Birpai, Worimi, and Dhanggati communities, the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate. This special artwork was commissioned by a local Aboriginal artist, Jamie Donovan, and we express our gratitude for his valuable contribution.





AGED CARE VOLUNTEER VISITORS SCHEME



Linked Community Services has been implementing the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) in the Mid North Coast region of New South Wales for over 30 years. The Royal Commission Aged Care Quality and Safety Report recommended the establishment of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) to support older individuals in leading meaningful and dignified lives, supplementing the care they receive through the aged care system. In response, the Australian Government allocated over \$99 million to the ACVVS through a grant opportunity.

Our committed team at Linked submitted a compelling grant application for funding to enable us to continue with the Program. In addition, it was our hope that we would be able to broaden our reach, allowing us to provide extended support for older people receiving aged care who are at risk of loneliness and social isolation within our region.

Excitedly, we were successful in securing funding for almost \$1.3M over the next three years. With this funding, the organisation aims to achieve our goal by expanding its services along the east coast of NSW, focusing on increasing placement numbers in new geographic areas. The ACVVS builds upon the existing CVS program, placing a renewed emphasis on enhancing the experiences of care recipients through volunteer engagement.

The ACVVS remains a free service that connects volunteers with older individuals living in residential aged care homes or in their own homes. The program offers companionship, social support, and opportunities for meaningful interactions. Volunteer Visitors recruited, trained, and supported by Linked play a crucial role in improving the social well-being and quality of life of care recipients. They engage in one-on-one visits, fostering social connections and providing a sense of purpose and belonging.

Volunteer Visitors are carefully matched with care recipients based on shared interests and hobbies, establishing long-term friendships. Visits are flexible and considerate of the recipient's health, culture, traditions, mobility, and well-being, with a focus on enjoyable activities.

Shared experiences between Volunteer Visitors and Care Recipients can be as simple as taking a walk in the garden, reading together, listening to music, watching a movie, going on an outing to the beach, having lunch at a cafe, or participating in group activities within residential aged care homes.

Thanks to the successful funding application, Linked Community Services can now offer the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme in both the Mid North Coast and the Hunter regions, resulting in a total of 215 visitation placements.

TESTIMONIALS

Lucy – ACVVS Volunteer Visitor

Since joining Linked Community Services in 2019 as a Community Visitor with my dog Star, I have enjoyed supporting residents' social wellbeing at Bethany Aged Care Facility in Port Macquarie with weekly Pet Therapy sessions. I have enjoyed the interaction with the residents, so much so, that I agreed to run a monthly singalong which brings so much joy to residents and to myself. It is wonderful to always have the support of Linked Community Services available. It is very reassuring to have our Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) Coordinator, Christie just a phone call away, if I need assistance or a question answered.

Margaret – ACVVS Care Recipient

I found out about the ACVVS Program from a Linked Community Services transport driver who felt I could benefit from having a volunteer visitor as my Husband had recently passed. I was feeling extremely lonely, depressed and upset as I didn't have family support during this difficult time. My details were given to Christie, the ACVVS Coordinator, who contacted me. Now I have a wonderful volunteer who is more like family than a friend. She has been instrumental in my health recovery as I still struggle with my grief. I have started to enjoy the simple things that life has to offer which is good for my mental health. We both enjoy a chat or reminisce at home about past times. Thank you Linked for matching me with a wonderful volunteer who goes above and beyond.



Paul – ACVVS Volunteer Visitor

As a Volunteer Visitor, my role is to catch up with my assigned person on a regular basis to offer companionship and friendship with the occasional outing. Another pair of eyes in their lives doesn't hurt either.

I was paired up with Dave who was 99 when I met him. Dave's

goal was to crack the 'ton' and see Charles coronated. He achieved both. He is an English World War II navy veteran and a staunch Monarchist. The fact that he was still living in his own home was amazing.

He was very independent and with the support of his daughters still managed to look after himself.

After meeting Dave, I understood that he was reasonably fit and walked daily around his village. I come to his home once a week for an early morning walk, followed by a chat and a cup of coffee. When I say weekly this quite often turned into fortnightly visits as some weeks Dave can't fit me into his busy schedule. The fact that he is now 100 made this busy schedule even more amazing. Recently, Dave had a fall in his backyard and broke his hip. He is now in a Residential Aged Care Facility. I continue to visit Dave to have a chat. As he heals and gets stronger, we will hopefully resume our walks.

We seemed to click straight away, and our friendship grew as we got to know more about each other. His war stories are incredible and so accurate. I was amazed at how accurate his recollections were for the kamikaze raids on his ship during the war. He was born and worked near Windsor Castle, so it wasn't surprising the esteem in which he held the Queen.

Meeting Dave and getting to know him has been a privilege and something I'll remember long after our visits finish.

We all need to give back when we have the time. The elderly in and around Port Macquarie are so fortunate to have an organisation such as Linked connecting community members with people who need friendship. I thoroughly enjoy being a volunteer and intend to do so for as long as I can.

2023 FINANCE REPORT



As part of our growth plan, Linked Community Services has successfully expanded our operations to the Manning Valley Area through the acquisition of Care N Go. We now offer our services through the corridor from South West Rocks to Port Stephens and all Local Government Areas in between.

The Linked brand has increased our presence in the community through the development and commitment to our strategic marketing plan with a focus on increasing higher brand awareness that will increase client numbers and trip outputs.

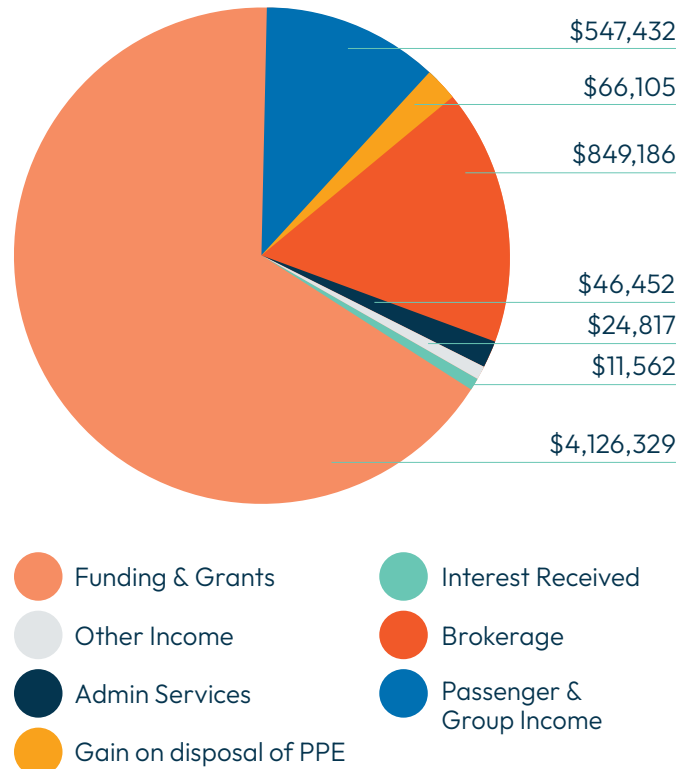
Our committed and dedicated staff have adapted to the challenges faced throughout the year and embraced our growth strategy while continuing to service our existing clients and maintain health and safety standards.

Linked Community Services recorded a net surplus of \$152,063 for the financial year. Total income for the financial year was \$5,671,884. Total expenses were \$5,519,821. Inflation has seen costs increase more than funding has increased. Our brokerage income and passenger and group income have increased in line with trip numbers and increased client numbers in the Manning Valley Area. Costs have also increased, with motor vehicle expenses remaining high due to high fuel prices and staff costs increasing as we expand our operations.

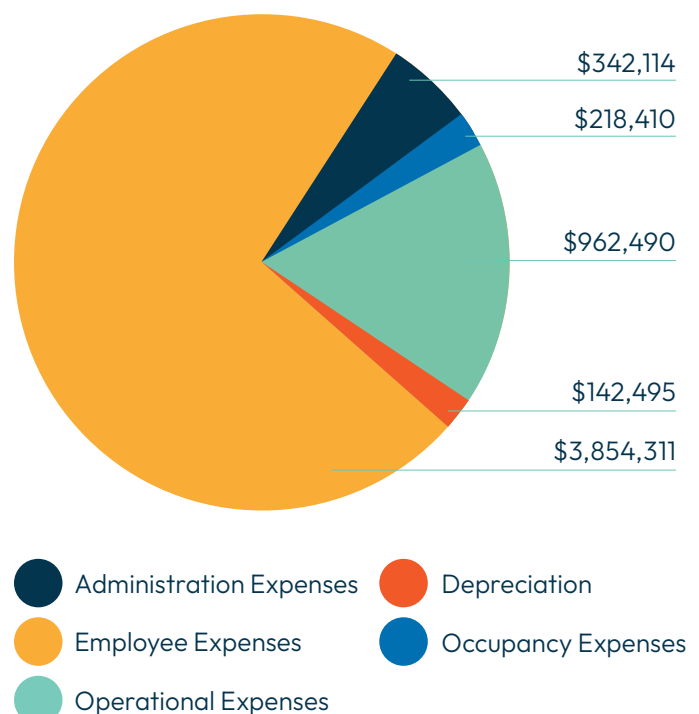
Linked has cash and financial assets of \$6,582,999 which covers all liabilities and fleet renewal costs. The overall balance sheet position is extremely healthy which makes us very sustainable. We are in a strong financial position to trade and make good decisions in the future to implement better strategic outcomes.

Carlie Comer
Chief Executive Officer

REVENUE & OTHER INCOME



EXPENSES



MOVING FORWARD

The next twelve months for Linked is going to be big! Now that our geographical footprint has increased, we look forward to working as one cohesive and efficient team to continue to bring safe and reliable transport and a sense of connectedness and belonging to those who need it the most.

In addition, our 2022-2024 Strategic Plan will see us move some of our fleet to Electric Vehicles. We acknowledge the NSW Government's commitment to reach Net Zero Emissions by 2050 and, as a community transport provider, we recognise our obligation to also work towards this target by reducing our own carbon footprint.





#Social Outings

Social interaction is particularly important for seniors' mental and emotional health and physical well-being.

At Linked Community Services, we pride ourselves on providing a diverse Social Outing Calendar for all areas. Full of new experiences to try, places to dine, and towns to explore, our Social Outings promote social inclusion and independence, while providing a level of service to make each person feel important and cared for. New friendships are formed, and happiness ensues.

To expand on the well-being of our clients, we successfully received grant funding to facilitate

a wellness initiative. For any client that cancelled their transport or social outing, we delivered a care pack containing items to stimulate the mind and fine motor skills, while providing relaxation and comfort to assist in their recovery.

Funds were also used to facilitate a creative program, aimed to reduce cognitive impairment, boost self-esteem, cope with stress, anxiety, and depression, enhance fine motor skills, help reduce pain and encourage communication and social interaction. Clients could attend the outing without the additional cost of materials, making it accessible to all.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Volunteer Call - Your Help is Needed!

Linked Community Services relies on the support of our amazing volunteers. We are grateful to have more than one hundred generous individuals who selflessly contribute their time to help us serve the community. Without them, we wouldn't be able to make such a meaningful impact on the lives of those we support.

Currently, we find ourselves in urgent need of additional assistance. Linked is experiencing unprecedented growth and increased demand for our services, requiring more volunteers than ever before, so adding some of your time as a volunteer will be advantageous.

If you're searching for an opportunity to give back or help those in need, we invite you to consider becoming a volunteer with us. Volunteers are the driving force behind the positive change we create, and without them, Linked's growth would not be possible.

We are desperately seeking volunteers for the following areas:

- **Drivers:** We are constantly looking for volunteer drivers for our fleet, including cars, buses, and mini vans. Our operations run during business hours, as well as evenings and weekends.
- **Bus Assistants:** Can you assist with our social outings? Bus assistants ensure the safety of our clients as they board and disembark the bus, help with storing walkers and other mobility aids, and assist with general duties as needed.
- **Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS):** Could you visit older people in their homes? Your visits would provide vital friendship, connection, and companionship to individuals who often feel isolated and lonely. Caring volunteers are always needed to deliver this essential service.
- **Community Engagement:** We require volunteers to man information stalls at community events and local markets. This involves engaging with the public, discussing our services, answering questions, and distributing our brochures.

We offer a wide range of volunteering options at flexible times to accommodate your schedule. If you need more information, please don't hesitate to call our office. We would be thrilled to welcome you to the Linked family.

Charitable Donations

In addition to our volunteers, Linked Community Services also relies on the generosity of individuals through financial donations and bequests.

As a registered charity with charitable fundraising authority under the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991, Linked Community Services greatly appreciates the funding received from the State and Federal Governments. However, due to the rising costs of living, it's not always guaranteed that we receive enough support.

We sincerely welcome charitable donations from the public, whether it's a one-time contribution, a monthly commitment, or a charitable bequest. If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation, please contact our reception at 02 6583 8644.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANK YOU

Volunteers

Our volunteers make a tremendous contribution to the services provided by Linked. We are so fortunate to our volunteers for dedicating their time to support our clients. We have over 100 volunteers to date, and they help within all aspects of our business.

Our Communities

From every community we service and every person we help from Port Stephens to South West Rocks, we thank you for your ongoing support and dedication to Linked. We value your feedback and use it to continually improve on our service so that our excellent reputation remains in place.

Our Funding Partners

Linked Community Services would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank our funding partners for their ongoing support.

Transport for New South Wales -
TfNSW



Transport
for NSW

Transport for NSW – Transport
Access Regional Partnerships
Grants Program (TARPS)



Transport
for NSW

Department of Health
and Aged Care



Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Department of Social
Services



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

HELLO LINKY!!

The award-winning Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail encompasses 83 one-metre high fibreglass koala sculptures, and the new 2.5 meter Big Koala, featuring hand-painted designs, by local artists.

The initiative is supported by Port Macquarie Hastings Council and the NSW Government, and celebrates one of Australia's most iconic animals, the Koala.

Sculptures are displayed across Port Macquarie in a Trail that leads people to discover interesting places from the mountains to the sea.

At Linked Community Services we have our very own Koala, Linky. Linky sits proudly in our reception area at our new Port Macquarie Office.

Linky is already featured in the official Sculpture Trail brochure, and we have had many visitors pop in and take a photo with him as they work their way through the Trail list.

