

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

**A community where
everyone can participate
and belong**



Strengthening
Communities

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026

VISION

A community where everyone can participate and belong

PURPOSE

We work with local communities to ensure the support, connection and care people need throughout their lives

VALUES

Integrity · Respect
Valuing people · Excellence
Innovation · Partnership



EMPOWERED PEOPLE

People are connected to their communities through support, care and new opportunities

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- > Delivering care in community transport
- > Facilitating volunteering and skills pathways
- > Connecting people with employment and training



STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Local communities and organisations are effective and influential

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- > Growing volunteering locally and across Australia
- > Establishing place-based collaboration that supports local communities
- > Supporting organisations to improve their governance, planning and practice



EQUITABLE SYSTEMS

Policy and systems change in ways that improve people's lives

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- > Convening local networks to drive positive change
- > Advocating for policy, systems and funding reform
- > Building community capacity to advocate and engage with government



INNOVATIVE GROWTH

We continue to develop as a sustainable and effective organisation

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- > Piloting and evaluating innovative service models
- > Developing our practice in collaboration and system change
- > Maintaining strong governance, financial and management systems

WHAT WE DO



COMMUNITY
TRANSPORT



AGED CARE



VOLUNTEERING



EMPLOYMENT



PLACE-BASED
COLLABORATION



EARLY
CHILDHOOD

FROM THE CHAIR

Despite the shifting world order, funding uncertainty, cost-of-living stress and the lingering impacts of social isolation, most Australians continue to uphold fairness and equality as the core purpose reflecting our endearing ideal of a 'fair go'. Wellbeing and support for people to live with dignity and security remains a national priority, and through these challenges, EV Inc's mission, to strengthen communities by empowering people to participate fully in life, work, and community, remains clear. Strong governance underpins our credibility. As a Board, we are committed to purposeful governance, governance that safeguards integrity, builds trust, and empowers sound decisions in service of our mission.

Established in 1976 and serving communities along the eastern metropolitan for 50 years, EV Strengthening Communities recognise that for-purpose has moved from being for communities to being with communities, embedding mechanisms where service users contribute to shaping interventions, programs, evaluation, and strategy.

Thus, for purposefulness a shift to governance with communities is happening and brings lived-experience representation, people with direct experience of the services we offer, to be involved in governance within a culture of distributed leadership and community accountability.

It has been our focus that for sustainability we must diversify our priority activities and pursue alternative sources of funds, and in doing so demonstrate not only what we do, but the difference we make to people and the community. Being robust, EV continues to evolve and capture this impact, the difference we make to people and the community, through multi-layered outcomes framework that is both quantitative and qualitative. The Board is acutely aware that a reduction in our capacity to extend services would mean the most vulnerable communities will be harder hit, staffing will become riskier with turnover, burnout and recruitment difficulties, and gaps will emerge in our proactive approach to early-intervention, prevention, and support services.

One of only 59 Early Years Management organisations delivering kindergarten services in Victoria, EV Inc commenced new projects in the management of kindergartens, extending our reach into early childhood education, managing multiple sites that provide benefits to children through contemporary, evidence-based practices, provides for their parents to focus on supporting their children's learning free of other obligations, and benefits staff through structures and processes that support their day-to-day work and professional development.



**RANJIT GAJENDRA
NADARAJAH**

FROM THE CHAIR

Without a doubt 2024 – 2025 has been meaningful, one of renewal, realignment and resilience-building as we continue to strive, within services that we offer, to help people live with dignity, connect them to opportunities, enhance community inclusion and emotional wellbeing, increase employability, augment confidence, boost independence, improve social connection and reduce isolation, especially for older adults and people living with disabilities.

EV Strengthening Communities empowers people to participate fully in life, work, and community, and creates, nurtures and builds stronger communities through equitable systems. Across the diverse projects, programs and interventions we undertake EV recognises and rewards a culture of collaboration, meaningful engagement, accountability combined with responsibility, and purposeful governance that is defined by the behaviours and attitudes we permit, and those that we overlook.

Governance and Strategic Achievements

During the year, the Board reaffirmed its commitment to voluntary service, recognising that leadership in community strengthens both purpose and accountability. We also revised the Governance Manual, introducing maximum durations for Board appointments, a process for formal review of performance of Board and Executive roles to support renewal, and greater transparency. To further strengthen oversight, the Board established a Quality, Risk and Governance Committee to inform our decisions and ensure our commitment for continuous improvement. The role of the Deputy Chair, was reinstated, reinforcing leadership continuity and mentoring within future Boards.

We celebrated the Volunteer Inclusiveness Awards, recognising the contributions and diversity of our volunteer base, and commenced new projects in the management of kindergartens, extending EV's reach into early childhood education. As a multi service community organisation, EV has diversified as an Early Years Manager and employment services organisation from its traditional base of aged care, community transport and volunteering services.

This has re-emphasised and renewed focus on outcomes, evidence, and impact and guides our reporting to key stakeholders. Across our programs, practices, and people, we must continue to embed systems that measure impact and success and ensure accountability, not only a reflection of our commitment to excellence and transparency but increasingly a requirement to obtain funding and sector-wide good practice.

FROM THE CHAIR

Reviewing Our Strategic Priorities

The Board undertook a review of EV's Strategic Plan 2023–2026, reaffirming our four key pillars, Empowered People, Stronger Communities, Equitable Systems, and Innovative Growth.

This review provided an opportunity to capture the progress, reflect on challenges, align emerging needs, and strengthen our focus on governance. It reminded us that clarity, than consensus, is vital as we pursue these strategic priorities and everyone understands the direction. The Board continues to map influences for the next cycle, acknowledging that both strategy making and strategy execution are not static, and these evolve with the communities we serve and the challenges we face; continuous realignment is natural as diverse opportunities and challenges emerge, and I foresee the review of strategy progress to be embedded with our governance calendar.

The Board also undertook a review of the Governance Calendar, and after a lengthy period of absence introduced an organisation wide consultation process for the review of EV's Risk Appetite.

Purposeful Governance and Board Independence

An essential part of what we do is maintaining the independence of the Board. Each member brings unique expertise, experience, and perspective, and we actively value constructive challenge and diverse viewpoints. This helps us avoid group think, ensuring that decisions are well-informed, transparent, reviewed, balanced, and truly in the best interests of the organisation and the communities we serve.

Purposeful governance also means protecting the people who serve. We uphold a strong framework for accountability and transparency, including introducing whistleblower protection and fair processes for raising and resolving concerns. Equally, we recognise the importance of safeguarding our volunteer Board members and management team from reputational harm. Protecting both the integrity and wellbeing of our people is fundamental to sustaining the trust the community places on EV Inc.

FROM THE CHAIR

Leadership Renewal and the Digital Future

During 2024-2025 the Board acknowledged the departure of members Sarah Jane Terril, Secretary, and Sue Edmonds, Treasurer, and we are thankful for their expertise, time and commitment to EV's purpose. The Board welcomed Fiona McDonald and Michael Ricketts as new members to the Board, and appointed Board members Colin Bostock as Secretary and Michael Ricketts as Treasurer.

Across the community services and not-for-profit sector in Australia, it has been observed that the majority of leadership and governance roles are often held by Senior Citizens who bring deep experience and commitment and are also getting closer to full retirement. It is a trend that the sector must address. As the sector embraces artificial intelligence, data analytics, and digital transformation, this generational strength must be complemented by new voices, emerging leaders, and diverse digital capabilities.

During the year EV also embarked on recruitment of candidates for the Board as it continues to be committed to fostering intergenerational collaboration, diversity, and lived experience, drawing on the wisdom of experience while inviting professionals who can help shape the next era of community impact. This balance between continuity and renewal will be vital as the needs and wants of the communities we serve become more complex, the risk of loss of privacy, confidentiality and data looms bigger than ever, and technology reshapes how we serve and connect.

Looking Forward

The years ahead will continue to test the resilience and creativity of community services organisations. For EV, this is not a reason for hesitation but a call to action. We will continue diversification, invest in innovation and the development of our staff, nurture partnerships, and practices that make a tangible difference in people's lives.

The Board remains deeply grateful to the leadership team led by the CEO Viv Cunningham Smith, our management, staff, volunteers, partners, funding bodies and supporters who make our work possible and meaningful. Together, we are not only delivering services, but we are also building stronger communities, where every individual can move freely, contribute meaningfully, and live with dignity.

FROM THE CHAIR

On a Personal Note

Having joined the Board in 2013 when the late Terry MacDonald was Chair and serving on the Executive since 2016, I informed the Board in July that I will be stepping down from my role as Chair at this AGM. I want to express my gratitude and sincere appreciation for the trust and commitment of the too-many-to-name previous Board members, Viv Cunningham Smith the CEO, the leadership team, staff, and the numerous volunteers. I am particularly thankful to the current Board of Colin Bostock, Kathy Walker, Fiona McDonald, Raju Adhikari, Michael Ricketts and Kumari Van der Meer who are engaged in the process of transition. It has indeed been a privilege to lead the Board over the years and contribute to an organisation that delivers vital services across Melbourne's eastern metropolitan region, embracing a culture of commitment to continuous improvement. Being research active and a practicing academic this journey over the 12 years, from Eastern Volunteers to EV Strengthening Communities has provided me invaluable learnings, reflections and case content that I shall use in teachings and scholarly activities.

The progress we have achieved over the years, sometimes in extraordinarily difficult and challenging conditions, has been nothing short of exceptional. In maintaining some of that ethos, there is consensus to continue as a Volunteer Board, without remuneration.

Together, we have strengthened governance, deepened partnerships, and guided the organisation through both challenging and transformative years. We have enhanced our financial sustainability, expanded our reach to those most in need, and embedded a strong culture of collaboration, accountability, and community impact.

As EV Inc continues to grow, diversify, and respond to the increasingly complex needs of the people we serve, it is vital that the Board and Executive uphold the highest standards of governance and care.

FROM THE CHAIR

This includes:

Courage and leadership in addressing challenges, making principled decisions, and championing our mission in times of ambiguity, uncertainty, and opacity;

Board independence that supports objective oversight, transparency and sound decision-making.

Robust whistleblower protections for staff, volunteers, and all those associated with EV Strengthening Communities.

Clear processes and safeguards for the leadership team and members of the Board, enabling them to fulfil their duties with confidence and integrity.

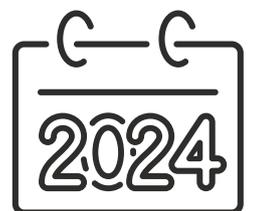
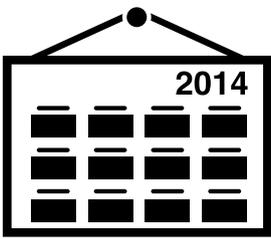
Greater transparency in communication, reporting, and engagement with our stakeholders and community.

Ongoing innovation in how we evidence and measure our impact and influence, ensuring this is done efficiently and effectively, embedded within our systems and processes, rather than as an afterthought that diverts resources from our for-purpose work.

These principles are essential to sustaining community trust, organisational integrity, and the impact we seek to achieve.

While I step down as Chair, I remain confident in the capability of Colin, Kathy, Fiona, Raju and Kumari on the Board, and EV's leadership team with Viv at the helm, to recognise that much needs to be done, and to continue building on this strong foundation. I look forward to extending my support for EV Inc in a different capacity and to seeing it continue to grow in the years ahead, remaining a trusted, responsive, and compassionate presence in the lives of those we serve.

Ranjit Gajendra



FROM THE CEO

The vehicle metaphor seems to be appropriate for our 24-25 year so I will quote Henry Ford:

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."

The achievements of our little team throughout 2024-2025 are showcased in this annual report and I will leave the reader to assess the collective contribution to our communities. I would like to thank our committed team of paid and volunteer staff in all their diversity for the outstanding results they continue to achieve. It is in the collective that EV achieves. It is in working together in all of our diversity that we achieve.



**VIVIENNE CUNNINGHAM-
SMITH**

We continue to adapt to-

- change,
- inadequate and short-term funding for services,
- large scale government reforms that keep us in limbo for years,
- lack of policy awareness of mobility disadvantage and its impact on people over 65 and those experiencing disability
- wholesale lack of understanding at state and commonwealth level of the need to provide place based support structures so people who want to volunteer can navigate into volunteering in their community and deliver much needed services into the future.

We also saw growth in this ever-changing community sector environment. We are steadily growing our early years services and in 2026 will be providing 12 kindergartens across 5 local government areas. I have had people say to me – do your volunteers run the kindergartens? We are still known as Eastern Volunteers by many people even though we changed our brand two years ago. We have successfully been a volunteer based organisation for nearly 50 years so it is no wonder that this assumption that we run on only a volunteer workforce prevails. There is an inherent prejudice which still prevails in various sectors of our community and government that somehow being an organisation with a volunteer workforce makes you less competent. In fact, that is one of the reasons we changed our name because government funders told us we were not competent to run services because we had a volunteer workforce!! They clearly have never managed integrated paid and volunteer workforces- the management is complex and rewarding, much more so than just managing a paid workforce.

A huge thankyou to all our partners, funders and supporters who we worked with in 2024-2025.

It takes collective action and commitment to achieve what we do.

FROM THE CEO

We have changed and will continue to change as EV Strengthening Communities.

Why the name EV Strengthening Communities? We now offer such diverse services- early years kindergartens, employment services, aged and disability services, emergency relief, consulting services and a much smaller volunteering service now funding streams to support it have ceased. What ties them together? They all strengthen community in their own way and that is our common commitment.

I must thank our Board for their continued sage governance of the organisation and their willingness to volunteer their talents and expertise to ensure EV grows positively into the future. Working together is critical to achieving a community where everyone can participate and belong. I would like to thank our outgoing Chair Ranjit for his significant contribution & governance leadership over many years . We wish him well in all his future endeavours. It has been a good team effort Ranjit.

We continue to work in a community sector under stress and it is in our collective support and effort that we achieve. We could not do our work without the support of our peaks- Australian Community Transport Association, Volunteering Victoria and the Victorian Council of Social Services. They continue to amplify the issues impacting people and communities and advocate for sensible policy positions at state and Commonwealth level. Thanks to Murray Coates [CEO ACTA] and Geoff Sharp [CEO VV] for your partnership and collegiate work with EV.

We would also like to acknowledge the many and varied community and government organisations we have worked with in the year. You are too numerous to mention, all 3526 of you. EV prides itself on being an ethical community sector partner to you all and we look forward to our continued collective effort in 2026.

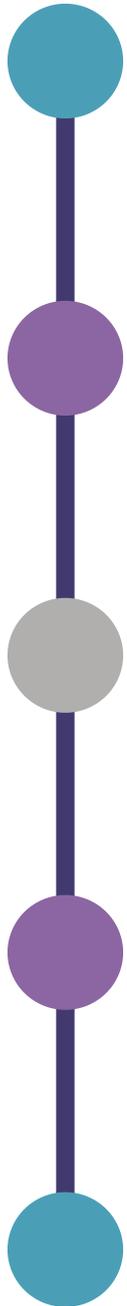
I would like to finish with a quote from a woman who had a most significant influence on my own professional values and career, Jane Goodall who we lost to humanity in 2025.

"One individual cannot possibly make a difference, alone. It is individual efforts, collectively, that makes a noticeable difference—all the difference in the world!" — Jane Goodall.

A huge thankyou to all our partners, funders and supporters who we worked with in 2024-2025.

It takes collective action and commitment to achieve what we do.

EV IN 2024-2025- NO LONGER "JUST" A VOLUNTEER ORGANISATION



A workforce of 37 full time equivalent paid staff representing over 50 individuals

A workforce of over 80 volunteers

Servicing 11 local government regions in Victoria

Servicing Commonwealth, state, local government and over 45 community organisation contracts

Since 2017 our paid workforce has grown by from 9-31 full time equivalent staff and our revenue from \$1 to 5 million per annum

OUR OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT APPROACH

The EV team have been working in 2025 to introduce outcomes measurement to determine if the people and organisations using our services are in fact better off. EV uses Results Based Accountability methodology for its outcome measurement. This methodology is used internationally to measure outcomes in the social services sector.

This approach measures our performance for our consumer group at 3 levels:

- How Much Did We Do- our internal activity
- How Well did We Do It- our quality agenda which measures how well we did our activity including gold standard accreditation.
- Is Anyone Better Off- the consumer outcomes

EV has two consumer groups:

Consumer Group 1: reflected in our Strategic Pillar: Empowered People

Individuals of all abilities that seek services, participation in community, education and employment and the outcome we seek for them is:

People are meaningfully engaged in their community

Consumer Group 2: reflected in our Strategic Pillar: Stronger Communities

Community organisations, businesses and government bodies across Australia that seek support to achieve results for their consumers or communities. The outcome we seek for them is:

Business, local government, and community organisations are supported to achieve their consumer results

To measure our consumer outcomes we use survey methodology the timing of which depends upon the program and department. Some survey quarterly, some monthly and some annually. Those who do an annual survey are not represented here as they survey at the end of the year.

Below you will find the Activity and Quality data which is collected routinely followed by the outcome data as it stood at August 2025. Outcome data commenced collection in January 2025. Each department has addressed its annual achievements using this framework.

As we evolve our outcomes thinking in 2026 EV will introduce Theory of Change methodology into its outcome planning and measurement to determine short, intermediate and long term outcome measures tailored to the specific consumer groups of each department.

HOW MUCH SERVICE DID WE PROVIDE? OUR ACTIVITY

11,197
people accessed services

3526
community organisations, business &
government entities were supported

53%
of people utilised Community Transport

22%
attended our Kindergartens

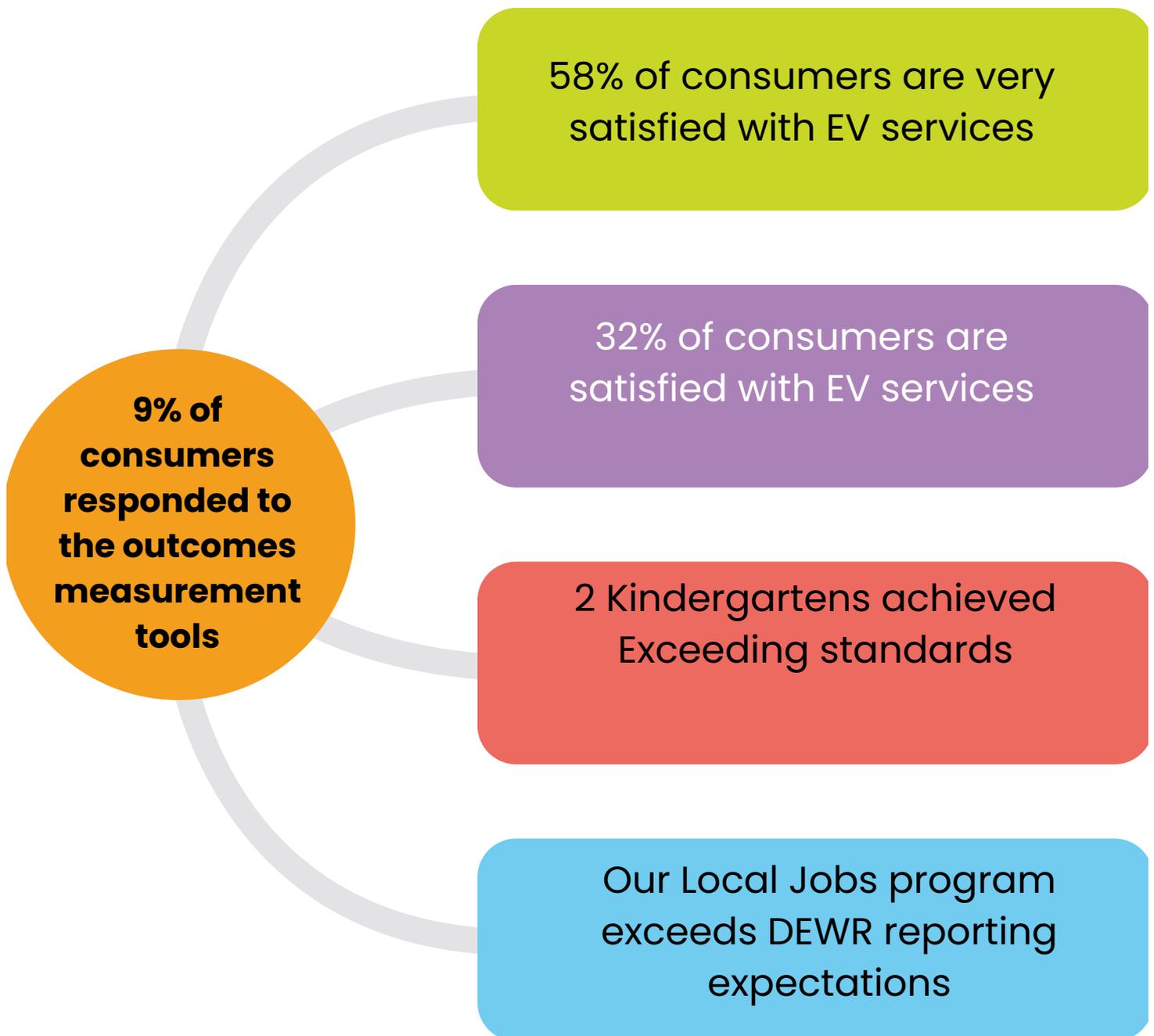
12%
utilised our Local Jobs retrenchment and
support services

14%
of people sought support to find
volunteering opportunities

The Victorian and
Commonwealth
governments say this
service isn't needed!

QUALITY DATA?

HOW WELL DO WE DO OUR ACTIVITY

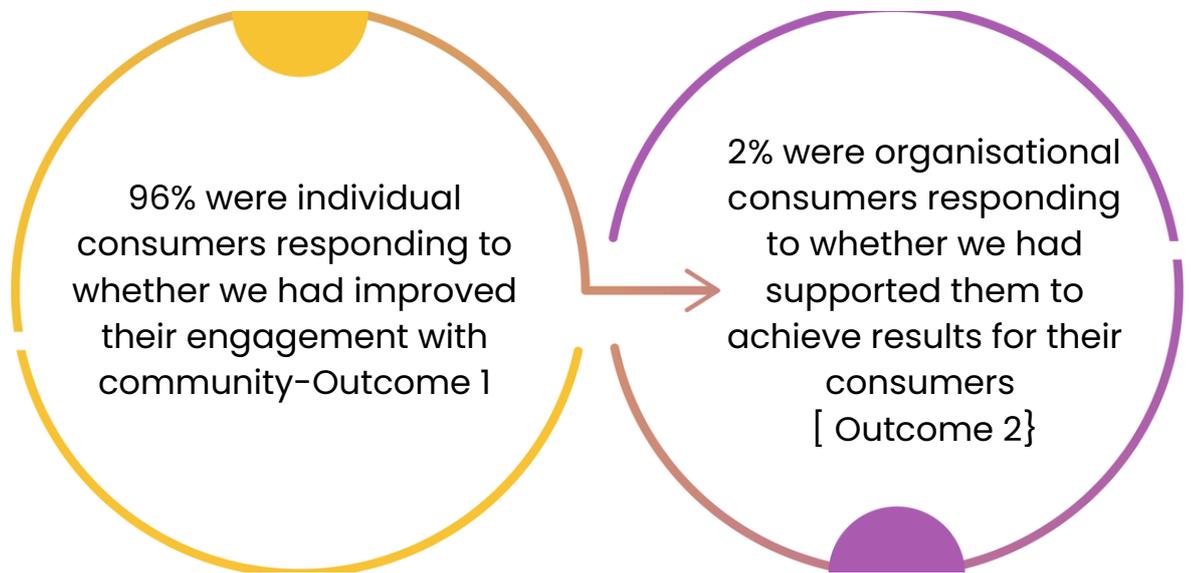


35 consumers offered suggested improvements. 86% of these were in community transport and 14% in volunteering. 50% of these consumers in community transport wanted more booking capacity ie so more trips could be taken, 13% wanted more vehicles and 10% said the phones were too busy. This speaks to the significant demand for community transport

IS ANYONE BETTER OFF? OUR PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES

9.2% of EV's consumers responded to the outcomes measures to August 2025

Of those who responded



24% of individual consumers were kindergarten users

56% of individual consumers were Community Transport users

IS ANYONE BETTER OFF? OUR PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES

Data for organisational consumers remains small so we have not reported this here. Below you will find results for our individual consumers thus far.



68%

of individual consumers feel it is important to feel a part of your community?

41%

of individual consumers feel included in their community already

61%

of individual consumers said EV services had improved their connection with people in their community
[30% said it was not applicable to them]

34%

of individual consumers said EV services had improved their connection with services in their community
[25% said it was not applicable to them]

60%

of individual consumers said EV services had improved their ability to get out to social, recreational and other community activities

EARLY YEARS SERVICES-

How much did we do in 2024 2025?

Our Early Years Management services managed 5 kindergartens from January-June 25. We saw 285 children and delivered 2325 hours of programs. We delivered Nature Playgroup to 50 children. Our EYM secured a Dept of Education Inclusion Grant of \$10,000 each for Arrabri Kindergarten, Doncaster Gardens Preschool & Kallista Kindergarten. This funding is for projects designed to: increase engagement, improve learning outcomes and strengthen inclusive early childhood learning environments for children of all abilities. We also received a Warrawong Professional Development Grant of \$5,870 to support the development of knowledge for Early Childhood Staff.



VIK NAIDU

How we contributed to Strategic Pillar 1: Empowering People-refer page 2

Our Early Years Management services worked to secure Exceeding Ratings for 2 of its kindergartens in 2025 and we were delighted to obtain these quality ratings. Our kindergarten staff are to be congratulated for the superior work they deliver to children. As our other kindergartens are rated we hope to ensure consistency of these high standards in both meeting and exceeding ratings. To achieve this excellence in service we created a Parent Advisory Group (PAG) at both Doncaster Gardens Preschool and Arrabri Kindergarten to assist the kindergartens with fundraising and working bees activities. Parent Advisory Groups and Families participated in over 33 fundraising activities, raising a total of \$ 49,600 this financial year.

Kindergartens serve a critical role in their communities. We collaborated with Body Safety Australia, Cancer Council Australia and Ethical Interactions Early Childhood consultancy for the 2025 Conference – 'Embedding the Child Safe Standards'.

The EYM undertook consultancy work (governance and financial) at Arrabri Kindergarten in July 2024 and successfully transitioned the kindergarten in January 2025. We participated in the Yarra Ranges Council's Expression of Interest in December 2024 and successfully transitioned Lilydale North Preschool into EV EYM in March 2025. Both kindergartens were previously managed by a volunteer Committee of Management.

The EYM is part of the Access to Early Learning (AEL) Eastern Region Governance Group. Access to Early Learning (AEL) is an Early Intervention Program that helps young children to take part in early childhood education and care programs. AEL is a targeted program for three-year-old children from families with complex needs.

AGED AND DISABILITY SERVICES-

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

How much did we do in 2024 2025?

Our Community Transport and Social Support Services delivered over 500 hours of Social Support to our clients and 38,905 trips. We experienced a 30% increase in demand for community transport. Our vehicles travelled 267,814 kms over 12 months powered by our volunteer driver team and a customer service centre of paid and volunteer staff.

How we contributed to Strategic Pillar 1: Empowering People-refer page 2

During the year our aged and disability team delivered:

Community education sessions: Radio sessions x 4 with Radio Eastern FM

Community education sessions

- Manningham Chinese Senior citizens July 2025
- Applewood retirement village
- Rotary club presentation April 2025
- Road safety awareness session Manningham Council April 2025

Events:

- Whitehorse dementia action week Sep 2024
- Whitehorse Council Positive Ageing forum March 2025
- Volunteer for Knox Expo May 2025

Safe and inclusive environments to participate in EV:

- Training attended: HR training re navigating legislation
- Cultural awareness
- Care Sector bushfire safety training Nov 2024
- SSD Connect professional boundaries training Feb 2025
- SSD Utilising the MAC portal effectively

Networks supported

- Whitehorse Service Sector Network
- Outer East Community Inclusion Alliance
- Boroondara Aged Care Service Providers Alliance (BASPA)
- Yarra Ranges Improving Transport Access working group
- Caladenia dementia support network meeting
- Aged and Community Care Providers Association (ACCPA)



LIZ MCFARLIN

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES-

LOCAL JOBS PROGRAM

How much did we do in 2024 2025?

In 2024-25 the Local Jobs Program for the North Eastern Melbourne Employment Region (Banyule, Darebin, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Mitchell, Murrindindi, Nillumbik, Whitehorse, Whittlesea and Yarra Ranges) engaged 1,232 people through service access and regional activities. The program supported 877 community organisations, businesses and government entities, facilitated 101 network engagements, and assisted communities in their advocacy on 31 occasions.



BRAD BYRNE

How we contributed to Strategic Pillar 1: Empowering People-refer

The Local Jobs Program empowered 1,232 people, including refugees, migrants, young people, CALD communities, First Nations people, people with disability, women 45+, primary carers and those long term unemployed to reconnect with community, build skills and move closer to meaningful training and work through targeted, place-based initiatives:

Himilo Futures Program (Local Recovery Fund) – Culturally tailored support for women 45+ from Muslim and African backgrounds (many of which were long term carers on the Workforce Australia caseload). This addressed a service gap and achieved 10 employment and 15 education outcomes, reduced isolation, and improved provider/employer cultural awareness.

Healthcare Career Jumpstart Program (Local Recovery Fund) – Prepared young people experiencing social anxiety for entry roles in healthcare, this led to 6 health related education and 10 employment outcomes.

Ready Set Mobile Dressing Service (Local Initiatives Fund) – Previously underutilised, on-site styling and clothing support expanded after access barriers were removed, 10+ mobile sessions were booked since the pilot, increasing support for participants.

Hopeful Horizons Navigating Your Local Job Market (Local Initiatives Fund) – Co-designed event designed to break down barriers for multicultural jobseekers through collaboration with local organisations, employment services, and training providers by supporting migrants to better navigate the Australian labour market. The event achieved strong outcomes, with 95% of attendees reporting greater confidence in seeking support from providers, 90% feeling better prepared to find work, and 90% gaining a clearer understanding of local employment and training services.

Bloom Program – Tailored employment focused support for single mothers, 6 women completed an 8 week capacity building program to re-engage with study/work and strengthen wellbeing and work life balance. The program's success was underpinned by strong connections with local employment service providers, who supported the initiative through referrals and collaboration, helping ensure the program's viability and impact.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES-

LOCAL JOBS PROGRAM

How we contributed to Strategic Pillar 2: Strengthening Communities

The Local Jobs Program strengthened the regional ecosystem by supporting 877 community organisations, businesses and government entities, building collaboration and influence across North Eastern Melbourne.



BRAD BYRNE

Apprenticeship Connect Australia Providers (ACAP) & Employment Services Networking Event (Local Initiatives Fund) – Convened 60 professionals across 2 Local Jobs regions, aligning Apprenticeship Support with Workforce Australia/Transition to Work. The event strengthened the cross-regional support networks for apprenticeship and trades pathways by identifying priority partnerships, sharing insights and developing strategies that improve jobseeker outcomes.

New Age Caravan Retrenchment Support – Engaged early with the employer to build trust and tailor assistance for predominantly Vietnamese speaking staff with limited English. In partnership with SYC, which brought extensive retrenchment experience and access to a Vietnamese-speaking employment coach, culturally responsive and targeted support was provided to affected workers. As a result, 6 of the 10 retrenched employees were successfully placed into new manufacturing roles.

Disability Employment Tourism Local Navigator Pilot – Increased awareness and employer participation in inclusive hiring by connecting local employers, employment services and NDIS providers, and creating bespoke training pathways. 100+ businesses were engaged, 10 progressed to recruitment stage. 3 people living with a disability were employed, 3 were in the applications/interview stage, and 2 were completing qualifications prior to appointment. We also built capability by co-developing 2 interactive modules on disability inclusive employment (30 completions), delivering tailored training to 12 staff, producing 2 handbooks plus a toolkit, and creating a case study video profiling 2 employers.

Empowered Women In Trades (EWIT) Coca-Cola Europacific Partners (CCEP) School Industry Tours (Local Initiatives Fund) – Supported with the delivery of Work Experience Done Differently for 20 Year 9–10 Fairhills High students. They gained hands on exposure to trade, office and manufacturing roles via a CCEP site tour and a Workplace Challenge on safety/logistics. Students later presented practical solutions to the CCEP team. This initiative would not have occurred without Local Jobs funding, which covered student transport and ensured full participation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT- VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER RESOURCE SERVICE

How much did we do in 2024 2025?

In 2024 EV undertook a major initiative (Virtual Volunteer Resource Service) to address the following challenges faced to building sustainable volunteer workforces.

- lack of equitable locally based navigation services across Victoria
- lack of collaborative networks to influence how organisations were responding to the changing trends in volunteering
- strength of local word of mouth in renewing volunteer workforces ie need for local initiatives and
- retention of a skeleton volunteer support infrastructure which could be built upon regionally .



DR SHONA BASS

How we contributed to Strategic Pillar 2: Strengthening Communities-refer page 2

The Virtual Volunteer Resource Service (Virtual VRS) is an innovative and bespoke initiative that has taken 18 months to develop, test and implement the following three components.

1. **Victorian Volunteer Navigation Hub** – powered by volunteers to support others to navigate volunteering opportunities
2. **Online Communities of Practice** – supporting big and small organisations, communities and sporting groups at the local, state and national level.
3. **Learning and Support platform online modules** to support: (i) volunteers, (ii) inclusion and diversity, and (iii) the capacity building of organisations and community groups.

The key achievements of the Virtual VRS initiative include:

Three LGA's have invested in the Virtual VRS to support volunteering in their council areas.

1. Manningham CC – Tier 3 funding (2024-2025)
2. Maroondah CC – Tier 2 funding (2024-2026)
3. Whitehorse CC – Tier 2 + 1 supplement (2025-2026)

Victorian Volunteer Navigation Hub

- 15 Volunteer Assessors
- 545 people registered
- 250 people assessed and referred
- 60 people successful in volunteer placement
- 412 vulnerable people supported
- 134 people supported to complete registration

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT-

Online Communities of Practice

- Launched in March 2025
- 7 Associations/Groups operating
 - VMA5
 - Manningham CC
 - Maroondah CC
 - Whitehorse CC
 - NNVRC
 - ACTA
 - Matildas Alumni
- 100+ people engaged in the platform



DR SHONA BASS

Learning and Support Hub

- Partnership with Volunteer Victoria to deliver Inclusion modules to 50 organisations
- Seven new modules developed include:
 - Engaging Young People in Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Organisations
 - Understanding Financial Reports for Non-Accountants
 - 3 Youth volunteering modules:
 - Volunteering as a Young Person
 - Preparing to Volunteer
 - Using Volunteering as an Employment or Study Pathway
 - Small Grant Writing
- 174 people registered on the Learning and Support Hub

MANNINGHAM YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS PROGRAM- FUNDED BY MANNINGHAM COUNCIL

How much did we do in 2024 2025?

Presentations were given across 4 schools in the Manningham LGA

Heatherwood Special School

- Doncaster Secondary College
- Templestowe Secondary College
- Doncaster Christian college

• A Youth Volunteering expo was held at Doncaster Secondary College, 200 students attended. This expo included:

- Volunteering presentation
- 8 VIO interactive stall holders
- Youth volunteering modules

Promotion of Youth Online Modules and Volunteer Nav Hub to 6 schools in the Manningham LGA

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT- VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

How much did we do in 2024 2025?

The Volunteer Management Activity project in the Eastern Metropolitan region of Victoria (Maroondah, Whitehorse, Knox, Monash, Yara Ranges & Manningham) in 2024-2025 engaged with over 1,500 individuals across 12 workshops and 20 pop-up stalls. Multiple council consultations and meetings with community groups took place and 30+ partnerships were fostered and supported by the project and within the online Communities of Practice platform. Connected 600+ people to community through the virtual volunteering navigation hub, inclusive volunteering workshops, citizenship ceremonies, and ambassador programs. Over 600 individuals were engaged in inclusive volunteering workshops, citizenship ceremony pop-ups, and youth programs.



ADELE BRAUN

How we contributed to Strategic Pillar 2: Strengthening Communities—refer page 2

We strengthened communities by fostering over 30 partnerships with councils, neighbourhood houses, TAFEs, and community organisations. Volunteer Ambassadors championed volunteering at more than 25 events, while councils collaborated to co-host inclusive volunteering awards and training. Collaboration with the Eastern Region Group of Councils and local community houses demonstrated strong influence in local policy and capacity building. Newly arrived migrants, young people, and people with disabilities were supported to access meaningful volunteering pathways, building confidence and skills.

We conducted consultations and developed inclusive training (disability confidence, autism-friendly programs, cultural awareness). Policy and systems change supported. Systemic barriers to volunteering were addressed through consultations with priority groups. Findings informed resources, training modules, and policy guidance for Volunteer Involving Organisations. Training sessions on disability inclusion, cultural awareness, and creating autism-friendly programs improved organisational readiness. Partnerships with BVRC and Interchange Outer East ensured equitable systems and practices were embedded across the region.

The year saw the continued growth of innovative approaches such as the Volunteer Ambassador program, inclusive pop-up events, and the use of community radio to promote inclusive volunteering. Strategic use of online training resources and regional conferences expanded reach. EV sat on key committees and collaborated with MMIGP, WISE Employment, Swinburne University and others to test new models for engagement.

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Strengthening
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