



ANNUAL REPORT

1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

Belonging Matters Inc

 belongingmatters.org

Image Descriptions: top – left to right: Image 1 – Justine and Brodie at Belonging Matters 20 Years Celebration. Image 2 – Harriet at work with her work colleagues. Image 3 – Davi and Deearne feature in the Our Voices Matter video.

Capacity building resources to foster inclusive and welcoming communities

Consults



People with disabilities/families

1395 consults

218 people

Consults



Professionals/
government

385 consults

115 people

Rotary/business

138 consults

48 people

Webinars, workshops, events



4 webinars

2 in person workshops

1 celebration event!

238 participants

Online Courses



2 8 session courses

41 participants

Presentations



7 presentations

259 participants

Peer Leadership



2 peer groups - **41** people

2 submissions - NDIS review

12 leaders with disabilities

17 family leaders

Websites



4 websites

10,539 users

52,286 page views

Home, My Way (NACBO)

2,050 users

7,231 page views

Projects



DSS

Designed by Me: Resources for Inclusion

Community Employment Partnership

My Home, My Way (with NACBO)

Individual Living Options Mentor (with NACBO)

Other

Building Community Networks (15 Circles of Support)

Belonging Matters' Advisory Council (BMAC)

Podcast downloads



385 Belonging Matters

276 My Home, My Way

Publications Distributed



91 Periodicals

78 Books

338 Guides

Film and Video Produced



10 documentaries

36 presentations

Talks That Matter



45 videos added

292 total videos in library

37,430 minutes watched

11,051 views

2023-24 Total reach: 25,796 people

Belonging Matters' Overview

Vision: A Community Strengthened by the Inclusion of All

Mission: To inspire, educate and build capacity at the grassroots to assist people with disabilities to live valued lives in the community.

Overview: Belonging Matters is a values-driven education, information and advisory service developed in 2003 by people with disabilities, families and others who were concerned about the systemic exclusion of people with a disability from their communities. Since then we have developed a range of capacity-building resources using various mediums including film, publications, workshops, webinars, conferences and retreats. These resources are designed to shift attitudes and create opportunities for people with disabilities to pursue mainstream employment, education, authentic community inclusion, and valued roles. We do not focus on a person's disability or diagnosis nor do we aim to sensationalise their disability or create pity. Instead we aim to portray people with disabilities as valued citizens with abilities, strengths and passions who have contributions to make to society. Thus, shifting mindsets positively and preventing the amplification of difference often portrayed through the media and other sources about people with disabilities.

Aims: To build the capacity and skills of people with disabilities, families and their supporters to encourage them to become better connected to their communities, pursue typical options and pathways that are available to other citizens, take up valued roles and pursue self-determination/direction. This will be achieved through a range of tools such as educational and training events and various informational resources and personalised consultation.

To give personalised, practical, follow up advice directly relevant to an individual's lifestyle, situation and culture to enable them to become better connected to their communities, pursue typical options and pathways that are available to other citizens, take up valued roles and pursue self-determination/direction.

To harness the strengths and skills of people with disabilities and families and build their confidence through information, reflection, supported decision making and practice.

To strengthen informal support networks and reduce the reliance on paid services through providing people with advice and information on community connection strategies, self-direction, Circles of Support, House Sharing with non-disabled peers; thinking creatively about support and the implications of paid supports.

To provide mechanisms for peer support and leadership through networking opportunities such as training events, referral to others who have pursued typical pathways and provide leadership opportunities for people with a disability and families/supporters to enable them to mentor and inspire other people.

Guiding principles:

Belonging Matters believes that people do better when they experience:

- The same opportunities and rights as their fellow citizens
- Belonging and social inclusion in the community
- Valued social roles
- Lifestyles that enhance their individuality and uniqueness
- Self-determination and empowerment
- Lifestyle arrangements that focus on their strengths, abilities, interests and passions
- Freely given relationships from people who love and care about them (family and friends)
- Respect, self-worth, dignity and self esteem
- Compassion
- Welcoming environments and people in them
- Responsive, flexible and creative supports and opportunities
- Support processes that are people friendly



President's Report

Mark Glascodine

This year has been the culminating third year of delivering the outcomes for our 4 Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grants. All deliverables have been made but what this process has showcased is the amazing people who make up Belonging Matters. Over the three years, dealing with COVID showed their willingness to step into new technologies, provide insight and feedback and still be flexible about their working conditions. This is what makes Belonging Matters the unique organisation that it is.

Belonging Matters has continued with the integral work that it does with individuals with disabilities and families who look to Belonging Matters for support, education, and leadership on how to best effect positive change in their lives. With the hard work that people put into achieving their goals, we have witnessed significant achievements for individuals, watching them take more control over their own lives and develop meaningful roles and relationships in the community. It is these outcomes that drive the organisation to keep working harder to ensure that the importance and value of capacity building is recognised and continues.

With the completion of the ILC projects planned for the end of June 2024, it was expected that our application for a new Individual Capacity Building (ICB) grant would be announced in April, to allow staff and the Board to understand what would be happening in 2025. Initially, we were told we had been unsuccessful! Most of the organisations in the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) were also unsuccessful! This was alarming news! NACBO launched a campaign to Minister Bill Shorten which was backed up by many letters and statements of support from families and people with disabilities.

In late June this resulted in agreement that our ICB grant would get further funding for the 2024-25 year until the recommendations from the NDIS Review are implemented. This was a reprieve to support our capacity building work. But as can be imagined, it was a highly uncertain and stressful period for all staff, who were still finishing off the existing ILC projects. Deb and the staff team worked incredibly well through this daunting period.

Now, as much as at any time in the past, it is important that the voices of people with disability are heard, valued, and respected. For this reason, the resources that are provided by Belonging Matters to enhance the social and economic participation of people with a disability, such as information sharing, workshops, webinars, Circles of Support, Roles Based Planning, Talks That Matter, peer and focus groups and publications are distributed, accessed and utilised to ensure they reach as many people as possible.

I would like to thank those individuals and organisations who provide donations, sponsorship and funding for the work we do.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the Belonging Matters team, who worked throughout the year and did whatever they could to ensure positive outcomes for people.

I would like to thank my fellow board members for their time and commitment throughout the year. During the year we welcomed Jack O'Dwyer as our new Treasurer. Adam D'Arcy will be stepping down as Vice President after 8 years of involvement on the Board, including 7 years as President. We thank Adam for his valuable contribution and wish him well for the future.

However, the biggest thank you goes to our CEO, Deb Rouget. Deb works tirelessly to ensure that the vision of the organisation is upheld. It is her passion and dedication to the outcomes for individuals, as well as the service as a whole, that makes Belonging Matters what it is. I am sure that I echo the sentiments of the board and all those who have benefited from her work when I say that I don't know what we would do without her and that our gratitude is immeasurable.

Mark Glascodine



Treasurer's Report

Jack O'Dwyer

Introduction

After witnessing the direct positive impact that Belonging Matters had on individual capacity building, particularly with my brother Harvey, I was thrilled to receive the call inviting me to join as Treasurer earlier this year. Taking over from Mark allowed him to focus entirely on his role as President. It turns out I joined during a pivotal year, as the organisation faced the significant challenge of securing funding due to changes in government grant policies. This presented an opportunity for me to provide strategic financial navigation through a very uncertain period.

Financial Performance for the Year

From a wider organisation perspective, Belonging Matters achieved a small profit of \$5,000 this year. This modest surplus aligns with our objective of not generating large profits but instead ensuring that all funds received from fee-for-service activities are reinvested back into programs, and all grant monies are spent in accordance with grant requirements.

The financial operations of Belonging Matters can be broken down into two main components, fee-for-service arrangements (recurrent) and programs funded by government grants (non-recurrent).

Fee-for-Service Activities

Building Community Networks

This segment performed strongly (BCN Revenue 2024: \$72,012.58, BCN Revenue 2023: \$53,845.76), with high demand for our 'Circles of Support' facilitation service.

Belonging Matters also offers a fee for service consultation and training service. This is usually provided to professionals and organisations where the service is not covered by our funded activities. The board expects the demand to continue in the coming year, with ongoing interest from the sector.

Online Bookshop Sales

Sales of publications on social inclusion, community, and mindfulness were modest this year (Online Bookshop Sales Revenue 2024: \$1,045.10, Online Bookshop Sales Revenue 2023: \$1,647.85). The board is currently discussing future plans to determine the best course of action for the online bookshop in the coming year.

Belonging Matters Memberships

Membership numbers were relatively stagnant (Members 2024: 39, Members 2023: 47), showing only a slight decrease from the prior year. The board has undertaken a review of membership and is committed to developing strategies to boost membership numbers in future years.

Government-Funded Programs

The core operations of Belonging Matters rely heavily on government funding (Grant Revenue 2024: \$936,011, Grant Revenue 2023: \$848,102). For the 2023/24 financial year, we faced a period of uncertainty as our largest grants were set to expire on 30 June 2024. The board and CEO were left with long delays in communication from the Department of Social Services (DSS) regarding the status of our grant applications, leading to significant concern all the way up until June 2024.

I want to strongly commend Deb for her tireless efforts and sleepless nights pursuing various grant applications with the government. Her dedication was instrumental in securing the main Individual Capacity Building (ICB) grant for FY24/25, which funds most of our organisation and allows us to continue our mission over the next 12 months. The DSS also extended two of our smaller grants for another 12 months.

Throughout the FY23/24 financial year, Belonging Matters operated on four main grants. These grants were used to establish tailored programs designed to enable people with a disability to lead fulfilling lives in the community. All grants were accurately tracked and spent appropriately per grant requirements. Any unspent funds were carried forward to continue grant activities as per DSS guidelines.

Summary of Key Grants:

1. National Information Grant: My Home, My Way (collaboration with the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations) - DSS grant ending June 2025.
2. Individual Capacity Building (ICB) – DSS grant ending June 2025.
3. Community Employment Partnership (CEP) - DSS grant ending June 2025.
4. Individual Living Options (ILO) (collaboration with the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations) - DSS grant ended on June 30, 2024.

Financial Position for the Year

From a financial position perspective, the Belonging Matters balance sheet shows that as a not-for-profit organisation, we are financially secure. Our positive net asset position is comprised of strong cash balances (**Cash Balance 2024: \$582,579, Cash Balance 2023: \$1,003,083**), a large portion of which is maintained in high-interest investment accounts. This means we are highly liquid and able to meet any debts as they fall due. Additionally, we earned \$8K in interest, providing more funds to reinvest into our programs and initiatives.

We have low receivable balances that regularly turnover, primarily from our fee-for-service arm, Building Community Networks, with no issues of recoverability or bad debts. Our low store inventory balance also turnover relatively quickly with no indications of impairment. No major capital expenditures occurred throughout the year, and there were no changes to existing lease arrangements.

Our unexpended grants balance is significantly lower than the prior year (**Unexpended Grants 2024: \$232,448, Unexpended Grants 2023: \$631,777**), highlighting that we are responsibly spending all grant monies we receive. We are not hoarding funds but delivering value back to our members and the community.

Beyond June 2025

There remains some uncertainty about funding beyond June 2025, as all our current grant programs conclude by that date. The leadership team is actively engaging in consultations and exploring all potential avenues to secure future funding. The most promising option at this time is the new ILC grant program the government is proposing called "Foundational Supports." The board will keep a close eye on this program and will make the relevant applications as soon as further details are released.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all staff for their patience, especially amid the significant uncertainty that clouded the organisation this year. Your willingness to stick with Belonging Matters and continue delivering high-quality services is truly commendable.

A special thank you to our part-time financial accountant, Rohini, for her dedicated work in compiling high-quality financial reports throughout the year and Tracy Ireson for her bookkeeping. Your work contributes to supporting Deb in managing the accounts.

To my fellow board colleagues, thank you for your support during my first year. Your warm welcome and guidance have been invaluable as I navigated my initial phase with the organisation.

I would also like to thank Kathryn Hill of RJ Sanderson and Associates for preparing our audited financial statements.

Jack O'Dwyer



CEO's Report

Deb Rouget

“We are all interconnected. Our actions ripple throughout the world and affect those around us”

(Hugh Mackay)

This year Belonging Matters celebrated its 20th anniversary! It was a celebration of the leadership of people with a disability and their families - their actions have created ripples of change throughout the world! You can view examples of this leadership by watching two of this year's video productions [Our Views Matter](#) and [Families Leading Change](#). Both illustrate the leadership of people with a disability and families and explore what is possible when people have a vision for a full, meaningful and inclusive life. Thank-you to all who contributed their time and wisdom.

Once again, we worked in an uncertain funding environment while recommendations from the NDIS Review are implemented. It is reassuring to see that capacity building was recognised as a Foundational Support by the NDIS Review. We would like to thank the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) and people with a disability and families for supporting our successful funding campaign, which will at least fund Belonging Matters in the interim. We also received a 12-month extension for the [Community Employment Partnership](#) and [My Home, My Way](#).

Our learning events are a key aspect of our work. I'd like to thank Caroline Towers for the incredible work she puts into marketing and managing our events to ensure they run smoothly. I'd also like to thank our guest presenters and teachers for assisting in delivering such rich material. This year our learning events covered the following topics: Towards a Better Life; My Home, My Way; Safeguarding Decision-making, Enhancing Learning and Skill Development and Circles of Support. We reached 238 people with a disability, families, and professionals through 4 webinars and 2 face to face workshops! We also held 7 presentations that reached 259 participants.

This year we also facilitated two 8 session on-line courses in which 41 participants took part. The first course was a deep dive into Asset Based Community Development with Cormac Russell. Cormac left us all with a deeper understanding about the assets and connectors which exist in our community. The second course was a reflective event for families in regard to Individualised Living Options based on [Quality and Outcomes of Individual Supported Living for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#). It was thoughtfully adapted and facilitated for families by two of our team members Carmine Laghi and Teresa Micallef. The course enabled families to strengthen their loved one's living arrangements and design safeguards for the future.

Often, a webinar, workshop, or conference will spark a participant's desire to create change and take action. Our personalised mentoring service is crucial for people to think about their own life and take the next step. This year, our consultation service provided 1,395 personalised consultations to 218 people with a disability and their families. In addition, we provided 523 consults to 163 businesses, Rotarians, professionals or researchers. We also facilitated 2 peer groups – Focus on the Good Life and Housemates.

The Community Employment Partnership with Rotary has really started to show very positive signs. Pat Wison and Jenny Royle have created very solid relationships with 5 Rotary Clubs which has led to creating job leads and increasing the knowledge of Rotarians in regard to the employment of people with developmental disabilities. Some of the award paying employment opportunities created this year included:

- Washing carts at a golf club
- Administration assistance for an airport design company
- Customer assistant at a local swim centre
- Maintenance team assistant at a local golf club
- Administration assistant at a women's health organisation
- Marketing assistant at a real estate agent

People continued to engage with our online resources, stretching our impact well beyond our physical presence. The [Belonging Matters](#), [Talks That Matter](#), [19 Stories](#) and [My Home, My Way](#) websites attracted 12,589 unique users.

Thanks to Owen Hourigan and our storytellers, our online video library continues to grow with 45 videos added this year. [Talks That Matter \(TTM\)](#) now hosts 292 videos with 11,051 views on YouTube this year. A couple of highlights this year included:

- Inclusive Employment Matters - Harriet and The Victorian Government <https://youtu.be/uHVuN0gVKLO>
- Towards a Better Life Presentation - Harvey O'Dwyer https://youtu.be/EdYf_liN7Nk
- Employment Matters Mike and Keysborough Golf Club – Mike Spence <https://youtu.be/72aN-k-Pfd8>
- Reclaiming Life Beyond a Group Home – Scott Jordan <https://youtu.be/h6dkvVJRFU0>

The leadership of people with a disability and their families is a catalyst for creating change. This year we supported the leadership of 12 people with a disability and 17 families. The members of the Belonging Matters' Advisory Council (BMAC) continued to offer guidance in regard to the work of Belonging Matters and the sector through the voice of people with intellectual disability. I'd like to thank Sarah-Jayne Markwell, Emily Raymond and BMAC, especially for their submission to the NDIS Review.

Circles of Support have been an important way to invite people who are unpaid into the lives of people with a disability to safeguard their vision for a full, meaningful and inclusive life in the community. Through **Building Community Networks (BCN)** this year, we facilitated 15 Circles of Support. I'd like to thank Teresa Micallef and our wonderful facilitators for their work throughout the year. The importance of inviting unpaid people into the lives of people with a disability cannot be underestimated.

Our work on the Individualised Living Options (ILO) project with our NACBO partners came to an end in June, 2024. Much thanks to Rebecca Feldman who provided focused advice and mentoring in regard to personalised living arrangements and the rather complex NDIS ILO funding. Although the funding ceased, Rebecca's role will continue as part of our consultation service.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to:

- The Belonging Matters' Board of Management (BOM) for their valuable voluntary contribution and for remaining clear about our principles, vision, and mission
- Our Circle of Support facilitators – Caroline Towers, Donna Shaw, Harvey Munday, Ingrid Camille, Lauren Mandel, Nellie Godwin-Welsh, Olivia Bennett, Pat Wilson, Teresa Micallef and Carmine Laghi
- Rohini Padey for financial management
- Tracy Ireson for bookkeeping
- Osher Marks for audio captions
- Leigh Harrison from Guarana IT and Michael Johnstone from Solstone for Information Technology (IT)
- David Armstrong for his live-streaming service
- R.J Sanderson and Associates for our financial auditing
- The National Alliances of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) who are an incredible support and source of wisdom!
- DSS for funding our Information and Capacity Building work

Deb Rouget

Financial Reports

Board Report

The Belonging Matters' Board of Management presents this report on the entity for the period 1st of July 2023 to the 30th of June 2024.

Directors

The names of each person who has been a Board Member during the year and to the date of this report are:

Mark Glascodine (President)

Adam D'Arcy (Vice President)

Toni Reeves (Secretary)

Jack O'Dwyer (Treasurer)

Jane Raymond (General Member)

Nada O'Dwyer (General Member)

Principal Activities

The principal activity of the entity during the year was in the provision of capacity building services, information and advice to assist people with a disability and their families. No significant changes in the nature of the entity's activities occurred in the period.

Operating Results

Our Net Profit from Ordinary Activities was positive \$5,436 (vs negative \$40,710 in 2023 due to carrying the Economic Participation grant until payment from DSS on 31/8/2023).

Auditor's Independence

The Auditor's declaration of independence can be found below.

Membership Fees

The Belonging Matters' Association membership fees were \$10 per annum joining fee and a \$10 per annum renewal fee (due June/July).

Signed in accordance with the resolution of the Board of Management.



Mark Glascodine (President)

2nd October 2024



Jack O'Dwyer (Treasurer)

2nd October 2024

Copy of financial reports

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Profit and Loss Statement
For the year ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Income		
Trading profit	96,297	83,634
Grants received	936,011	848,102
Contributions received - members	483	1,016
Donations received	350	
Interest received	8,371	6,160
Loss on sale of property, plant, equip	(825)	
Total income	1,040,687	938,912
Expenses		
Advertising and promotion	5,027	11,354
Audit fees	4,000	3,182
Bank fees and charges	741	1,149
Eventbrite fees	546	418
Paypal Fees	90	147
Bookkeeping fees	6,846	4,800
Cleaning and rubbish removal	581	
Computer & website costs	15,850	15,082
Conference and seminar costs	31,060	54,675
Consultants fees	78,467	121,356
Depreciation-office equipment & computer	4,751	3,990
Depreciation - Right of use assets	16,599	17,098
Discounts Allowed		15
Donations		200
Insurance	6,767	6,719
Interest - Australia	106	
Interest charges on right of use assets	763	197
Legal fees		15
Light & power	1,686	1,441
Long service leave	11,664	12,312
Meeting expenses	117	1,765
Office administrative costs	9,176	19,047
Postage & courier fees	320	554
Printing & stationery	1,526	3,749
Provision for annual leave	4,651	227
Provision for long service leave	(4,275)	(6,045)

These financial statements are unaudited. They must be read in conjunction with the attached Accountant's Compilation Report and Notes which form part of these financial statements.

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Profit and Loss Statement
For the year ended 30 June 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Rates & land taxes	4,158	3,049
Rent on land & buildings	265	1,660
Repairs & maintenance	1,264	314
Staff amenities	645	308
Staff training	1,393	2,975
Superannuation	77,696	62,832
Telephone	3,508	4,326
Travel, accom & conference	1,846	7,383
Wages	587,974	608,773
Wages - Sal Sac & Allowance	135,373	
Workcover	24,070	14,555
Total expenses	1,035,251	979,622
Net Profit from Ordinary Activities before income tax	5,436	(40,710)

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2024

	Note	2024	2023
		\$	\$
Proprietors' Funds			
Opening balance		250,923	291,633
Net profit / (loss)		5,436	(40,710)
Less:			
Total Proprietors' Funds		256,359	250,923
Represented by:			
Current Assets			
Cash Assets			
Cash at bank		156,939	386,122
Cash at bank		368,075	561,017
Cash at bank - Event Brite			374
Security bond on premises		2,961	2,956
Cash at bank - Bendigo Entitlements		53,596	52,289
Paypal account		503	266
Cash on hand		5	59
		582,079	1,003,083
Receivables			
Trade debtors		6,831	7,070
		6,831	7,070
Inventories			
Finished goods - at cost		1,919	2,684
		1,919	2,684
Total Current Assets		590,829	1,012,837

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BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Total Current Liabilities		<u>331,308</u>	<u>757,721</u>
Non-Current Liabilities			
Financial Liabilities			
Unsecured:			
Lease liabilities - principal repayment		<u> </u>	<u>17,613</u>
		<u> </u>	<u>17,613</u>
Provisions			
Provision for long service leave		<u>27,069</u>	<u>31,343</u>
		<u>27,069</u>	<u>31,343</u>
Total Non-Current Liabilities		<u>27,069</u>	<u>48,956</u>
Total Liabilities		<u>358,377</u>	<u>806,677</u>
Net Assets		<u>256,359</u>	<u>250,923</u>

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2024

	Note	2024	2023
		\$	\$
Non-Current Assets			
Property, Plant and Equipment			
Office & computer equipment		53,006	56,802
Less: Accumulated depreciation		(47,206)	(46,745)
Right of use - leased assets		34,706	34,706
Less: Accumulated amortisation		(16,599)	
		23,907	44,763
Total Non-Current Assets		23,907	44,763
Total Assets		614,736	1,057,600
Current Liabilities			
Payables			
Unsecured:			
Trade creditors		13,761	1,547
Creditor BAS		26,030	50,624
Superannuation payable			19,978
		39,791	72,149
Financial Liabilities			
Unsecured:			
Lease liabilities- principal repayment		17,613	17,093
		17,613	17,093
Current Tax Liabilities			
GST payable control account		11	25
Unexpended grants funds		232,448	631,777
		232,459	631,802
Provisions			
Accrued Portable LSL		2,984	2,866
Provision for annual leave		38,461	33,811
		41,445	36,677

These financial statements are unaudited. They must be read in conjunction with the attached Accountant's
 Compilation Report and Notes which form part of these financial statements.

Belonging Matters Inc. Board of Management Declaration

The Board of Management has determined that the entity is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

The Board of Management declares that:

The financial statements and notes present fairly the entity’s financial position as at 30 June 2024 and its performances for the year ended on that date in accordance with the accounting practices described in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the Board of Management’s opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the entity will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.



Mark Glascodine (President)

2nd October 2024



Jack O’Dwyer (Treasurer)

2nd October 2024