Social Impact Strategy

Our Vision for Change
2024-2034

neami national
Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing

neaminational.org.au

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as the Traditional Custodians of the land we work on and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded.

We are committed to cultivating inclusive environments for staff, consumers and carers. We celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

Interpreter

If you need help understanding this report, please call **03 8691 5300**. We can organise an interpreter or provide you with a translation.

Acknowledgement of contributions

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the staff, consumers, carers, and community members who participated in this project. Thank you for the knowledge, experience, stories, creativity, heart, and passion you shared to shape our vision for impact and bring the Strategy to life.

Throughout the Strategy we have included a selection of photographs taken by people with Lived and Living Experience about what social impact means to them and their hopes for individuals, communities, systems, and the environment now and into the future.

Cover

Confidence Within Oneself, by Brayden Finlay.

This is (my sister) Dawn. Dawn has been diagnosed with PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome), an illness that leaves her nauseous and sick on a cycle. These experiences have left her with her own mental health challenges. Despite this, she finds the confidence to live her life to the fullest and she finds peace and happiness within herself.

Citation

More information

Content

Forewords

Tom Dalton
Chief Executive Officer, Neami National

The launch of Neami's first Social Impact Strategy marks a significant milestone in our organisation's more than 30-year history.

As a national not-for-profit, with a broad geographical reach across Australia and a diverse workforce, we have a responsibility to understand and improve how we contribute to long-term social, economic, and environmental change.

The Social Impact Strategy — Our Vision for Change 2024-2034 is our roadmap. It enables us to take stock of where we're at and reflect on what's important to our organisation, consumers, and communities. It also provides a framework for how we measure our impact and focus our efforts to support a world where everyone has access to opportunities, resources and can live a life that is meaningful to them.

The development of our Social Impact Strategy has been the result of collaboration — listening to voices from across our organisation, learning from those with Lived Experiences, and consulting with external experts to ensure we are informed by the latest research and best practise in social impact. We're proud to say that we've put Lived Experience and First Nations perspectives front and centre, and we're committed to building on that foundation for meaningful and sustainable impact now and into the future.

We're also committed to transparency and will openly and honestly share our successes, obstacles, and progress as we navigate what we know is an ambitious vision.

We invite you to join us in this journey — whether it's by amplifying diverse voices, reflecting on your own social impact, or exploring opportunities for collaboration. We look forward to working together to build a more just and sustainable world.

Teresa Hall
Lived Experience participant

I was one of the participants of Photo Stories for Impact. I am someone with complex mental health issues. I have had good and bad experiences utilising services, feeling at times safe, understood and my needs met. At other times very far from it. I've found mental health struggles can make the world feel like a very dark place but also very isolating. Yet we often have such big desires and concerns about the world we are part of.

Being part of this project was a meaningful experience. It allowed me to try out a different and creative way of looking at things. It was an opportunity to express my views and be a part of something impactful. Seeing other people's photos and perspectives, how we differed and where we had shared visions and ideas was really eye opening. Each person brought their own unique perspective.

Mental health issues and people are so complex. It's so hard to see from our perspective, the things that plague us, what concerns us, how we want to be seen and the things that matter to us. It can be hard to see from an outside perspective, which can be so focused on the issues on the surface. Recovery requires taking in so much more depth and an understanding into our unique worlds.

What drives us and our recovery needs to be understood by sitting at our level and looking through our lens, which is why this Strategy is so impactful. Neami doing this really shows their commitment to understanding the people they are supporting.

I hope this Strategy inspires people to see and contemplate what matters to us. How we view ourselves and want to be seen. The variations in our different needs, an insight into what drives us, and how that might differ to how services are usually approached.

Social Impact is

"Acknowledging issues, gaps, good things, hidden things, then finding meaningful and actionable ways to make a collective shift or change."

"Keeping hope."

"Sometimes life's very heavy. Social impact – if we all support each other it's a better world."

(Lived Experience participants)

Our vision for social impact

What is social impact?

Social impact is the long-term effect that programs and services have on the community and society including and beyond the direct support provided. For Neami National (Neami), social impact is about how we contribute to broader social, economic and environmental change as an organisation. This vision acknowledges that Neami is a service-based organisation and this is the core way that we deliver social impact.

Our vision for social impact

Neami's Social Impact Strategy (the Strategy) is grounded in an overarching vision of belonging, equity and wellbeing. We're big believers in everyone having the opportunity to live a full life - and we give our all to support people to achieve the wellbeing and mental health outcomes that matter to them.

We aspire to contribute to a world in which people have equitable access to opportunities and resources, are treated with dignity and worth, and experience a sense of connectedness, inclusion and belonging. We hold this vision for all people, but particularly for people and groups who have experienced marginalisation.

Why did we develop a Social Impact Strategy?

Neami is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support for mental health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness, and suicide prevention through services across Australia. Our team of more than 1,500 people proudly support more than 30,000 people living with mental health challenges each year.

We have a significant geographical footprint, workforce and revenue. The scale of our organisation speaks to our potential and opportunity for impact and influence. We have a social responsibility to know what our current impact is and proactively improve it.

This Strategy articulates our vision for the next ten years, what's important to us, and how we will make a difference.

The Strategy will provide a framework for measuring our impact and will guide our long-term decision making and planning to support better outcomes for people and the planet.

A note on language

Language is powerful and is constantly evolving. We know that people identify and connect with different language, and one term or description is unable to capture the breadth of someone's experience or identity. Our intent is to be inclusive and respectful with our language, and we support the right of all people to use language that is meaningful to them.

Identity and intersectionality

Individuals' identities are often made up of multiple, intersecting factors. This includes but is not limited to:

— caring responsibilities
— cultural or linguistic background
— disability status
— faith, spiritual beliefs and religious affiliation
— sexual orientation
— gender identity
— intersex status
— socioeconomic background
— perspectives of mental health
— social and emotional wellbeing.

These intersecting factors make us multi-layered humans, and collectively paints a fuller picture of who we are. Intersectionality recognises the way in which intersections of someone's identity inevitably exposes them to overlapping and compounding forms of systemic discrimination, oppression and injustice.

Throughout this document we use both person-first and identity-first language, meaning that we position the person before the description of them, and position a person's identity before the person. At times we also use the word diversity to describe the spirit of intersecting identities in a way that is more accessible and inclusive.

When we refer to marginalised people, groups, and communities throughout the Strategy, we recognise intersectionality and compounded experiences of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression.

Lived and Living Experience

We understand Lived and Living Experience as personal experience of mental health challenges, trauma, distress, adversity, recovery, or service use and/or the distinct experience of supporting someone with these experiences as a carer, family member or supporter.

Throughout this document we use the language of Lived Experience for simplicity and consistency, however, it is intended to represent both Lived and Living Experience, recognising that for many people their experience is current and living, rather than in the past.

Art as an alternative language

We recognise art as an alternative language and an accessible and meaningful way of expressing and communicating experiences, ideas, and perspectives. We intentionally used an arts-based method to support the development of the Strategy and included a selection of these photographs and stories. Through this alternative language, we wish to speak to your heart as well as your mind and ground these broad and complex social issues and hopes for change in the everyday lives of people with Lived Experience.

Strategy development process
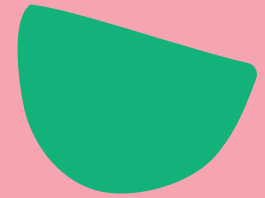
How did we develop the Social Impact Strategy?

The development of the Strategy was comprehensive and collaborative. From April 2022-December 2023, we actively engaged with a range of people and resources internally and externally. We wanted to better understand what social impact means for Neami now and our hopes for the future.

This included:

— six face-to-face photo story workshops with 22 consumers, carers, and community members with Lived Experience
— fourteen online workshops with 20 Neami staff, including service delivery, head office and leadership staff
— more than 10 targeted consultations with key staff and teams, including First Nations and Lived Experience leaders
— guidance from external environmental, social, and corporate governance consultants
— a scan of social impact literature and resources across the sector
— a review of internal data including Neami's Employee Engagement Survey, and key strategic projects
— a review of current funder criteria related to social impact.

The Strategy captures learnings from across these inputs and identifies the key areas where we believe we can add the most value.

Photo Stories by people with Lived Experience

Throughout the Strategy we have included a selection of photographs and stories created by people with personal experience of mental health challenges and experience caring for someone with mental health challenges. Participants included people who identify as living with a disability, being a part of and connected to a particular cultural and linguistic group, as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and LGBTQIA+ people. Several people also spoke about how their lived experience of homelessness, alcohol and other drug use, family violence, trauma, and other experiences of distress and adversity shaped their contributions. Half of the participants had engaged with a Neami service and half had not but may have experience engaging with other community services.

Participants used the photo stories arts-based method to capture and express what social impact means to them and their hopes for individuals, communities, systems, and the environment now and in the future. While a smaller number of contributions are featured in this Strategy, a larger collection of more than 60 photo stories, as well as the deep dialogue held in the workshops, informed its development.

For more information read our photo stories **Engagement Report.** And to view the full gallery of photo stories visit, **neaminational.org.au/photostories.**

Strategy overview

This visual provides an overview of the Strategy and a simple theory of change.

Throughout the development of the Strategy, we learned that weaving nature throughout our approach was important and allowed people to connect with and understand complex concepts in a more genuine and accessible way. Therefore, we have used the metaphor of a tree to illustrate the different elements of the Strategy and how we believe they lead to change.
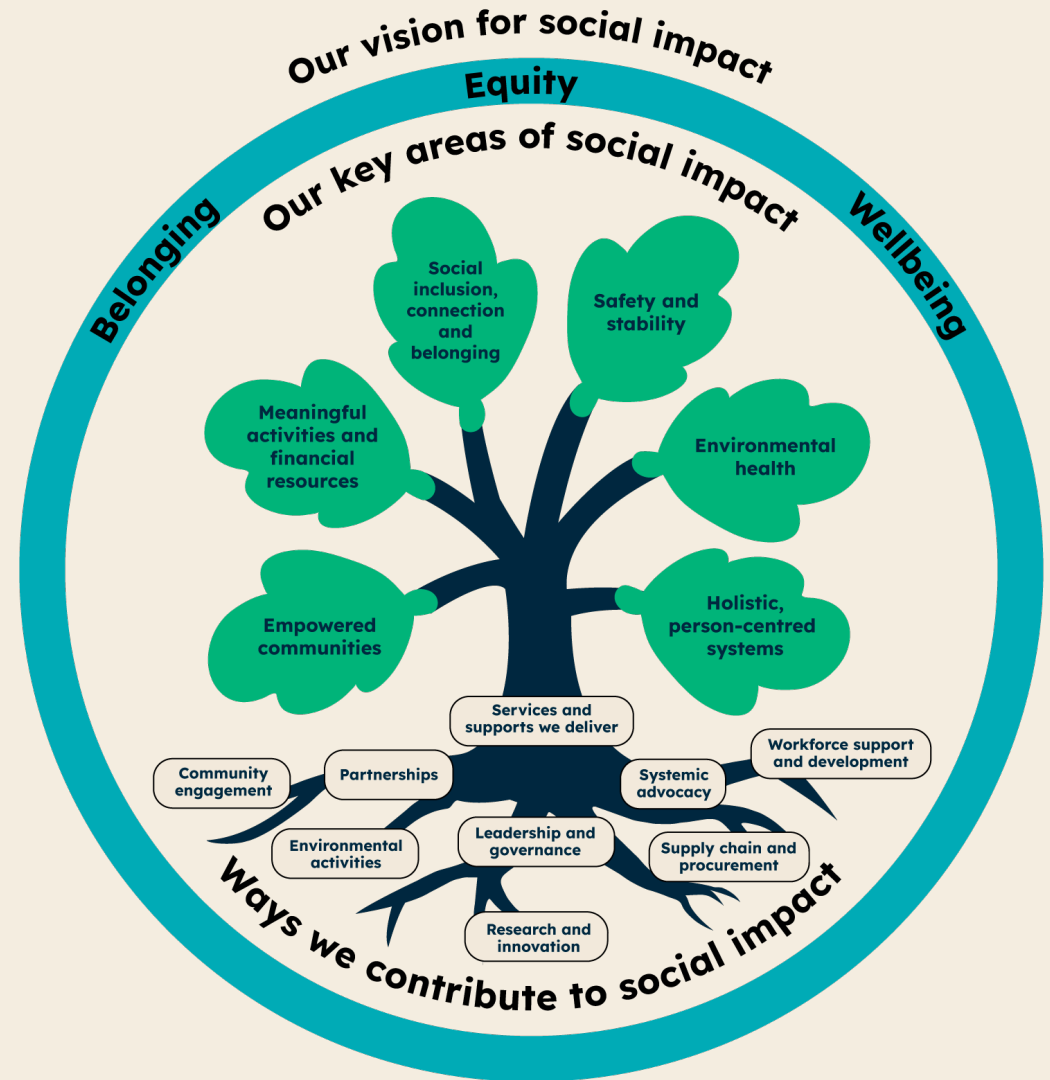
Our impact tree

The **roots** of the tree represent the foundations of our work and the different ways we contribute to social impact as an organisation.

The **branches and leaves** growing from the tree represent the different areas of impact we aspire to positively contribute to long-term.

Surrounding our tree are the broader and collective societal impact goals at the heart of our impact vision.

We also recognise the broader **ecosystem** in which the tree lives, representing the societal, systemic, and environmental context we work in. We acknowledge how our work and impacts can be influenced by our ecosystem and the changing conditions around us, just as we may also influence it.

Our vision for social impact

Equity · Belonging · Wellbeing

Our key areas of social impact

- Social inclusion, connection and belonging
- Safety and stability
- Meaningful activities and financial resources
- Environmental health
- Empowered communities
- Holistic, person-centred systems

Ways we contribute to social impact

- Services and supports we deliver
- Community engagement
- Partnerships
- Systemic advocacy
- Workforce support and development
- Environmental activities
- Leadership and governance
- Supply chain and procurement
- Research and innovation

Guiding principles

The Strategy is grounded in our organisational vision for all people in Australia living with mental health and wellbeing challenges to live a life that is meaningful to them. It embodies the values of our practice approach, **Collaborative Relational Practice** and our broader organisational values of Connecting, Collaborating, Learning and Belonging.

Our approach to social impact is guided by the following principles:

Belonging and equity

We focus on how we can contribute to addressing the social determinants of health and the structural inequalities that create and exacerbate mental health challenges and disproportionately affect marginalised communities.

We take an intersectional approach grounded in human rights, social justice, self-determination, and equitable access to wellbeing, safety and inclusion.

Foregrounding diverse voices and perspectives

We value, respect, and prioritise diverse knowledge bases and perspectives, including First Nations, Lived and Living Experience and expertise and insights from the many cultural and linguistic groups that make up our communities.

We believe multiple ways of knowing are needed for understanding and contributing to positive change on the challenges and systems that affect individuals, communities and the environment.

Long-term, community-based accountability

We commit to the responsible use of resources and accountability to the communities we work with to support meaningful change within the systems we work in.

We recognise the need for longterm planning (that goes beyond the limitations of funding cycles) and commit to conscious and responsible actions with clear outcomes and transparency.

Interconnected, relational and collaborative

We go beyond supporting individual mental health challenges and believe in taking a systems approach; recognising the interconnectedness of people, their supports and communities as part of a larger system.

We respond to community issues through relational ways of working by deeply listening, building genuine connections, resourcing and empowering people, and prioritising community knowledge.

We know that collaboration and collective action is vital for addressing complex social issues, and requires brave thinking, innovation, and leadership by us and the sector at large.

Ways we contribute to social impact

The Strategy recognises the diverse ways in which we contribute to social impact, and the opportunity for all parts of our organisation to work collaboratively towards a shared vision for impact. The Strategy recognises the collective impact of:

Services and supports we deliver

Our services are Neami's main touchpoint with consumers, carers and community, and our primary way of contributing to social impact. We take a holistic approach to supporting mental health, wellbeing, safety and homelessness across several service streams.

Partnerships

We know that to deliver our vision and purpose, we cannot do it alone. Values-aligned partnerships across and beyond our sector allow us to build collective knowledge, deliver more integrated and holistic services, learn from diverse perspectives and enhance our collective impacts.

Research and innovation

Our investment in research and innovation allows us to centre the voices of people with Lived Experience, respond to complex challenges, improve our services, and address the needs of the people and communities we serve in creative, participatory and evidence-informed ways.

Workforce support and development

Neami staff are the backbone of our organisation and our greatest contributor to consumer outcomes and social impact. Investing in the wellbeing, support and development of our diverse workforce is essential for staff engagement and workforce sustainability.

Systemic advocacy

Advocacy is an essential part of addressing structural barriers and societal challenges. We use our voice and influence to contribute to collective advocacy and action. By collaborating with like-minded organisations, we can work towards meaningful and just systems change and policy reform that will benefit all Australians.

Supply chain and procurement

Our choices around suppliers throughout our whole supply chain influences our broader environmental and social impact. By spending and investing money ethically and consciously, we can extend our positive impacts to benefit First Nations people and other communities.

Leadership and governance

Elevating First Nations leadership, Lived Experience leadership, and the leadership of people with diverse cultural perspectives at all levels is essential. It will drive meaningful and sustained change, and positive impacts for individuals, communities, and service systems. This includes our workforce, consumers and advocates from across the sector.

Community engagement

Working relationally and with mutuality with communities is essential to ensuring our services meet their unique needs and that we can contribute to the resourcing and empowerment of communities so that our positive impacts last beyond our contracts.

Environmental activities

Due to our organisational size and scale, we have a significant impact on the environment through our physical service footprint, staff travel and resource use. Our actions, choices, and initiatives — both within our workforce and beyond — shape our environmental impact.
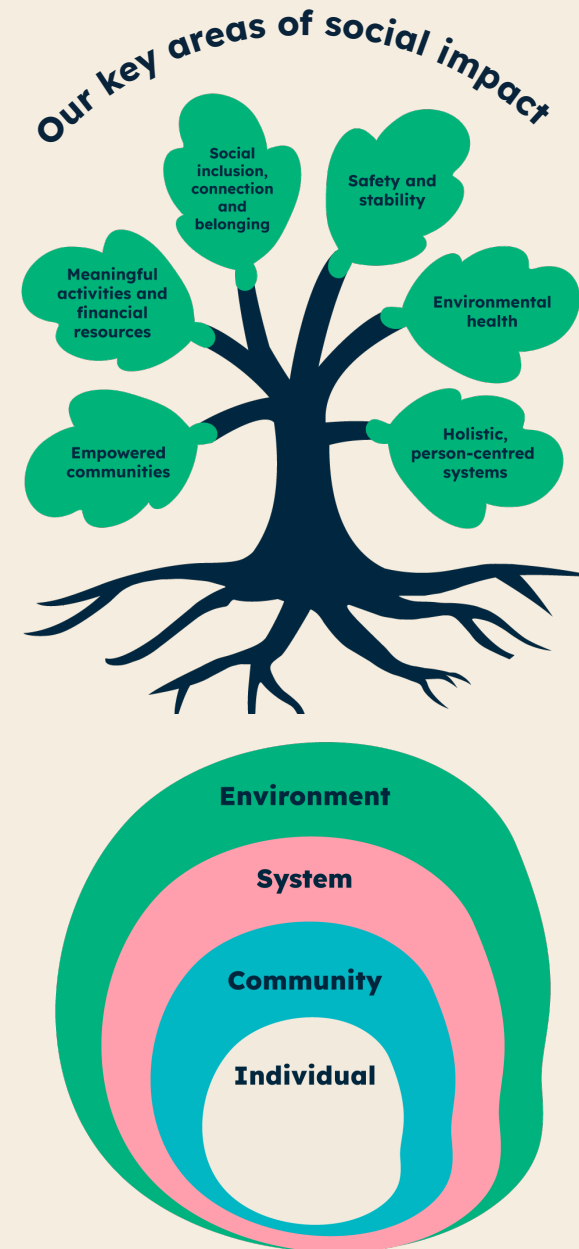
Our key areas of social impact

Our Strategy identifies the broad and collective societal goals we aspire to contribute to in the long-term, relating to the themes of belonging, wellbeing and equity. Within these broader goals sit the six key areas of impact we are focussing on organisationally, and which form the basis of our Strategy. These areas of impact are based on what we've learned matters most to the people and communities we work with, and where we believe we can add the most value through our work. Our aims in this Strategy are written at a broad level, to provide us with clear and overarching direction through the ten-year period this Strategy covers.

Interconnected impact

While each impact area is presented separately, they are deeply interconnected. Social determinants of health do not occur in isolation, but rather impact people concurrently and cumulatively. Our approach to impact must reflect this interconnectedness, recognising that meaningful change in one area cannot occur without meaningful change in others. For this reason, we have chosen not to rank any impact areas over others, and acknowledge their collective importance and role in our work. The Strategy also includes environmental impact and approaches this through a social lens, recognising the interconnected relationship between people and the planet.

Levels of impact

In each area of impact throughout the Strategy, we highlight what we believe in, why, and how this informs our organisational impact aims. Each area has a focus on consumer, community and staff wellbeing and considers what impact looks like at these different levels. The nested model on the right illustrates the levels of impact we influence. It acknowledges the interconnected nature of individuals in communities, their involvement and interactions in service and broader societal systems, all within the context of the environments we inhabit.

Our key areas of social impact

- Social inclusion, connection and belonging
- Safety and stability
- Meaningful activities and financial resources
- Environmental health
- Empowered communities
- Holistic, person-centred systems

- Environment
- System
- Community
- Individual

Social inclusion, connection and belonging

We believe:

Connection and belonging are integral to wellbeing

Social connection and relationships with friends, family, pets, peers, and community members is essential to health and wellbeing. Having people and places where someone feels like they belong and can be their true selves without fear of judgement is deeply meaningful and important. Connection and belonging can support relational healing. Loneliness and social isolation are significant health and wellbeing issues in Australia, and many people who engage with our services emphasise the challenge of limited support networks.

Inclusive workplaces are essential to providing inclusive services

Inclusive workplaces enable connection, belonging and wellbeing for staff, and support better experiences for people accessing services. Creating accessible, inclusive, and culturally responsive workplaces and services requires a whole-of-organisation approach that values and celebrates our diverse workforce. This includes caring responsibilities, cultural or linguistic background, disability status, faith, spiritual beliefs, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, socioeconomic background, and diverse worldviews and perspectives of mental health and social and emotional wellbeing.

Stigma and discrimination are human rights issues, and we have a responsibility to actively address them

We acknowledge the intersectional nature of identity and the ongoing challenges of discrimination faced by staff and consumers. Many marginalised communities still experience systematic exclusion and unfair treatment when they try to access services and opportunities. Stigma and discrimination can impact negatively on people's sense of self-worth, create shame, and prevent people from seeking support. Challenging discriminatory and prejudicial beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and actions is essential to creating more accepting, compassionate, and inclusive service systems, workplaces, and communities. Lived Experience leadership is vital to our approach in taking action to address stigma and discrimination.

Therefore, we aim to:

Enhance individual and community connection and belonging, through:

— providing holistic services that centre individuals and their unique needs and support them to build and maintain meaningful relationships
— creating accessible opportunities for connection within services and the community
— supporting innovative approaches at a systems level to enhance social inclusion, connection and belonging.

Build and retain a leadership profile, governance structure and workforce that reflects the people and communities we work with, through:

— a commitment to best practices in diversity and inclusion standards, in both our workplaces and services
— workforce development and support that foster a thriving workforce
— accessible and inclusive recruitment practices.

Reduce stigma and discrimination within the workplace, communities, and systems, through:

— enhancing the inclusion, representation, and visibility of people with diverse Lived Experience in leadership, advocacy, and decision-making roles
— creating accessible opportunities for people with Lived Experience to share their own stories in ways that are meaningful to them
— supporting community mental health education and building understanding of individuals and communities
— delivering workplace training and development initiatives that build an inclusive workplace culture and improve the attitudes of the wider workforce
— contributing to collective advocacy movements aimed at addressing structural drivers of stigma and reducing barriers to help seeking.

Ceres, by Jessica

What: two bikes (mine and housemate) with flowers in back of one, when we rode to CERES and went home and gardened.

Why: memory of Emma leaving Australia and fixing garden together. Bike riding helps with mental health.

What: growth and outdoors

Change: reminder to get outside with friends and prep to change garden from weeds to flowers.

Grams and I, by Marnie

This is the last picture I have of my Grandma and I, it shows our bond as family and how we supported each other, it is my hope that all people in our community have someone to share this with, whether with family, friends, or a service.

Holding Space, by Teresa Hall

The dark things in life are hard to face. It's something we can't control, something we can't ever fully understand and something we naturally fear.

When we run from it, we make it harder and harder to face. When society runs from it, it makes it harder and harder to face together.

When we lose someone, when we talk about death, when someone becomes unwell, when our head starts doing weird and wonderful things or we are dealing with trauma or abuse, it can feel so alone.

We are surrounded by others who refuse to face that these things are part of life so when we are forced to face it, whether we choose to or not, it can be so confronting for those around us we love that they do anything to jump ship or pretend it's not there.

We are left alone, facing the hardest things we will ever have to face. The ugly parts of our story, the ugly parts of us, the ugly parts of life.

But then we find those who stop and acknowledge life for what it is. Who aren't afraid to face the hard parts of life and who get the need to face them together. There we can find the beauty in the safety of someone holding space for us, for all of us and all of life.

Meaningful activities and financial resources

We believe:

Employment and financial stability have a significant impact on health

Employment is recognised as a key social determinant of health. For many people, employment supports access to income and resources, and contributes to people's sense of identity, social inclusion and wellbeing. Staff engagement, wellbeing and retention are also impacted by working conditions such as hours, demands, remuneration and job security.

Structural barriers mean that unemployment rates tend to be higher among people with mental health challenges, chronic health conditions and disabilities, caring responsibilities, multicultural people, First Nations peoples, and other marginalised groups. Unemployment, especially long-term, can cause emotional and financial stress, and have a big impact on individual, family, and community wellbeing. Our approach to wellbeing includes supporting people to gain financial stability through employment, income support or other appropriate means.

Other meaningful activities also support health, wellbeing, and inclusion

As well as highlighting the positive impact of employment, we recognise that many people with mental health challenges and people with disability have had poor experiences with employment and employment supports. Beyond employment, we acknowledge the choice and value of engaging with other meaningful activities, such as volunteering, community participation, caring responsibilities, study and activism. These activities can also support a person's sense of identity, meaning and purpose, social inclusion and wellbeing. We provide supports that prioritise individual needs and values and enable people to engage in activities that are important to them.

Financial stress is amplifying social and health inequities

Many people who access our services rely on government assistance for their income and are some of the most impacted by financial stress and the rising costs of living. The growing gap between income and living costs has made it increasingly hard for people to afford essential resources like rent, food, medication, healthcare, pet care, and to participate in social and community activities. We believe it's important to address the systemic and structural causes of unemployment and socioeconomic inequity, as well as the individual impacts, and to support greater economic opportunities and equity for staff and the people and communities we serve.

Therefore, we aim to:

Increase consumer and community access to meaningful activities and financial resources, through:

— providing holistic individual support to assist with job seeking, employment support and engagement in meaningful activities
— providing paid participation and capacity building opportunities for people with Lived Experience
— providing advocacy and education within and beyond the mental health sector to support inclusive and sustainable employment practices for people with Lived Experience
— collective advocacy to improve income support payments and access to essential resources for everyone.

Positively influence sector workforce conditions and standards to benefit staff, through:

— providing and promoting fair and equitable employment opportunities, practices and conditions for diverse and marginalised people and communities
— contributing to collective advocacy movements to enhance workforce wellbeing, development, opportunities and conditions.

Utilise social procurement to address social and economic inequities, through:

— reorienting our supply chains to buy from ethically, socially and environmentally conscious suppliers
— proactively investing in businesses that are owned by and benefit marginalised groups, for example First Nations peoples, and people with disability.

To Build, by Judith

We can build a better future for everyone. Little bit at a time to add a bit of colour of life to guide us in the right direction.

Glass Half Full, by Marnie

There is growth in the most surprising of places, beauty amidst sadness and struggle and life, even amongst death. This one scrappy poppy flower beat the odds, grew tall and flourished amid the desolate stones of this cemetery plot.

We all have to try and do the same despite the negative circumstances we all might face in life.

Resilient Not Broken, by Teresa Hall

We don't always create our fall; we have often been hurt in our softness and innocence.

We don't always run away from our wellness; we just value our freedom.

We may be worn and ragged, we may have been trodden on and discarded, but there is beauty in our story, there is value in our being.

Don't treat us like a lost cause, or that we are weak because we have fallen.

Reframe how you see us, maybe you'll see how strong we are to have gotten this far, faced things you could never dream of facing, made hope out of nightmares and dreams out of fears.

We have faced the darkest parts of life and are working our way out to the other side.

See our worth, encourage our contribution.

 We are not broken goods; we are resilient beings in the process of transformation.
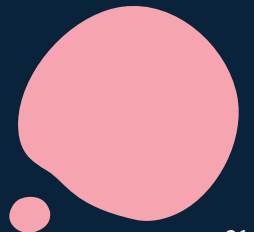
Safety and stability

We believe:

Safety is a foundation for wellbeing

Our Collaborative Relational Practice approach identifies safety as one of the key conditions for wellbeing. We believe it is important that what safety personally means and feels like is defined by the people and communities we work with.

Feeling safe and protected from harm within our homes, workplaces, communities, online and other environments enables a better quality of life, increases people's capacity to be involved in the community and interact with community spaces and amenities in a positive way. We know that people's sense of safety can be influenced by many factors, including social attitudes, discrimination, abuse/misuse of power, built environments, experiences of violence and crime, and access to resources and supports and more. Perceived threats to safety can also cause people to experience increased vulnerability, stress and anxiety.

We need to holistically address and foster safety within our services

We believe that creating service environments and experiences that feel safe, welcoming, and inclusive is essential to building trust, connection and enabling people to receive the support they want and need.

This involves culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and peer-led approaches to practice, as well as moving beyond traditional risk management approaches towards practices that foreground people's rights and preferences in co-creating safety.

Access to safe and secure housing is a human right and requires a systemic response

Housing affects people's sense of security, stability, safety, privacy, identity, and control over their lives. Homelessness and unsafe living conditions disproportionately affects First Nations people and communities as well as people facing structural discrimination, intergenerational trauma, poverty, and mental health challenges. And can hinder access to healthcare, education, employment and community engagement.

Housing is a critical issue in Australia, with a growing number of people facing risk of homelessness due to financial difficulty, limited housing supply, housing affordability stress, family and domestic violence and climate change. We believe addressing homelessness requires a collaborative, integrated and holistic approach that recognises the wider social and economic drivers across the system.

Therefore, we aim to:

Contribute to individual and community safety across contexts, through:

— connecting with the people and communities we are working with to better understand their needs, challenges, and aspirations around safety, and how we may positively contribute to them
— advocacy at a systemic level for greater recognition and action on upstream conditions for safety and wellbeing (for example, stigma, discrimination or income).

Foster greater experiences of safety within our services, through:

— integrating Collaborative Relational Practice, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and peer-led approaches to practice and service design that centre consumer safety, choice, and control across all services
— implementing contemporary approaches that create opportunities for safety for all
— embedding community accountability and continuous improvement processes within our services to ensure our approaches are evolving to meet individual and community needs around safety.

Support people's access to safe, secure, and sustainable housing, through:

— providing holistic, integrated services that respond to the relationship between homelessness, mental health and other intersecting experiences and identities that place people and communities at higher risk
— partnerhips that support integrated and innovative approaches to addressing homelessness
— collective advocacy approaches to address the structural and systemic drivers and impacts of homelessness, which may include housing supply, government policy and program funding.

Home, by Anonymous

I took this image to represent home and the integral importance of having one. At the beginning of this year, I found myself part of a growing cohort of women, homeless and in the 50 plus age group category. It's a terrifying thought to be entering your 50s and to have such instability in your housing situation. To be honest, I'd never had housing stability, abusive relationships spanning 31 years of my 50 meant home had never felt or been safe for me, childhood abuse from the age of 7 until I escaped into an even more abusive situation meant my only memories of a safe home were as a child living within the safe compounds of my grandmother's home. I had no superannuation to fall back on as I'd spent most of my adult life doing unpaid domestic work. I was terrified of falling through the cracks of a grossly incompetent system and never being able to recover. I'd witnessed it happening all around me, women my age living in tents, crashing on friends couches or living in their cars, smart educated women who'd fallen through the very cracks I was desperately trying not to slip into.

I was uneducated, unemployed and I no longer had a car to fall back on, I'd lived in my car before, and I remember at the time giving up my car was such a difficult decision because it had provided me with such safety and sanctuary during a previous abusive relationship. Without a car there was a real clear sense of vulnerability, no protection from any of the vast number of dangers women are susceptible to. It's a terrifying thought to face. Especially when you are facing that alone. I remember sitting in the offices of Launch Housing in Collingwood after being told a few days prior that there was no more support or financial assistance for me after using up all my "crisis accommodation support" and meeting 2 housing outreach support workers who were about to deliver me news that would fundamentally change my life, in more ways than I could ever imagine. I was initially shocked and stunned and couldn't quite believe what they were saying to me.

I had a home. I HAD A HOME. HOME.

The sense of relief in that room on that day was palpable to all present, both of my workers mentioned this to me on several occasions. We had succeeded in a system that was almost purpose built to fail. It was unheard of in the current housing crisis. I couldn't quite believe that I had a home. A home. My home. Safe home. I cried so hard, I couldn't say thank you in enough ways or show them how much this meant to me. I moved in immediately even though my furniture and belongings weren't arriving for 2 more weeks. I bought a blow-up mattress and cheap bedding at Kmart. The place was stark and barren, so I immediately set about decorating it. I scoured op-shops for old magazines to collage my walls with and I stumbled upon this rather kitsch little sign that perhaps previously I would never have looked twice at. HOME. I knew then that this somewhat tacky little sign was going to have permanent residence with me for the rest of my life, for every time I look at it, I'm reminded. HOME. Within a safe home we have space to dream and to hope. Within a safe home healing and recovery and growth can happen with infinite possibilities. Broken along the way, left alone without help. Support given by many and different advice services.

We can build a better future for everyone. Little bit at a time to add a bit of colourful life to guide us in the right direction. A future that is maintained, looked after, and allowed to be comfortable for everyone.

Invisible, by Len James

A homeless man sits at an intersection, in the middle of the city, for several hours. People walk past looking straight ahead or looking down. No one wants to make eye contact. No one approaches or talks to him. He feels invisible.

My hope for the future is that more can be done to support individuals with mental health challenges who find themselves homeless.

Holistic, person-centred systems

We believe:

Everyone has a right to agency, choice, and person-centred care

Recognising the harm service systems have caused is an important first step to repair and reform. Service systems have historically operated by "doing to" people, and we recognise the only way forward is "doing with" people. People want to feel seen, heard, validated and valued as individuals, not defined by their diagnosis, symptoms or circumstances.

We acknowledge and value that everyone has their own unique context, identities, needs, preferences, and understandings of wellbeing. Adopting a person-centred approach means looking at a person's whole picture, working collaboratively and flexibly, and empowering people to work towards outcomes that matter to them. Lived Experience leadership and governance is key to genuine system reform and the development of services that centre consumer rights, choice and agency.

Sector collaboration and integration are essential to system reform

Integrated services are urgently required to address the intersections of mental health, disability, homelessness, unemployment, alcohol and other drug use, family and domestic violence, gender discrimination, and other experiences. These experiences often overlap and impact people's wellbeing concurrently and cumulatively. It is essential the system does not continue to operate in silos, and that people no longer experience retelling their stories, being turned away or falling through the gaps.

Holistic and diverse approaches to wellbeing are the way forward

There is a recognised need for holistic mental healthcare that includes mental, emotional, social, spiritual, cultural, and physical wellbeing. As a mainstream service, there is an opportunity for us to be guided by diverse knowledge bases and practices, including First Nations, Lived Experience, and multicultural approaches to provide more holistic approaches to care. There is also growing evidence on the positive impact of creativity and arts engagement for wellbeing and its ability to address social determinants of health. By better meeting the needs of the diverse communities we serve, we can work to address wellbeing challenges and health inequities more effectively.

Therefore, we aim to:
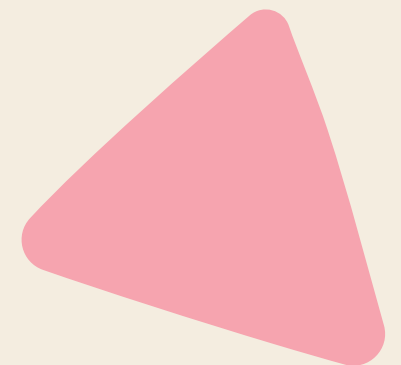
Promote Lived Experience-led sector reform, through:

— sector collaboration and collective advocacy
— investing in consumer participation and leadership
— the genuine co-design, governance, and evaluation of services
— investing in Lived Experience workforce development, Lived Experience-led services and peer models of care.

Enhance people's access to integrated care and systems, through:

— building strong collaborations and partnerships within and across services and sectors
— developing well-supported multidisciplinary teams and workforces
— collectively advocating for collaborative, integrated sector reform.

Provide best practice person-centred support and holistic models of care, through:

— supporting and developing Lived Experience, First Nations, and multicultural workforces
— embedding Collaborative Relational Practice approaches across all services
— delivering inclusive services that understand and approach mental health within broader, culturally responsive frameworks, including First Nations social and emotional wellbeing and faith-inclusive approaches
— integrating arts engagement and creative approaches into the design, delivery and evaluation of our services
— embedding health promotion and support for physical wellbeing as part of a holistic approach to wellbeing and care.

Smorgasbord for our Universe, by Alison Marshall

My hope for the system is that providers and consumers would have a smorgasbord of healthy choices of support systems available to them. And that the system would be much more holistic in its approach to mental health healing.

We humans are as complex as the structure of the universe. And like the universe, we cannot function optimally unless all parts of our universe are in balance.

We cannot separate our body, mind, spirit, and emotions. They are our universe.

Each facet needs to be well fed.

The consumer.

The providers.

The system.

Rebirth, by Anonymous

This tree had been cut down and the stump remained. It had begun sprouting new leaves and branches, despite losing its trunk. This represents my hopes for the mental health system and reform. The new branches are a symbol of post-traumatic growth and recovery. My hopes are for individuals to be able to engage in mental health recovery in ways meaningful to them and find spaces they belong.

Taking care of tiny things,
by Anonymous

This tiny snail could be squished very easily with a small amount of pressure, so they are delicate and fragile.

This moment reminds me of how delicate the small details in society and the environment are.

For example, People 'falling through the cracks' of the health and mental health care systems because 'small' details are missed. I would like a future where issues for the individuals are protected from being steamrolled by corporate interests.

Empowered communities

We believe:

Community leadership and self-determination leads to better outcomes

We value the knowledge and expertise of diverse communities and recognise the benefits of community-led collaboration and problem-solving for developing innovative and creative solutions and fostering stronger, more inclusive communities. Self-determination is foundational to First Nations justice and Indigenous Governance approaches. It means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples having meaningful control over their own lives. That is, having genuine decision-making power and responsibility about what happens to their peoples and lands.

Empowered, connected and sustainable communities have a greater ability to foster wellbeing and collectively respond to challenges

Active community groups and spaces offer opportunities for participation, connection, confidence building, social and other skill development and the sharing of knowledge and resources. Resourcing and capacity building is crucial to supporting the enablement, empowerment, and sustainability of communities, and enhances their ability to collectively respond to broad and increasingly prevalent societal and environmental challenges such as food insecurity, extreme weather events, mental health challenges and loneliness.

A collective response to addressing mental health challenges is key

The experience of mental health challenges is widespread across our communities, and our existing service systems are unable to meet everyone's needs. Through building on existing support networks, there is great opportunity and motivation for communities to be better equipped and educated to support a community-based, long-term response to mental health challenges. We support a collective response that encompasses greater mental health literacy and understanding around mental health across the public and professionals, supports mutual aid approaches and access to inclusive and diverse supports.

Therefore, we aim to:

Support and enable community leadership and self-determination, through:

— working in partnership with local communities in the design, delivery, and governance of our services to ensure they are appropriate, effective and respond to evolving community needs
— offering opportunities for communities to provide direct feedback and leadership in how services are engaging and working within local community
— implementing Indigenous governance approaches and principles
— providing community accountability mechanisms to ensure our impact is led by, and accountable to, the local community
— supporting and contributing to community-led advocacy for First Nations justice and reconciliation.

Support and enable preventative, long-term, community-based responses to mental health challenges, through:

— supporting prevention-oriented initiatives
— investing in quality community education programs that are culturally sensitive, support capacity building, and are relevant to the needs of the community
— supporting resource and knowledge sharing in the community
— supporting initiatives that preserve and promote the cultural knowledge of the community
— advocacy to influence government policy and funding that encourages and enables community-based responses
— developing community accountability mechanisms and direct engagement pathways to advocate and steer policy and practice.

Mumma and Papa Bear, by Chez

My fear of big dogs is now gone after spending time with these two beautiful shepherds. They have also warmed up to me and Ted over the time we spend together. My hopes for the community is for people to stop fearing big/louds etc, to realise that all animals need and deserve kindness, patience and respect. If we approach anyone with fear, we will receive fear back.

WORDS: family, courage, peace, love, confidence, unity.

Community Fish, by Julie White

A colourful community of fish gathering in all directions, each of a different colour and size.

Little Yellow Library, by Anonymous

This is a community bookshelf in my neighbourhood, where people can take a book to read in exchange for donating a book. In times where it is becoming more common to not know your neighbours, I felt this is good example of a sense of community, connection, and generosity.

Environmental health

We believe:

Recognising the interconnectedness of people and nature is essential for promoting holistic mental health and wellbeing

Connection to place and the natural environment is deeply important for wellbeing, and the health of the land influences the health of people and communities. This aligns with the holistic approaches in First Nations' social and emotional wellbeing frameworks and our Collaborative Relational Practice approach.

Climate change is an issue of social justice, and action should be led and informed by Indigenous knowledge and practices

We recognise the increasingly harmful impacts of environmental damage and climate change on individuals, community, and societal health and wellbeing. Climate change is intertwined with other social determinants of health. It impacts housing availability and security, and disproportionately affects those experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation through factors such as low income, disability and more.

First Nations peoples have been custodians of this land for tens of thousands of years and are now on the frontline of climate change impacts. By working together and supporting Indigenous-led initiatives, we can help to preserve land and culture, and create a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

We have an organisational responsibility to reduce our environmental footprint

Neami has a significant geographical footprint, workforce, and revenue. While some of our choices are limited by funding constraints, we have the opportunity and responsibility to act where we can to reduce our environmental footprint and become more sustainable.

Therefore, we aim to:

Enhance consumer, community and staff connection to nature, through:

— the physical design of our workplaces and service environments
— embedding holistic models of care through our services that recognise connection to nature and environmental aspects of wellbeing
— workplace practices and conditions that recognise and support staff wellbeing in relation to connection to nature and the environment
— promoting wellbeing practices and the connection between nature and mental health to support community wellbeing.

Contribute to action on climate justice issues affecting staff, consumers, and their support networks, through:

— actively supporting and learning from Indigenous-led knowledge and environmental practices to inform our work in this space
— providing climate-informed workplace practices and care that recognise the impacts of climate change on mental health and wellbeing
— ensuring continuity of care and service operations during or following climate events
— contributing to collective advocacy movements aimed at addressing systemic drivers and impacts of climate-related social justice issues
— participating in advocacy around climate adaptation measures led by relevant community groups, organisations and communities.

Reduce our organisational environmental footprint, through:

— implementing proactive organisational sustainability policies and practices at a national and local level
— ensuring best practice through direct engagement with relevant agencies and bodies with expertise and knowledge around strategies, pathways and practice within this space.

Branching into country, by Jae

Hopes for the future: I wish for foregrounding connection to country and Indigenous knowledges in all systems. Photo highlights importance of nature connection and interaction for mental health. Tree branches extend into Beast's head providing knowledge of lands and sky. Beast is looking to the future which is acknowledging and foregrounding wisdom of country and Indigenous people and histories and story telling. Human in photo loves and trusts Beast – is equal to Beast – eyes are closed trusting Beast, supported by Beast and wisdom of country.

The Importance of the Environment, by Brayden Finlay

My hopes for the future of the Environment is that our current generation can teach our children or the younger generation the importance of looking after the environment and ensuring an environmentally friendly future.

Marri Tree, Dwellingup, WA, by Laura

Spending time in nature and gardening at home are beneficial to my mental health. Being surrounded by natural landscapes, away from heavily built-up areas promotes feelings of calm, peace and positivity for me. This tree was the tallest in the area I walked through and appeared to have multiple trunks, which is common for some species of Eucalypt.

Bringing the Strategy to life

Measurement and evaluation

A Measurement and Evaluation Framework will accompany the Strategy to guide our approach to measuring impact. While the Strategy recognises the broad impact areas we aspire to contribute to in the long-term, we will focus on measuring and evaluating the outcomes we know we can directly influence.

We acknowledge there are a range of challenges in social impact measurement, including inconsistent measures, and measures based on service-level funding requirements. We are committed to a long-term approach, improving our systems, and learning from the sector. Diverse perspectives and knowledge bases will inform our measures to ensure they are relevant and meaningful.

Our approach to measurement will also recognise the diverse range of activities at a local and national level that contribute to our overall impact. While we may be unable to directly attribute all impacts to our actions, we seek to better understand how our organisational work is contributing to change. We will use these learnings to inform our actions and grow our positive impact over time.

Implementation

The Strategy sets our overarching vision for the next 10 years. It will be accompanied by more specific and shorter-term initiatives and goals in a separate Strategic Implementation Plan to guide our activities across the organisation.

Implementing initiatives associated with the Strategy will require an organisational approach with shared responsibilities across teams. This will be enabled by resourced and dedicated strategic oversight to ensure that we are able to work sustainably and effectively towards achieving our aims.

The Strategy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains responsive to the community and the sector. We will evaluate our implementation process to ensure we are working in alignment with our guiding principles and commit to transparent reporting.

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Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing