



Strategic Directions 2024—2028



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Improving Mental Health
and Wellbeing



Acknowledgments



We acknowledge Aboriginal and 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.



If you need help understanding this report, call us.
We can organise an interpreter or give you a translation.
03 8691 5300



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A message from the Board and CEO

We are excited to present our refreshed Strategic Directions 2024—2028.

Over the past four years we have navigated significant changes, both as an organisation and a society – a global pandemic, shifts and reform in the mental health sector, and expanding our reach across the country. As we reflect on these changes, our refreshed Strategic Directions ground and guide us as we seek to positively impact the world around us. At the heart of our Strategic Directions lies our core values of connecting, collaborating, learning and belonging. They shape our approach and guide our decisions and actions.

We have set out four commitments to help us realise our vision and purpose. They encompass our consumers and communities, our dedicated workforce, our partners, and the infrastructure, systems and processes that are essential to drive and deliver our services.

The development of these Strategic Directions has spanned more than six months. We have actively listened to voices from across our organisation, the communities we serve and external partners to understand what truly matters. We are proud to reaffirm our commitment to placing lived and living experience and First Nations perspectives at the centre of our approach. This strengthens our workforce and organisational structure and supports our work.

Importantly, we have also drawn upon our existing strategy, knowledge and insights. We identified what was working well, the key principles guiding our work and the learnings from the last few years. We have aligned this with our current context and the needs of consumers and communities.

With a renewed sense of focus and commitment, we will build on our strengths, develop our capabilities, foster collaborations and make a meaningful impact on people’s lives.



Ruth Faulkner
Board Chair
Neami National



Tom Dalton
Chief Executive Officer
Neami National



About Neami National

We’re big believers in everyone having the opportunity to live a full life. We give our all to support people to achieve the wellbeing and mental health outcomes that matter to them.

Everyone has different goals for their own life, and since 1988 we have been committed to working with and alongside people to help improve their quality of life, on their terms.

For more than 30 years we have grown from our inception in the northern suburbs of Melbourne to become a national organisation.

Today, we are proud to support more than 30,000 people each year living with mental health and wellbeing challenges in Australia, and we deliver services over 40 Indigenous lands. Our work includes mental health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness and suicide prevention services.

A note on language

Language is powerful and constantly evolving. We all identify and connect with different language to describe our experience and the world around us. We know that one word can't capture the breadth and complexity of someone's experience and identity. At Neami National (Neami) we aim to be inclusive and respectful with our language and we support the right of all people to use language that is meaningful to them. We invite you to read more about our intent behind some of the language used throughout our Strategic Directions.

Lived and living experience

We understand lived and living experience as the personal experience of mental health challenges, service use, trauma, distress, adversity, periods of healing or personal recovery, and/or supporting someone with these experiences as a carer, family member or supporter.

Throughout this document, we use the terms **lived and living experience** to represent both personal experiences and experiences of support. When referring to staff with lived and living experience in designated roles, we capitalise the term Lived Experience to distinguish the Lived Experience workforce. This definition is adapted from the National Mental Health Commission's **Lived Experience Workforce Development Guidelines**.

Consumer

At Neami we offer a range of services, many of which use different words to describe the people who access supports, including consumer, guest, client and customer.

For the purposes of this document, we have used the term **consumer** broadly to represent any person who uses, has used or may use our services.

Transdisciplinary practice

Neami's **transdisciplinary practice** approach allows us to make sense of, and respond to, the diversity, complexity and changeability of people's needs and lives. This approach involves combining diverse perspectives, knowledge and skills to explore and understand what is going on, what matters and what might help to make a positive impact for an individual, in their context. It is an ongoing and collective process of sharing, learning and doing. Upholding the values of mutuality, inclusion and equity, transdisciplinary practice places collaboration at the centre of how we work with people, the community and each other.

Workforce

Our workforce is made up of people in many roles, all of which contribute to our vision and to delivering meaningful outcomes for consumers and the community. Throughout the document, unless specified, we use the term **workforce** to represent our whole workforce. This includes, but is not limited to, our clinical and non-clinical staff, Lived Experience and peer workforce, designated First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse workforce, and those in administrative and support functions.



Our strategic plan 2024—2028

Vision

For all people in Australia living with mental health and wellbeing challenges to live a life that is meaningful to them.

Purpose

To support people to achieve mental health and wellbeing outcomes that matter to them, through access to the resources and opportunities they need.

Values

Together with our vision and purpose, our values define who we are and guide the way we operate. They are fundamental to our identity, and we align all our actions with them.

- Connecting
- Collaborating
- Learning
- Belonging.

Strategic themes

Great consumer experiences

Everyone should have the opportunity to live a meaningful life and achieve the mental health and wellbeing outcomes that matter to them. As this looks different for everyone, so does our approach.

Building collective knowledge and partnerships

We understand that systems have many parts that need to work together to ensure people have access to the support they need. Through our collaborations and partnerships across the country, we work to create positive change for consumers and communities.

Sustainable and resilient organisation

We are accountable to our consumers, communities and the environment. We use our resources responsibly to deliver services now and into the future. We consider our impact within the systems we work in and make conscious and ethical decisions about how we operate.

Capable and diverse workforce

Neami staff are essential to the delivery of our services. An engaged and empowered workforce is vital to support people to achieve the mental health and wellbeing outcomes that matter to them and achieve positive social impact.



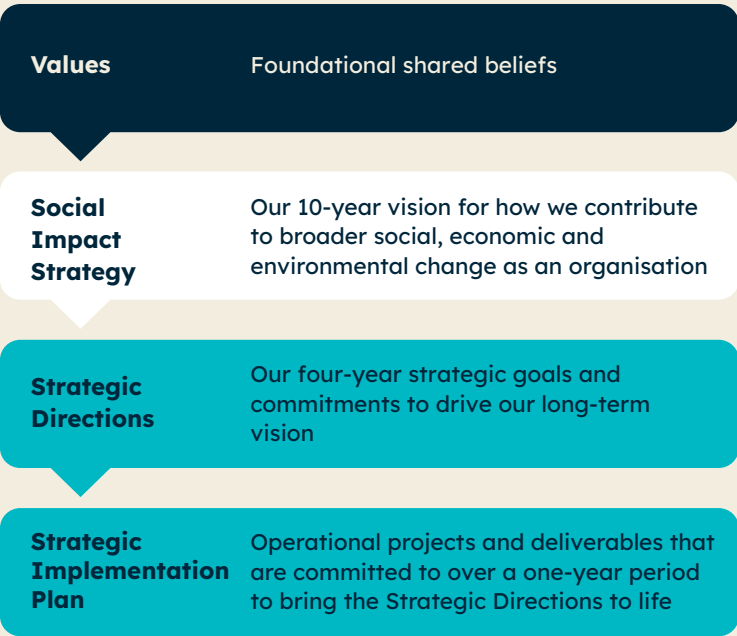
Our vision for impact

In 2024, Neami launched its first Social Impact Strategy, a significant milestone in our organisation’s more than 30-year history.

Our Social Impact Strategy, Our Vision for Change 2024—2034, is our 10-year roadmap. It takes stock of what’s important to us, our consumers and our communities and it identifies how we contribute to broader social, economic and environmental change as an organisation.

It provides a basis for our Strategic Directions and a way to focus our efforts and resources to support a world where everyone has access to the opportunities and resources they need to live a life that is meaningful to them.

The diagram to the right highlights the relationship between our values, Social Impact Strategy and Strategic Directions 2024—2028.



Great consumer experiences

Everyone should have the opportunity to live a meaningful life and achieve the mental health and wellbeing outcomes that matter to them. As this looks different for everyone, so does our approach.

Priority areas

Putting people at the heart of what we do

Everyone deserves to feel seen, heard and understood in their unique context, culture, faith, identities and experience of mental health and wellbeing. Grounded in human rights and social justice, we are committed to providing support that acknowledges and values these differences.

To do this we:

- Work with consumers, their families, carers and supporters to tailor our approach. We consider a person's whole context and how global, cultural and social factors are felt differently by individuals and the communities we work with.
- Increase opportunities for people to make choices and decisions about their care that support self-determination and agency. We build trusting relationships to support people to develop strategies that are right for them.

Listening and acting on what is important

People are experts in their own wellbeing. We work with consumers from the start and throughout their experience with a service. By asking the right questions and actively listening we ensure they receive support in ways that best meet their needs.

To do this we:

- Use co-design and collaboration to place lived and living experience at the centre of how our services are designed, delivered and assessed.
- Collect and use a variety of data to understand the experience people have accessing support, what is working well and opportunities to improve our services.
- Identify how improvements in technology and practice can improve people's experiences of services. We respond to new evidence and the changing needs of consumers and communities to innovate our service delivery models.



Building collective knowledge and partnerships

We understand that systems have many parts that need to work together to ensure people have access to the support they need. Through our collaborations and partnerships across the country, we work to create positive change for consumers and communities.

Priority areas

A connected service sector

Bringing together and valuing different strengths and knowledge bases offers stronger connections and greater understanding. By working with organisations inside and outside the mental health and wellbeing sector, we can deliver holistic, contextually relevant services and enhance our collective impact.

To do this we:

- Explore opportunities to deliver services that are connected to, and in partnership with, local services and communities to ensure people can easily get the support they need in the way that works for them.

Services by and for communities

We value connection, trust and mutual respect in developing partnerships with communities. By listening, understanding and responding to local context and needs, we uphold a community's right to self-determination.

To do this we:

- Develop strong relationships and work with communities to understand how the connections between history, location, culture, language, faith, gender and ability can inform how our services are delivered.

Advocating for change

In partnership with other organisations and groups, we can influence and shape the mental health system and increase awareness of consumer and community needs. Advocating for these needs is essential to driving systems change and addressing structural barriers and societal challenges at all levels.

To do this we:

- Work with communities and partners to identify advocacy goals and contribute to reforms that support a better system of care for people.



Sustainable and resilient organisation

We are accountable to our consumers, communities and the environment. We use our resources responsibly to deliver services now and into the future. We consider our impact within the systems we work in and make conscious and ethical decisions about how we operate.



Priority areas

Improving how we support service delivery

To continually improve our approach to the establishment and delivery of services, we aim for long-term organisational sustainability, both within and outside of funding cycles.

To do this we:

- Streamline and enhance the technological capabilities of our operational systems, processes, data collection and analysis.
- Explore opportunities to improve how we can provide services more sustainably and strengthen continuity of support for consumers.

Respecting the environment and minimising our impact

We understand that connection to the environment is important to mental health and wellbeing. Through our actions, choices and initiatives we recognise the harmful effects of environmental damage and climate change on individuals and communities, as well as the ways our organisation impacts the environment.

To do this we:

- Seek to understand and explore our environmental impact across the services we provide, our supply chains and the processes and systems we use.

Strong governance and decision making

With ethical governance and decision making that aligns with our values, we are committed to improving and strengthening our approach, both now and in the future. Through cultural, clinical and strategic management practices, we support safe and high-quality services, the protection of information, and operational resilience.

To do this we:

- Explore and embed governance arrangements that promote trust, integrity and continuous improvement – including Indigenous governance and lived experience principles – to inform the way we make decisions and are held accountable.



Capable and diverse workforce

Neami staff are essential to the delivery of our services. An engaged and empowered workforce is vital to support people to achieve the mental health and wellbeing outcomes that matter to them and achieve positive social impact.

Priority areas

Diverse and well-supported teams

We acknowledge the different cultures, identities and experiences of our staff and the range of skills and disciplines they bring. We strive for a well-supported and inclusive organisational culture built on respect and understanding.

To do this we:

- Foster a workforce that reflects and celebrates the experiences of people in the community and who access our services. To provide a safe, respectful and supportive workplace, we make our recruitment and ongoing employment accessible and inclusive.
- Value all staff and invest in their learning and development. We listen to what is important to staff throughout their time at Neami and offer tailored training, professional and practice development opportunities.

Drawing on our collective skills and working together

Collaboration is built on trust, respect and recognising the different expertise people bring to their work. By working together, we learn from each other and improve the services we deliver.

To do this we:

- Create the conditions for collaborative and connected team environments and work cultures. We enable staff to share their skills and disciplines – through approaches such as Collaborative Relational Practice and transdisciplinary ways of working – to support great consumer experiences.

Embedding our values and practice through leadership

Our cultures, identities and experiences shape our thinking, decision making and leadership approach. We are committed to the development of leaders across the organisation and sector, and we strive for a leadership profile that reflects our staff and the community.

To do this we:

- Invest in building leadership capabilities for all staff across our workforce - particularly First Nations and Lived Experience staff - to support, represent and empower strong, accountable and confident leaders throughout our organisation.
- Promote opportunities for emerging leaders within our organisation and for consumers and advocates across the sector - to drive our organisation forward and influence and shape the mental health system.



Photo stories for impact

Involving Neami consumers, this project harnessed the power of art to centre the voices of those with lived and living experience. Participants shared photos and stories, and engaged in deep dialogue, informing the development of our first Social Impact Strategy, and ultimately shaping our Strategic Directions 2024—2028.

People with lived and living experience, including Neami consumers, used the photo stories arts-based method to capture and express their perspectives on social impact. The stories explored their hopes for individuals, communities, systems and the environment, both now and in the future.

Resilient Not Broken,
a photo story by Teresa Hall



Scan to view the full gallery, or visit:
neaminational.org.au/photostories



“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.”

Neami National Head Office

4-8 Water Rd, Preston VIC 3072

☎ 03 8691 5300

🖨 03 8678 1106

✉ reception@neaminational.org.au

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