



Windermere®

ISSUE

#20

2026

# Connect

Windermere  
Plan Management

## One parent's story

Practice  
reimagined for  
**lasting  
change**

Inside

## Family Day Care

Hear what educators  
have to say

// **Everyone is someone  
in our community** //

# CEO's Message

## Welcome to our 2026 edition of Connect.

### The theme for this edition is Your Voice

It is your voice that informs everything we do and helps us understand how we can do better and strengthen our support. In this edition of Connect, we share your experiences across our services to bring the impact of our work to life and help others in the community know that support is available.

Being a carer or parent to a child with disability comes with many challenges and we know how much it means to have the right supports. On page 3, Kerry, a parent shares how Windermere Plan Management helps her manage her daughter's NDIS plan effectively and ensures consistent access to vital supports.

We are constantly looking for ways to improve how we deliver support. In 2017 we began exploring how we can bring about sustainable change for those we support. Turn to page 4 to learn how we established a new approach to service delivery focusing on driving long term change.

As you may know, we deliver a wide range of services. This means that we are well placed to meet complex and changing needs. Read about Chaya and Leah on Page 6 and learn how our services work together to help families reach safety and stability.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of Connect. We are always on the lookout for new ideas and stories, so please feel free to share your thoughts or ideas. You can simply email us on [emailmarketing@windermere.org.au](mailto:emailmarketing@windermere.org.au).

**Dr Lynette Buoy**  
Chief Executive Officer



## In the spotlight



### Featuring

**Kylie Crawford**

Team Leader

Victims Assistance Program

I'm Kylie Crawford and I lead the team in Windermere's Victims Assistance Program (VAP) supporting Victim Support Workers to meet varying needs and challenges. I also work with victims directly and I'm passionate about helping them have a voice in a complex justice system which can be overwhelming. I provide both practical and emotional support through all stages, from investigation to sentencing and even parole processes.

### Background

I began my career in the criminal justice field, which included working with Victoria Police for 15 years, before joining VAP as an intake worker in 2017. Over eight years, I moved from frontline support to team leader, drawing on my experience supporting individuals and families through traumatic experiences and navigating financial support schemes.

### Why Windermere?

I chose to build my career at Windermere because I believe deeply in the purpose of the Victims Assistance Program and the organisation's values. Windermere's commitment to giving victims a voice, its supportive leadership and team culture gave me the confidence to step up into leadership. I feel proud to work in a place that aligns with my values.

### Outside of Windermere

Outside of Windermere, I enjoy recycling and upcycling furniture, giving old pieces a new life. I also treasure time with my husband Marty and our dog Penny, now that my two grown children are pursuing their own paths.

**Our Victims Assistance Program (VAP) provides free and confidential information, advice and support for those who have experienced violent crime.**



Scan for more information or call 1300 946 337

# How Windermere Plan Management makes a difference: one parent's story

*My plan manager has been my backbone.*



Kerry began her NDIS journey for her daughter Charly who has Down syndrome and low vision. Navigating the NDIS was challenging, but when Kerry signed up for **Windermere plan management**, she could finally find the answers she needed.

## Taking the worry out of managing an NDIS plan

As a busy single mum, it was important for Kerry to have all the supports in place for Charly who needed both occupational therapy and speech therapy.

Accessing supports using NDIS funds required maintaining complete records of supports and processing invoices quickly and accurately.

"It's very intense dealing with all that. I want Charly's support workers and carers to be paid on time and efficiently. That's why I signed up for plan management," she says.

Charly's plan manager, organises payments to providers, helps Kerry keep track of NDIS funds and spending and provides monthly statements. These are just a few among a list of financial administration tasks that Kerry no longer has to worry about.

## Local expertise to rely on

Beyond tackling all the paperwork, Kerry found in her plan manager someone she could rely on; something she values after a challenging start to her NDIS journey.

"When my daughter first started her NDIS plan, it was so very stressful to the point I was in tears. I wasn't getting the correct information," says Kerry.

Now, Kerry has confidence in her plan manager's expertise to make the most of Charly's NDIS funding, understand dos and don'ts, knowledge of the local area and manage any risks of overspending.

"I know if I speak to my plan manager, everything will be sorted. If there's anything that we need to keep an eye on we discuss ways to manage that like cutting back an hour of support or avoiding public holidays as the rates are higher. She's like a teaching tool for me," she adds.

## A personalised touch

While Kerry knows she has a trusted and reliable source of support, she also values that her dedicated plan manager checks in periodically.

"She's very caring. She'll send a text to touch base and see if I have any questions or concerns. Over the years, she has been a backbone for me," says Kerry.

Find out how you can access NDIS Plan Management and maximise your plan.

Scan the QR code for more information



# Practice reimaged for lasting change

For many years, we navigated challenges familiar across the community services sector: families presenting with increasingly complex needs, practitioners stretched thin and a traditional case management model that was not delivering sustained change.

It raised questions on whether “doing for” families truly set them up for long-term success. This reflection marked the beginning of a transformative journey.

## The turning point

Marija Dragic, Manager Evidence, Innovation & Practice reflects on the early days when practitioners were doing everything they could but their efforts weren't translating into long-term capability.

“Practitioners are responsible for the process, drawing on strengths and building skills that support sustainable change. The outcome is the responsibility of the parent or individual. Our practitioners were taking over that responsibility and were exhausted,” she says.

The shift began when our CEO Dr Lynette Buoy initiated deeper inquiry into how we were working with families. What if practitioners could empower families to become experts in their own lives? This question set the stage for a new way of working.

## A research partnership that redefined practice

In 2017, we partnered with the Parenting Research Centre (PRC) through a Victorian Learning Systems Grant. This collaboration proved transformative.

The PRC had evidence to support that coaching was a much better approach to build parental capacity compared to case management. But there was work to do.

“It wasn't simply about taking on an established coaching approach. We worked with the PRC to co-design our approach,” explains Marija.

The partnership produced a clear **Theory of Change** which identifies desired outcomes and most importantly, the PCF – a structured, relational, six-phase model: Engaging, Motivating, Exploring, Planning, Doing and Consolidating. It created a shared language across the organisation and provided practical steps to guide families through meaningful change.

Using validated tools and data dashboards became critical components of our evidence informed approach to clearly define and track indicators of success.

## Designing and implementing the PCF: a cultural shift

Developing and embedding the PCF took several years and required unwavering leadership commitment. Champions were identified early and training was redesigned to focus on ongoing learning and reflection.

“It required not only learning new skills but also unlearning deeply embedded ways of working.”

Practitioners initially responded with a mix of enthusiasm, apprehension and in some cases, resistance. Those who embraced the approach often reported moments when everything “clicked”, discovering how focusing on one meaningful concern could unleash a ripple of positive change across a family's life.

“When we give families solutions, we take away the opportunity for learning. To be truly strengths-based in our approach we must work alongside them to uncover and build those solutions,” explains Marija.”



For more information about our services scan the QR code or call our team on 1300 946 337



# Our disability icon: symbolising inclusion and accessibility

Last year, we launched our very own trademarked Disability icon, emphasising our commitment to accessibility and inclusion. The icon represents a broad spectrum of abilities and conditions encompassed by the term disability. We consulted individuals, including our staff, who have lived experiences with disabilities to inform the design of our icon.

Its presence across our communications and platforms is a step toward ensuring those with disability feel represented and empowered.

To learn more about our disability icon and what each element of the icon illustrates, scan the QR code



## Free and confidential support for victim survivors of sexual assault

The impacts of sexual assault can be complex and overwhelming. Reaching out for help can feel daunting, but having the right support means you don't have to navigate your journey to healing alone.

### Who can get help?

Our free and confidential Sexual Assault Support Services is for victim survivors and their non-offending family members of any age or gender living in Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.

Sexual assault includes rape, incest, child abuse, unwanted sexual touching or kissing and being forced to watch explicit sexual content. It can happen once or over time, in childhood or adulthood. **Whatever your experience, your feelings are valid and support is available.**

### What does support look like?

When you reach out to us, we meet you with care, respect and understanding. Our trauma-informed counsellors work alongside you to prioritise your emotional and physical safety.

You can access up to six counselling sessions focused on helping you understand your thoughts and emotions, recognise triggers, strengthen coping strategies and take meaningful steps toward healing.

Following a recent assault, we provide crisis intervention including immediate and brief support. We also liaise with critical services like police and medical, and offer advocacy and outreach support to help you navigate legal processes.

As our program is integrated with Family Violence Services, we can ensure you receive wrap-around, coordinated support that meets your specific needs. We also deliver group programs which may help with your recovery. If you're ready to talk, we're here to listen.

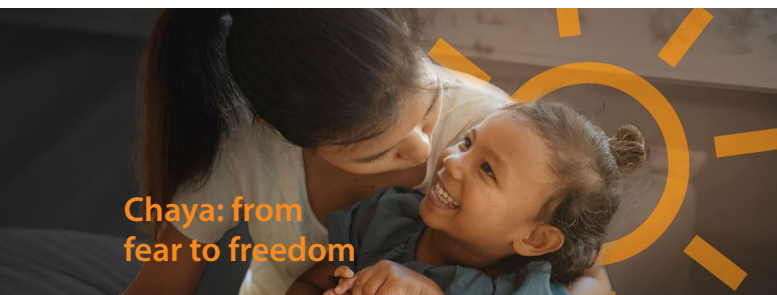
Learn more about our Sexual Assault Support Services

Contact our Rapid Response Team on 1300 946 337

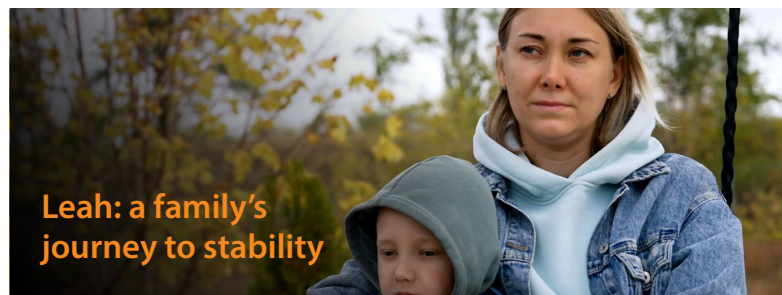


# Supporting families through crisis and homelessness

Families experiencing family violence and homelessness face intersecting challenges across safety, housing, schooling and stability. At Windermere, we provide tailored and coordinated support to help families emerge from crisis and rebuild their lives.



Chaya: from fear to freedom



Leah: a family's journey to stability

Chaya lived in fear of her partner, Neil, who threatened to take her young daughter, Anya, away from her. He kept Chaya trapped in a cycle of fear and intimidation, exploiting her chronic illness and limited English.

"I had nowhere to go, no money, no ID and only the clothes I was wearing. Where was I to go? And I couldn't leave my daughter," she recalls.

Through trauma-informed support, safety planning and practical guidance, she began rebuilding her life.

"I felt like I had family," she says, highlighting how connection and care can foster resilience and hope.

At the height of the crisis, we helped Chaya and Anya take refuge in a secure undisclosed location, but they were isolated. The turning point came when we secured Transitional Housing where they could continue receiving support.

Sadly, stories like Chaya's are all too familiar. Leah is another mum we supported who was at risk and fleeing danger. The complexity of her circumstances was compounded due to the size of her household. A single mother of eight, she faced homelessness as a direct result of severe family violence. When she was referred to our service, urgent safety was the priority.

We delivered wrap around supports while adapting and responding to changing or uncertain circumstances. We supported the family into Transitional Housing, linked the children with local schools and undertook intensive safety planning.

Challenges escalated when the perpetrator located their address, forcing them to relocate to crisis accommodation. Securing long-term housing with enhanced safety became critical.

## Pathways to safety and stability

Both Chaya and Leah's stories demonstrate how layered, persistent support makes a difference. Transitional Housing provided an immediate safe space, but there were challenges in securing long term stability. The size of Leah's household meant options were limited and both families continued to face significant safety risks.

Fortunately, the final step in both their journeys came through our strong partnership with Women's Property Initiatives, which facilitated access to long-term, secure homes tailored to each family's needs.

By the end of the year, Leah's family moved into a fully furnished five-bedroom home, a place where they could finally breathe and feel safe.

Although Chaya's partner, Neil, made relentless efforts to track them down, security measures at their home exposed him, preventing further harm.

These stories show that supporting families with complex needs goes beyond housing. **With compassion, practical support and persistence, families can move from crisis to stability and hope.**

Scan the QR Code for more information about homelessness and family violence support



# Inside Family Day Care: hear what educators have to say

Our educators share what they love about Family Day Care and how this home-based personalised early education and care option benefits families.

## Letting kids just be kids

Leaving behind a successful career as a stock control manager, Chris started her Family Day Care to spend more time with her two young children. That was 25 years ago and she hasn't looked back.

"There's a lot of spontaneous play involved, and I let children direct their own activities most of the time. Parents love that about Family Day Care because children can play, explore and grow at their own pace giving them the freedom to simply be children."

Before enrolling, Chris holds an initial meet and greet with the family to run through questions on just about everything that concerns parents including transitions, separation anxiety and payments.



*This is exactly what I wanted, a home away from home for children to learn, grow and explore. When I see them so happy and thriving that's when I think, yes, this is rewarding."*

## Better quality care for each family

Aimee began her career as a long day care educator, but since starting her own family day care business in 2015, she relishes the laidback environment of her home setting.

It means calmer children and more opportunity for one-on-one interaction – a marked contrast to the busy and rushed nature of long day care.

"Not only do I have more time to spend with my own children, I am also able to provide better quality care for each family," says Aimee.

Aimee also values that the care environment allows her to accommodate each parent's needs.

*I go over the whole procedure with them whether that takes an hour or 20 minutes. If parents have the slightest doubt we won't proceed, and I tell them to have a think about it. It's important that everyone is on the same page right from the start."*

## A home away from home for children

After eight years of working in long day care primarily as lead educator, Stacey set her sights on starting her own Family Day Care. She quickly discovered that it was exactly what she wanted to do.

She cherishes the connections she has formed with the families and children and being able to provide early education and care in a vastly different environment to long day care.

"I have the privilege of providing them a second home that will forever be part of their lives to look back on and remember," she says.

Setting up her Family Day Care took time and commitment but the rewards made up for all the efforts.

*If parents are having a rushed morning and the children are not ready, they can still drop them off in their pyjamas and let them get ready here."*



**Find the right Family Day Care where your child can thrive**

**Scan for more information or call 1300 946 337**



# Windermere in the community

## Connecting with families in Cranbourne

Members of our Communities for Children (CfC) Cranbourne team were at the Cranbourne Primary School Community Event, which brought together local health and social services. It created a valuable opportunity to connect with families and share information.

During the day, the team introduced the Child's Voice Project, inviting children to share their ideas, experiences and hopes for their community. Thank you to Cranbourne Primary School for hosting such a meaningful event.

## How we supported you

In 2024-25, we supported over 23,000 individuals and families who are at the heart of everything we do. In the past year, we strengthened this focus by ensuring their voices drive our services.

Read our 2024-25 Impact Report to learn how we delivered our services to meet the complex and diverse needs in our community



## Merry Mission accomplished

Thanks to generous donations to our annual food and gift drive, we were able to distribute essential pantry items and Christmas gifts to some of the most vulnerable families and children we work with.

## Through our 2025 Merry Mission

- 560 children received gifts
- 444 families received pantry packs
- 911 individuals, who are remote or have safety concerns received digital vouchers

## Useful Contacts

**SECADA**  
Drug and Alcohol  
Recovery Support  
1800 142 536

**1800RESPECT**  
Family violence and sexual  
assault counselling services  
1800 737 732

**Safe Steps**  
Women's Domestic Violence  
Crisis Service  
1800 015 188 (24 hours)  
safesteps.org.au

**Disability Services  
Commissioner**  
Complaints:  
1800 677 342 (free call)

**General Enquiries:**  
1300 728 187 (local call)  
1300 726 563 (TTY)  
03 8608 5765 (Fax)  
odsc.vic.gov.au

**The Orange Door**  
Family violence, family  
supports  
1800 271 170  
(Southern Melbourne office)

**National Disability  
Insurance Scheme**  
For people with disabilities  
& their carers  
1800 800 110

**Alfred Health – Respite  
and Carelink Centre**  
Carer's support (business hours)  
Emergency respite (24 hours)  
1800 052 222  
carersouth.org.au

**WAYSS**  
Housing support  
03 9791 6111

## Emergency contact numbers

**Lifeline**  
13 11 14

**Parentline**  
132 289

**Child Protection**  
131 278

**All others**  
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Windermere is committed to equity, inclusion and belonging for consumers and employees, by building diverse and inclusive services and work environments.

Scan the QR code to find out more



1300 946 337

windermere.org.au



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