



Community Living Association

Community Matters

NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2026



Together we thrive



TABLE OF CONTENTS

04

CEO UPDATE

06

ABILITY FESTIVAL

08

EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS

10

DRIVE FORWARD
NEWS

12

ACTIVITIES NEWS

16

STAFF
RECOGNITION

18

CONTACT LIST



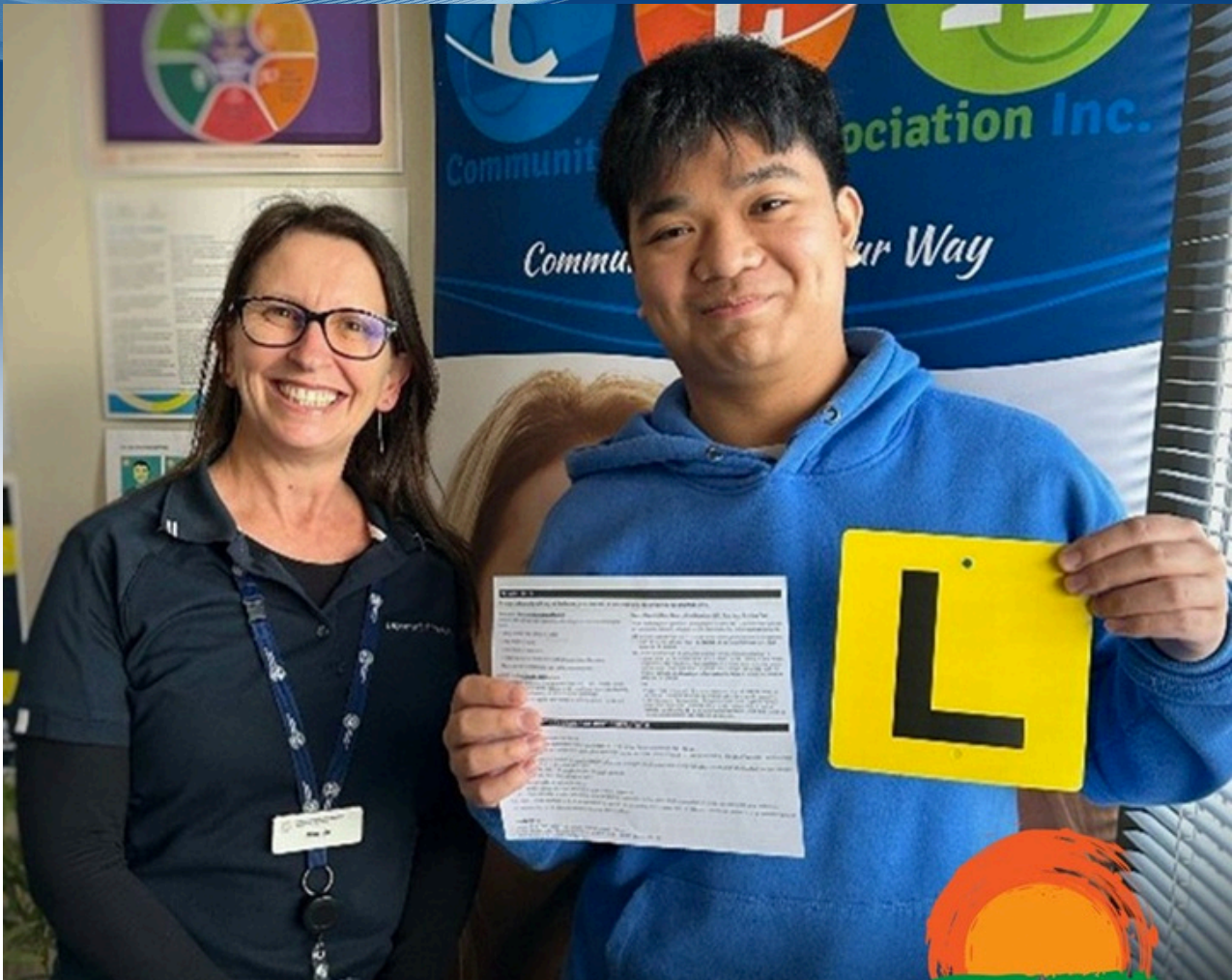
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Email your photos and news to:
Newsletter@mycla.org.au
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COMMUNITY MATTERS FEB 2026

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 **Transport WA** 
January 16 at 10:44 AM · 

There's more than one way to get your L's! 🚗 🚘

"Having Marnie read the question to me and rephrase them sometimes really helped me stay calm and not get anxious," Samuel shared.

Samuel is being supported by the Driving Forward program at [Community Living Association](#) in Albany, which is the first Driving Access and Equity Program solely focused on supporting people with disability to get their licence. 🙌

Now Samuel is one step closer to realising his dream of securing a driver's licence due to receiving this personalised support for his theory test. 🙌 👍

If you face challenges with reading or using computers, enquire at your local DTMI service centre about the possibility of oral theory testing. 🙌 🗣️

To read more stories of change, head to <http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/.../driving.../stories-change>

Our Drive Forward program continues its success and is recognised by the Department of Transport.



CEO UPDATE

As we move through the middle of summer here in the Great Southern, there is a strong sense of energy and reconnection across our community. Following the holiday period, a number of our programs have just recommenced, and it has been wonderful to see participants returning with enthusiasm and momentum.

Our activities, skills building programs and community participation supports are again in full swing, bringing structure, friendship and new opportunities for growth. The longer days and warm weather have made it an ideal time to get active, social and engaged.

This quarter has also been one of significant change across the local disability support landscape. With several providers having reduced or ceased services in the region over recent months, service availability has tightened considerably. In many cases across the Great Southern, Community Living Association is now one of a select few registered providers with staff capable of delivering high intensity supports to participants.

We recognise the responsibility that comes with this position and have strengthened rostering, recruitment and transition processes to maintain service continuity and quality.

For participants and families affected by provider exits, it is important to remember that you retain choice and control under the NDIS. Even where local provider options are limited, you are still entitled to clear service agreements, transparent pricing and supports aligned with your goals. Where participants are transitioning to us, we take a careful, participant led approach that protects routines, preferences and established relationships wherever possible.

There are also several important national developments participants should be aware of regarding the NDIS and NDIA.

The NDIA continues to increase its focus on scheme sustainability, correct claiming and fraud prevention.

Participants may notice closer scrutiny of invoices, service descriptions and budget usage. This is designed to safeguard participant funds and ensure supports meet the reasonable and necessary criteria.

It is sensible to review your plan budgets regularly, keep documentation and ask providers to explain any charges that are unclear.

Plan reassessments and plan variations are now more structured. If your circumstances change including functional needs, health status, living arrangements or informal supports you should request a reassessment rather than waiting until plan expiry. Current allied health and functional reports remain highly influential in funding decisions.

The NDIA is also continuing to clarify the boundaries between disability supports and mainstream services such as health and education.

Some supports previously funded under the NDIS may now sit with other systems. Raising questions early helps prevent disruption and allows time to identify the correct funding pathway.

For participants who self manage or use a plan manager, timely and accurate claim submission remains essential to avoid delays and maintain clear tracking of budgets.

Across regional Western Australia, workforce supply remains tight. However, we recently commenced a major support worker recruitment drive and are receiving an exceptional response. Clearly the community has heard about what wonderful participants we have to work with.

With programs recommencing and community activities building again, the second half of summer is shaping up to be active and positive.

We are proud to continue supporting the Great Southern community and look forward to the months ahead together.

“

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Singability Choir performing at the GS Ability Festival

GREAT SOUTHERN ABILITY FESTIVAL

The Ability Festival is an annual inclusive community event in Albany Town Square, which celebrates the talents and abilities of people living with disabilities during International Day of People with Disability.

Held on Tuesday 3rd December 2025 the event provided a range of free activities, crafts market and information stalls attracting a large crowd.

Congratulations to the Great Southern Disability network, Denise Kay and the committee for the Great Southern Ability Festival for their nomination for Active Citizenship Group or Event Award.

WA Australia Day award recognizing local groups or events that have made a significant, positive contribution to their community in the past year. It highlights outstanding community initiatives.

The team includes:

Denise Kay - Great Southern Community Legal Services

Haley Russel - South Regional TAFE

Amanda Baxter - Wanslea

Patrick Kerr - Community Living Association (CLA)

Janet McCartney & Emily O'Brien - Let's Shine All-ability performers part of Albany Light Opera & Theatre Company



International Day of People with Disability

Tuaari Amor-Kuiti and Josh Spouse.
Credit: Laurie Benson



Drumming Circle



Tim Fairley



Denise Kay (centre) and Janet McCartney (right) receive the Active Citizenship nomination.



DFES at 56

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS DAY

On the 20th of November 2025, CLA delivered an Emergency Preparedness Day designed to strengthen organisational readiness and improve our ability to respond effectively during emergencies and disasters. The event brought together staff, participants, and emergency service personnel.

The day emphasised practical learning, hands-on experience, and collaboration with emergency response partners with a strong focus on ensuring continuity of support for participants during major disruptive events. Feedback gathered throughout the day confirmed that the event was informative, engaging, and highly valued by those who attended.





Participants and staff had the opportunity to view the fire truck and equipment up close and engage directly with DFES personnel. This interactive experience was one of the most enjoyable and memorable parts of the day.



Our Coordinators and staff attending the event.

Amazing Lego cre



Erica - Drive Forward Coach

DRIVE FORWARD NEWS

“ Katia and Pablo moved from Colombia to Albany and as skilled workers are both motivated to gain their licence. They joined the Drive Forward program as CALD participants. Katia is working on driving on the left side of the road and Pablo is working on his 50 hours of supervised driving. Vamos!



On the open road first pass and full licence

Simon joined the CLA Drive Forward program to gain his C class licence. He passed his PDA with flying colours and having held his moped licence for sometime he was issued a full licence. Congratulations Simon, enjoy the open road .





Driving into 2026 is Emily, our 12th successful Drive Forward participant. Emily is the second member in her family to successfully pass, with her brother obtaining his licence through the program a couple of months earlier. Mum and the family dog were excited to greet Emily at the front door. Congratulations, from the Drive Forward Team.

ACTIVITIES NEWS CHRISTMAS FUN!



City of Albany Christmas Parade

CLA Christmas Party



ACTIVITIES NEWS

MEET THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

CLA has created a Participant Advisory Council to ensure participants have a say in our organisation's direction.

The Council brings participants together to share ideas, provide feedback, and contribute to decisions that affect the wider CLA community. Members have already helped develop a Participant Code of Conduct, improve the sports session environment, explore uniform options, promote volunteering opportunities, and highlight important education topics such as cyber safety and respectful relationships.

The Advisory Council plays an important role in making sure participant perspectives help shape CLA's future, supporting inclusion, leadership, and self-advocacy.

We are keen to welcome more participants to join the Council. If you would like to get involved, please speak with your Coordinator or contact our Business Planning Partner, Patrick Kerr.



Hayden Claessens - Council Member

Hayden Claessens is a proud history buff who loves sharing interesting facts and stories. He brings humour, quick wit, and plenty of jokes to the Advisory Council, making meetings both productive and enjoyable. In his spare time, Hayden enjoys playing on a computer and card games.

Hayden contributes thoughtful ideas around topics such as cyber safety, respectful behaviour, and supporting participants to speak up for themselves. He values fairness, learning, and making sure everyone's voice is heard.



Photo: (From Left) Scott Marwick, Jack McSweeney and Josh Spouse

Jack McSweeney – Chair

Jack McSweeney is the current Chair of the CLA Advisory Council. An active and motivated individual, Jack enjoys bike riding and staying involved in the community. He is passionate about ensuring that everyone at CLA feels included, respected, and heard.

As Chair, Jack has played an important role in discussions around the CLA Code of Conduct, improving our adaptive sports session and making sure participants have a strong voice in decisions that affect them. Jack is especially committed to supporting CLA to be a welcoming and inclusive organisation where everyone feels they belong.

Scott Marwick – Council Member

Scott Marwick has been part of the CLA community for over 15 years and brings valuable lived experience as a participant to the Advisory Council. Scott is a huge fan of Home and Away, the West Coast Eagles, and WWE, and is always up for a good chat. Scott is down to earth, approachable, and genuinely cares about others feeling comfortable and included.

Josh Spouse – Council Member

Josh Spouse enjoys walking around the community and connecting with others. He has a strong interest in car racing and loves attending major car events, as well as spending time with his family. Josh is always keen to lend a hand. On the Advisory Council, Josh is passionate about encouraging more people to get involved.



STAFF RECOGNITION

Congratulations to our wonderful Support Worker, Mathew Shaw Wallace.

Mathew received a Certificate of Appreciation for his pro-active approach to his work, and for actively working with participants to achieve their goals while ensuring information sharing to achieve outcomes.

“
**CONGRATULATIONS
MATHEW!**
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PHOTO FINISH



Here is a great photo of Jarrod, showing his creativity during one of our Art Circle sessions by making the activity his own.

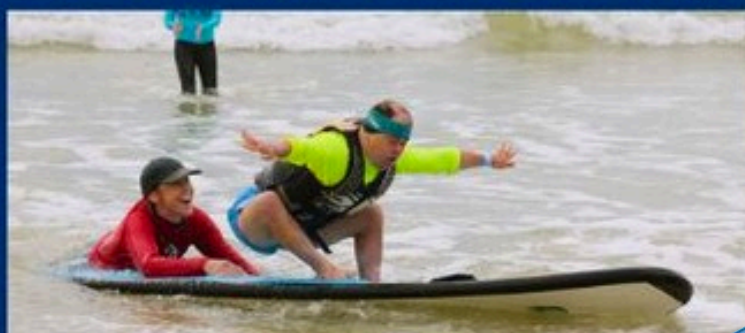
While the group explored mandala designs on recycled vinyl records, Jarrod chose to adapt the task and drew a character he had researched online, onto his record.

Great work Jarrod!



UPCOMING EVENTS

Great Southern Disabled Surfing
2026 - Middleton Beach
Jan 10th, Feb 14th, March 28th, April 18th





CLA CONTACT LIST

Patrick Kerr - Customer Relations Officer	0448 104 333
Cameron Crane - Coordinator	0490 513 930
Amanda Dawson - Coordinator	0419 175 784
Corey Grossman - Coordinator	0428 679 419
Kirsty Martin - Coordinator	0419 474 203
Amanda Glover - Mentor	0448 423 128
Gemma Podlich - Mentor	0429 682 599
Marisol Santiago - Mentor	0490 513 930
Kelli Thornton - Mentor	0438 305 384
Erica Gardiner - Drive Forward Coach	0492 844 796

To make a complaint:

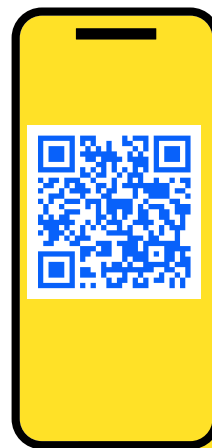
We manage complaints fairly. We will provide you with updates as we resolve your complaint.

You can submit a complaint online by scanning this code.

Phone: 9842 3855.

Email: reception@mycla.org.au

or visit us at our administration centre.



Need to make a complaint?

SCAN ME!



Registered
NDIS
Provider

