



## Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027

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## Acknowledgement of Country

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In the spirit of reconciliation, Mercy Connect acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country, and their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs, and to Elders past, present and emerging.



# Message from the Chair

## Matthew Clancy

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Mercy Connect operates as a ministry of Mercy Ministry Companions. The Mercy ethos of caring underpins all we do at Mercy Connect as we strive to ensure that every person living with a disability has equity in our society.

Mercy Connect has a long history of service of supporting those with disability, including mental illness and other co-morbidities. A diverse range of services are offered within the broader Albury Wodonga and Central Western regions to meet existing, and emerging, needs. Mercy Connect has evolved its services in line with the ongoing rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across Australia. We continue to welcome the challenges that this innovative funding model presents, and recognise its contribution to the improvement of participants' lives through choice and control. We stand ready with, and supportive of, our participants as we support people in need to live fulfilled lives, by embracing new ways of operating as a registered NDIS provider.

Mercy Connect currently operates in a dynamic, evolving environment that is largely funded by consumer-led model. A rapidly changing regulatory environment is an everyday experience for service providers. Shifting participant wants and needs has implications for service planning and personnel recruitment and development. As well, technical advancements and digital developments will call for greater investment in these products.

Demographic and social changes are part of our everyday world. These influences must be monitored carefully in the times ahead and planning and service delivery models altered continuously and incrementally as changes are indicated. A strong Mercy mission – driven culture, supported by an innovative, vibrant, workforce, is operative at Mercy Connect. We are confident that this will enable us to meet these stated contemporary influences in a way that will be compassionate and supportive towards those we seek to serve.

Care of our environment is enshrined in our daily operations. Both participants and staff share our commitment to the environment and several programs have been developed to emphasis and support this commitment. The years ahead will require enhanced efforts and the development of additional programs in response to identified needs.

This Strategic Plan presents the way forward from 2024 to 2027 for Mercy Connect as developed and supported by the Board of Directors.

I would like to thank the Mercy Community Services Australia Limited Board and staff for their support in developing, and progressing, this plan.

Together we grow.



**Matthew Clancy**  
**Chair**





# Our Purpose

Mercy Connect supports people in need to live fulfilled lives.

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# Our Mission

Through the Mercy tradition to recognise the rights of adults, children and older people with a disability and to assist each person to achieve their life's ambitions in a connected and meaningful way.

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# Our Vision

Mercy Connect, through our actions, will become the preferred service provider to people with a disability. We will create and deliver innovative services and supports that empower participants to reach their full potential.

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# Our Values

Mercy Connect supports people in need to live fulfilled lives.



## Compassion

Supporting and listening with kindness and understanding.



## Hospitality

Welcoming each other with openness and a smile.



## Respect

Accepting and treating each other with integrity.



## Innovation

Seeing opportunities and creating new solutions.



## Teamwork

Working together safely with a shared view of success.



## Accountability

Choosing courage and taking ownership of our actions.



# Our Strategic Priorities

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As a Christian organisation, in the Catholic tradition, and underpinned and driven by the Mercy ethos, Mercy Connect will develop and drive its organisation in 2024 – 2027 through the following Strategic Priority Areas:

- **Capability**
- **Community Services**
- **Social Justice**
- **Respect**
- **Safety and Wellbeing**
- **Sustainability**

## As a Registered NDIS Provider

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Mercy Connect will support the needs of all its participants as a registered NDIS Provider. There are many obligations to this role and how Mercy Connect will need to conduct their business and meet predetermined performance measures to achieve and retain the status of a Registered Provider.



# Mercy Connect Strategic Priorities

## 2024 - 2027





# Community Services



**Develop holistic, innovative, high quality and inclusive community services to respond where there is an identified need.**

Strategic Focus	Strategic Initiatives
<p><b>1.1</b> Grow through innovation to expand our community services, across all regions, and actively collaborate with the Catholic Church and Mercy Ministry Companions in relation to the planning of services growth opportunities.</p>	<p><b>1.1.1</b> Investigate opportunities to sustainably expand service delivery in Northern Victoria, and Southern / Central Western New South Wales.</p> <p><b>1.1.2</b> Increase engagement with various Catholic Diocese in areas Mercy Connect operates.</p> <p><b>1.1.3</b> Facilitate Mercy Health delivered programs for Mercy Connect participants, including ageing and rehabilitation services.</p> <p><b>1.1.4</b> Actively identify opportunities for service delivery collaboration with other MCSAL ministries.</p> <p><b>1.1.5</b> Actively explore opportunities to acquire and / or partner with other values-aligned Not-For-Profit organisations.</p>
<p><b>1.2</b> Develop greater capacity for early intervention with families to whom community services are provided to keep them safe and prevent harm.</p>	<p><b>1.2.1</b> Embed Social Impact Framework.</p> <p><b>1.2.2</b> Increase research into the experiences of Mercy Connect participants.</p> <p><b>1.2.3</b> Introduce innovative programs to meet participant needs, including employment of a dedicated therapeutic team, and trauma care training for Mercy Connect staff.</p>
<p><b>1.3</b> Nurture confidence and resilience through access to quality education and support.</p>	<p><b>1.3.1</b> Increase range of Learning and Development Programs for Mercy Connect staff, and formal skills assessments as appropriate.</p> <p><b>1.3.2</b> Introduce recognised 'life skills' program for younger Mercy Connect participants transitioning into adulthood.</p> <p><b>1.3.3</b> Deliver recognised parenting programs for parents with children with disability.</p> <p><b>1.3.4</b> Provide training and access to technology and digital skillsets for people with disability.</p>



Strategic Focus	Strategic Initiatives
<p><b>1.4</b> Grow and promote accessible services that are inclusive.</p>	<p><b>1.4.1</b> Develop disability services for younger participants, including after-school care and respite services.</p> <p><b>1.4.2</b> Introduce Mental Health Recovery Coach role for participants.</p> <p><b>1.4.3</b> Increase Behaviour Support Practitioner services.</p> <p><b>1.4.4</b> Design facilities and sites that are fully accessible and inclusive for people with disability.</p>
<p><b>1.5</b> Embed best practice in all our services, including out-of-home care, accommodation and day program services, and improve the transition of marginalised community members to hopeful futures.</p>	<p><b>1.5.1</b> Consider the needs and wants of participants, and the opportunity to provide additional services including: education and employment services, social enterprise programs, and mental health service offerings.</p> <p><b>1.5.2</b> Develop additional 'transition / assessment' facilities which meets the needs of participants.</p> <p><b>1.5.3</b> Develop and introduce 'Easy Read' agreements and information sheets.</p> <p><b>1.5.4</b> Implement systemic improvements drawn from internal audits, reported incidents, and risk management reviews.</p>
<p><b>1.6</b> Support former residents and service users to access their records and understand their family history.</p>	<p><b>1.6.1</b> Develop visible processes for participants (former and current) to access their personal records.</p>
<p><b>1.7</b> Where appropriate, establish dedicated teams to address Royal Commission responses and to engage with participants, their families and guardians.</p>	<p><b>1.7.1</b> Implement recommendations of Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, where applicable and appropriate.</p> <p><b>1.7.2</b> Continue advocating for the rights of people with disability, and raising awareness with participants, families / guardians, staff and the wider community.</p>





**To steward the Mercy Ministry Companions theological formation process and advocate for social justice.**

Strategic Focus	Strategic Initiatives
2.1 Embed the commitment to Catholic Social Teaching across all programs.	<p>2.1.1 Support staff participation and engagement with formation program and associated activities.</p> <p>2.1.2 Incorporate Catholic Social Teaching principles into 'business as usual' functions and decision-making processes.</p>
2.2 In the development of new and existing community services programs, promote awareness and an understanding of the Mercy Ministry Companions theological framework.	2.2.1 Raise community awareness of the Mercy Ministry Companions theological framework, and the charism of Mercy, including the legacy of Catherine McAuley.
2.3 Develop, evaluate and scale up innovative programs and emerging practice.	<p>2.3.1 Increase participant health support through innovative measures.</p> <p>2.3.2 Continue investment in major capital work projects that deliver new accommodation, facilities and service locations.</p> <p>2.3.3 Explore the development of bespoke community inclusion / communication application for participants and families / guardians.</p> <p>2.3.4 Expand scope of Participant Welfare Officer role.</p>
2.4 Advocate on critical issues informed by the voices of vulnerable members of the community and collaborate with peak bodies and others on system-wide improvements.	<p>2.4.1 Increase advocacy and cross-ministry collaboration with MCSAL ministries.</p> <p>2.4.2 Continue developing 'thought leadership' submissions via peak bodies and government agencies.</p> <p>2.4.3 Leverage enhanced brand and reputation to drive systemic change within NDIS and the broader disability sector.</p> <p>2.4.4 Deliver podcast episodes to raise awareness of people with disability, and those that support them.</p>
2.5 Develop a focused and innovative research and evaluation agenda and implement findings to strengthen outcomes and build the evidence base for best practice and advocacy.	<p>2.5.1 Collaborate with Universities on research projects and initiatives.</p> <p>2.5.2 Embed virtual reality application 'IMercyVE', and investigate potential creation of new modules.</p> <p>2.5.3 Utilise community data to inform service delivery decision-making, and care practices.</p> <p>2.5.4 Engage with other service providers / government agencies to better understand the needs of the community.</p>

# Respect



**Deepen our commitment to respect the dignity of every person with a preferential option for the poor and marginalised.**

Strategic Focus	Strategic Initiatives
<p><b>3.1</b> Establish new and develop existing community services programs that are people-centred and aim to reach the poorest and most marginalised people, especially those living in remote areas.</p>	<p><b>3.1.1</b> Embed Participant Journey Mapping processes.</p> <p><b>3.1.2</b> Deliver affordable housing options for people with disability.</p> <p><b>3.1.3</b> Increase formal partnerships with other Not-For Profit organisations.</p> <p><b>3.1.4</b> Design psychosocial services for people with disability and mental health conditions.</p> <p><b>3.1.5</b> Deliver social enterprise programs for people with disability.</p> <p><b>3.1.6</b> Deliver culturally appropriate services and programs.</p> <p><b>3.1.7</b> Employ Support Plan Facilitator role.</p>
<p><b>3.2</b> Listen deeply to the Aboriginal voice and CALD voices and, as appropriate, implement Reconciliation Action Plans.</p>	<p><b>3.2.1</b> Implement Reconciliation Action Plan, seeking direct input and feedback from First Nation participants, staff and stakeholders.</p> <p><b>3.2.2</b> Offer Acknowledgement of Country (Welcome to Country, where possible) at key meetings and events.</p> <p><b>3.2.3</b> Engage directly with local First Nation elders on specific matters that may impact First Nations participants.</p> <p><b>3.2.4</b> Recognise and celebrate key awareness days for marginalised groups.</p> <p><b>3.2.5</b> Develop multiple-language versions of policy and procedures impacting participants and families / guardians.</p>
<p><b>3.3</b> Proactively engage with Aboriginal Communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to build respectful partnerships, to collaborate to change structural inequality, promote cultural safety and self-determination.</p>	<p><b>3.3.1</b> Seek opportunities to collaborate directly with First Peoples Disability Network, Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service, and Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation.</p>

**CALD** - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

**ACCOs** - Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations



# Safety and Wellbeing



Ensure accountable and integrated systems that prioritise the safety and wellbeing of those we service and those we work alongside.

Strategic Focus	Strategic Initiatives
<p><b>4.1</b> Embed through leadership, strong governance and professional development, a visible culture of best practice, including safeguarding requirements.</p>	<p><b>4.1.1</b> Develop formal succession plans.</p> <p><b>4.1.2</b> Develop individualised staff training plans.</p>
<p><b>4.2</b> Drive leadership development and Work, Health &amp; Safety improvements for ministry volunteers and staff.</p>	<p><b>4.2.1</b> Develop and embed organisational safety culture.</p> <p><b>4.2.2</b> Increase staff awareness, and visibility, of WHS requirements (including WHS Committee).</p> <p><b>4.2.3</b> Enhance internal workers compensation processes.</p> <p><b>4.2.4</b> Appoint designated WHS Officer.</p>
<p><b>4.3</b> Develop and maintain robust, integrated systems in place to measure and increase the quality of services provided to the community, the outcomes achieved (including performance against targets), and adherence to regulatory standards.</p>	<p><b>4.3.1</b> Maintain investment in Digital Transformation Strategy.</p> <p><b>4.3.2</b> Explore the development of bespoke transportation application for participant vehicle usage.</p> <p><b>4.3.3</b> Continue delivery of digital transformation program (Project Connect).</p> <p><b>4.3.4</b> Improve use of digital information to assist decision making and provision of participant care and support.</p> <p><b>4.3.5</b> Define and monitor agreed participant, staff and corporate performance metrics.</p>
<p><b>4.4</b> Attract, develop and retain the most capable and an engaged workforce.</p>	<p><b>4.4.1.</b> Provide supported employment / vocational training opportunities for people with disability.</p> <p><b>4.4.2</b> Seek opportunities to collaborate with Australian Disability Enterprises to support people with disability to gain employment.</p> <p><b>4.4.3</b> Recruit school leavers and Vocational Training / Tertiary School graduates.</p> <p><b>4.4.4</b> Maintain investment in staff learning and development programs.</p> <p><b>4.4.5</b> Offer leadership development programs for staff.</p> <p><b>4.4.6</b> Continue staff reward and recognition practices.</p> <p><b>4.4.7</b> Improve staff onboarding and pre-employment screening processes.</p> <p><b>4.4.8</b> Develop dedicated Recruitment and Retention Strategy.</p> <p><b>4.4.9</b> Investigate introduction of Registered Nurse role.</p>
<p><b>4.5</b> Strengthen the culture of continuous improvement and participation, through feedback from all service users, community and workforce.</p>	<p><b>4.5.1</b> Increase engagement with Participant Satisfaction surveys.</p> <p><b>4.5.2</b> Continue monitoring staff engagement through bi-monthly / annual surveys.</p> <p><b>4.5.3</b> Introduce supplier / vendor satisfaction surveys.</p>



## Strengthen the organisational and financial sustainability.

### Strengthen the organisational and financial sustainability

**5.1** Ensure strong governance, risk management and integration strategies are successfully implemented.

**5.1.1** Further grow leadership capabilities across the organisation.

**5.1.2** Continue to develop our policies, guidelines and procedures to ensure strong governance across the organisation.

**5.1.3** Develop and implement governance frameworks for new and existing business areas.

**5.1.4** Maintain compliance against relevant standards and accreditation to ensure the delivery of efficient and high-quality services.

**5.1.5** Develop Key Risk Indicators to assist with the identification of emerging risks.

**5.1.6** Continue to develop line one audit controls with management oversight to ensure continuous improvement.

**5.1.7** Review the procurement governance framework to ensure decisions are ethically based reflecting transparency as well as social outcomes and sustainability.

**5.2** Maintain stringent financial oversight and adherence to financial budgets and operational plans.

**5.2.1** Continue to review the financial sustainability of all care and support services.

**5.2.2** Maintain positive cash flow and operating profit.

**5.2.3** Continue to develop monthly Board and Management reporting.

**5.2.4** Complete annual budget and reforecast.

**5.2.5** Continue to improve information accessibility and relevance across all levels of management and promote budget ownership.

**5.2.6** Develop and improve the financial literacy of senior leaders.

**5.3** Enhance and diversify the income streams to strengthen their financial sustainability and to engage the community to encourage philanthropic support of new and existing programs.

**5.3.1** Investigate grant funding, subsidies and donation opportunities.

**5.3.2** Seek further income diversification reducing reliance on NDIS funding.

**5.4** Promote environmental responsibility and connection to our community ecological footprint and systems, including by addressing the implications of a changing climate on the operations and assets.

**5.4.1** Investigate installation of renewal energy sources at new / existing properties.

**5.4.2** Monitor energy usage at new / existing properties.

**5.4.3** Develop corporate social responsibility framework.

**5.4.4** Develop environmental sustainability policy and procedures.

**5.4.5** Review introduction of environmentally friendly fleet vehicles.





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