



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 – 2026





## OUR VISION

Children with autism living their best lives.

## OUR PURPOSE (OUR MISSION STATEMENT)

To enhance the lives of children with autism and their families, through evidence-based, successful early intervention programs and practical support.

# OUR VALUES



## SUPPORT

You can rely on AEIOU for expert guidance and a commitment to each member of the Foundation's family.



## TEAMWORK

A collaborative, inclusive team working together to create bright futures.



## EXCELLENCE

Driven to be the best, we are leaders in the delivery of quality, evidence-based early intervention.



## PASSION

We're inspired by the difference we are making in young lives. We love what we do.

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

**We are proud to bring you AEIOU Foundation's strategic plan for 2023-2026. In doing this, we highlight our commitment to supporting autistic children and their families as they navigate a new and often complex world.**

AEIOU is an ambitious organisation. We are buoyed by the impact of our work upon the lives of children and families, and how our research and clinical data demonstrates our impact on the sustainability of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

We are not deterred by operational challenges, of which there are many. Our desired expansion across centres, services, and supports is aligned to increasing demand for high-quality services, and the growing awareness about the importance of early intervention.

Our drive for best-practice, evidence-based programs can be seen in our investment in clinical and educational methodology and research, helping us to refine early childhood interventions and outcomes, family experiences and community impact.

We seek new partnership opportunities and to elevate the research community's ability to probe our historic and real-time data about the needs, strengths, gains, and potential of a generation of autistic children.

Alongside our investment in research is our ongoing investment in modernising governance, measurement, and operational practices of our organisation. As with other organisations in this sector, we must attract and retain great people that are committed to improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of our client and advocacy outcomes.

Our employee dedication to delivering these outcomes is a source of pride and makes AEIOU a great place to work and learn.

AEIOU is underpinned by a true sense of community and shared beliefs. We acknowledge and thank our compassionate supporters, whose generosity enables AEIOU to continue providing seamless, integrated and individualised supports to children with complex needs.

In the years ahead, we want to be part of a community that builds consensus around best practice early intervention, provides great value for money and transparency, and better integration into the early childhood sector.

In this plan, you will gain further insight into our values, priorities, and the vision for the future.

Sincerely,

**Susan Rix** AM, Chair



**Alan Smith**, CEO





# OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1:

Enhance the **consistency and quality** of Early Intervention, Education and Care

- Pursue clinical and educational innovation across all services
- Provide consistent, high quality supports and program fidelity in all classrooms (that meet or exceed the National Guidelines for Early Intervention)
- Be leaders in long day care for children with autism
- Connect with employees, families, and other key stakeholders to ensure our improvement priorities are relevant, contemporary, and in line with community expectations



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2:

**Strengthen our families** by building capacity and wellbeing

- Ensure families feel supported and connected during their time at AEIOU (from enquiry to transition)
- Better understand what families need to build capacity and resilience and experience wellbeing
- Create partnerships with aligned organisations to leverage knowledge, support advocacy campaigns and enhance transitions

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3:

**Build a strong employer reputation:**  
AEIOU is known as a **great place to work**

- Build and promote an employer brand which attracts and retains the workforce/skills we need to be successful in a competitive market
- Become an employer of choice through contemporary practices, policies and procedures which enhance the employee experience throughout the Employee Lifecycle
- Plan for and invest in a workforce which meets the current and future needs of the organisation
- Hold organisational values which reflect contemporary thinking, are relatable, resonate with our workforce and contribute to healthy organisational culture
- Be a workplace known for its strength of leadership capability and performance, which invests in existing and nurtures new and emerging leaders

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4:

Mature our organisation: enhance our systems, financial **sustainability**, and governance

- Enhance our efficiency and effectiveness across our operations (including processes and digital systems)
- Improve our governance frameworks to ensure they are contemporary and the appropriate fit for our organisation
- Secure the financial future of the organisation by developing and diversifying revenue streams, reducing unfunded NDIS supports, and growing our fundraising opportunities
- Mature our measurement and reporting frameworks and hierarchy
- Remove network access barriers to internal knowledge sharing and innovation

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #5:

Enable AEIOU to be a valued, influential partner in the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) community

- Grow AEIOU's reputation as an evidence-based thought leader that provides world-class supports
- Demonstrate our social impact as a provider of ECEI services
- Attract ongoing investment from federal and state governments and agencies
- Identify the areas of research needed for the autism community and influence the national priorities for autism research
- Influence Early Childhood (EC) policy across the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and Quality and Safeguards Commission
- Consistently advocate for AEIOU's cohort and families through a strategic advocacy approach

# OUR ROADMAP

Quality clinical governance systems and processes are defined and integrated.

Fundraising approach matured based on a data-driven supporter journey.

Diversified revenue pursued with new business line strategy embedded.

Disaster recovery plans and cloud-based, enterprise security strategy implemented.

Data quality enhanced to enable real-time decision making.

Local schools understand the value of AEIOU and actively welcome graduates.

An employer brand that attracts and retains a skilled workforce is established.

Centre optimisation strategies in place to increase utilisation of capacity.

Autism Research and Innovation Committee (ARIC) networks lead to diversified research partnerships aligned with AEIOU strategic needs.

Clinical and educational methodologies refreshed to align with sector reforms.

Year 1 2023/24

EMBED

Integrated management reporting available across all portfolios.

Policy influenced through strategic and research partnerships at NDIA and sector partners.

Enhanced employee experience through contemporary workplace practices.

Fundraising streams diversified to meet the needs of our connected and loyal supporters.

The new Townsville centre has opened, with the expanded capacity of a third room.

Year 2 2024/25

ENHANCE

AEIOU Curriculum biennial review cycle ensures input of current research and practice.

Investments made in workforce capability and development.

Research projects and new services accelerated by strategic grants and enhanced sponsorship.

Reconciliation Action Plan progressed and celebrated.



Year 3 2025/26

## ELEVATE



Education sector actively seek partnerships with AEIOU.

Workplace culture recognised as positive and progressive.

Research funded by ongoing grants and bequests.

AEIOU services proudly co-designed with autism community.

A “rounding up” donation program with a major retailer secured.



AEIOU has influenced the National Autism Strategy.

A new and expanded Camira centre is operational.

Leadership capability elevated with clear succession plans.

Digital tools have transformed and enhanced the client journey.





## MEASURING OUR IMPACT

**On average, autistic children are diagnosed when they are 2 years and 11 months old and many of our families (47%) come to AEIOU after finding mainstream childcare doesn't suit the needs of their child.**

Through an evidence-based approach to early intervention and education services, children make significant gains at AEIOU, at a rate over and above what is expected for a typically developing child (as measured by the Mullen Scales of Early Learning). This is often highlighted by the level of independence gained for common childhood tasks e.g. 17% of children are toilet trained when they start at AEIOU in comparison to 81% of children when they leave.

**With ongoing investment in the AEIOU Digital Database and the in house Clinical Programming toolset, we can more easily track and measure:**

- Clinical progress through standardised clinical assessments (ADOS-2, Mullen Scales of Early Learning, Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales).
- Extensive demographic information including therapy received prior to attending AEIOU.
- Information about family and community participation (Autism Family Experience Questionnaire, Parental Stress Index).
- Real-time progression through a child's individual program (based on the AEIOU curriculum).
- Qualitative information about experiences at AEIOU and their hope for the future reported by caregivers.



An independent cost benefit analysis provided by Synergies Economic Consulting in 2023 quantified the economic impact of our program. Pleasingly, it highlighted that every dollar invested into early intervention programs like ours equates to a return of \$6.16 to the community. Included in this is a direct cost saving of \$4.58 to the NDIS, equating to approximately \$297,000 over the lifetime of each child who attends AEIOU.

Autistic children and families are at the heart of why we exist. We are deeply committed to tracking child and family outcomes and will continue to invest to ensure our support programs and corporate services are compliant, efficient and effective. We will provide value for money, greater transparency and focus our resources on the most impactful improvements.

**We will do this by measuring:**

1. The impact our services have on the lives of autistic children and their families.
2. Attraction, engagement, and retention of the best talent who will elevate the outcomes we deliver.
3. Program availability and participation at our centres across Australia.
4. Our sustainability within the disability and early childhood funding models.
5. Our reputation with sector partners, government and supports.
6. Our impact on early childhood and autism policy.







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