



ANNUAL REPORT

1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

Belonging Matters Inc



3/178 Boronia Road
Boronia Vic 3155



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(03) 9739 8333



belongingmatters.org

Capacity building resources to foster inclusive and welcoming communities

Consults



People with disabilities/families

993 consults

196 people

Consults



Professionals and government

271 consults

101 people

Webinars and workshops



3 webinars

4 in person workshops

271 participants

Online Conference



29 guest speakers

205 participants

Presentations



8 presentations to

159 participants

Peer Leadership



2 peer groups to **15** people

19 leaders with disabilities

6 family leaders

Websites



3 websites

7,794 users

31,927 page views

Home, My Way (NACBO)

4,385 users

16,872 page views

Projects



DSS

Designed by Me: Resources for Inclusion

Community Employment Partnership

My Home, My Way (with NACBO)

Individual Living Options Mentor (with NACBO)

Other

Building Community Networks (16 Circles of Support)

Belonging Matters' Advisory Council (BMAC)

Podcasts



721 Belonging Matters

1669 My Home, My Way

downloads

Publications Distributed



25 Periodicals

62 Books

511 Guides

Film and Video



8 documentaries

2 presentations

(filmed and released)

Talks That Matter



241 total videos

30,546 mins watched

8751 views

2022-23 Total reach: 24,890 people

Belonging Matters' Overview

Vision: A Community Strengthened by the Inclusion of All

Mission: To inspire, educate and build capacity at the grassroots to assist people with disabilities to live valued lives in the community.

Overview: Belonging Matters is a values-driven education, information and advisory service developed in 2003 by people with disabilities, families and others who were concerned about the systemic exclusion of people with a disability from their communities. Since then we have developed a range of capacity-building resources using various mediums including film, publications, workshops, webinars, conferences and retreats. These resources are designed to shift attitudes and create opportunities for people with disabilities to pursue mainstream employment, education, authentic community inclusion, and valued roles. We do not focus on a person's disability or diagnosis nor do we aim to sensationalise their disability or create pity. Instead we aim to portray people with disabilities as valued citizens with abilities, strengths and passions who have contributions to make to society. Thus, shifting mindsets positively and preventing the amplification of difference often portrayed through the media and other sources about people with disabilities.

Aims: To build the capacity and skills of people with disabilities, families and their supporters to encourage them to become better connected to their communities, pursue typical options and pathways that are available to other citizens, take up valued roles and pursue self-determination/direction. This will be achieved through a range of tools such as educational and training events and various informational resources and personalised consultation.

To give personalised, practical, follow up advice directly relevant to an individual's lifestyle, situation and culture to enable them to become better connected to their communities, pursue typical options and pathways that are available to other citizens, take up valued roles and pursue self-determination/direction.

To harness the strengths and skills of people with disabilities and families and build their confidence through information, reflection, supported decision making and practice.

To strengthen informal support networks and reduce the reliance on paid services through providing people with advice and information on community connection strategies, self-direction, Circles of Support, House Sharing with non-disabled peers; thinking creatively about support and the implications of paid supports.

To provide mechanisms for peer support and leadership through networking opportunities such as training events, referral to others who have pursued typical pathways and provide leadership opportunities for people with a disability and families/supporters to enable them to mentor and inspire other people.

Guiding principles:

Belonging Matters believes that people do better when they experience:

- The same opportunities and rights as their fellow citizens
- Belonging and social inclusion in the community
- Valued social roles
- Lifestyles that enhance their individuality and uniqueness
- Self-determination and empowerment
- Lifestyle arrangements that focus on their strengths, abilities, interests and passions
- Freely given relationships from people who love and care about them (family and friends)
- Respect, self-worth, dignity and self esteem
- Compassion
- Welcoming environments and people in them
- Responsive, flexible and creative supports and opportunities
- Support processes that are people friendly



President's Report

Carmine Laghi

As we have found our way out of the pandemic, it is nice to entertain the thought that the worst of COVID is behind us. Over the last 12 months, Belonging Matters has emerged from the challenges of the pandemic a little like spring emerges out of winter. We recommenced face-to-face sessions, staff have returned to the office, filming of videos of people doing great things in their community recommenced, and seeing people emerge and resume their roles in the community.

Of course, all of this occurred, while our core work around capacity building continued. Belonging Matters has always engaged in and defined itself as a capacity-building organisation. The capacity building Belonging Matters provides is not only authentic but also comprehensive in that it seeks to build the capacity of people with disabilities and their families to envisage and then craft a better life in the community.

Sometimes capacity building takes the form of detailed work over a number of years while other times it may be a conversation and information that simply helps point people in the right direction. Regardless of the type or amount of support provided, the relationship with those we journey with is always at its foundation.

Some of the capacity-building work done by Belonging Matters included our first conference since 2017. The conference was a great team effort and it would be remiss to not make mention of the amazing work done by staff and people with disabilities, both through their presentations and introductions of guest speakers. The guest speakers were another highlight, showcasing the strong connection Belonging Matters has with thought leaders, both national and international around inclusion and belonging.

As mentioned, our other work involving employment, circles of support, individualised living options as well as the ongoing delivery of training, workshops, websites, supporting contributions to the Disability Royal Commission, and consultations with people with disabilities and their families have all continued to provide information and guidance while delivering on Belonging Matters' mission. Also, we have continued our membership of the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations which seeks to further social inclusion and capacity building nationally.

There have also been challenges to contend with. These have included keeping everyone safe as we emerged from COVID. Also, the unpredictability and short-term nature of funding through the Department of Social Services (DSS) Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grants has been an issue for the organisation and staff as they continue to deliver their great work without any certainty of ongoing tenure.

Belonging Matters is vigilant in resisting pressure to stray from its core purpose and mission of providing information, resources, and learning opportunities in regard to belonging and social inclusion. These pressures are especially significant at a time when funding remains insecure.

Strong foundations have held up the mission and vision of Belonging Matters. These include:

- People with a disability and families who have a vision for inclusive communities
- Staff who have committed themselves through action to fulfilling the mission of Belonging Matters
- The contributions of other allies including academics, consultants and other people passionate about genuine and life-giving inclusion.

As a board of management, we have sought to provide oversight and accountability towards ensuring the organisation remains on task with its vision and purpose. This has involved the ongoing review and approval of policies as well as revising the strategic plan to ensure the organisation is well placed to meet its mission, legal, and compliance accountabilities both now and into the future. Also, the voice of people with an intellectual disability has been harnessed through ongoing development and relationship with the Belonging Matters' Advisory Council.

Presently our Association has 33 members. The board will be seeking to make membership more accessible to a greater number of people moving forward and one way of doing this is by reducing the membership fee in the future.

The board has also undergone some changes this year. Adam Darcy, who has been the Belonging Matters president since June 2016, has stepped down from the role. The board would like to acknowledge and thank Adam for his long-standing commitment and contribution to the board and the depth of knowledge he has brought over so many areas of disability. Adam has kindly offered to stay on in the role of vice president.

I would like to conclude by extending the thanks of the board to people with disabilities and their families and allies for their leadership, courage, and tenacity and for the privilege of Belonging Matters being welcomed into their lives and invited to share their hopeful vision of the life their family member deserves.

Sincere thanks also to the staff for their dedication to their work, the organisation and their investment in the shared vision of a good life for the people and families they have spent time with and what is possible and hoped for by each of them. Similarly, sincere thanks to the Belonging Matters' Advisory Council for their support and guidance over the last year.

A final thank you to our CEO, Deb Rouget. For over 19 years as the CEO of Belonging Matters, in spite of funding, bureaucratic, staffing and workload challenges, Deb has held strongly to and never let go of the right of people with disabilities to be able to live a life with genuine purpose and meaning. Belonging Matters and all the lives it has changed for the better would not exist if all those years ago, Deb had not taken the decision to follow what she believed was right and join with families in charting a path to a good life for people with disabilities. A sincere thank you Deb.

As a final thought, Belonging Matters represents more than a capacity-building service, it represents hope, much like a beacon in the night. An ancient proverb says "it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness". Imagine if we all just lit one candle and found others who were like-minded to stand with - how much we might illuminate the world and show others what possibilities exist all around them.

Carmine Laghi



Treasurer's Report

Mark Glascodine

I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report and the audited financial statements of Belonging Matters Inc. for the year ended 30th June 2023.

This was a very busy year, in terms of delivering on four Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grants through the Department of Social Services (DSS). Due to an ILC review, DSS offered extensions to enable the following grants to continue:

- An Economic Participation Grant to continue the work of the Community Employment Partnership,
- An Individual Capacity Building grant for the core work of Belonging Matters,
- A National Information Grant for My Home, My Way in which Belonging Matters was the lead organisation in conjunction with the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO), and
- An Individual Living Options project led Valued Lives in conjunction with NACBO.

Building Community Networks, a fee-for-service arm of Belonging Matters, also continued its work to facilitate Circles of Support.

A great deal of work was needed and Belonging Matters successfully progressed all projects. Well done – staff.

Our Net Profit from Ordinary Activities was negative \$40k (v positive \$51k in 2022). This was negative as we were carrying the Economic Participation grant until the next payment which was due on 31/8/2023 for the amount of \$98k.

Given the complexity of managing and reporting on multiple grants, the Belonging Matters' Board of Management and CEO undertook planning to develop a part-time financial management role. This role will provide oversight of Belonging Matters' finances and assistance to the CEO in the financial management of grants and overall income.

Income through DSS, ILC Grant funding was \$848k (versus \$928k in 2022).

Apart from the ILC grant income, the Belonging Matters team grew trading income to \$85k (versus \$42.5k in 2022).

As grant activities and deliverables increased, staffing and other costs have increased. Total expenses of \$979.6k (versus \$913k in 2022, versus \$621k in 2021).

Total Current Assets at the end of the financial year were \$1013k (versus \$1040k in 2022). Our Total Current Liabilities were \$758k (versus 738k in 2022). The Net Assets of Belonging Matters at year-end were \$251k (versus \$292k in 2022, versus \$233k in 2021, versus \$210k in 2020).

As the Belonging Matters' Treasurer, I would like to thank my Board colleagues for their interest in and support for prudent financial decision-making. I also recognise the dedication and innovation of the Belonging Matters team.

I'd like to commend our bookkeeper, Tracy Ireson, for her bookkeeping throughout the year and for working with Deb Rouget, our CEO to run the QuickBooks accounting system. I'd like to also thank both Deb and Tracy for their careful day-to-day management of Belonging Matters funds.

I would also like to thank Kathryn Hill of RJ Sanderson and Associates Pty Ltd (Certified Practising Accountants) for preparing our audited financial statements.

If you would like to view the full financial statements for 2022/2023 financial year, please contact the Belonging Matters office.

Mark Glascodine



CEO's Report

Deb Rouget

I would like to commence my report this year by paying tribute to Catherine Drinkwater, who sadly lost her life this year. Over 20 years ago I met Catherine during my work with One by One, a family-governed collective. Catherine was one of the most determined and reliable people I have ever met, rarely missing a day of work. Even in the last months of her illness, she was determined to return to her roles in the community. Belonging Matters would like to acknowledge Catherine's contribution to her community and offer our heartfelt condolences to Catherine's family, Wendy, Bruce, Olivia, and Matthew.

COVID-19 has impacted our relationships, communities and sense of belonging. Given community is at the heart of our work, it was reassuring this year to see so many people rekindle and take up new roles in their communities. As an organisation, we slowly emerged to provide more face-to-face events, meetings, and conversations!

We spent the early part of the year wondering if we would have funding to continue due to a review undertaken by the Department of Social Services' (DSS) in regard to Information Linkages and Capacity (ILC) grants. DSS offered organisations currently funded, the opportunity to apply for an extension until June 2024. As a result, we are able to continue the Community Employment Partnership and Designed by Me – Resources for Inclusion.

The extensions also enabled us to continue our collaboration with the [National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations](#) (NACBO). Through the [My Home, My Way](#) project and the Individualised Living Options (ILO) project, we were able to provide valuable resources and mentoring to people with intellectual disability about living in a home of their own.

Our collaboration with NACBO also led to the completion of an extensive evaluation by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC). This was a significant piece of work and it creates a solid argument for the importance of capacity building in regard to creating change. We would like to thank those who contributed to this evaluation, especially people with a disability and their families/supporters who shared their experiences. We would also like to thank our NACBO colleagues and the researchers from SPRC. You can read the final report here <https://www.unsw.edu.au/research/sprc/our-projects/national-alliance-of-capacity-building-organisations-nacbo>

A great deal of our work this year focused on holding the Purpose Matters Conference. Given COVID-19 remained a risk, we ran the conference online. Although this did not create the same networking and connection opportunities, we were able to host 30 presenters from all over the world! The theme of the conference was important because “purpose” is often overlooked or not even considered in the lives of people with a disability. Focus is often on care, activity, and systems, rather than discovering a person’s purpose. The conference illuminated many rich stories of people discovering their purpose through taking up valued roles and contributing to their community. I would like to sincerely thank all of the presenters, our staff team for the many hours they contributed to this event, and the Belonging Matters’ Advisory Council for introducing all of the speakers. You can watch some of the video presentations at our [Talks that Matter](#) website.

This year our learning events covered the following topics: Towards a Better Life; My Home, My Way; Employment Matters, Loneliness and What to Do About, Introduction to Community Inclusion, Supported Decision Making, and of course Purpose Matters! We reached 476 people with a disability, families, and professionals through 3 webinars, 4 face to face workshops, and our conference. We also held 8 presentations that reached 159 participants.

Often, a webinar, workshop, or conference will spark participant’s imagination and they’re inspired to create change and take action. This is why our personalised mentoring is crucial for people to take the next step. This year, our consultation service provided 993 personalised consultations to 196 people with a disability and their families. In addition, we provided 271 consults to 101 businesses, professionals or researchers. We also facilitated 2 peer groups.

COVID-19 had an impact on our Community Employment Partnership with Rotary. I would like to acknowledge the partnership with Rotary and thank Rotarians, particularly from Rotary Central Melbourne, for sticking with the partnership throughout this time. Through the networks of Rotarians, we're now seeing employment opportunities emerge for people with intellectual disability.

People continued to engage with our online resources, stretching our impact well beyond our physical presence. The **Belonging Matters**, **Talks That Matter**, **19 Stories** and **My Home, My Way** websites attracted 12,179 unique users and we reached 36,176 people through **Facebook**.

Our online video library continues to grow. **Talks That Matter (TTM)** now hosts 241 videos with 8751 views on YouTube this year. Our film production recommenced with gusto with the production of 8 documentaries! A highlight this year was capturing the following inclusive employment stories:

- [Inclusive Employment Matters – Kez and Harris Scarfe](#)
- [Inclusive Employment Matters - Davi and Gottliebs](#)
- [Harvey's Iron Man Services;](#)
- [Working at Waves](#)
- [Rach Works Front of House](#)

In addition, 2 documentaries were produced focusing on people with an intellectual disability living in their own home and one story about voluntary contribution to the community.

- [Planning Lincoln's Move into his Own Home](#)
- [Davi's Good Life](#)

Once again, I would like to thank people who shared their stories and our friends at the [LMC Group](#) who have supported many people to pursue their interests and contribute their skills to the community.

The leadership of people with a disability and their families is a catalyst for creating change. This year we supported the leadership of 19 people with a disability and 6 families. The members of the Belonging Matters' Advisory Council (BMAC) continued to offer guidance with the work of Belonging Matters through the voice of people with intellectual disability.

Circles of Support have been an important way to invite people who are unpaid into the lives of people with a disability to safeguard their vision in regard to living a full, meaningful, and inclusive life in the community. Through **Building Community Networks (BCN)** this year, we facilitated 16 Circles of Support.

Good lives in the community do not just happen, even with funding. It takes the commitment of people with vision and a steadfast commitment to the inclusion of people with a disability in their communities. I'd like to thank people with a disability and their families for their commitment to community. I'd also like to thank our staff team who, in the words of Cormac Russell are "animators" for lives well lived in the community. Much gratitude to:

- Caroline Towers, for the incredible work with our conference and events
- Teresa Micallef, who made a huge contribution to our conference and nurtured our Circles of Support facilitators and peer groups
- Owen Hourigan for ramping up our video production and working on our websites
- Rebecca Feldman for her work in regard to understanding Individualised Living Options (ILO) funding but more importantly mentoring people about living in their own home
- Patricia Wilson and Jenny Royle for fostering strong relationships with Rotary and shifting community mindsets about employment opportunities for people with an intellectual disability
- Emily Raymond for her work with leading BMAC and assisting with office administration
- Sarah-Jayne Markwell her work with supporting the leadership of BMAC members and making BMAC resources understandable
- Our Circle facilitators – Caroline Towers, Donna Shaw, Harvey Munday, Ingrid Camille, Lauren Mandel, Nellie Godwin-Welsh, Olivia Bennett, Pat Wilson and Teresa Micallef for the incredible work they do to assist people with a disability to create or sustain a Circle of Support.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to:

- Osher Marks for audio captions
- Tracy Ireson for bookkeeping,
- Leigh Harrison from Guarana IT and Michael Johnstone from Solstone for Information technology (IT),
- David Armstrong for his live-streaming service
- R.J Sanderson and Associates for our financial auditing,
- The National Alliances of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) who are an incredible support and source of wisdom!
- DSS for funding our Information and Capacity Building work
- The Belonging Matters' Board of Management (BOM) for their valuable voluntary contribution and for remaining clear about our principles, vision, and mission.

Deb Rouget

Financial Reports

Board Report

The Belonging Matters' Board of Management presents this report on the entity for the period 1st of July 2022 to the 30th of June 2023.

Directors

The names of each person who has been a Board Member during the year and to the date of this report are:

Adam D'Arcy (President & Chairperson; Vice President)

Toni Reeves (Secretary)

Mark Glascodine (Treasurer)

Jane Raymond (General Member)

Nada O'Dwyer (General Member)

Carmine Laghi (General Member; President)

Principal Activities

The principal activity of the entity during the year was in the provision of capacity building services, information and advice to assist people with a disability and their families. No significant changes in the nature of the entity's activities occurred in the period.

Operating Results

Our Net Profit from Ordinary Activities negative \$40k (v positive \$51k in 2022). This was negative as we were carrying the Economic Participation grant until the next payment which was due on 31/8/2023 for the amount of \$98k.

Auditor's Independence

The Auditor's declaration of independence can be found below.

Membership Fees


The Belonging Matters' Association membership fees were \$35 Standard and \$25.00 Concession

Signed in accordance with the resolution of the Board of Management.



Carmine Laghi (President)

24 November 2023



Mark Glascodine (Treasurer)

24 November 2023

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Profit and Loss Statement
For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Income		
Trading profit	83,634	42,186
Grants received	848,102	928,726
Contributions received - members	1,016	1,241
Interest received	6,160	600
Total income	938,912	972,753
Expenses		
Advertising and promotion	11,354	9,330
Audit fees	3,182	3,545
Bank fees and charges	1,149	174
Eventbrite fees	418	264
Pnypal Fees	147	301
Bookkeeping fees	4,800	3,818
Cleaning and rubbish removal		160
Computer & website costs	15,082	13,243
Conference and seminar costs	54,675	28,226
Consultants fees	121,356	141,384
Depreciation-office equipment & computer	3,990	5,257
Depreciation - Right of use assets	17,098	15,785
Discounts Allowed	15	
Donations	200	
Insurance	6,719	6,407
Interest charges on right of use assets	197	239
Legal fees	15	
Light & power	1,441	1,749
Long service leave	12,312	
Meeting expenses	1,765	957
Office administrative costs	19,047	12,043
Postage & courier fees	554	483
Printing & stationery	3,749	2,689
Provision for annual leave	227	13,981
Provision for long service leave	(6,045)	8,409
Rates & land taxes	3,049	2,510
Rent on land & buildings	1,660	(313)
Repairs & maintenance	314	545

These financial statements are audit reviewed. They must be read in conjunction with the attached Accountant's
 Compilation Report and Notes which form part of these financial statements.

Copy of financial reports

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Profit and Loss Statement
For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Replacement of minor equipment		453
Staff amenities	308	1,216
Staff training	2,975	4,295
Superannuation	62,832	53,632
Telephone	4,326	4,871
Travel, accom & conference	7,383	13,000
Wages	608,773	550,113
Workcover	14,555	14,972
Total expenses	<u>979,622</u>	<u>913,738</u>
Net Profit (Loss) from Ordinary Activities before income tax	<u>(40,710)</u>	<u>59,015</u>

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Proprietors' Funds			
Opening balance		291,633	232,618
Net profit / (loss)		(40,710)	59,015
Less:			
Total Proprietors' Funds		<u>250,923</u>	<u>291,633</u>
Represented by:			
Current Assets			
Cash Assets			
Cash at bank		386,122	205,561
Cash at bank		561,017	775,043
Cash at bank - Event Brite		374	374
Security bond on premises		2,956	2,926
Cash at bank - Bendigo Entitlements		52,289	52,132
Paypal account		266	210
Cash on hand		59	30
		<u>1,003,083</u>	<u>1,036,276</u>
Receivables			
Trade debtors		7,070	1,556
		<u>7,070</u>	<u>1,556</u>
Inventories			
Finished goods - at cost		2,684	2,523
		<u>2,684</u>	<u>2,523</u>
Total Current Assets		<u>1,012,837</u>	<u>1,040,355</u>

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2023

	Note	2023	2022
		\$	\$
Non-Current Assets			
Property, Plant and Equipment			
Office & computer equipment		56,802	52,300
Less: Accumulated depreciation		(46,745)	(42,755)
Right of use - leased assets		34,706	17,098
		44,763	26,643
Total Non-Current Assets		44,763	26,643
Total Assets		1,057,600	1,066,998
Current Liabilities			
Payables			
Unsecured:			
Trade creditors		1,547	1,452
Creditor BAS		50,624	5,970
Superannuation payable		19,978	15,496
		72,149	22,918
Financial Liabilities			
Unsecured:			
Lease liabilities- principal repayment		17,093	15,693
		17,093	15,693
Current Tax Liabilities			
GST payable control account		25	10
Unexpended grants funds		631,777	665,772
		631,802	665,782
Provisions			
Accrued Portable LSL		2,866	
Provision for annual leave		33,811	33,584
		36,677	33,584

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 Compilation Report and Notes which form part of these financial statements.

BELONGING MATTERS INC
ABN 93 429 506 771
Detailed Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Total Current Liabilities		757,721	737,977
 Non-Current Liabilities			
Financial Liabilities			
Unsecured:			
Lease liabilities - principal repayment		17,613	
		17,613	
 Provisions			
Provision for long service leave		31,343	37,388
		31,343	37,388
Total Non-Current Liabilities		48,956	37,388
Total Liabilities		806,677	775,365
Net Assets		250,923	291,633

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Belonging Matters Inc. Board of Management Declaration

The Board of Management has determined that the entity is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

The Board of Management declares that:

The financial statements and notes present fairly the entity's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and its performances for the year ended on that date in accordance with the accounting practices described in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the Board of Management's opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the entity will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.



Carmine Laghi (President)

24 November 2023



Mark Glascodine (Treasurer)

24 November 2023