

CEO Update...

In this year of collaboration, learning, and advocacy, I want to acknowledge the strength, insight, and generosity of the people we support, their families, and our dedicated staff.

At Greystanes Disability Services (GDS), we remain committed to creating environments where people with disability have choice and control to shape the services and systems that affect their lives.

This edition of the GDS newsletter highlights the importance of genuine partnership—between participants, researchers, service providers, and the broader community—as we work together to improve health outcomes and promote fairness across disability supports. **Thank you for being part of this shared journey.**

The National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health *

In December 2025, GDS welcomed researchers from the National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health as part of the “Our Health Space” co-design project. Visitors Professor Patsie Frawley, Dr Scott Brown, and Dr Grace Sharkey spent time with participants Alex Ringland, Melissa Petley, Lois White, and Rana Gurisik, who generously contributed by sharing their experiences.

Participants were supported by staff members Elizabeth Bass, Mel Davis, Ellen Jackson, and Ethan Martin.



Photo by Kimberley Tickner. Winner of the People's Choice Award at the International Day of People with Disability 2025 Photo Exhibition held by Dare Disability at the Blue Mountains Theatre, Springwood

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We extend our sincere thanks to all participants and staff for their thoughtful contributions, and to Patsie, Scott, and Grace for finding creative and meaningful ways to support genuine participation.

*** The National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health** is an initiative dedicated to reducing health inequalities for people with intellectual disabilities. It provides leadership, research, education, and practical support to improve access to high-quality, tailored healthcare. The Centre works collaboratively with people with disability, families, researchers, health professionals, and service providers to translate evidence into policy and practice.

GDS is pleased to support people with intellectual disability and to help increase awareness of the complex lived experiences that shape health outcomes. We encourage participants, families, friends, and staff to explore the Centre’s work, and GDS looks forward to continuing our partnership.

<https://nceidh.org.au/>

NDIS Funding: *Changes and Advocacy*

People with disability continue to experience significant variation in how NDIS-funded supports are assessed and approved, particularly regarding what is considered “reasonable and necessary.”

GDS has been supporting many participants to follow up essential items—such as wheelchairs and walkers—where long wait times and funding delays have become increasingly common. We have also observed changes in how support levels are streamed.

For example, a person may receive high-support funding in the morning but be allocated standard funding on a Saturday, despite having the same complex support needs.

The NDIS has brought many positive changes, especially in promoting individual choice and control. However, the fairness and consistency of funding distribution remains confusing and challenging for many people navigating the scheme.



We have seen participants lose funding for day program participation and overnight supports, while disability service providers are under growing pressure to deliver more with fewer resources. This is occurring without additional government funding to maintain sustainable, high-quality services. For further insights, the State of the Disability Sector Report 2025 by National Disability Services offers valuable information: <https://nds.org.au/about/state-of-the-disability-sector-report>

GDS remains committed to advocacy and support. We will continue raising concerns with government bodies and assisting participants in building self-advocacy skills to ensure fair and appropriate supports are available to all who need them.

Amanda Coleman-Watson

Western Sydney University Medical Student Placements



Image owned by Western Sydney University

Western Sydney University medical student placements at GDS Community Centre continue to provide students with placement opportunities.

The 5 week community-based placement for third year medical students includes working along side support staff and participants observation and community services based assessments.

Students have shared that the style of communication observed at GDS differed from hospital environments in which medical professionals are under increased demand with patient load which can impact on ability to provide consistent person centred care. Feedback shared from students included observation that communication between support staff and participants was inclusive and consistent, regardless of support needs, staff adapted to individual needs.

The planning and coordination required to support participants with outings and activities, particularly when participants had different interests impressed students along with the level of expertise staff had to manage complex health care such as enteral feed care and dysphasia management.

The Medical Student community placement offers insights into the importance of support within community settings and offers an important opportunity to learn from people with disability on what allows good support to occur.



Investing in the Future

Community Centre Update



We are pleased to share that GDS investment in renovations at 2 Grose Street Community Centre will commence in May.

The first stage of works will focus on the long-awaited replacement of the Euroka bathrooms, which has not been upgraded since the original building in the 1980s.

The new bathroom and toilet facilities are designed to meet modern accessibility standards and give better support to people with disability.

The bathrooms will have complete upgrade including new hoists, shower beds and toilets and an additional fully accessible bathroom.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the GDS volunteer Board of Directors, Peter Poulos, John Curry, Alexis Viles, Christine Macqueen, Don Ringland, John Rankins and Ron Jones for your commitment to the GDS strategic vision and the governance you bring to the future of GDS. Your dedication in volunteering your time to govern the organisation is valued.

Stage One is the beginning of broader renovations. Stage Two includes the Community Centre Hydro Spa, along with improvements to storage and activity/meeting rooms enhancing the overall centre for people we support that will also support future diversity of revenue streams to invest back into the charity.

The building works will be managed by Light Scape Building Company a local Blue Mountains building company and who we are pleased to be working with.

As CEO, I am proud that through consistent focus over the past few years a long-term vision and deliberate strategic planning is in place for sustainability that has enabled GDS to make these investments. As a not-for-profit registered charity the surplus is re-invested within the charity to improve services for people with disability.

These improvements reflect our commitment to supporting people with disability, while also honouring the charitable purpose and community significance of 2 Grose Street, Leura.



Investing in the Future cont...

To our dedicated team across the GDS 24/7 services, thank you. It is the commitment and skill, that that make the support we provide possible. As a smaller NDIS-registered service, GDS is strengthened by our experienced long-term team members and new team members joining us across GDS.

As CEO I remain committed to ensuring long-term sustainability for both the people we support and the team we employ who make this important work possible.

In a time of increasing disruption and division, the optimism that comes from people working together towards a shared vision is reassuring. Together, we continue to make this mission possible.

GDS Mission

To provide individualised support services that uphold the rights of people with disability Promoting inclusion, dignity, and advocacy to support each person to live a good life.

Amanda Coleman-Watson

A big thank you to Colin and Loren Fragar and the Impact Masterminds, a group of property developers and investors.



On the 10 February they volunteered to help clean up our 2 Grose Street, Leura garden. A part of the Impact Masterminds ethos is a strong focus on serving and giving back. The courtyard and outside the studio looked so good after they finished. Participants, Staff greatly appreciated all their hard work.

GDS currently do not have a dedicated gardener so any volunteering to keep the gardens looking good for the people GDS support and staff is very welcome.



Staff Update

Welcome to all the new Support Workers! We hope you feel supported and are enjoying working with GDS.

Amanda Coleman-Watson, the GDS CEO has been successfully appointed as Director of Blue Mountains Safe Space (BMSS) Board of Directors March 2026.

BMSS is a registered Charity dedicated to suicide prevention and non-clinical community-based support providing compassionate spaces and improving access to early intervention and support for people in distress.

The service is free and operated completely by volunteers dedicated to suicide prevention.

Your feedback is welcome...

We invite you to share your feedback and insights about GDS if you are a participant, parent, family, guardian or staff member. We can set up a face-to-face meeting, or you can fill in our Feedback forms that are available in paper form at 2 Grose Street Leura or via the Feedback form on the GDS website. If you would like to set up a meeting with Amanda Coleman-Watson please contact Vanessa Balfour at vbalfour@greystanes.org.au to make an appointment.

We would love to hear from you!



Amanda is proud to contribute to this essential community service strengthening safe, compassionate spaces within the Blue Mountains community and advocating for Suicide prevention and Mental health support.

GDS Online Training

We introduced the Greystanes Disability Service DSC staff online training last year. It has been a great success allowing staff to login and complete mandatory NDIS High Support Health training. All staff are paid for their training. They need to make sure that they book this time in with their Team Leaders. **Staff continually need to check if there are new courses ready for completion.**



Feedback from the GDS Disability Advisory Committee



Below is a sample of the feedback from the Disability Advisory Committee March 2026 report. Contact info@greystanes.org.au for the full report

- Having a say and being included in all decisions about their lives is important to people with disability.
- The committee and meetings matter to people, being listened to and involved supports people feel valued.
- Having support staff who they know and trust is important.

More opportunities to be in the community like:

- Having more planned outings.
- Using public transport such as trains.
- Another disco.
- Spending time together and being with friends.
- Support to catch up with friends on weekends and invite friends over.

Qualities they value in support staff are:

- a happy and friendly nature.
- respectful and are able to listen.
- do not rush.
- the use of clear and simple language when speaking.
- curious of what people with disability want to share, and questions to help people to share.
- staff that are fun and “groovy” including dancing, singing and upbeat.



Catch up with Rana

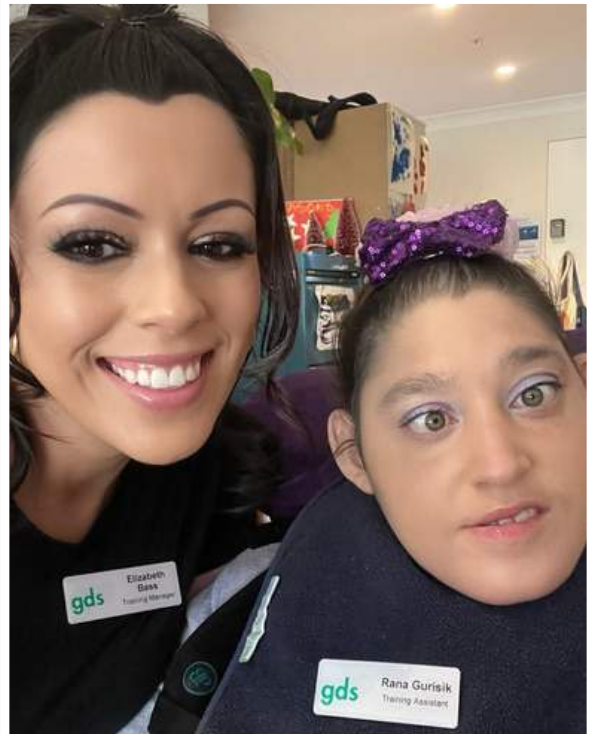
Hi everyone, it is time for our catch up!

For a couple of years now I have been helping with interviewing support workers for positions here at GDS.

I will continue to do this but I am excited to announce that I'm the new Training Assistant. I work alongside Elizabeth the Training Manager.

Check out my new badge!

All the best from Rana



Fundraising with Return and Earn cans, bottles...



The GDS Community participants are raising funds for some of their activities to ensure that all participants can take part fairly in activities that are not funded for in their NDIS funding, for example cooking, swimming, and art therapy.

If you have any spare cans, bottles and cartons that have the Return and Earn 10c they would be happy to take them off your hands. Please leave at the back door near the yellow bin at 2 Grose Street Leura.

GDS Upcoming Events

GDS Open Day and Day Program Art Show

Friday, 11:30 - 14:30, 31 July 2026

Fundraiser GDS Golf Day, Blackheath Golf Club,

Friday, 8:00 - 14:00, Friday 2 October 2026

