



**YEAR IN REVIEW**  
**Annual Report**

## CEO REPORT



Stepping into the role of CEO at NESAY has been a real privilege. I feel very proud to be working with such a dedicated team and to lead an organisation with a strong history of supporting young people and their families across our region. I am grateful to the team at NESAY, our Board and the wider community for the lovely warm welcome I received.

This year has been one of both challenge and opportunity. The need for our services has continued to grow, particularly with the ongoing and increasing cost-of-living pressures, housing shortages and broader issues of service accessibility. What has stood out for me is the way our team continues to focus on what we can do to provide supportive and safe services for our young people.

Throughout the year, NESAY has continued to advocate strongly for the needs of young people in our community. We have actively contributed to regional and state-level conversations to highlight the gaps in youth housing and mental health support, and to promote the importance of early intervention and place-based services. NESAY's voice continues to be an important one in ensuring that young people in rural and regional communities are seen, heard and prioritised in local and state planning.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Alison, our outgoing Board President, for her many years of leadership and steady guidance. Her contributions have been instrumental in shaping the strong foundation that NESAY is built on.

Looking at the year in front of us, I am excited about the opportunities ahead of us and know that we have a brilliant team in place to continue to create sustainable and positive change.

Thank you for your continued support.

Laura Shortis

## NESAY's Board of Governance

Pictured from left: Alison Maclean (President), Caitlyn Walker (Vice President), Trish Merlo (Secretary of the Board & Association), Brian Hargreaves (Treasurer), Donna Samon, Kirsty Beecroft and Varun Joshi. We acknowledge and thank Chris Dwyer, who retired from the Board during 2024, for his contribution to NESAY's Governance.



## PRESIDENT REPORT



What a fabulous year at NESAY! I must start by thanking our fabulous team for supporting so well our transition to a new CEO! We welcomed Laura Shortis as NESAY's new CEO in January 2025 and have been delighted by how well the team have supported Laura as she transitioned into the CEO role. The NESAY Family is something to be very proud of.

We are delighted to continue to support young people and their families across the Ovens Murray region. Our vibrant team of staff and volunteers are flexible and client led as they continue to expand how we support young people and their families to lead their best lives.

The Board are grateful to our Youth Advisory Committee for their ongoing support and wisdom, helping us to set the direction for NESAY and its services.

It is important to recognise our end of year financial position. While the reported deficit is the correct representation of our position, we take into account that \$394,412 of this amount is due to the (correct) accounting treatment of a lease arrangement. The Board notes that excluding this non-cash adjustment, our end of year operating position would show a surplus of \$24,325. We thank the leadership team and the whole NESAY team for their commitment to our financial sustainability.

Finally, I am pleased to say that after 10 years I am stepping down from the Board. It has been an enormous privilege to serve NESAY and its young people and their families. NESAY is in good shape, and I look forward to hearing of its success into the future.

Best wishes to you all.

Alison Maclean



**2025 SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM**

A photograph of three women smiling at the camera. The woman on the left has blonde hair and wears glasses, a pink jacket, and a white starburst logo on the sleeve. The woman in the center has long, wavy brown hair and wears a black top. The woman on the right has long brown hair and wears a black top with a white and rainbow pattern. They are standing under a blue and pink canopy with the text 'NESAY' and 'www.nesay.org.au' visible. A purple banner with white text is overlaid on the top right.

**NESAY** were proud to be part of so many community events this year. Connecting, supporting, and celebrating alongside the people who make our region thrive.

# CORPORATE SERVICES

This year, NESAY's corporate team focused on ensuring strong leadership, stable operations and professional growth across the organisation. Through careful planning, strategic decisions and staff development, the team maintained seamless service delivery, while building capacity and capability for the future. Key highlights from the year include:

- Successfully navigating the CEO transition, from outgoing to interim and then new leadership, without disrupting services, thanks to a strong team and organisational foundation.
- Maintaining a stable, adaptable workforce, with staff taking on new opportunities across teams while continuing to deliver consistently.
- Strengthening and streamlining the recruitment processes, providing a more positive and responsive recruitment process.
- Supporting organisation-wide professional development, including a Cultural Awareness Training Day delivered by Uncle Dozer and Sam from ACHE.
- Supported organisational culture through the update of staff engagement surveys and feedback mechanisms, helping strengthen communication, morale and continuous improvement.



**NESAY would like to acknowledge the following funders and sponsors for supporting our programs and services over the 2024/25 Financial Year:**

- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
- Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) / Transport Accident Commission (TAC)
- Department of Education
- Beyond Housing
- Rural City of Wangaratta
- Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV)
- Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR)
- Friends of NESAY
- Department of Social Services (DSS)

**In 2024, NESAY marked 40 years of service. It was a meaningful milestone in our ongoing commitment to young people, their families and our community.**



*Image credit: Wangaratta Chronicle*

## SPOTLIGHT ON: BORINYA

Our partnership with Borinya Wangaratta Community Partnership shows the power of collaboration between schools and community organisations to deliver real, lasting outcomes for young people. By embedding NESAY's services directly within the school, we're able to respond to students' needs in real time, build resilience and strengthen their pathways to learning and wellbeing.

For students, the impact is immediate and personal. They have access to counselling, mental health support, housing assistance and case management quickly, confidentially and in a setting they trust. Tailored workshops and one-on-one support build vital life skills such as emotional regulation and communication, preparing them for life beyond school.

**"It makes me feel safe and relaxed knowing I have someone to talk to,"**  
said one student.

**"Having mental health support at school has helped me understand my own feelings and others' feelings,"** shared another.

**"I'm grateful for there to be someone for me to talk with at school."**

For Borinya, having NESAY practitioners on-site means support is truly integrated. Early intervention prevents small issues from escalating, and close collaboration with educators leads to a safer, more stable school environment. Teachers and NESAY staff share knowledge and co-manage support, creating a united approach to student wellbeing.

This partnership is about more than just services, it's a shared commitment to seeing young people succeed. Students benefit from timely support, the school community becomes more resilient, and Wangaratta sees the ripple effects of resilience and opportunity across the region.

*Pictured: Sophie Cleal (NESAY's Borinya Wellbeing Practitioner), Eamon Buckley (Principal) and Georgie Gray (NESAY Wellbeing Manager) in the Spiritual Garden at Borinya.*



# WELLBEING SERVICES

This year, our Wellbeing Services team continued to strengthen our impact in the community, delivering meaningful programs and supports that create real outcomes for young people. Our focus on innovation, collaboration, and sustainability has enabled us to expand opportunities, enhance wellbeing and ensure that vital services remain accessible when they are needed most.

Key highlights from the year include:

- Increasing our reach through the provision of Targeted Care Packages, providing tailored assistance to three young people to help them achieve stability and independence.
- Delivering a range of wellbeing workshops and group programs in schools, strengthening young people's resilience, confidence, and connections.
- Actively engaging with the community through strong attendance and participation at local events, enhancing awareness of NESAY's services and building partnerships.
- Securing a philanthropic grant through the CFC Group to fund an in-house Psychologist for two years (starting in 2025/26 financial year), enabling young people connected with NESAY to access vital mental health support otherwise unavailable to them.
- Achieving funding targets across all programs, ensuring the continued sustainability and delivery of high-quality services for young people in our community.
- Strengthening collaboration by joining the Family Services Alliance, enhancing integration across Family Services programs, including the Adolescent Support Program and Finding Solutions.



**366**

hours of counselling support provided to students at our partner schools



**179** young people received individual case management or counselling supports

**179**



**130** Young people were supported in group programs

**349**

Students provided with intervention support through the School Focused Youth Services Program - (SFYS)

Timely access to psychological support is vital for young people as they navigate the challenges. Providing an in-house service helps to breakdown many of the barriers that can prevent young people from accessing this essential support.



# TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

This year has been full of growth, innovation and hands-on support across our transitional programs. Our teams delivered new opportunities, practical assistance and skill-building experiences that make a real difference in the lives of young people.

Key highlights from the year include:

- Our Community Connections Program supported our Better Futures young people to attend CREATE workshops for the first time, giving them the chance to connect, lead and participate in regional events.
- The TAP team collaborated closely with a new statewide program; resulting in successful referrals and increased housing options for young people.
- Celebrating 20 young people gaining their P Plates through the TAC DoT L2P program. The team also ran mentor training sessions and welcomed several new mentors to the program.
- Our Better Futures team attended the Home Stretch symposium, engaging with international speakers and the latest insights on supporting young people leaving care.

- The STAR program supported numerous people in private rentals, using increased brokerage to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness through early intervention.
- Healthy Eating & Living Program (HEAL) delivered multiple school-based group programs with guest speakers and individual sessions to strengthen independent living skills. With funding for HEAL now finished, we have said goodbye to the project in its current form, marking the end of an important chapter.



Assisted over 145 people with brokerage support relating to crisis accommodation or acquiring/sustaining stable housing.



Image credit: Wangaratta Chronicle



**“The L2P Program helped my independence, built my confidence in driving, and gave me a real chance to get my licence, when completing 120 hours felt impossible.**

**My mentor Shari was compassionate, understanding, and calm which made all the difference.”**



**The L2P Program supported 20 young people to obtain their Probationary Licence through our L2P program**

### Case Study: Rebuilding Stability Through Collaborative Care

When a young person connected with NESAY they were experiencing homelessness and were couch surfing without safety, stability, or consistent support. With the help of our Transitional Accommodation Program (TAP), they began to navigate the challenges in their life with the guidance of a trusted case practitioner.

During this uncertain and overwhelming period, their TAP case practitioner became a reliable and reassuring presence. They worked closely with the young person, their family, and external services to address complex needs and create a tailored, wraparound support plan.

This collaborative approach integrated other NESAY programs and community supports, ensuring a strong care team was in place. The TAP team supported the young person's emotional regulation through safe and practical strategies, including exercise routines, referrals to psychological services, assistance with health appointments, and increased presence during times of stress. Through this consistent, person-centered support, the young person remained engaged, rebuilt family relationships, and developed confidence in their ability to manage life's challenges.

Today, they are living back at home in a stable environment, drawing on the skills and resilience gained through their time with NESAY. Highlighting the impact of dedicated and holistic support, showing that with the right guidance and connection, young people can move from crisis to stability and create lasting change in their lives.



**NESAY participated in the Victorian Homelessness Network's Houses of Parliament campaign. The day started with the rolling out of 6,000 origami houses on the steps of Victoria's Parliament House. This colourful display represented the 60,000 new social houses required to meet the current demand on social housing.**

# YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Rachelle



Lyndsey



Isabelle



Charlie

The NESAY Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) has had another dynamic and impactful year, proudly representing NESAY and the voice of young people across North East Victoria. With a commitment to advocacy, our team of young leaders have achieved incredible progress through collaboration, learning, and community engagement. Key highlights include:



**Community Representation:** YAC members proudly representing NESAY at multiple events across the region, ensuring young voices were heard and valued.



**Ongoing Training:** The YAC participating in training sessions to enhance and further develop their professional skills and knowledge.



**Action Plan in Motion:** Continuing to work through our YAC action plan, focusing on core themes of leadership, community connections, teamwork and advocacy.



**Monthly Meetings:** Each month the YAC participated in engaging monthly meetings filled with meaningful discussions, diverse opinions, and strategic planning.



**Youth Advocacy:** Remained committed to being strong advocates and a genuine voice for young people across North East Victoria.

As we reflect on our achievements, we are incredibly proud of the growth, impact and unity within the committee. The year has strengthened our purpose and motivated us for what lies ahead. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Jesse, who finished up with the committee this year. Jesse's passion and contributions have left a lasting mark, and he will be greatly missed.

## Looking Ahead

We're excited about continuing this important work and making an even bigger impact in the coming year. With fresh ideas, strong teamwork and shared passion, the future of the YAC is bright. If you are interested in joining the YAC, you can check out our website for more information.

**“Being a part of the YAC is the most fulfilling, enjoyable and meaningful experience. The work that we do is incredibly rewarding and I can’t wait to see what we achieve next year.”**



Our Friends of NESAY program has continued to grow, with both businesses and community members signing the pledge:  
**“We will raise awareness of homelessness and advocate for all young people in our community.”**

- A1 Tyrepower
- Advance Motel
- Apex Property Partners
- Appin Street Bakery
- Aroma Deli Café
- Artrmania
- Bendigo Bank Wangaratta
- Borinnya Wangaratta
- Business Wangaratta
- Cafe the PreVue
- Cleal Constructions
- Confluence Group
- Councillor Ashlee Fitzpatrick
- Councillor David Fuller
- Curtis Adams Pharmacy
- CVGT Employment
- Edgars Books & News
- Edge FM/STAR FM
- Electrum Property
- Flynn's Inland & Surf
- Gabby Simmonds Jewellery
- Garry Nash Real Estate
- Goodisons Dental
- GOTAFE
- Harvey Norman Wangaratta
- Hogan Health Consulting
- Hume Riverina Community Legal Service
- Insite Real Estate
- Jacques Driving School
- Lisa Bishop Studio and Art Store
- Madem Espresso
- Mama D's on Murphy
- Milawa Mustards
- Milawa Pharmacy
- Morris Bros Real Estate
- North East Homemaker Centre
- North East Media
- North East Tiles
- O'Brien Real Estate Joyce
- Ovens St & Appin St Laundrette
- Personnel Group
- Ramsay Pharmacies - Ovens & Murphy Streets
- Revellised Lawn and Garden Care
- Robinson's Truck and Coach Maintenance
- Rural City of Wangaratta
- Steers Co
- Tait Real Estate & Co
- The Best Car Wash
- The Centre for Continuing Education
- The Hair Room Wangaratta
- The Lunchbox
- Thyme for Coffee
- Tone Road Takeaway
- Wangaratta Caravan Park
- Wangaratta & Indigo Computers
- Wangaratta Library
- Wangaratta Mazda
- Wangaratta Painting Services
- West End Café and Convenience Store
- West End Cycles
- Where Is My Coffee
- 3whitehorses





NESAY acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of Ovens Murray area. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to their children and young people who are our future Elders and caretakers of this land.

NESAY welcomes all people, irrespective of faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and lifestyle choice.

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