



# BECOMING A LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS CARER



WE  
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS  
WE

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Championing opportunity for all

# WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

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## CHIEF EXECUTIVE MESSAGE



I would like to welcome you to the first step in becoming a carer with Life Without Barriers.

Carers are the life blood of our organisation. Our experience in working with our carers, giving them a real say and listening to their feedback has ensured we have a valuable care team to make a positive difference in the lives of children and young people across Australia.

We welcome people with qualities and values that mirror those of Life Without Barriers. Our carers place relationships first, are imaginative in their thinking, courageous, respectful and highly responsive to the needs of those in their care. Our carers reflect the diversity of the wider community and provide safe, stable and nurturing home environments.

Covering all key aspects of caring with Life Without Barriers and addressing many of the questions that arise, the information within this booklet will assist you in understanding the essential role and responsibilities of carers within Life Without Barriers and the range of opportunities for you to be involved in changing lives for the better.

I encourage you to carefully read the information and I trust you find it informative, encouraging and helpful in making the decision that's right for you.

I look forward to welcoming you to the Life Without Barriers community.

Yours,

Claire

**Claire Robbs**  
Chief Executive

## ABOUT LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

Life Without Barriers is a not-for-profit organisation providing care and support services across Australia in urban, rural and remote locations.

Our community-based programs assist more than 6,000 children, young people, adults, families and communities. We provide family support and out of home care, disability services, home and community care and support to refugees and asylum seekers. We also work in the areas of mental health, homelessness and youth justice.

Life Without Barriers has a strong commitment to reconciliation and delivering culturally sensitive programs. We believe in the rights of people and the importance of relationships. These foundations shape our unique approach to care and underpin the vision and mission of our organisation.

LWB has grown from humble beginnings into one of the most significant not-for-profit organisations in Australia, providing care services to communities across the country.

## WE PUT CHILDREN FIRST

At Life Without Barriers we all share the responsibility for child safety.

Every day, Life Without Barriers offers support and care to children. We want each and every one of those children to feel as safe and respected as they should.

We all have a responsibility to make sure their safety comes first – and that they're well cared for, protected from abuse, and given the respect they deserve.

## FAMILY SUPPORT AND OUT OF HOME CARE

At Life Without Barriers we provide family support and out of home care services across Australia. These services deliver meaningful outcomes for children, young people and families, with an emphasis on building safe, stable and nurturing relationships.

We have been working with carers in a range of different areas for many years. Carers range in age and cultural background, and bring a wealth of experience to their role. Carers are recognised as an essential part of our team.

At Life Without Barriers we are dedicated to supporting our carer community. We are committed to best practice and delivering positive outcomes for children and young people.

## CARING WITH LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

You can become a carer at Life Without Barriers if you:

Act in a way that prioritises the wellbeing of children at all times.

Want to make a positive difference in a child's life

Have a regular source of income to meet your own family's needs

Are open to discussion and assessment of your suitability to be a foster carer

Are willing to work within a care team

Successfully meet probity and screening requirements

Complete all relevant training requirements

Are committed to ongoing learning and training

Accept regular visits from our professional staff (at all stages of the recruitment, assessment and placement processes)

### WHO WOULD YOU BE CARING FOR?

Life Without Barriers foster carers support children and young people aged 0-18 years who cannot live with their families.

Children and young people who come into care can have a range of needs, for example, complex behaviours, high medical needs, mental health issues or a disability. Our role is to work together to support each child's individual needs, and provide them with a safe and secure environment from which they can achieve their full potential.

To do this, Life Without Barriers uses a care team approach. This model sees foster carers work in partnership with case managers, specialised support personnel and the young person to support each child or young person.

Life Without Barriers is committed to working within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, which requires Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be placed within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Carers with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children work in cooperation with the care team to meet the cultural needs of the child.

### CARER ASSESSMENT

All Life Without Barriers carers undertake a full carer assessment process. This assessment process will include all members of the household. As part of this process, you will be asked to participate in and agree to the following:

- Preparation training
- Assessment/screening interviews
- Criminal Record Check
- Working with Children Check
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Housing Safety Check
- Health/Medical Check
- Life Without Barriers Carer Code of Conduct
- Personal reference checks

Depending on which State or Territory you are in, the relevant government department may be responsible for undertaking some tasks in the carer assessment process, and may make the final decision about approval of carer assessments. Life Without Barriers will continue to support you through this process. Please contact your local office if you would like further information about carer assessment in your State or Territory.

Life Without Barriers takes a culturally appropriate approach, supported by resources that guide the assessment process. You are able to withdraw from the assessment process at any time.

Following the initial authorisation process, routine reviews are also undertaken to ensure ongoing compliance with statutory obligations and policy, and to provide an opportunity to review the learning and development needs of each carer.

### THE CARE TEAM

Life Without Barriers uses a care team approach to provide wraparound supports and coordination of care to children and young people. This model sees foster carers work in partnership with case managers, specialised support personnel and the young person. There may also be other members of the care team, depending on the needs of the child or young person. Each carer is engaged within this team structure and supported in their role as a carer.

We expect to meet with you regularly, depending on the case plan and needs of the child or young person.

### CARER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Life Without Barriers is committed to providing carers with comprehensive learning and development opportunities. The Life Without Barriers Carer Learning and Development program provides a range of training packages that enable carers to acquire new skills and knowledge.

The program aims to build the capacity of our carers to communicate effectively, understand and support the development of children and young people, promote and develop a child's identity and provide a safe and stable care environment.

There are a range of compulsory and elective modules available, allowing for carers to develop the fundamentals and then specialise as they gain more experience.

In identifying your training and development needs, we will take into consideration training you have already completed.

### 24-HOUR CARER SUPPORT

Life Without Barriers provides 24-hour support to all carers. After business hours and on weekends support is available via a local on-call service. This service is used for duty of care issues, at times of a critical incident or during a stressful situation. A support person will be available to speak with you and guide you through any challenges that you may experience.

### POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A suite of policies and procedures is available to explain what we expect of you as a carer, and what you can expect from us.

“ Life Without Barriers is committed to providing carers with comprehensive learning and development opportunities ”



## HOW WE SUPPORT CARERS

Life Without Barriers provides specialised support and training to our carers so they can support the children and young people in their care. The following initiatives have been implemented to support and engage our carers.

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Foster carers receive a tax free, fortnightly reimbursement to assist with the daily needs of the child or young person in their care. This reimbursement is non-taxable and is not considered income. The reimbursement is for care related costs such as food, clothing, outings, pocket money, school fees and general housing costs. The reimbursement is made in recognition of the costs of supporting children and young people and ensures carers are not unduly financially burdened. Depending on which State or Territory you are in, reimbursements may be provided by Life Without Barriers or may be paid directly to carers from the relevant government department.

### CARER CONSULTATION

Life Without Barriers recognises the importance of carers and Life Without Barriers staff working in partnership to promote best practice. Formal communication and consultation groups are in place including a National Carer Consultation Group, which meets quarterly with senior management. A number of Regional Carer Reference Groups have also been established, and meet regularly with local management.

These groups provide opportunities for carers to provide valuable input into service improvement and enhancement.

### LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS CARER WEBSITE

Life Without Barriers provides a website specifically for our carers – [carers.lwb.org.au](http://carers.lwb.org.au). This website is a dedicated space to share national and regional events, news and initiatives with carers across Australia. The website also holds a range of resources and tools to enhance carers' capacity in their role, as well as providing links to external resources relevant to carers.

### CARER PERSONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Life Without Barriers provides carers with access to personal counselling services to deal with personal or life issues that may arise from time to time. It is completely voluntary and confidential to use.

### NATIONAL FOSTER CARER SURVEY

As part of Life Without Barriers' commitment to service improvements, we undertake National Foster Carer Surveys. The aim of the survey is to gather carers' views of our induction, learning and development, support and retention services. The report provides valuable information to Life Without Barriers, which contributes to the development of new services and the review and enhancement of existing services.

### CARER ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Life Without Barriers seeks out opportunities to highlight and celebrate the commitment and achievements of our carers. Many of our carers have been recognised through local and national awards and this is testament to their fabulous work and dedication to the people they support.

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Carers of children with complex support needs may be assigned a person to support them in their role as a carer. The Supporter of Carers (SOC) will provide regular debriefing, discuss any issues that may arise and ensure the carer is meeting their responsibilities within the care team.

A range of clinical and specialist supports are also available to carers depending on the needs of the child. This may include a SOC, respite care, and 24-hour support services.

“ Life Without Barriers recognises the importance of carers and Life Without Barriers staff working in partnership to promote best practice ”

# SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Life Without Barriers provides a range of programs and support services to meet the individual needs of children and young people. Your local LWB office can provide more information on programs available in your area.

## FOSTER CARE

Life Without Barriers' foster care services range from generalist to intensive foster care and are provided on a short or long-term basis to children and young people aged 0-18 years who are unable to live with their families. Foster care is provided by people in the community within their own home.

Each child and young person is matched to an approved foster carer.

All foster carers receive ongoing support and training to maintain their capacity to care and assist them to meet the changing needs of each child or young person.

## RESIDENTIAL CARE

Residential care provides intensive support in a structured setting that promotes stability, relationship-building and positive growth. A range of supports are built into the residential care environment to ensure young people feel safe and have the opportunity to stabilise before making a decision on their long-term care arrangements.

All residential care programs are therapeutic and are characterised by 24-hour care provided by a care team.

## SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

Supported accommodation services provide flexible, tailored independent living arrangements and lifestyle support to young people preparing to leave care. This includes housing options provided by Life Without Barriers, the Department of Housing or the private rental market.

Support is tailored to an individual's identified needs and goals, with a focus on developing their skills, strengthening their links within the community and maximising their independence and choice. Where possible, existing relationships with foster carers or residential workers are utilised to provide ongoing support within the young person's local community.

## FAMILY CONTACT

Life Without Barriers provides children and young people in out of home care with a safe and neutral environment to interact with their birth family. Contact may be focused on maintaining a sense of identity for the child or young person, or the establishment and maintenance of positive bonds and attachments with their biological family. Family contact may include transport, supervision and facilitation of family visits.

Family contact can be used as a building block in cases where family reunification is the goal.

In these instances family contact visits are planned to enable parents to take on or re-learn aspects of their parenting role. Skilled LWB staff members facilitate this interaction and assist parents in both preparation and debriefing.

## CASE MANAGEMENT

Case management is the coordination of support for each child or young person in out of home care.

Undertaken by Case Managers, or equivalent roles, case management involves the identification of the strengths as well as needs of the child or young person, convening case conferences, and preparing and monitoring case plans. LWB is committed to placing children and young people at the centre of the case management process.

## EDUCATION

Life Without Barriers has established partnerships with education providers to improve links between the education and out of home care systems. This encompasses the provision of education specific support to children and young people in care by staff members with the relevant educational experience and qualifications.

## CLINICAL SERVICES

Clinical services are provided by professionally trained clinicians from a range of backgrounds including psychology, nursing, social work, speech pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. These services aim to strengthen the stability and therapeutic nature of placements and services.

Clinical services assist and support children and young people in a number of key areas including issues of attachment and trauma, health care and developmental assessments, positive behaviour support and language development.

## CULTURAL SUPPORT PLANNING

Cultural support planning services provide specialised support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people by trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

The aim of these services is to develop a child or young person's cultural identity and participation in the local Aboriginal community. This is achieved through the development of individual cultural support plans.

Cultural support plans provide direction and assistance to the care team to ensure Life Without Barriers' services are provided within a cultural respect framework.

## TRANSITION SUPPORT

Transition support services assist young people who are leaving care to form safe, stable, nurturing relationships within their community, build independence, access relevant community services and transition to other care environments if necessary.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

We are committed to working with young people to increase their access to, and presence in, the workforce and are developing programs to achieve this in key areas around the country.

Our employment services provide assessment, training and support to young people to identify and promote employment opportunities.

## RESPITE

Our respite services are designed to meet the needs of children and young people in care while giving carers or families planned, short-term breaks in order to support and maintain the primary care-giving relationship.

Our services provide for a range of flexible respite alternatives including in-home, centre-based, host family, supported holidays and community options.

## DISABILITY SUPPORT

Our disability services focus on the individual, empowering people to realise their full potential. This is achieved through innovative programs that promote and support positive relationships and community access. We assist our clients to develop skills and abilities, enhancing decision-making and choice, and involve them in the design and review of their services. Please speak to us if you're interested in caring for someone with a disability.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This section has been designed to answer some questions you may have as you consider becoming a Life Without Barriers carer.

### RESPIRE

Respite is considered as part of the case planning process for each child and young person. Access and frequency is determined through the case planning process, taking into consideration the needs of the young person and the carers.

### WE WELCOME DIVERSITY

Life Without Barriers values a diverse carer team. This includes same sex and heterosexual couples. Carers can be single, married, or in a de-facto relationship. What is important to us is that you are able to provide a stable, loving home to children and young people. We also welcome carers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

### WHAT IS LWB'S POLICY ON ADOPTION?

Although Life Without Barriers is not an approved adoption agency we will work closely with carers who wish to consider adopting.

### CAN I HAVE BIOLOGICAL CHILDREN AND FOSTER CARE CHILDREN?

Yes, Life Without Barriers accepts carers with their own children. Carers should consider the needs of their own children when bringing another child into their household. We will also consider the needs of children in the household when making placement decisions, and this will be explored with you in detail throughout the assessment process.

### IS THERE AN AGE RESTRICTION ON CARERS?

Life Without Barriers accepts carers over the age of 18 years. It is expected that carers providing long-term care for a child will be able, if necessary, to continue to care for the child until they are able to live independently. Carers also need to have enough life experience to assist children and young people with their social, physical and emotional development.

### WHAT IS YOUR POLICY REGARDING CARERS WORKING FULL TIME OR PART TIME?

Life Without Barriers accepts carers who work full time or part time.

### CAN I BE AUTHORISED TO DELIVER LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM CARE AT THE SAME TIME?

This is possible but will be based on a range of factors, such as the needs of the children and young people, their suitability to live together and the capacity of each carer's household.

### DOES LWB PROVIDE TRANSPORT FOR FAMILY CONTACT VISITS?

For some children and young people transport will be covered as part of the case plan, or contact will be provided by the case manager. Transport coverage will depend on the needs of the young person and the distance involved.

### DO I NEED TO REPORT BACK ABOUT HOW I AM DOING? DOES THIS NEED TO BE A WRITTEN REPORT?

Communication regarding a placement occurs through a combination of regular visits by a case manager where ongoing information is gathered (usually in the home) as well as a carer requirement to provide regular updates to the agency. At times you may be required to provide information to Life Without Barriers, in writing, regarding children in your care.

### CAN I HAVE MORE THAN ONE UNRELATED CHILD PLACED WITH ME AT THE SAME TIME?

This is possible depending on the needs of the children or young people and the capacity of the carer's house. Placing unrelated children together is less likely where the needs of the child are more complex or intensive.

### CAN FOSTER CHILDREN SHARE A BEDROOM WITH MY OWN CHILDREN?

We require that carers have a spare bedroom specifically for children in care. It may be possible for siblings in foster care to share a bedroom.

### HOW LONG DOES THE TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS TAKE?

Carer assessment is a comprehensive process, involving interviews, training and other tasks organisations are required to complete in line with legislative and accreditation requirements. Timeframes for training and assessment will differ for individuals. We will work with you to complete this process at a pace that suits your circumstances. We will discuss the progress of your application with you throughout the training and assessment process.

### DO YOU HAVE SPECIFIC SUPPORTS FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE?

Yes. We are committed to creating a culturally safe and supportive environment.

A range of supports are available to you, please contact your local office to discuss our cultural support options.

### WHAT IF MY APPLICATION IS UNSUCCESSFUL?

A number of factors are taken into consideration when assessing applications. Depending on which State or Territory you are in, the relevant government department may make the final decision about approval of carer assessments. If you are unhappy with the decision made you have the right to appeal.



# WHERE TO FROM HERE?

If you are interested in becoming a Life Without Barriers foster carer, you can complete an application form online, visit: [www.lwb.org.au/fostercare](http://www.lwb.org.au/fostercare) or call us on 1300 592 227.

Once you have submitted your form, we will contact you to commence the carer assessment process.



## CONTACT US

To find your local office, please visit [www.lwb.org.au/fostercare](http://www.lwb.org.au/fostercare) or you can contact your state office for further information.

### NATIONAL OFFICE

352 King Street  
Newcastle NSW 2300  
T. (02) 4033 4500

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA STATE OFFICE

Ground floor, 89-92 South Terrace  
Adelaide SA 5000  
T. (08) 8193 9400

### NEW SOUTH WALES STATE OFFICE

Suite 1, Level 1, 81 Railway Street  
Rockdale NSW 2216  
T. (02) 9508 4000

### TASMANIA STATE OFFICE

Ground Floor, 175 Collins Street  
Hobart TAS 7000  
T. (03) 6232 8750

### NORTHERN TERRITORY STATE OFFICE

Level 1, 36 Mitchell Street  
Darwin NT 0800  
T. (08) 8930 2300

### VICTORIA STATE OFFICE


Level 3, 554 Church Street  
Richmond VIC 3121  
T. (03) 8480 9600


### QUEENSLAND STATE OFFICE

10 Fitzgerald Ave  
Springwood QLD 4127  
T. (07) 3440 6300


### WESTERN AUSTRALIA STATE OFFICE


Unit 1, 26 Dugdale Street  
Warwick WA 6024  
T. (08) 9208 3400

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