

PLACE ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25



PLACE

Partnerships for Local Action and
Community Empowerment



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Acknowledgement of Country

PLACE acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, skies, waters and communities. We pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge that systemic inequities continue to impact First Nations communities disproportionately, and that these are the result of colonisation, dispossession and historical injustice that persist in current systems.

The work of PLACE is grounded in a belief that those closest to the challenges must be central to the solutions. In this, we recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long practised community-led, place-based governance and decision-making.

We are committed to walking alongside First Nations communities in a spirit of respect, learning and shared leadership, amplifying their voices, supporting self-determination, and embedding equity in all we do.



Highlights from 2024–25

52

communities visited across Australia on our national Listening Tour, including 70 place-based initiatives

04

founding directors appointed to the inaugural PLACE Board

07

members appointed to the inaugural PLACE Community Council

04

functional teams established: Enable; Learn and Share; Collaborative Solutions; and Strengthen Data

13

staff onboarded by 30 June 2025

36

interviews undertaken for PLACE's history project

Our year in review

Message from the Chair

As inaugural Chair, I'm honoured to reflect on PLACE's establishment year and to present this report as a record of the foundations we've built together.

From the outset, the Board's role has been to steward PLACE's vision with integrity, transparency and accountability. In our establishment year, that has meant building strong foundations – diverse governance structures, robust evaluation structures, and decision-making that embeds community voice. The inaugural Community Council, the Activity and Evaluation Committee, and our understanding, monitoring, evaluation and learning (UMEL) framework all signal our commitment to governance that is inclusive, transparent and accountable – not only to funders, but to the communities whose leadership drives this work. PLACE was never intended to be another layer of bureaucracy; it was designed to connect, enable and support.

The Board takes confidence in the progress made in 2024–25, with PLACE delivering on its commitments with integrity and pace while laying strong foundations for the future. What stands out most is not just the quality of delivery, but the way it has been achieved – with authenticity, respect and an unwavering focus on community. The national Listening Tour was especially significant. More than 50 communities welcomed us, and their voices are now shaping the policy and program directions of funders and governments alike. That is the kind of impact PLACE exists to enable.

Looking ahead, our responsibility as a board is to ensure PLACE stays true to its founding principles. That means keeping community at the centre, measuring our impact with honesty, and building sustainability beyond political or funding cycles. We know the challenges are real, but so too is the opportunity to demonstrate that shared leadership between community, philanthropy and government is not only possible, but powerful.

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank the PLACE team for their work, our funders and partners for their trust, and every community that has given their time and knowledge this year. Your voices are our guide and our accountability.

PLACE was built on the belief that lasting change happens when communities lead and systems respond. As Chair, I'm committed to ensuring that, in both governance and practice, PLACE honours that promise.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank outgoing board members the Hon Fred Chaney AO and Professor Robynne Quiggin AO for their contribution to PLACE's inaugural Board. Their valuable knowledge and commitment helped set the foundations we now build upon.

Sean Gordon AM
Board Chair



Luke Craven, CEO, and Sean Gordon, Board Chair, in Yarrabah, Queensland – PLACE Listening Tour 2025. Photo by Romy Bullerjahn.

Message from the CEO

Delivering on our promise to funders and communities

I'm proud to share PLACE's first annual report – a reflection of what we've built together in this establishment year, and what we're now positioned to deliver.

When we launched PLACE, we made a commitment to build the foundations for lasting, community-led change. This year has been about making good on that promise – putting in place the systems, relationships and capabilities that will enable us to do the work ahead.

Every major deliverable we articulated in our FY 2024–25 work plan has been met. In several areas, we've gone further than expected. And we've done it while holding firm to our core principles: grounding everything in place, amplifying community voice, and building a new way of working with government and philanthropy.

Some highlights from the year:

- We've stood up a national team that brings together strategic insight, delivery experience and deep community connection – ready to deliver across PLACE's 4 core functions.
- We completed a national Listening Tour that reached 52 communities and surfaced powerful, practical insights already influencing how policy and programs are being shaped.
- We've built strong relationships with dozens of place-based initiatives across the country. Our focus has been clear from the outset: show up with curiosity, listen first, and add value to the work already underway. PLACE isn't here to duplicate or compete – we're here to support, connect, and help remove the barriers communities have been naming for years.

- We've established strong governance from the outset: a diverse Community Council, an Activity and Evaluation Committee, and the systems needed to ensure transparency and high-quality decision-making.
- We've initiated PLACE's evaluation function by developing an understanding, monitoring, evaluation and learning (UMEL) framework. This framework ensures we have the right tools to measure impact, learn from practice, and stay accountable to both funders and communities.

Together, these achievements show that this model of shared investment – between government, philanthropy and community – works. It delivers on expectations, unlocks agility, and keeps the focus squarely on impact.

Establishing a new, fit-for-purpose national centre was supported by the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR). We appreciate the crucial role FRRR played in navigating the initial administrative processes.

What we've built this year is both an organisation and the momentum that will carry us into our delivery phase. We've heard clearly what communities need. We've built the trust to work alongside them. And now, we're ready to go further – accelerating place-based practice, building the workforce to do the work, strengthening data use, and helping systems shift in response to what communities know.

Thank you to every funder, partner and community who has helped bring PLACE to life. We've built the platform – now it's time to put it to work.

Luke Craven
Chief Executive Officer



Jo Martin, Community Council Chair. Photo by Nathan Dyer.

Message from the Community Council Chair

It's an honour to share this message on behalf of PLACE's inaugural Community Council. This first year has been about beginnings: coming together, building trust, and setting the foundations for how the council ensures community leadership remains at the heart of PLACE's work.

From our appointment in April 2025 and first meeting in May, we have approached our role with purpose and humility. I want to thank my fellow council members – Amy Robinson, Armani Francois, Christine Kamau, Elly Bird, Patrick Sharpe and Ian Trust – for the wisdom and commitment they have brought. It has been a privilege to work alongside such dedicated leaders.

In its first 3 months, the Community Council has contributed to PLACE's first annual work plan, ensuring community priorities guided its direction. We supported the

development of the understanding, monitoring, evaluation and learning (UMEL) framework with Dandolo Partners, embedding accountability to communities as well as funders.

The chair of the Community Council also holds the role of chairing the Board Nominations Committee, charged with ensuring that community practitioners remain central in PLACE's board recruitment. I want to thank outgoing director the Hon Fred Chaney AO, and fellow committee members Patrick Sharpe, Jen Sainsbury, Chris D'Souza and Marnie Wettenhall, for their contributions to this important process. Their involvement has helped ensure the Board remains strong, diverse, and connected to practice.

The Community Council is designed to be both consultative and catalytic. We don't duplicate the functions of the Board or management; instead, we bring lived experience into the centre of decision-making. Already,

it's clear the council has become a vital part of PLACE's governance ecosystem, and plans are in motion to develop a roadmap to strengthen our role.

Looking ahead, we know the challenges are significant. Communities across Australia are striving for better outcomes in health, education, culture and wellbeing, often in the face of systemic barriers. PLACE exists to support and enable these efforts. The Community Council's role is to ensure that anchor is never lost.

On behalf of the Community Council, I thank the PLACE team, the Board, and most importantly, the many community leaders whose insights and energy shape our work. Together, we're committed to PLACE's conviction: lasting change happens when communities lead and systems respond.

Jo Martin
Community Council Chair

Our organisation

About PLACE

Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE) is a national organisation that supports community-led approaches to social and economic challenges. PLACE is not a service provider. We are a support system – a hub for shared learning, partnership, and policy innovation. Our work is underpinned by a belief that communities know best what matters to them, and that long-term change starts with shared decision-making and strong local leadership.

Why PLACE

We exist because top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches have consistently failed to meet the needs of diverse communities. Despite decades of effort, persistent disadvantage remains entrenched in many parts of Australia. Meanwhile, communities across the country are leading place-based initiatives that demonstrate different approaches built on genuine partnership and local ownership. What's missing is the infrastructure to connect this work, elevate it in policy discussions, and remove the structural barriers that constrain it.

PLACE offers an innovative way forward. We believe:

- Communities know best what matters to them.
- Local leadership leads to better outcomes.
- Decisions should be made with communities, not for them.

Our vision

Communities are empowered to share decision-making with government and other stakeholders, to accelerate progress on the issues that matter most to them.

PLACE supports and enables place-based change by creating and sustaining the conditions for place-based initiatives to thrive.



Top and centre: Participants in the 100 Voices – Story of Community workshop with Uniting Harris Community Centre, Ultimo Village Voice, Ultimo Gardens, Fusion Culture Group, Elger Street Community Garden, Glebe Youth Service, Glebe Public School and University of Technology Sydney. Photo by Tom Psomotragos.

Bottom: Sean Gordon (left), Chair of the PLACE Board, speaks with a community member at Pingelly Community Resource Centre, Western Australia – PLACE Listening Tour 2025. Photo by Natalie Davy.



Our strategic priorities

PLACE has 3 key strategic priorities identified in its 2030 Strategy: **Collaboration for Lasting Change:**

Priority	Actions
<p>Priority 1: Address structural barriers to place-based change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify structural, policy and system-level barriers to the impact of place-based approaches. Work with community and governments to embed structural reforms that support greater subsidiarity* and accountability. Advocate for community need within the place-based ecosystem.
<p>Priority 2: Build momentum and capacity for place-based change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish trusted and purposeful relationships across community, government and other stakeholders to amplify place-based initiatives. Drive sustained collaboration, connection and learning across the place-based sector. Produce tools and resources that actively shape the practice of place-based initiatives.
<p>Priority 3: Develop a strong, shared understanding of the impact of place-based initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document the practices and outcomes of effective place-based approaches. Amplify and share effective, high-impact place-based practices across diverse communities. Strengthen the use of community-informed data, evaluation and learning to continuously improve practice.

* The principle of subsidiarity aims to strengthen communities by ensuring that decision-making powers lie as close as possible to the local people who are most affected by a decision.

Our strategic enablers

PLACE is built for long-term impact, grounded in community leadership and focused on changing the systems that hold communities back. We achieve this through:

- Working with community:** We empower communities through trusted relationships that enable shared decision-making and embed local knowledge in our work. Our Community Council ensures community voice shapes the national place-based agenda.
- Our learning approach:** As a learning organisation, we use our monitoring, evaluation and learning approach to guide every action and engagement, with systems that connect the place-based sector to refine strategies and innovate methods.
- Our governance structure:** Our governance reflects our commitment to transparency, shared power and community accountability, ensuring community leadership while maintaining independence to create the policy environment for place-based work.
- Our collaborative funding model:** We work in strong partnerships with government and philanthropic funders to activate diverse stakeholder strengths.¹ Our funders are custodians and enablers of PLACE's community-led structure.

Our functional pillars

PLACE operates through 4 interconnected functional areas that work together to support place-based change:

Enable	Learn and Share	Collaborative Solutions	Strengthen Data
Lead the development and implementation of a national workforce strategy for place-based approaches, supporting the needs of communities.	Bring together, translate, disseminate and generate evidence, knowledge and other resources to amplify and accelerate place-based practice and policymaking.	Enable and convene expertise and experience to identify solutions to shared challenges and incubate concepts through partnerships and wraparound support.	Provide a range of practical supports to place-based approaches to improve data, monitoring and evaluation.

¹ PLACE is an independent non-profit organisation funded by the Australian Government, the Minderoo Foundation, the Paul Ramsay Foundation, the Bryan Foundation, the Dusseldorp Forum and the Ian Potter Foundation.



PLACE governance

Our governance structure reflects our commitment to transparency, shared power and community accountability in all decisions we make. The structure has been designed to ensure community leadership and accountability that

goes beyond input or participation through advisory groups. We recognise the importance of collaboration and shared decision-making among diverse stakeholders.

Within this context, PLACE is an independent body that brings a strong voice to creating the policy and authorising environment for place-based work.

PLACE Board

On 31 October 2024, PLACE appointed its inaugural Board, which was tasked with overseeing the establishment of PLACE as an

organisation. PLACE will hold its inaugural annual general meeting in September 2025.

The inaugural PLACE Board



Sean Gordon AM
Board Chair



Jane Halton AO PSM
Board Director



Fred Chaney AO
Board Director



Robynne Quiggin AO
Board Director

PLACE Community Council

In addition to the Board, PLACE has established its inaugural Community Council, inviting diverse community leaders to help guide our work. The Community Council is designed to enhance accountability and integrity by involving primary beneficiaries in PLACE's governance. The inaugural council, consisting of 7 members from various regions and organisations, will serve

a 12-month term to design an operational framework and establish relationships with the Board, funders and partners. This council includes members associated with Commonwealth-funded initiatives, including Communities for Children and Stronger Places, Stronger People. The first meeting took place in May 2025, after an induction process.

Initial feedback from the Community Council was that PLACE represents an exciting opportunity for the sector; however, work is needed for it to be truly community-led and community-governed. How the council will legitimately represent the community and make decisions – in tandem with the Board – requires ongoing development over the course of the coming year.

The inaugural PLACE Community Council



Jo Martin
Chair



Patrick Sharpe
Member



Armani Francois
Member



Amy Robinson
Member



Ian Trust
Member



Elly Bird
Member

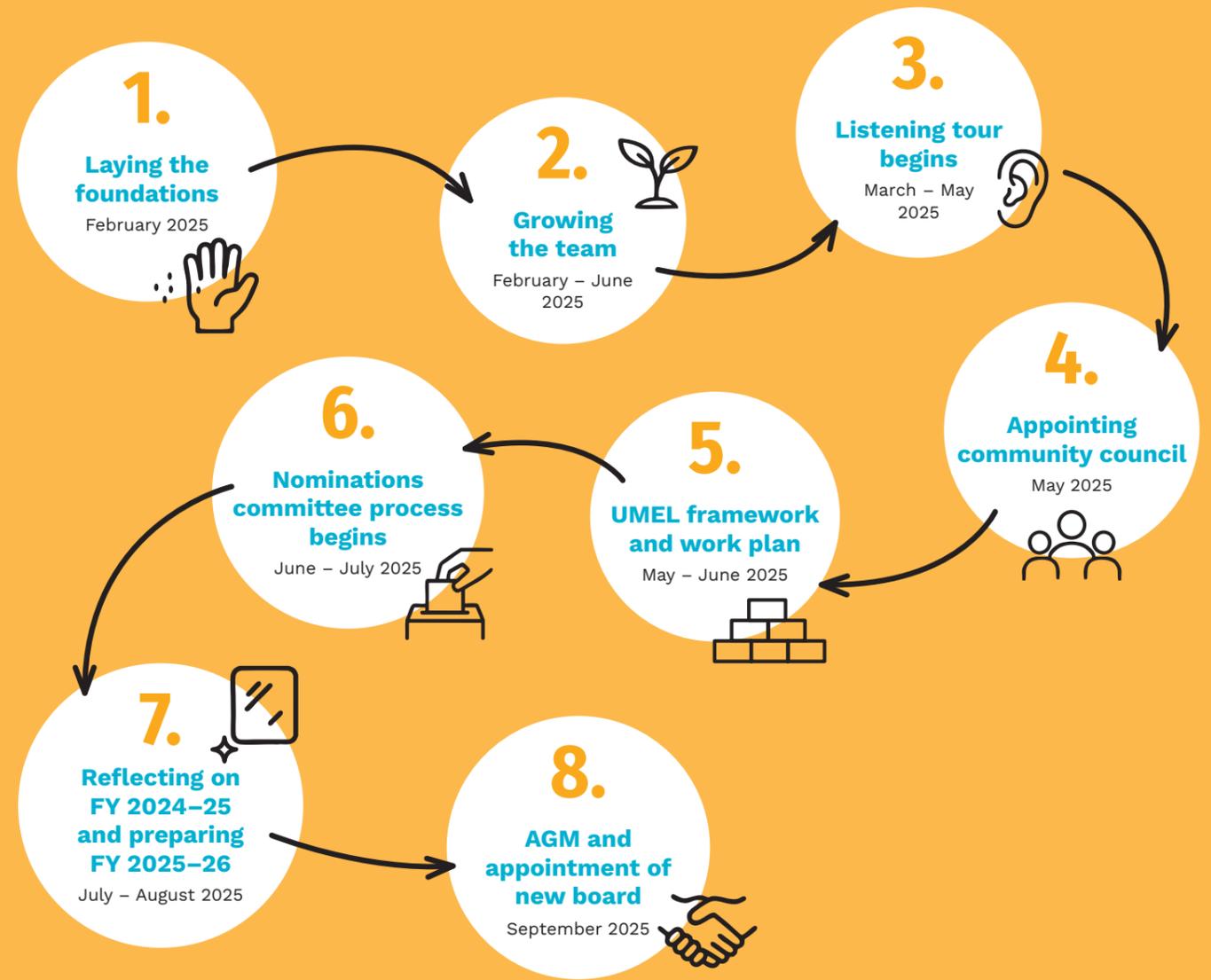


Christine Kamau
Member

Our progress

Establishing the organisation

The focus in the first year of PLACE has been establishing the organisation and engaging with the community to transition PLACE into a delivery phase in FY 2025–26.



UMEL = understanding, monitoring, evaluation and learning
AGM = annual general meeting

The establishment phase included the following milestones:

- legal, governance and regulatory foundations
- staffing
- community engagement and learning
- strategic planning and risk management
- transition from FRRR auspiced organisation.

Legal, governance and regulatory foundations

In September 2024, PLACE was incorporated as a public company limited by guarantee under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (Cth). Since incorporation, PLACE has established the following infrastructure to uphold its obligations:

- **Corporate governance:** An inaugural Board consisting of 4 founding directors was appointed for a one-year term by organisational members.
- **Community governance:** As per PLACE's constitution, an inaugural Community Council was appointed to provide strategic advice and community accountability.
- **Key policies:** We established an initial suite of key governance and operational policies to meet regulatory requirements and be fit for purpose for the first year of PLACE's operations.

Staffing and locations

Within 12 months, staff have grown from the CEO and Director of Operations as initial key staff to a national team of 21 full-time equivalent staff (13 staff were onboarded by 30 June 2025). Staff are located across Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, with a focus on balancing regional and metropolitan representation to maintain broad geographic connections.

- **Staffing model:** We designed positions to be aligned to the 4 functional service areas as well as to the shared operations, and strategy and governance teams.
- **Executive leadership team:** In addition to the CEO and Director of Operations, we appointed a Chief of Staff to lead strategy and governance work, and 3 directors to oversee the 4 functional service areas. Together, they have worked to develop the annual work plan and recruitment initiatives to build their teams.
- **Recruitment:** A broad approach to recruitment has brought together a team of specialists from sectors including government, community development, international development, business and academia.

Strategic planning and risk management

- **Strategy:** We developed PLACE's 2030 Strategy: Collaboration for Lasting Change, which will guide PLACE's strategic direction for the next 5 years.
- **Evaluation framework:** We developed a comprehensive understanding, monitoring, evaluation and learning (UMEL) framework (see next page).
- **Risk management:** We developed a robust risk framework to strengthen our governance and ensure effective stewardship of funder investments. This comprehensive framework demonstrates our commitment to transparent, accountable management. It includes a risk appetite statement that clearly defines our approach to risk-taking, a detailed risk management policy outlining systematic identification and mitigation processes, and an active risk register that tracks and monitors enterprise-level risks.



Community members at Burnie Community House, Tasmania – PLACE Listening Tour 2025. Photo by Jillian Mundy.

Our understanding, monitoring, evaluation and learning framework

PLACE conducted a competitive procurement process to identify and engage a provider with demonstrated expertise in place-based evaluation. We worked with an independent procurement panel comprising representatives from government and philanthropy, and undertook a multistep process of expressions of interest, tendering schedules, interviews and contract negotiation.

The panel unanimously appointed Dandolo Partners as PLACE's evaluation partner. The panel was impressed by Dandolo's detailed methodology for developing and implementing an understanding, monitoring, evaluation and learning (UMEL) framework, its proposed collaborative approach with PLACE and stakeholders, and its innovative data collection methods. Dandolo also proposed effective risk management strategies, a highly experienced team with relevant experience, and a commitment to data privacy and security. Dandolo's approach is designed to be flexible, adaptive, and focused on continuous improvement and collaboration.

Dandolo and the PLACE team co-developed a theory of change and comprehensive UMEL framework. This framework is designed to measure our impact at 4 levels:

- organisational viability
- project activities
- direct impacts attributable to PLACE
- broader impacts to which PLACE has contributed.

The evaluation will be conducted in 3 phases:

- UMEL framework development (completed)
- interim reporting cycles
- final reporting.

The UMEL framework development included extensive collaboration with PLACE to refine the theory of change and establish data collection processes. As part of this process, Dandolo interviewed management, the Board, members of the Activity and Evaluation Committee, and the Community Council to ensure the evaluation framework meets the requirements of every stakeholder.



PLACE's history project team collects stories from staff at Learning the Macleay, a social impact initiative based in Kempsey, New South Wales. Photo by Michael Mouritz.

Listening Tour

PLACE's 2025 Community Roadshow and Listening Tour was a national journey to hear directly from communities about what's working, what's holding them back and opportunities for change. Over 12 weeks from March to May 2025, we visited 52 communities across Australia, engaging deeply with place-based initiatives.

Our approach

Our approach to the Listening Tour was flexible and locally led. Underpinning our approach were 3 key principles: subsidiarity, accountability and partnership. We received more than 200 expressions of interest from communities nationally, of which 25% were selected for the tour. The selection aimed to reflect a mix of geographies, community sizes, cultural leadership and underrepresented voices in national policy conversations. While this allowed us to hear from a diverse cross-section of initiatives, we recognise that not all stories and experiences could be included within the time available.

What we heard

What we heard wasn't uniform, but it was consistent. Across 52 diverse communities, the same enablers showed up and the same barriers appeared. The most common enablers, barriers and opportunities are set out in the adjacent column.

Enablers –

What makes place-based change possible?

Trust enables change

Local leadership recognition and resourcing

Backbone coordination for systems integration

Cultural authority and identity as a foundation

Long-term and flexible investment

Community-driven data and evidence

Recognition and support for informal care

Barriers –

What holds communities back?

Short-term and rigid funding cycles

Compliance over care

Invisible labour and volunteer burnout

Fragmented services and siloed systems

Lack of meaningful consultation

Opportunities –

How can we shift the system?

Real power sharing in community-led design

Faster pathways from listening to action

Safety and stability as prerequisites

Long-term investment in people and infrastructure

Recognition of community governance as legitimate authority

Next steps

PLACE is transitioning from its 3-month Listening Tour to actionable implementation, launching the *Pride in Place* report to share findings and chart the path forward.² This marks a crucial shift from listening to legitimising community voices through concrete action. We'll build on the core work of supporting innovative investment models, helping communities access integrated resources, and advocating for place-based governance reforms.

Moving forward, PLACE will continue engaging communities through regular opportunities to shape and strengthen their work, including ongoing updates, shared decision-making and community-led evaluation. While some initiatives are already underway, new programs will grow directly from what communities identify as their next priorities. We commit to transparency about deliverables and limitations, and maintaining a structured focus while staying flexible enough to learn and adapt as the listening continues.

² PLACE, *Pride in Place: 2025 Community Roadshow and Listening Tour report*, PLACE, 2025.



History project

In February 2025, PLACE embarked on a history project with 2 objectives: to reflect on and share the story of how PLACE came to be; and to collect and share stories of the history of place-based work in Australia. As PLACE is an organisation that was many years in the making, the PLACE Board saw value in reflecting on and communicating the story of how the organisation was developed.

Central to the research for both these objectives has been the collection of oral history testimony. PLACE has interviewed people from a broad range of initiatives and locations. These interviews have captured a vast array of insights and reflections about place-based initiatives from the 1970s to more recently.

The stories collected will feature in short films shared by PLACE and will also inform a research report documenting this history. PLACE is also taking steps to ensure the interviews are sustainably housed in an accessible archive, providing a resource into the future for place-based practitioners and communities.

20

national interview locations + online

40

hours of interview recordings collected

36

interviews undertaken

Top: PLACE staff visit community members at Becoming U, Toormina, New South Wales – PLACE Listening Tour 2025. Photo by Leah Moore.



Brighton Community Food Hub, Tasmania – PLACE Listening Tour 2025. Photo by Jillian Mundy.

Our work in 2024–25 and beyond

Learn and Share team

The Learn and Share function will bring together, translate, disseminate and generate evidence, knowledge and resources to amplify and accelerate place-based practice and policymaking.

Through PLACE’s national Listening Tour and early engagements, we heard clearly: communities want to learn from each other, access practical tools, and be part of generating the evidence needed to influence lasting change. They want learning that is grounded in practice, responsive to their needs, and connected to the systems that shape outcomes.

The Learn and Share team has focused on laying the groundwork:

- We listened to more than 50 communities, gathering insights on what’s working, where the barriers are and what support is needed.
- We began building a strong network of relationships across government, philanthropy, community organisations, and researchers.
- We designed the scope and structure of the team, and are recruiting skilled practitioners to deliver the work.

The Learn and Share team will:

- facilitate opportunities for people and organisations to come together, reflect on their experiences and learn from each other
- turn evidence and insights into tools, messages and resources that are clear, accessible and useful
- share ideas, lessons and knowledge across communities and systems to influence broader change
- support research that is grounded in real-world practice and shaped by community priorities.

Strengthen Data team

From the Director, Eve Millar

Throughout the Listening Tour and beyond, we heard about the significance of data as a key enabler for place-based initiatives and their communities. At its most effective, localised data (of all types) informs community-led priority setting, local decision-making, and ongoing learning, transparency and accountability, and supports sustainability through evidence of impact.

Realising the opportunities from localised data is a universal challenge for place-based initiatives everywhere. We heard about frustrations with systemic barriers to data access; resourcing and knowledge challenges around data management systems and compliance; and approaches to data collection, analysis and utilisation. We heard clearly that place-based organisations need a range of supports that will meet them where they’re at and enable them to grow their data capability.

With a commitment to delivering what organisations actually need, in a format that is useful for them, the Strengthen Data team will work with place-based organisations to co-design and pilot our ‘service offerings’ and test our resources and tools.

The team will provide direct and individualised support to place-based organisations to address data access challenges; develop data management infrastructure; build confidence in using data; and strengthen capability in measurement, evaluation and learning, and data collection, to demonstrate impact.

In addition, the team will work alongside the other functions of PLACE to address the systemic challenges around data for place-based initiatives:

- We’ll work with the Enable team to grow data capabilities in the place-based workforce – identifying and facilitating training, secondment and placement opportunities (in the Strengthen Data team and in other initiatives), and engaging in mentoring and peer-to-peer learning.
- We’ll work with the Learn and Share team to collate, curate and translate existing resources into practical and useful tools that support increased data capability; build the evidence base for place-based approaches; develop impact frameworks; and facilitate collection of data that demonstrates impact.
- We’ll work with the Collaborative Solutions team to address shared barriers to accessing and using government-held data, and contribute to collaborative efforts across the sector to increase data access and availability for communities.



Photo by Hugh Clark.



Collaborative Solutions team

From the Director, Andrew Davitt

Throughout the Listening Tour, we heard a clear and consistent message from communities: system-level barriers are undermining their ability to lead local change. Communities are too often excluded from shaping solutions, from decision-making processes, and from access to the resources required to sustain local leadership.

The feedback pointed to a set of persistent, structural challenges:

- limited influence over how solutions are designed and implemented
- a lack of meaningful roles in decision-making
- short-term funding cycles that constrain long-term impact
- underinvestment in local backbone organisations and leadership
- inaccessible, complex procurement processes
- fragmented, siloed government funding streams.

These concerns highlight the need to reform the authorising environments within governments and funders. Many communities spoke to a sense of marginalisation – of being acted upon rather than engaged with – and the erosion of trust caused by short-term, reactive and disconnected funding models.

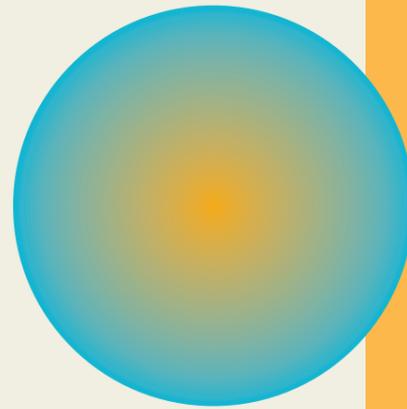
At the same time, our growing engagement with government reveals a shared appetite for change. There is a recognition that these barriers can and must be addressed – and that in some contexts, change is already underway. The work of the Collaborative Solutions team is to make that change stick. To shift from isolated reform to system-wide transformation. To enable more consistent, accessible and community-empowering approaches to funding and decision-making.

Over the coming months, the team will:

- identify and act on immediate opportunities to reshape funding and engagement approaches in partnership with government
- support new models of shared decision-making that centre community voice and authority
- work alongside other PLACE functions to align system reform with local delivery
- champion policy and procurement changes that simplify access and sustain investment in backbone infrastructure
- contribute to sector-wide efforts to redesign how governments and funders work with – not just for – communities.

Ultimately, the team will help forge a ‘new normal’ – one where systems are built to support, not stifle, community leadership in tackling complex and persistent disadvantage.

Photo by Hugh Clark.



Enable team

From the Director, Jane Anderson

When we asked communities what makes place-based work successful, they didn’t talk about roles or programs. They talked about people. The local leaders, support workers, backbone staff and volunteers who show up, build trust and help move things forward, often with limited resources and little formal recognition.

We saw this in action throughout the Listening Tour. In many communities, people spoke about how place-based work created its own employment pathways. Someone might start by attending a local event, then begin volunteering, take on a casual role, and eventually become a paid team member or sit on a governance committee. These were common stories, each of them powerful.

But we also heard how fragile that progression can be. Burnout is real. Roles often rely on short-term funding or unclear expectations. In regional and remote areas, the same small group of people are stretched thin, picking up the slack because no-one else is available or trained. Existing training options are often too far away, too expensive, or not tailored to the realities of place-based work.

The Enable team is here to support and grow this workforce – starting from what’s already happening on the ground. Our job is to help communities keep the people they have, support those who want to step up, and make sure the system around them is fit for purpose.

Over the coming months, we’ll:

- talk directly to people doing the work to understand the practical skills they draw on, what development opportunities they’ve had (or missed), and what support they need to stay
- map existing training and development options to see what’s working, what’s accessible, and where the big gaps are
- design a workforce strategy that’s a roadmap for action focused on employment pathways, training options, and support systems that communities can actually use
- start testing solutions from community-led micro-credentials and mentoring models, to secondments, on-the-job learning and peer-to-peer networks.

We’re taking a ‘grow your own’ approach, because the most effective place-based workers are already embedded in community. They just need the right conditions, support and recognition to thrive.

This work will link closely with the other PLACE functions. We’ll feed workforce needs into our training priorities, align with our learning and data agendas, and work with government and philanthropic partners to make sure funding and policy settings support the kind of leadership that place-based work demands. Place-based change doesn’t happen without people. The Enable team is focused on backing those people with practical, community-informed solutions that build a stronger, more sustainable workforce for the long term.



Photo by Hugh Clark.

Our finances

A summary of our audited financial statements for FY 2024–25 is set out below. At 30 June 2025, we received \$2.73 million in grant funding and other income, and incurred total operational expenses of \$2.03 million. Our audited annual financial report for FY 2024–25 will be published on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website, acnc.gov.au.

Income and expenditure statement, FY 2024–25

Income	Amount (\$)
Grant funding	2,716,298
Interest	13,337
Other income	3,687
Gross income	2,733,322
<hr/>	
Operational expenses	
Employee benefits and expenses	551,192
Consulting expenses	513,408
Subcontractor expenses	373,484
Travel	233,056
Directors fees	93,380
Advertising expenses	65,211
Community outreach	42,550
Program expenses	14,337
Depreciation – right-of-use office lease	8,124
Depreciation – IT equipment	7,165
Other expenses	127,379
Total operational expenses	2,029,286
<hr/>	
Surplus/(Deficit)	704,036



Water tank art by Red Cliffs Secondary College students, supervised by Clark Barrett, in Red Cliffs, Victoria – PLACE Listening Tour 2025. Photo by Tammy Brennan.

