

## End of 2025 letter to Melba community

Dear Melba community,

As we farewell 2025, we do so with clear eyes and full hearts. It has been a year of profound challenge across our organisation, the disability sector, and the wider world. We also acknowledge the heartbreaking, violent, antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi Beach last week. Our thoughts are with everyone affected. We hold a simple hope as we enter 2026: a more peaceful, unified world where kindness, respect and compassion guide us.

At Melba, one thing will never change: people we support always come first. In a sector facing the most difficult operating conditions in its history, our commitment to a sustainable Melba is real, it's daily work, built on human rights, quality, and transparency. We will continue to advocate for pricing and policy settings that reflect the real cost of safe, person-led support, especially for people with complex needs. Quality has a cost, and people's lives and outcomes must remain the priority.

This year reminded us of our sector's fragility, with several providers closing, including Annecto after more than 70 years. We were deeply saddened. In response, and working in partnership, we moved quickly to start supporting more than 70 people continue their supports at home and in their communities, and offered employment to over 100 support workers – preserving trusted relationships wherever possible. That is what sector stewardship looks like: people first, practical collaboration and real solutions. Looking ahead, we're focused on practical innovation that strengthens everyday support.

Things like our meaningful homes approach that sets a pathway for people to choose where they live, who they live with, and the kind of home that suits their life.

It's about using modern systems that give our teams more time to spend on what matters most, supporting people.

It's about being guided by data and insights so we can see what's working, what's not, and where to improve – guided by real information about the services people use and where they want to be. Even in a tough year, there is much to be proud of. We welcomed a new President who has hit the ground running, we have strengthened connections, embraced new skills, stepped out of comfort zones, and lifted safety and quality. Most importantly, we kept listening: to people we support, to families, and to each other. To everyone who chooses Melba: thank you for your trust and for leading the way. You truly are the heart of this community.

We also mark a milestone that gives us hope: Australia appointed its first Federal Minister for Disability. For the 5.5 million Australians with disability, this is the most significant step forward since the NDIS began in 2013. A dedicated voice at the Cabinet table means disability is considered, prioritised and advocated for every day, not as an afterthought, but as a national priority. It builds on decades of hard-won progress. Our focus for 2026 is clear: put people first, do the basics brilliantly, and make every decision through a human rights lens. We will continue to invest in our workforce, codesign with people we support, and use data to continually improve quality and outcomes. We see a future defined by resilience, strength, commitment and hope – and a Melba built to last.

Thank you to everyone in our Melba community. Together, we will keep opening up a world of opportunities for people to live fabulous lives, their way.

With respect and gratitude,  
Hayley Dean (CEO) and Sonia Sharp (President)