NUNDAH · COMMUNITY · ENTERPRISES · COOPERATIVE

2025

Impact Report

Calendar Year · 1 January – 31 December 2025

Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative

Est. 1998 - Brisbane - Australia

We don't employ people to work.
We work to employ people.

Australia's Best (Large) Social Enterprise 2020
ADS Innovation in Employment Programs Finalist 2021
Brisbane Lord Mayors Best Social Enterprise 2023

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work, the Turrbal & Jagera peoples, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

The Problem We Are Solving

Having a job is central to our wellbeing. NCEC was founded by people with intellectual disability in response to the barriers they experienced in securing meaningful employment. While employment for people with intellectual disability remains our core mission, our work has expanded to include others who experience similar exclusion, including people living with mental illness and humanitarian migrants.

Of the 337,000 Australians with intellectual disability, 61% remain outside the labour market. Even among those actively participating, only one in three secure employment. As one member told us:

"I went to lots of employment programs. Everyone told me they would help me find a job. The Co-op was the first place that actually gave me one."

Our members describe years cycling through employment services, facing rejection after rejection without ever achieving sustained employment. Yet they still desire to work. In response, we have sought to redesign the work environment so it is inclusive. We believe everyone can benefit from the opportunities that employment provides. When our members thrive, so do the communities of which they are a part.



This impact report presents evidence of the social change created by the Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative (NCEC) in 2025. It draws on data collected through NCEC's inaugural formal impact measurement surveys; An Annual Member Survey (n=23, consenting) and a retrospective Intake Survey (n=10, consenting)

These surveys are used in conjunction with NCEC's internal records and a well established evidence base that links cooperative employment to long-term outcomes for people with disability and others facing significant barriers to employment. This is the first year NCEC has collected survey-based impact data of this kind. The results reflect a workforce with significant depth of tenure and a richness of lived experience that numbers alone cannot fully capture.

Who We Work With

NCEC works with those furthest from the labour market. The barriers our members face are intersecting and compounding. In addition to intellectual disability, factors that shape the experience of NCEC workers include; limited or no family support · having exited child safety or justice systems ·tenuous housing or homelessness · LGBTQI+ identity · psychiatric disability · indigenous background · refugee or migrant background.

NCEC does not work at the edges of disadvantage but at its centre, creating jobs for those for whom it will make the greatest difference.

2025: Outcomes At A Glance

21,922 HOURS OF WORK PROVIDED

59 LONG TERM JOBS CREATED

$594,660 PAID TO OUR PEOPLE



Our Members: A Demographic Snapshot

24% REFUGEE OR NEW MIGRANT

92% WITH NCEC 12+ MONTHS

67% IDENTIFY AS HAVING DISABILITY

A Note on Our 2025 Survey Cohort

The stories in this report are drawn from 33 consenting members across the Annual and Intake surveys. Before joining NCEC several members had never held employment prior to their jobs at NCEC. Another member had spent more than two years without work. Other members arrived navigating language barriers and complex visa situations. We have had members arrive directly from a mental health unit. These are their starting points. The pages that follow describe their journey once they commence working with us.

Community Partnerships & Systems Change

NCEC achieves additional outcomes through community partnerships and systems change. Established in 1998, we are one of Australia's longest-running social enterprises, with decades of experience in delivering social impact.

In 2001, we piloted the first social procurement relationships with Brisbane City Council.

"It was NCEC that kicked it off (social procurement), and over time, that relationship has grown bit by bit" - Councilor Adam Allan speaking to Westpac Wire Magazine 2023

That pilot partnership has evolved into a city wide program supporting a vast multitude of enterprises. In 2013, we co-founded the Queensland Social Enterprise Council (QSEC), which we also chaired from 2022 to 2023.

In 2025, we drew on our history of collaboration to work with a diverse cross-section of community organisations, peak bodies and government. These partnerships opened training and employment pathways for refugees and people with disability. They also helped disadvantaged workers earn qualifications and move into open employment. We are making sure that cooperatives are a part of the national conversation when it comes to disability employment reform.



Partnerships at NCEC:

The organisations we have collaborated with in 2025

Worked alongside The Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) in response to the Australian Government's proposed disability employment reforms. We promoted cooperatives as an alternative model.

Consultancy to Caboolture Community Workers Cooperative on their cafe business, leading to more long term jobs for workers with a disability.

Deepened our partnership with Amani Community Centre and secured additional training and employment pathways for refugees as detailed later in the EPRI section of this report.

Partnered with Community Living Association (CLA) to host training programs, which saw **47** disadvantaged workers securing certificate qualifications and **27** transitioning to open market employment.

Member Led Design

NCEC's employment model was designed by our workers themselves. This participatory, member led approach is what makes NCEC fundamentally different and consistently effective.

Employment at NCEC
What it is like working with us



- Community embedded with businesses operating in public spaces, serving Nundah and surrounding suburbs
- Inclusive and not congregated; members working alongside staff without the same barriers to work in open employment comparable settings.
- Understanding, supportive and flexible. The pace, structure and supports within each role are shaped around the person, not the other way around.
- A fair workplace with good wages and safe working conditions.
- A place to grow; members have opportunity to try different roles, develop skills and progress into leadership.

Our Social Return on Investment

An independent Social Return on Investment study has validated NCEC's impact in dollar terms. For every $1.00 invested in the cooperative, $3.31 of social value is created for members and the community. This value comes from wages earned, skills gained, reduced reliance on other services and stronger social connection. It reflects outcomes that would not otherwise exist without stable, inclusive employment. The figures in this report sit alongside that finding as evidence of the same underlying impact.

[1] Social Ventures Australia Consulting (January 2012), Nundah Community Enterprise Co-operative: Baseline Social Return on Investment Report.

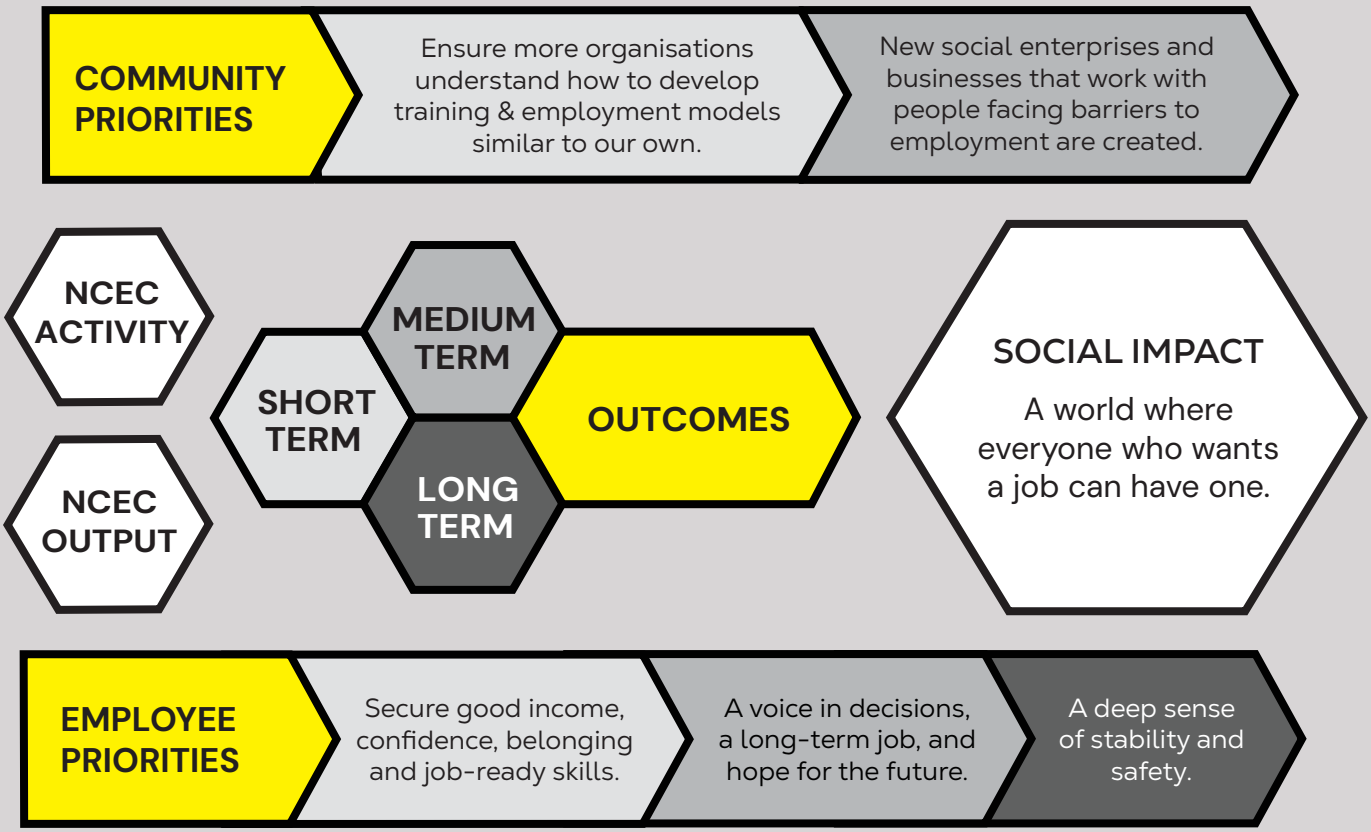
How We Create Impact

Our Theory of Change: The Golden Thread

'If we create an empowering work environment for people facing multiple barriers to employment by providing the right supports, work opportunities and collective ownership of the workplace, we can help people secure jobs they would otherwise not have. In doing so, we build a more inclusive community and demonstrate that employing people who face barriers to work can be a normal and sustainable business practice.

The work undertaken by NCEC and the impact it creates is underpinned by a Theory of Change, first developed by the Social Impact Hub and refined in partnership with GoodWolf. This framework maps the pathways through which cooperative employment creates change for our members and the broader community..

NCEC's Impact Pathway
Mapping Our Theory of Change



Creating Impact for our People

As a workers' cooperative, NCEC's impact is best understood through the experiences of its members. The themes below emerge repeatedly throughout our 2025 Intake and Annual Surveys and align closely with our Theory of Change. Together, they show how members move from their first days at NCEC towards greater confidence, stability and hope for the future.

Belonging

Strong Sense Of Belonging

87%

A sense of belonging is a foundational outcome at NCEC and often one of the first changes reported by new members. Of the 23 Annual Survey respondents, most reported a strong sense of belonging, in marked contrast to intake respondents who often described feeling little or no sense of belonging when they first arrived. Employment helps expand members' social networks and strengthensna sense of connection.

Safety, Stability and Change

Employment provides more than income. For many members, it creates a foundation of safety and stability. This is one of the deepest and most enduring outcomes in NCEC's Theory of Change, with most longer tenured members reporting that NCEC had contributed positively to their sense of security and stability.

Feeling Safe And Stable

96%

Confidence

Feeling Very Confident

83%

Developing confidence at work is an important early outcome for NCEC. Most longer-tenured members describe themselves as ‘confident' or 'very confident' at work, representing a marked shift from intake respondents, many of whom reported low confidence when they commenced employment.

Hopes, Dreams and the Future

A medium-term outcome for NCEC is that employees develop aspirations for the future. This reflects a growing sense of self-determination that is often absent after long periods of exclusion from work. Most longer-tenured members said NCEC had helped strengthen their hopes and dreams. From initially seeing little opportunity for change in their lives, many of our members now see possibilities.

Developed Hopes And Dreams

70%

Skills & Goals

NCEC members set goals and build real work skills. They do this across the cooperative's business streams: Gardens and Property Maintenance, Cafés and Catering. The Annual Survey used a self-assessed skills matrix from “Want to Learn” through to “Can Teach”. Many longer tenured members now rate as “Can Teach” across most areas.

Member Goals for the coming year include:

- A gardening micro enterprise
- A cheffing apprenticeship
- Public speaking
- A chainsaw licence



What Our Members Are Saying

Qualitative Impact
Quotes from Our Annual Surveys



Caring for Place

Place shapes us, and we shape it. Our ecological philosophy grows from a simple truth: when you live and work somewhere, you begin to care for it and love it. Through our various local enterprises and training programs, people don't just learn hospitality or horticultural skills; they also learn what it means to belong to and care for a place. Every item diverted from landfill, every tree planted, and every park maintained is a small act of restoration and a signal of something bigger. We aspire to be a community that chooses to invest in and care for its own backyard, and we have only just scratched the surface of what we hope to achieve. There is much more to do.



Renewable Energy

NCEC generates more than two thirds of its electricity from solar power. This reduces the cooperative's reliance on the grid. It is a direct contribution to a lower carbon footprint.

Place-based | Planet-friendly

Our fleet vehicles travel shorter distances and generate significantly fewer emissions by efficiently managing local pockets of work within a compact geographic area. We have also transitioned one of our divisions to electric equipment for mowing and gardening, and we are working to introduce electric vehicles into our fleet as existing vehicles reach the end of their service life and are replaced.

Triple Bottom Line

NCEC believes that social and environmental responsibility can align with the financial sustainability of a business. Accordingly the Co-op seeks to make business decisions that support an inclusive and just community as well as a sustainable environment.

Employment Pathways for Refugee Intergration (EPRI)

EPRI is a Federal Government-funded employment program administered by the Department of Home Affairs. NCEC has delivered the program since 2023 and secured funding for a fourth consecutive year in 2026. This ongoing investment reflects the program's consistently strong performance and outcomes.

An independent evaluation by Dr Peter Westoby of Community Praxis Co-op[2] found that participants experienced measurable gains in skills, confidence and social connection, alongside stronger connections with both their own communities and the broader Australian community.

> "This program puts us together with the Australian community, through this we came together ... we feel more welcome in this country. We are all Australian."

NCEC's model is distinctive because EPRI is not delivered as a stand-alone training program. Participants are embedded within a working cooperative and learn within community-based settings. This combination of place-based training and real work experience is central to the program's success.

EPRI METRICS	Achieved in 2023-2024	Achieved in 2024-2025	Achieved in 2025-2026
VET Achieved (Target = 50 %)	65 %	193 %	93 %
Pre-Employment Training And Job Readiness (Target = 80 %)	125 %	160 %	153 %
12 Weeks of Work Experience (Target = 50 %)	80 %	193 %	120 %
Participate in English Language Course (Target = 50 %)	70 %	227 %	125 %
Employed 26 weeks after completion (Target = 70 %)	75 %	127 %	125 %

What these numbers mean.

Every figure above represents the percentage of a government agreed target achieved by NCEC for specific outcomes. Across all five measures, NCEC has exceeded its contracted targets.NCEC assists up to40 people from refugee backgrounds each year.

Across the employment and training programs managed or hosted by NCEC, approximately 70% of participants secured employment in the open labour market following program completion. These results demonstrate strong employment outcomes for cohorts facing multiple barriers to work.



Donovan, R. & Westoby, P. (2025), The Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative: Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration (EPRI) – Evaluation Report and Research Project, Community Praxis Co-op Ltd.

A Financial Breakdown

NCEC experienced strong growth in 2025, with total income increasing by 38.7% to $3.48 million, the largest year-on-year increase in the past four years. This continues a pattern of sustained growth across the organisation.

While trade remained our largest source of income at 72% of total revenue, income growth was recorded across all categories. Alongside continued growth in our enterprise activities, NCEC has increasingly delivered workforce development and training initiatives supported through government funding. These programs complement our core social enterprise activities and create additional pathways to employment for people facing barriers to work.

The result is a more diverse and resilient income base, while maintaining a strong commitment to the deep social impact that comes from direct employment within the cooperative.

	2025	2024	2023	2022
Total Income ($)	3,476,224	2,506,459	1,938,616	1,763,404
Revenue From Trade	72%	79%	73%	71%

2025 Enterprise Outcomes: A Snapshot



A Reminder

These figures reflect our ongoing effort to balance participation and production. We remain committed to building commercially successful enterprises that create meaningful employment opportunities for people facing barriers to work. Achieving both goals is central to our mission.

Become a Part of Our Story

This report tells our story so far. You can help us write our next chapter.

100% of donations support people facing significant barriers to employment, including people with intellectual disability and people from refugee backgrounds, who might otherwise remain long-term unemployed.

Employment, as this report demonstrates, can be life changing.

You can choose to direct your donation toward:

- Work Equipment
- Wrap Around Support
- A Permanent Home for us to Continue our Work

CLICK HERE TO DONATE NOW

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With heartfelt thanks to our current and past donors, partners, and supporters whose contributions have helped us to create our impact so far.

Your support means the world to us. Visit givenow.com.au/ncec

Social Traders CERTIFIED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE Business for good

Australia's Best (Small) Social Enterprise 2015

AUSTRALIAN DISABILITY SERVICE AWARDS FINALIST Innovation in Employment Programs 2021

Australia's Best (Large) Social Enterprise 2020

REGISTERED CHARITY acnc.gov.au/charityregister

GOOD MARKET APPROVED

Lord Mayor's Business Awards 2023
Hutchinson Builders Social Enterprise Award Award
WINNER
Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative

GET IN TOUCH

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