



## 70 SUNNY YEARS

When reflecting on our past, family is synonymous with our history. Sunnyfield started as a family-built organisation 70 years ago thanks to Hazel Whiddon, a determined mother who wanted a better future for her son. Hazel put an ad in the Manly Daily and was joined by other families who all wanted to make a change for their children with intellectual disability. Together they built the foundations for what Sunnyfield is today. Sunnyfield has become like a second family for many clients, customers, and staff over the years. We're lucky enough to have had the privilege and honour of supporting many people with intellectual disability through various stages of their life. For some, Sunnyfield has been a part of their lives since they were children.

## SMALL MOMENTS WITH BIG IMPACT

Not long after I first started work at Sunnyfield I distinctly remember an elderly lady waiting out the front of reception one hot summer's afternoon. I went over and introduced myself and learnt that she was Andrew's mother. I told her I would go and get Andrew but she politely declined the offer explaining that Andrew would be upset with her if he had to finish work early. We then had a quick chat about how much Andrew loved working at Sunnyfield and it became apparent that she had no idea as to what he did each day. With much encouragement I brought Andrew's mum into the factory. The first thing she saw was her son proudly working on a production line with a soldering iron in his hand. "Look at this mum," Andrew said, as he soldered two wires together. "Be careful Andrew you will hurt yourself if you aren't careful" she panicked. "It's ok mum this is my job and I know what I'm doing" Andrew proudly responded, grinning from ear to ear.

### Meet the Foldi Family

Kristine (Krissie) has been a Sunnyfield client since 1965 when she was just nine years old. Krissie's father, Keith, had the great fortune of taking on a new role at Philips Electrical, working alongside Fred Whiddon – one of Sunnyfield's founders. Fred introduced the Foldi family to Sunnyfield, and they have never looked back. Krissie moved into Sunnyfield's supported living accommodation, with her family visiting her on weekends. Since then, Krissie has built a great network of friends through our Community Services programs, and now lives independently in a Sunnyfield Shared Living home on the Northern Beaches, keeping close to her family. Like all parents, it was hard to see Krissie move out of home, however Keith said, "those early days at Sunnyfield proved to be the best for Krissie's life."

Not only has Sunnyfield profoundly impacted Krissie's life, but Keith's as well. He worked tirelessly as a Director on Sunnyfield's Board, and continued to help with fundraising for many years. In 2021, at the age of 92, Keith became an Honorary Life Member of Sunnyfield in recognition of his significant contributions. Sunnyfield holds a very special place for Keith, his late wife Andrea and Krissie's brother and sister, Matthew and Maria.



It was only a small moment but this is what stuck with me. Andrew's mum was fiercely loyal and protective. I could only imagine how many times she had to go in to battle to make sure Andrew got a fair go in life. More importantly Andrew taught me that he didn't want to be wrapped up in cotton wool. Andrew wanted to work, be treated with respect and receive recognition for what he did. To Andrew and his late mum, thanks for the lesson in life.

– **Employment Services Staff**

## THE SUNNYFIELD WAY then and now



### Contact

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ISO 9001: 2015 Quality Management System  
ABN 72 000 415 127  
Charity Fundraising no. 13915



**Sunnyfield**  
For a brighter future



## LET'S CELEBRATE 70 YEARS OF SHINING BRIGHT

Since 1952



### For a brighter future

In 1951 Hazel and Fred Whiddon placed an advertisement in the local papers, calling together like minded parents of children with intellectual disability to work together to create better lives for their children. Their son Trevor was born with an intellectual disability and they were determined he would have a good life like his brother Bryan. At their family home in October 1951 Hazel and Fred met with Mrs Astley, Mrs O'Donoghue, Mrs Sproston, Mrs Piggott and Mrs Roberts and shared their passion and vision for a better future for their kids with intellectual disability.

On 17 March 1952, 18 people met for the inaugural meeting of the Sunnyfield Manly Association – little did they know what they started.

Registered  
**NDIS**  
provider



**Sunnyfield**  
disAbility Services



Let's celebrate  
70 years of  
shining bright,  
since 1952.

• **THAT THE EFFORT WAS SUCCESSFUL BEYOND ANYONE'S WILDEST DREAMS, SEEMED INCIDENTAL; IT WAS THE GETTING THERE THAT PROVIDED THE GREATEST EXHILARATION** •

The History of Sunnyfield, foreword, Shelagh O'Hanlon

• **WHAT WONDERFUL VISION HAZEL WHIDDON HAD WHEN SHE AND HER FAMILY STARTED SUNNYFIELD WHICH HAS BENEFITTED SO MANY CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS TO LEARN NEW SKILLS AND ENABLE THEM TO TAKE THEIR PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY WITH CONFIDENCE** •

Barbara Steel, Hazel Whiddon's sister

**50s**

During the 1950s parents of children with intellectual disability were advised to send their child to an institution, as they were not able to access mainstream schooling or financial assistance for in-home support services.

**1951**

**October** – enterprising Northern Beaches resident, Mrs Hazel Whiddon gathers a group of mothers of children with intellectual disability, to start a local training program for their children.

**1954**

**May** – The Sunnyfield School, built on land in Manly Vale donated by Mrs Rundle, opened with 23 students with intellectual disability.

**1957**

Mrs Hazel Whiddon is elected as the first Honorary Life Member of The Sunnyfield Association.

**June** – Building Committee formed and construction work commenced at Allambie Heights for residential buildings and training facilities.

**1952**

**March** – The Manly Sunnyfield Association is established to provide education for students with intellectual disability at the Sporting Union Hall, Manly Oval.

**1956**

**September** – Five acres of Crown land at Allambie Heights are leased to The Sunnyfield Association.

**60s**

**1961**

**April** – Hostel shared accommodation for 31 residents completed at Allambie Heights.

**June** – The Warringah Rotary Club donated a new bus for residents to get out into the community.

**1963**

The Sunnyfield School is formally recognised by the NSW Department of Education and Miss O'Hanlon becomes Principal.

**1966**

**April** – Trevor Whiddon House (named in honour of Mrs Hazel Whiddon's son) is completed. Allambie main site had 64 residents.

**1967**

The Adult Workshop building is completed at Allambie Heights, forming the early foundations of Sunnyfield Enterprises.

**70s**

More land leased at Allambie Heights, more accommodation created, and community recreation activities expanded.

**1974**

**June** – The Sunnyfield School moved to Dee Why and was renamed Fisher Road Public School.

Sunnyfield continued to grow, supporting 188 children and adults with intellectual disability and 90 residents at Allambie Heights.

A training centre was developed at Allambie Heights for people with intellectual disability transitioning into Sunnyfield community houses.

**1981**

**July** – Sunnyfield's first community home purchased for 12 residents in Beacon Hill.

**1983**

Sunnyfield's first Physiotherapist and Speech Therapist were employed with the assistance of a government subsidy.

**80s**

**1986**

Ablite Lighting opened in Brookvale with 25 supported employees.

**90s**

The first Great Duck Race fundraiser was held at Davidson park, Roseville. Thousands attended the fun event, raising awareness and funds for people with intellectual disability.

**1990**

Sunnyfield met the residential and training needs of 140 people with intellectual disability.

**1994**

Sunnyfield established 24-hour support across all residential homes. Gateway Community Access service opened to support 21 people with intellectual disability to participate in their local community.

**1992**

The Australian Government introduced the Disability Discrimination Act, which prohibited discrimination against people with intellectual disability in a range of areas including employment, education, provision of goods and services, accommodation, clubs and associations.

**1997**

Sunnyfield established a single occupancy residential unit, which initiated the Independent Living Support Program and supported people with intellectual disability to live on their own.

**2000s**

**2000**

Sunnyfield providing over 400 opportunities in the areas of accommodation, employment and community services for people with intellectual disability.

**2001**

Tommy Emmanuel and Doug Parkinson captured the positive spirit of Sunnyfield in the recording of "Sunny".

**2005**

A modern factory was built at Allambie Heights to support the growth of Sunnyfield Employment Services.

**2006**

Sharpro Industries workshops (Homebush and Parramatta) acquired by Sunnyfield to establish employment services for people with intellectual disability in Western Sydney.

**2008**

Person-centred practices are implemented across Sunnyfield, placing people with intellectual disability at the centre of everything and respecting their individual needs and preferences.

**2013**

Three new Community Service Hubs opened to provide support and services for people with intellectual disability in Marrickville, Kariang and Charmhaven.

**2014**

Sunnyfield launches the Communicate to Connect project, to empower clients in everyday choices and decision making.

Sunnyfield prepares for the incoming National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

**2015**

Sunnyfield's Shared Living services expand into the ACT.

Sunnyfield amalgamates with Pioneers (Guildford).

**2017**

Sunnyfield launches Support Coordination services for NDIS participants.

**2018**

Community Services Hub opened in Tweed Heads.

Skills for Life program launches using Assistive Technology to build independence.

**2019**

Sunnyfield amalgamates with EGA (NSW Hunter region), expanding Community Service Hubs into Maitland, Kurri Kurri, Singleton, Muswellbrook, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens.

**2020**

NSW government transfers ownership of Druids Court and 185 Allambie Road to Sunnyfield.

**Today**

Sunnyfield continues to invest in Specialist Disability Accommodation, creating new homes for people with intellectual disability.

Sunnyfield operates 47 homes, 22 hubs, 3 short term accommodation, and 3 supported employment facilities.

Sunnyfield delivers over 2000 support services for people with intellectual disability, including children, adults and seniors.

Sunnyfield employs over 1500 staff in NSW and the ACT.