

Our Vision is that every child's development is nurtured by the community to ensure they reach their potential



**STRONGER
TOGETHER**
FOUNDATION

Formerly known as Fit Kidz Foundation Ltd.

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 AT A GLANCE

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO - Stronger Together Foundation

It is with great pride and excitement that we welcome you to the Stronger Together Foundation's Annual Report for 2024. The year was one of transformation, growth, and deepened impact as we continued our mission to support children with developmental delays and neurodivergent needs.

A defining moment of the year was our transition from the Fit Kidz Foundation to the Stronger Together Foundation—a change that reflects our evolution and the strength of our community. This transition was more than just a name change; it was a reaffirmation of our purpose, a step towards greater independence, and an opportunity to expand our reach. Alongside this milestone, we moved into a new home, creating a space that fosters inclusion, collaboration, and the ongoing development of our programs and services.

Despite these major changes, our core commitment has remained unchanged: to provide meaningful and high-quality support for children and families. We were proud to host our third annual Stronger Together Conference, bringing together experts, professionals, and families to share insights, strategies, and experiences that empower people with disability or neurodivergence, and their parents and carers. Events like these not only provide valuable learning opportunities but also strengthen the bonds within our community.

In addition to professional development, we focused on creating opportunities for joy, connection, and inclusive play. We hosted two exclusive school holiday events at Inflatable World, which provided children with a fun and supportive environment to explore and engage with peers. We also attended several community events with our sensory breakout tent, including the Mayor's Easter Egg Hunt, Orange Blossom Festival, Mayor's Christmas Party and Glenhaven Carols. This ensured that all children had a comfortable and welcoming place to retreat when needed. These initiatives, both big and small, are representative of the Stronger Together Foundation—we are a true support network, a source of belonging, and an advocate for inclusion.

This year also saw our influence grow beyond our immediate programs. We were honoured to have our CEO selected as a member and Chair of the Hills Shire's Disability Inclusion Action Plan Reference Group, ensuring

that the voices of children and families with diverse needs are represented at a broader level. This opportunity reflects our ongoing commitment to advocacy and meaningful change, not just within our own programs but across the wider community.

None of these achievements would be possible without the dedication of our team, the generosity of our supporters, and, most importantly, the trust and engagement of the families we serve. Each child's journey is unique, and we are privileged to walk alongside them, offering the support, understanding, and resources they deserve.

As we reflect on the milestones of this past year, we look ahead with excitement for what's to come. We are growing, learning, and evolving, but one thing remains constant: together, we are stronger. Thank you for being part of our journey and for believing in a world where every child is supported, included, and empowered to thrive.

Ellen Kulbicki, CEO
Educational and Developmental Psychologist



A NEW CHAPTER - A Transition to Stronger Together Foundation and Opening of Our Castle Hill Premises

After fifteen wonderful years, 2024 marked the right time to give the Foundation its own identity, separate from “Fit Kidz,” and for its founders to step away from the board and governance. This decision was made with deep gratitude for the journey that led us here.

The Fit Kidz Foundation began with a vision to support children and families, growing from supporting 15 families to now serving over 200 each year. We extend heartfelt thanks to every family and supporter who has placed their trust in us.

As part of this transition, the Fit Kidz Foundation officially changed its name to the Stronger Together Foundation, and a new Board was appointed. Ellen Kulbicki continued in her leadership role as CEO, ensuring continuity and commitment to our shared vision. Our relocation in April to 16/5-7 Anella Ave, Castle Hill, marked another exciting step.

We marked the milestone with the official opening of the new premises on 12th June, 2024. The evening was made even more special by the presence of Melissa Scaife, co-founder of the Fit Kidz Foundation, who joined CEO, Ellen Kulbicki, Director Ramsay Zreikat, and Hills Shire Council Mayor, Dr Peter Gangemi, in cutting the ribbon.

Guests heard heartfelt speeches from Ellen, Dr Gangemi, and Foundation parent Kelly Doyle, each reflecting on our past and expressing excitement for the future. Attendees celebrated with drinks, canapés, and explored the new space, enjoying games, prizes, and photo moments at the media wall.

We were honoured to receive a Community Recognition Statement (now published in Hansard) from Mark Hodges MP, acknowledging our mission and community impact.

The Stronger Together Foundation continues to deliver vital supports, programs, and services to local families, driven by a passionate and committed team. We remain a not-for-profit charity dedicated to nurturing every child’s development and helping them reach their full potential.

The generosity and support of our community during this transition have been invaluable. We look forward to continuing our journey, united in purpose and passion.



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT - Fotu's Journey

Diagnosis

Fotu was four years old when he was diagnosed with autism. Like many parents, his family began noticing that he wasn't meeting typical developmental milestones. While every child develops at their own pace, his parents trusted their instincts and chose to seek clarity. "We didn't want to wait or ignore the signs - we wanted to understand him better and give him the best support possible."

The diagnostic process, while emotional and overwhelming at first, brought Fotu's family a sense of clarity and direction.

"We finally had answers, and that gave us hope. It meant we could now move forward with the right support, therapies, and understanding to help Fotu thrive. More than anything, it reminded us that the diagnosis didn't change who he was - it just gave us a better way to support the amazing little boy we already knew and loved."

Discovering the Foundation

Fotu's family was referred to the Stronger Together Foundation by St Gabriel's School while looking into schooling options. "From our first contact, we felt welcomed and understood. The team took the time to listen to our story, explain the programs available, and guide us through what would best support Fotu's needs."

Fotu joined the Foundation's Andy Bear Club - a program tailored to help children prepare for kindergarten.

Ongoing support

"The best part about finding the Foundation has been the sense of genuine support, care, and community they've given our family. They didn't just see Fotu's diagnosis - they saw him for who he is. Watching him grow in confidence, build friendships, and develop key life skills through their programs has been such a blessing."

Smooth transition to school

Andy Bear Club provided Fotu with a structured, supportive environment in which he could develop key skills needed for school. "Most importantly, it helped him feel confident and safe in a classroom setting. By the time school started, Fotu was familiar with the kind of structure and social setting he'd be entering, which made the transition so much smoother - for him and for us as parents."

Words of encouragement to other parents

Fotu's family offers heartfelt advice to others who may just be beginning a similar journey:

"Take it one step at a time and trust your instincts. It can feel overwhelming at first, but you're not alone. Don't be afraid to ask questions, seek help, and celebrate the small wins. Most importantly, never forget that your child is still the same beautiful soul—they just see and experience the world a little differently, and that's something to embrace. For our family, our faith played a big part in getting through the hard days. We leaned on God, and He reminded us that Fotu is beautifully made and deeply loved—and that gave us comfort and courage. Never stop advocating for your child. You know them better than anyone else, and your voice matters."



STRONGER TOGETHER CONFERENCE 2024 - Sharing Knowledge, Building Community

We were thrilled to host our third annual Stronger Together Conference on Saturday 31st August 2024, with thanks to grants from The Hills Shire Council and CommBank Staff Foundation. This one-of-a-kind conference is a space where parents and carers from our local community can build meaningful connections with others, have access to information and local support services, whilst also having an opportunity to hear many inspiring guest speakers and terrific families sharing their personal stories on our panels.

We were so excited to have Sandy Golder, the co-founder of Kindship, back as our MC, and journalist Jo Abi as our facilitator. Both Sandy and Jo have been supporting the conference since its inception.

Our guest speakers included inspirational mother-daughter duo Evelyn and Kylie Scott, who shared the challenges and joys of their advocacy journey. We were then lucky enough to hear from powerhouse Kathrine Peereboom, a devoted mum of three sons with disability and a prominent figure in the disability community.

After a delicious lunch and amazing musical performance, we heard from an amazing panel of local parents and carers—Ramsay Zreikat, Sarah Sydir and Delaney Wright—followed by the one and only Mr A+, Michael Theo, from Love on the Spectrum.

To finish the day, African drumming experts Soul Drummer energised and united the audience (and Foundation staff, who shed their nerves to join the group onstage!) with each guest given a Djembe to participate in a group drumming experience! It was a great way to end a day that we always hope leaves our guests feeling connected to a growing and incredibly supportive community. One guest told us, “I left feeling my cup has been refilled and I have new leads to follow to further support my son and myself. I wouldn’t miss the conference for anything.”



2024 HILLS SHIRE COMMUNITY GROUP OF THE YEAR

On Tuesday 16th January 2024, The Hills Shire Council hosted its Annual Australia Day Awards ceremony at the Pioneer Theatre in Castle Hill. The event, attended by community leaders, volunteers, and residents, celebrated the outstanding contributions of individuals and groups who have gone above and beyond in serving and strengthening the local community.

We were honoured to receive the Community Group of the Year award. This recognition is a testament to the collective effort, heart, and vision of our entire team and volunteers, who work every day to ensure that inclusion, support, and empowerment are at the heart of everything we do.

We also take this opportunity to acknowledge all the other nominees and award recipients for their valuable contributions to the community.

A special thank you to Dr Peter Gangemi, former Mayor of The Hills Shire Council, for presenting the awards and for the Council's ongoing support and recognition of individuals and organisations that make a meaningful difference.

This recognition reinforces our commitment to building an inclusive and supportive community and inspires us to continue our work with even greater focus, passion, and determination.



OUR TEAM

In 2024, the Stronger Together Foundation was proud to employ a dedicated team of 29 staff members, each contributing to our mission with passion and expertise.



Management and Administration	6
Events and Marketing	3
Speech Pathologists	6
Occupational Therapists	6
Therapy Assistants	8



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Stronger Together Foundation Family Community Events

During 2024, we were so excited to host two Family Community Events, exclusively for children with neurodivergent needs or developmental delays and their siblings. With thanks to a grant from ClubGRANTS, we hired out Inflatable World in both the July and October school holidays, with over 100 children joining us each time in a safe and inclusive environment.

“Everyone had a smile on their face, and it was so relaxing for once with my daughter in a social setting as everyone was in the same boat,” said one parent. Another parent said that the most enjoyable aspects of the event were “inclusion, watching the joy on my children’s faces, getting to meet other parents and exchanging information and socialising.”

Out and About in the Community

After the success of the Sensory Sensitive Session at the 2023 Mayor’s Children’s Christmas Party, we were so pleased that The Hills Shire Council decided to include one of these sessions at the 2024 Mayor’s Easter Egg Hunt. Sensory Sensitive Sessions have capped ticket numbers, music turned down on the rides, and the inclusion of our Stronger Together Foundation Sensory Breakout Space—a tent with sensory tools where children and adults alike can retreat to avoid overwhelm.

“My son used the tent as a kind of base,” said one parent. “It was familiar, because he’s attended group programs at the Stronger Together Foundation, so he was excited to talk to the therapists and knew we could head there to take a break from the main event.”

We also took our Sensory Breakout Space to the Orange Blossom Festival, Glenhaven Carols and the 2024 Mayor’s Children’s Christmas Party.



COMMUNITY EVENTS -

Neurodiversity Affirming Workshop by NeuroWild

On Friday 30th August, as part of the annual Stronger Together Conference, we were honoured to have Em Mainey (the mastermind behind NeuroWild) present to a room full of educators, therapists and support workers at the Castle Hill RSL. Em is a late-diagnosed Autistic and ADHD speech pathologist, illustrator, and advocate for neurodiversity-affirming practices. As the 2023 Reimagine Australia Inclusion Award winner and a mum to three neurodivergent kids, Em brought both professional expertise and lived experience. The workshop was a sell-out!

Our Operations Manager, Anwyn Yap, had this to say:
“Em’s message was loud and clear – we can build our neurodivergent children up by ensuring their foundations are strong!

Children need the people in their lives to be their support network, to understand their strengths, and channel these to support learning opportunities, build a sense of positive identity and prioritise their safety and health. This is the foundation for all learning. Only once these areas are nurtured can children start to learn to regulate their sensory systems, emotional systems and co-regulate with others.



The higher order skills of focusing, learning, impulse control, memory, planning, flexible thinking, language and problem solving can only be built on a strong foundation.

I left the training feeling empowered as a therapist!”

Others said:

“I found it so beneficial, not just for learning about ways to support neurodivergent children, but to support all children!” (Educator at a Community Preschool)

“Now that we’ve got the information, we can change our practice for the better.” (Speech Pathologist at the Stronger Together Foundation)

“Hearing Em speak was so affirming to what I had noticed throughout my career. Safety, connection and strengths-based supports are fundamental to all children and should be the foundation for all learning relationships.” (Therapist at the Stronger Together Foundation)

FUNDRAISING OVERVIEW

In 2024, the Stronger Together Foundation achieved significant milestones in its fundraising efforts, thanks to the unwavering support of our community, corporate partners, and local organisations.

2024 Annual Charity Golf Day

Our flagship fundraising event, the Annual Charity Golf Day, was held at the picturesque Lynwood Golf and Country Club in October. Despite overcast skies and light drizzle, the event saw enthusiastic participation from golfers who enjoyed a day of friendly competition and community spirit. Highlights included the Longest Drive Challenge, Hole-in-One Competition, Live Auction, and Guest Speaker.

The event concluded with a hearty lunch and the sale of raffle tickets, contributing to the funds raised to support the Foundation's programs and services.



Christmas Raffle

In December, the Stronger Together Foundation organised a successful Christmas Raffle, which became a festive highlight for our supporters. The raffle featured attractive prizes and garnered widespread participation, significantly boosting our fundraising efforts during the holiday season.

Grants & Community Support

The Stronger Together Foundation was honoured to receive grants from several esteemed organisations, enabling us to expand our reach and enhance our services:

- The Hills Shire Council: Through their Annual Community Grants program, the Council supports local initiatives that benefit the community.
- CommBank Staff Foundation: As part of their 2024 Community Grants program, 175 organisations, including the Stronger Together Foundation, were awarded \$10,000 each to support the health and wellbeing of Australian children.
- Castle Hill RSL Group: Through their ClubGRANTS program, we received funding to support community-focused projects within The Hills Shire Council area.

These grants have been instrumental in advancing our mission and extending our impact within the community.



Looking Ahead

The success of our fundraising initiatives in 2024 has laid a strong foundation for the year ahead. We are committed to continuing our work in supporting children and families, and we look forward to the ongoing collaboration with our partners and supporters to achieve even greater outcomes in 2025.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to our fundraising efforts in 2024. Your support is invaluable in helping us make a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.

OUR IMPACT IN 2024



SUPPORTERS



- Castle Hill RSL Group -



CommBank
Staff Foundation



guardian



THE HILLS
Sydney's Garden Shire

JDI Services Pty Ltd

Business Coaching | Consulting | Sales Training



CASTLE TOWERS



FLEMMING
GROUP



FundFindrs



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Financial reports were audited by Lamb, Lowe and Partners Pty Ltd and are available by request from Stronger Together Foundation. They have been lodged with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

Where the money comes from - Income

Total Income \$ 1,851,312.33

- 93.6% Services, programs & projects
- 3.6% Fundraising & donations
- 2.9% Grants

Where the money goes - Expenses

Total Expenses \$ 1,883,975.75

- 84.7% Employee costs
- 7.8% Administration & occupancy
- 6.4% Services, programs & projects delivery costs
- 1.1% Fundraising



TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

How can you support us

Make a donation

Support our work with a one-off or regular gift. Every contribution helps us continue our vital subsidised programs and provide services to the community.

Volunteer your time to help with community or fundraising events

From wrapping raffle items or transporting items to and from an event, there is a volunteer role to suit everyone.

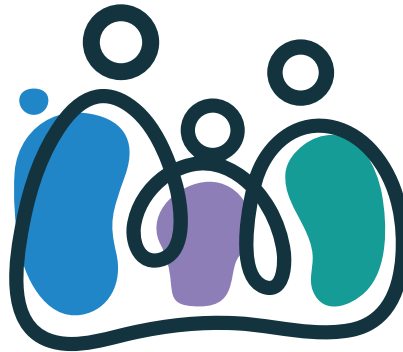
Donate products or services

Contribute items or professional services for our fundraising event - a practical and powerful way to help.

Sponsor an event

Partner with us by sponsoring a fundraising event or one of our inclusive Community Family Events. It's a great way to show your support and make a lasting difference.

Thank you for helping us build a stronger, more inclusive community.



**STRONGER
TOGETHER
FOUNDATION**



Unit 16, 5-7 Anella Avenue | Castle Hill, NSW 2154 | 1300 111 783