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MEDIA RELEASE



CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes to establish Children's Contact Service at Broken Hill

Separating and separated families in far-western NSW will soon have a specialist centre for supervised, safe visits of children and changeovers to take place, delivered by CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes.

The social support organisation has received \$2 million in federal government funding over four years to establish a Children's Contact Service (CCS) at Broken Hill for the first time.

With the child's needs as the primary focus, the centre's purpose is to allow children to stay connected with both parents and other significant people in their lives, in circumstances where families are unable to manage their own contact arrangements.

Children's Contact Services currently operate in more than 60 locations across Australia, but the nearest to Broken Hill is Mildura, a three-hour drive away.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes pursued the funding for a CCS at Broken Hill to meet a need in the community, with the city's social and legal services long advocating for this type of service.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes's funding application included letters of support from members of the local community, including legal practitioners.

The organisation's local staff report there are families currently going to public places like fast-food outlets, parks, police stations and neighbourhood streets for the changeover of children for whom a joint custody arrangement is in place, because of the lack of a more appropriate option – an issue the CCS will address.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes chief executive officer Anne-Marie Mioche said the funding to establish the CCS at Broken Hill was a win for far-western NSW communities.

"This service has not existed previously at Broken Hill, a regional city," Ms Mioche said.

"Its purpose is to provide children with the opportunity of re-establishing or maintaining a meaningful relationship with both parents, and other significant people in their lives.

"Most importantly it is a child-centred service, and their needs are the primary consideration."

Ms Mioche says CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes already offers a number of programs at Broken Hill and is well-placed to deliver the service.

"Our unique position is the wraparound support we can provide through our family mental health and financial counselling programs and our family dispute resolution practitioner at Broken Hill," she said.

The CCS will be based at the Broken Hill branch of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes, in Argent Street.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes went through an open competitive process to apply for the funding under the Family Relationship Services Program, administered by the federal Attorney-General's Department.

Ends.....

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes provides social services, caring for the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging



- **Mental Health**
- **Parent Child Services**
- **Family Relationship Services**
- **Financial Counselling & Capability**
- **Accommodation & Housing Support**

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