




CatholicCare
Wilcannia-Forbes

Annual Report
2022-23



Contact

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A close-up, low-angle shot of a branch with several small, round, pinkish-purple flower heads. The flowers have many fine, radiating petals. The branch is dark and woody, with some small green leaves visible. The background is a clear, bright blue sky with a soft white glow from the sun on the left side. The overall mood is bright and natural.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes acknowledges
and pays respect to the Traditional Custodians
of the land. We recognise their continuing
connection to the land, waters and culture.
We would like to pay our respects to
elders past, present and emerging.



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Background

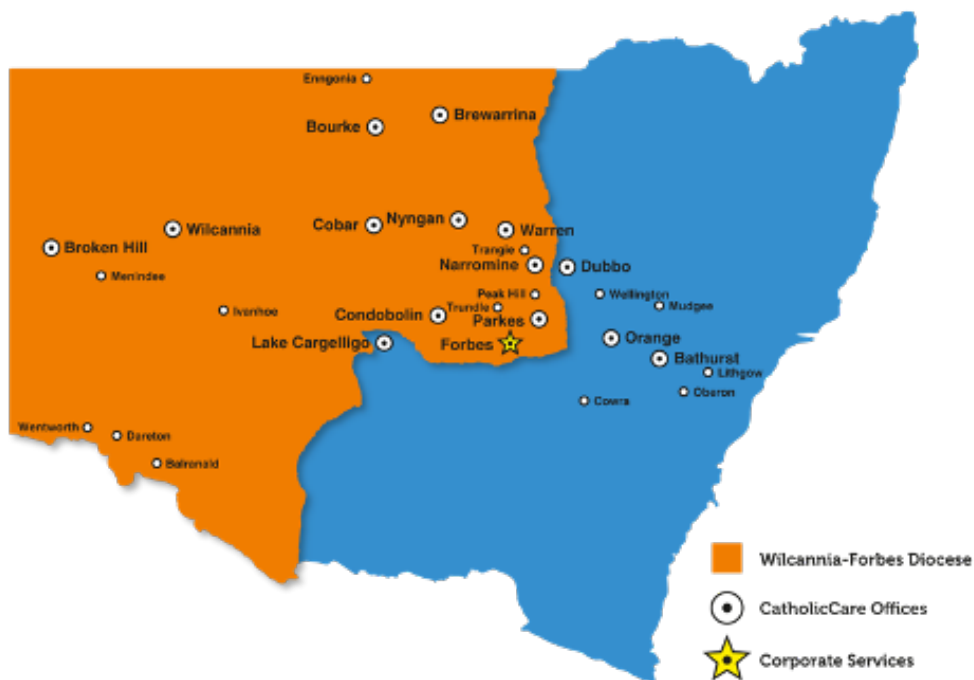
CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes is the official social service of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes. The diocese covers more than 52% of NSW and 414,398 square kilometres. It spans from beyond Bourke and Brewarrina, to Broken Hill, south to Balranald and east to Forbes and Parkes.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has a strong reputation as a leader and innovator in the provision of support and social services. We are experienced and skilled in identifying community needs and share our vision for wellbeing, support and respect.

Our team is passionate about making a real difference in people's lives and works to empower individuals, families and communities. People are the heart of our organisation – both our clients and our team.

All our services are offered to the whole community, regardless of religious belief or background.

Where we work



We are CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes

Our Mission

Inspired by our Creator, we are committed to a mission of empowering the individual, families and communities of western NSW, enhancing their social, economic and emotional wellbeing and strengthening their network of support.

Our Vision

We share a vision of communities imbued with a spirit of justice, where there is tangible respect for:

- the sacredness of all Creation
- the dignity of each person
- the inherent right of all to participate fully in our co-creative mission.

Our Values

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes aims to be a sign of our Creator's life-giving compassion, to discern the significant social, economic and emotional needs within the diocese, to provide advocacy, support and professional services to individuals, families and communities, and to appreciate and utilise the gifts within ourselves and others towards the fulfillment of our mission.

The principles of Catholic social teaching frame and guide our values and approach to planning, programming and action. These values are 'lived' by each member of the team through:

- respect for the dignity of human life and for each person
- respect and celebration for the culture of others
- responsibility for the stewardship of creation
- solidarity and a shared responsibility for our most vulnerable
- equality and justice for all
- interdependence, community and the common good
- subsidiarity – placing ownership and responsibility with community and allowing them the primary role in the decisions that affect their lives
- honest and open dialogue with all stakeholders within a spirit of collaboration, partnership and probity.

OUR IMPACT 2022-23

We supported

4,590
people

7.5% increase
on previous year



We offered a total of

21,157
sessions



71%



of our clients were new to the
CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes
program in which they
participated in 2022-23

Almost

40%



of our clients identify
as Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander

14%



of our clients
identify as people
with disability

15,159



hours of support

14% increase
on previous year

65%



of our clients
identify as female

For

4.6%



of our clients, their
country of birth was
not Australia

36%

of our clients were new,
having never received
support from us before



MESSAGE FROM OUR BISHOP



Welcome to the 2022–23 annual report of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes, an insight into the invaluable social and support services provided by this committed team in our diocese.

The Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, in the west of NSW covering 52% of the state's land mass, is a strikingly beautiful and sometimes brutal part of God's own country.

As the social welfare arm of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, CatholicCare continues to radiate the love of Christ for all people by providing help to those in most need.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2023, we saw emergencies and crises, and particularly unimaginable flooding in our diocese. CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes was a sterling example of an organisation supporting individuals and communities during these natural disasters and in the long aftermath. Team members, as part of their communities, rolled up their sleeves to bring immediate relief in response to these most visible challenges. These same team members were also there when the despair was as deep but less publicly visible.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has a mission of empowering the individual, families and communities in western NSW, enhancing their social, economic and emotional wellbeing and strengthening their network of support. I am deeply heartened by the tireless efforts the organisation has made to make this mission a reality in this year of natural disasters and significant challenges.

Financial counsellors rose to the task of providing support for people affected by disasters, as well as equipping individuals of all backgrounds facing increased financial pressures. Demand for homelessness services rose, with the team providing crisis assistance but also measures for lasting change. Experienced practitioners and their teams worked to improve outcomes for children, particularly those in situations of disadvantage or strained family relationships. Carers and families of people with mental health challenges, and young people showing early

signs of mental illness, found support and the comfort of knowing they were not alone. Inspirationally, individuals, families and communities continue to build strong connections to culture.

I am pleased that CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes and the Parish of Condobolin were able to cooperate in a project that will in the future deliver emergency accommodation to support women and children leaving domestic violence situations. In March, I was able to visit the former church property that is undergoing capital works for this project, and see its progress towards completion. This will be an important service to welcome and care for the vulnerable and promote the life and dignity of the human person.

The 2022–23 year showed us the importance of reaching out and helping others. The good we do today will have an impact not only on the people of today, but also on the lives of the generations to come. I wish to thank the whole team of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes for their commitment to the organisation's mission. Frontline staff in our far-flung communities, together with the leadership team and the Board, all play unique and critical roles in supporting people in need.

May this coming year bring us all strength and the spiritual capacity to endure and thrive.

Yours in Christ,

Most Rev Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE DD
Bishop of Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO AND CHAIR

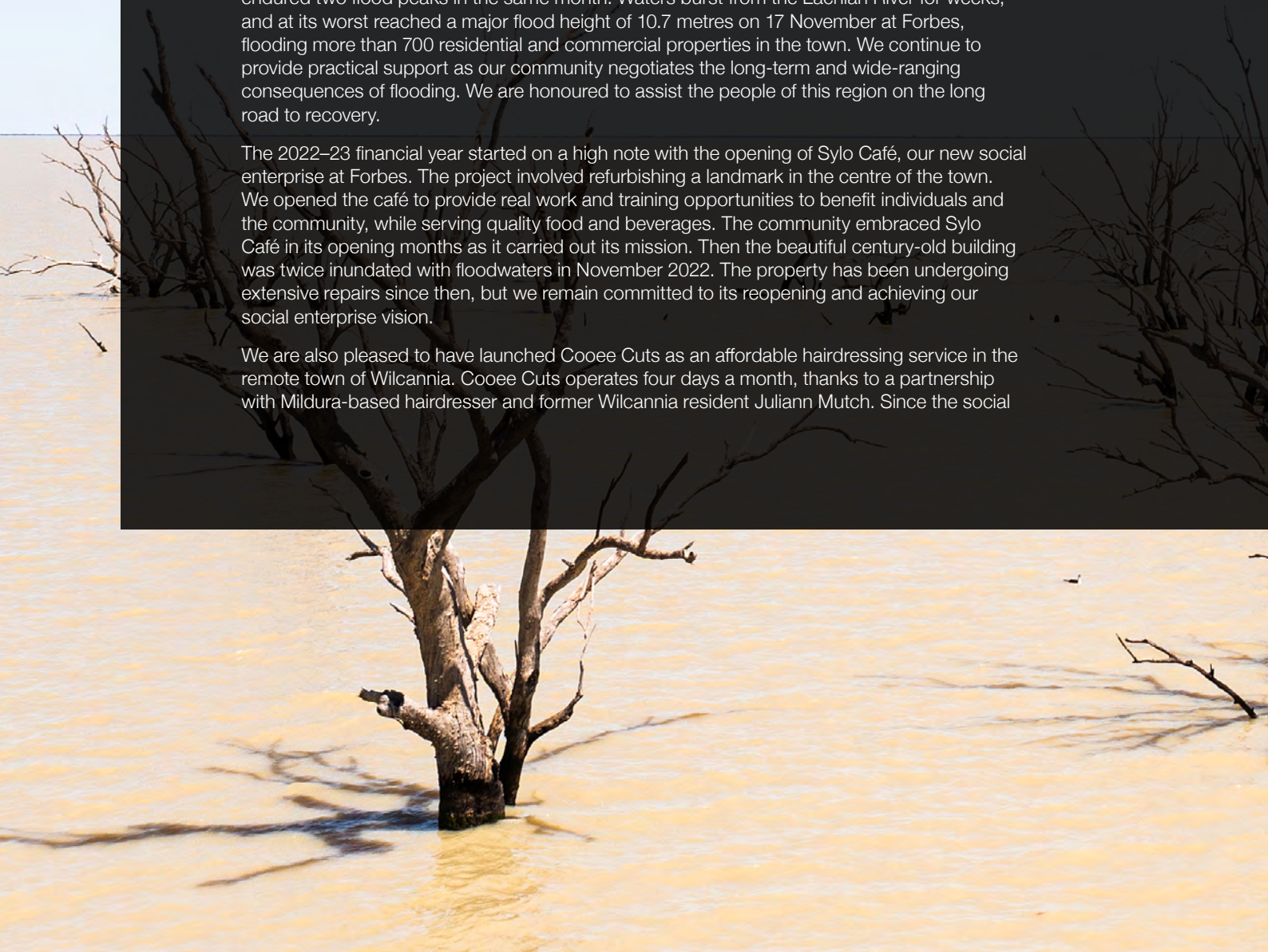
The 2022–23 reporting period will long be remembered for the devastating flooding across multiple districts of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes. During these crises the determination and strength of our team members was abundantly evident. CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has a long history of responding to community needs as we deliver support to address serious social challenges – poverty, intergenerational disadvantage and trauma, unemployment, homelessness and natural disasters. In this period, we again brought tenacity and fresh approaches to respond to crises and the long-term consequences they produce.

When the small town of Eugowra was hit by flash flooding that tragically claimed two lives in November 2022, our team members were on the ground within days. They gave emotional support to residents who had been traumatised by the threatening flood waters. They also brought willing hands for the heavy task of cleaning up. Our financial counsellors came early and have remained by the Eugowra community's side ever since, even as the first anniversary of the tragedy approaches.

Also in November 2022, Forbes – home to our head office – and the surrounding region, endured two flood peaks in the same month. Waters burst from the Lachlan River for weeks, and at its worst reached a major flood height of 10.7 metres on 17 November at Forbes, flooding more than 700 residential and commercial properties in the town. We continue to provide practical support as our community negotiates the long-term and wide-ranging consequences of flooding. We are honoured to assist the people of this region on the long road to recovery.

The 2022–23 financial year started on a high note with the opening of Sylo Café, our new social enterprise at Forbes. The project involved refurbishing a landmark in the centre of the town. We opened the café to provide real work and training opportunities to benefit individuals and the community, while serving quality food and beverages. The community embraced Sylo Café in its opening months as it carried out its mission. Then the beautiful century-old building was twice inundated with floodwaters in November 2022. The property has been undergoing extensive repairs since then, but we remain committed to its reopening and achieving our social enterprise vision.

We are also pleased to have launched Cooeee Cuts as an affordable hairdressing service in the remote town of Wilcannia. Cooeee Cuts operates four days a month, thanks to a partnership with Mildura-based hairdresser and former Wilcannia resident Juliann Mutch. Since the social



enterprise's launch in September 2022, it has recorded an impressive 273 appointments in 10 months.

We continue to focus on growing our services to respond to need in western NSW. In 2022–23, we won 57% of the tenders we submitted. This is a win for our communities where disadvantage and marginalisation continue to be overrepresented in key statistical measures. Advocacy remains a focus and we continued to raise issues faced by our communities with ministers and senior bureaucrats.

In building for the future, we are investing in organisational leadership. Team members in leadership roles have participated in a number of training sessions and workshops. Relevant training for all members of staff remains a priority, with mental health first aid and risk and safety among some of the topics covered.

The rollout of training in the Family Partnership Model for team members was another positive step. This case management model matches well with our mission and values, and our existing person-centred, strength-based and holistic practices. Fortunately in 2022–23, we were no longer in the grips of COVID-19 and resulting lockdowns. We have, however, recognised telepractice – vital during the pandemic – remains beneficial for our clients in the post-COVID world and we continue to grow our telepractice options.

We were thrilled to be chosen by an independent panel to deliver five presentations at the Family and Relationship Services Australia National Conference in May, for the second consecutive year. The nine team members who delivered the presentations are to be commended. We are proud to bring a regional perspective to a national audience.

We would like to pay tribute to our amazing team who are the strength of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes, working in communities to support some of our most vulnerable people. Our team members are the reason we are able to make such a positive difference for our clients. The case studies throughout this report reflect the passion and empathy shown by the team.

We offer a special thank you to Bishop Columba who is the greatest supporter of our work in making the CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes mission a reality. At the height of the natural disasters at Forbes and Eugowra, Bishop Columba was there, ministering and counselling community members. His presence was a great comfort to those enduring hardship, and inspiring to us.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to our Board members, who are all volunteers, for their sound leadership and deep commitment to our organisation and people. In particular, we acknowledge Lynda Edwards for being named the 2023 NSW Premier's Woman of the Year, and we farewell Michael Moore, who retired from our Board after 3-and-a-half years of service to CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes.

Anne-Marie Mioche

Chief Executive Officer

Stefanie Loader

Chair



Team members from CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes at the Family and Relationship Services Australia National Conference.

Photos by Grace Mac
Photography courtesy of FRSA.

The passion and innovation of our team members is what drives CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes to achieve more for our communities.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes showcased its outstanding work to peers from across Australia at key conferences for the social services sector during 2022–23.

Financial counsellor Tracy Reid accepted an invitation to present at the Financial Counsellors Association of NSW Annual Conference held in September at a session attended by her peers and the Financial Counselling Australia CEO. Tracy delivered a learning session about one of her cases, highlighting the challenges experienced by our rural and remote clients.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes was accepted to deliver a total of five presentations at the 2023 Family and Relationship Services Australia National Conference in May. The event is one of the largest annual gatherings of practitioners, academics and policymakers working to support children, families and communities. The conference program featured the following presentations by CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes:

- 'When services in rural remote communities are needed more than the COVID pandemic' by Belinda Bell
- 'Relationship building: the key to connection' by Meagan Giddy and Jane Kemp
- 'Joining forces for child contact in Far West NSW' by Mark Braes and Julua Hamel
- 'Galari Bila (Lachlan River) Cultural Lens on Men's Behaviour Change Program (MBCP)' by Rebecca Palenapa-Pili, Les Coe and Nadika Skinner
- 'Finding a space for women's voices through connection – Women's Group' by Rebecca Palenapa-Pili and Vanessa Smede.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes service delivery director Dorothée Crawley teamed up with peers from Karitane, Parenting Research Centre and AbSec to deliver a presentation at the 2023 NSW Aboriginal Child & Family Conference in Sydney in June. Their session focused on the NGO Telepractice Venture, and was called 'Learning Together: Using telepractice with First Nations peoples'. The theme for the conference was 'Healing Our Sector', and it brought together AbSec members, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Out-Of-Home Care providers, government and non-government organisations, decision-makers and funders.

Our team profile at a glance

Average length of service **3.89** years

Longest current serving staff member **21** years

Total staff with 15-plus years of service **5**

Total staff with 10–15 years of service **12**

Total staff with 5–10 years of service **21**

Total number of staff at 1 July 2022 was 117, and by 30 June 2023 was 127 **8%** increase

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members **30%** approx

53%
Full-time staff

35%
Part-time staff

12%
Casual staff

FLOOD RESPONSE

Many months on from flash flooding that devastated the small town of Eugowra, CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes remains on the ground to support residents.

Our commitment to the town began within the first week of the unprecedented flash flooding that tragically claimed two lives. We continue to provide financial counselling, a service crucial to the many stages of disaster recovery. Our work at Eugowra has been in addition to on-the-ground support for the multiple Lachlan catchment floods of Forbes and downstream communities.

Disaster struck Eugowra, a town of 700 people, on 14 November 2022 when the Mandagery Creek peaked at record levels, and the NSW State Emergency Service was called to 150 flood rescues. Authorities reported more than 200 buildings were damaged or destroyed by the unforgiving floodwaters.

With the need so great, team members based at Forbes and Parkes quickly rallied to assist at Eugowra, helping with the clean-up and offering emotional support in the aftermath.

Our staff worked alongside defence force personnel going from house to house, and listened to people's stories of survival, and provided information about services.

Team members also rolled up their sleeves to provide practical support, cleaning, ripping up and dragging out carpet and helping clear out other ruined items from houses and yards. They delivered food and drinks to residents, did first aid when required, and helped people look for cats and dogs, missing since the flood.

Our financial counsellors offered their assistance from these early days, connecting, listening and guiding flood-affected residents, many of whom had experienced life-threatening trauma.

Financial counsellor Carole Shennan has been working intensively with Eugowra people and advocating strongly for them in the recovery process.

When NSW government support centres wound up in April 2023, CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes continued delivering financial counselling services, with Carole initiating flood recovery support sessions held at the local bowling club, and organising for other support agencies to attend.

**'We are going to be here for the long haul,'
financial counsellor Carole said.**



Watch
our video



FINANCIAL STABILITY

This was a year like no other in the history of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes's financial counselling program.

Weather and climate were defining features of the second half of 2022 causing natural disasters in our region and hardship for many. During the spring of 2022, the Lachlan catchment had its wettest two-month, three-month and four-month periods on record for any time of any year (*BOM Special Climate Statement 77: Persistent and heavy rain and flooding in eastern Australia during spring 2022*, 21 September 2023). Flooding of the Lachlan River started in the weeks prior to spring and by mid-September reached major levels at a number of locations. From mid-October to mid-November, water levels at key points at Forbes peaked at or above the major flood level multiple times.

With the unprecedented flood disaster, our financial counsellors had to meet a new community need as events unfolded in real time. We met the community in their preferred spaces, including parks, showgrounds, evacuation centres, flood drop-in centres and Reconstruction NSW recovery access points at Eugowra, Forbes and Condobolin. During November and December 2022, we assisted 199 residents impacted by flood, and in many cases resulting/related trauma.

Multiple external, concurrent issues made this a year of significantly increased financial stress across all demographics, with:

- a sharp rise in the cost of living
- interest rate rises
- lack of affordable housing.

All these have seen increased stress in essential expenses areas, such as mortgage, rental, utilities, food, council rates, transport, medical and others.

People who have never accessed our services before are reaching out for support.

These pressures are only made worse by predatory lending practices, which can be the catalyst that traps people in a cycle of high-cost debt to cover basic living costs.

In conjunction with providing disaster financial counselling support, we continued to provide mainstream support, and support for people affected by problem gambling, to individuals of all ages and cultures experiencing financial distress, to assess their realistic options and support their chosen path forward.



Programs and services

Financial Counselling

Our generalist Financial Counsellors are based in Forbes, Narromine, and Orange. Our catchment area extends to Lithgow, Bathurst, Wellington, Mudgee, Dunedoo, Oberon, Blayney, Cowra, Molong, Parkes, Peak Hill, Tullamore, Trundle, Condobolin, Grenfell, Young, West Wyalong, Ungarie, Lake Cargelligo, Trangie, Nyngan, Warren, Gilgandra, Coonabarabran, Coonamble, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Brewarrina, Bourke, Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Menindee.

Offers a comprehensive financial counselling service to individuals who may be experiencing financial stress. The program works across a large geographical footprint to deliver services which encourage self-determination and self-reliance. Financial counsellors negotiate and advocate on behalf of people who are experiencing financial hardship or at financial risk. Financial capability workers provide financial literacy workshops to individuals and groups in disadvantaged communities.

Financial Counselling for People affected by Disaster

Provides financial counselling to help eligible people who reside in NSW Local Government Areas impacted by the November 2022 flood to address their financial challenges through the provision of information, advocacy and/or negotiation on their behalf, and connection to holistic support services.

Financial Counselling for People affected by Problem Gambling

Specialists based in Broken Hill and Dubbo providing casework and education to individuals and groups in Wilcannia, Menindee, Cobar, Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Coonamble, Coonabarabran, Gilgandra, Wellington, Narromine, Trangie, Nyngan, Warren.

Offers targeted assistance for the delivery of financial counselling to support people affected by problem gambling. Also delivers education sessions to create awareness about gambling harm and encourage wellbeing and access to support.



Funding

Predominantly Department of Social Services and NSW Office of Fair Trading, with some funds from Catholic Mission.

Highlights

The non-linear nature of disaster recovery lends itself to financial counselling being crucial from day one – through connecting, listening, guiding and interpreting information. We advocated with banks early during the response phase and explained the necessity for a single point of contact. This approach helped reduce the stress on residents and financial counsellors, avoiding the constant repetition while explaining the enormity of the disaster, often to someone located in call centre in another state. When government support centres wound up in April 2023, our service continued to provide regular in-community recovery support sessions.

Ongoing, we are working closely with our sector supported by Financial Counselling Australia disaster coordination, our funders, local community service providers, and negotiating with creditors to assist residents impacted by flood to navigate the long-term ramifications on their financial and emotional wellbeing.

We are proud of the following achievements:

- One of our Forbes-based financial counsellors presented at the Financial Counselling Association of NSW annual conference in September 2022.
- Growing leadership in our team to include a senior support worker for Financial Stability and a senior support worker for Disaster Relief.
- We engaged First Nations Foundations to deliver My Money Dream financial literacy mentor training to the Financial Stability team and other portfolio team members.

Mum flees domestic violence and with financial counsellor's holistic support, regains some control of her life

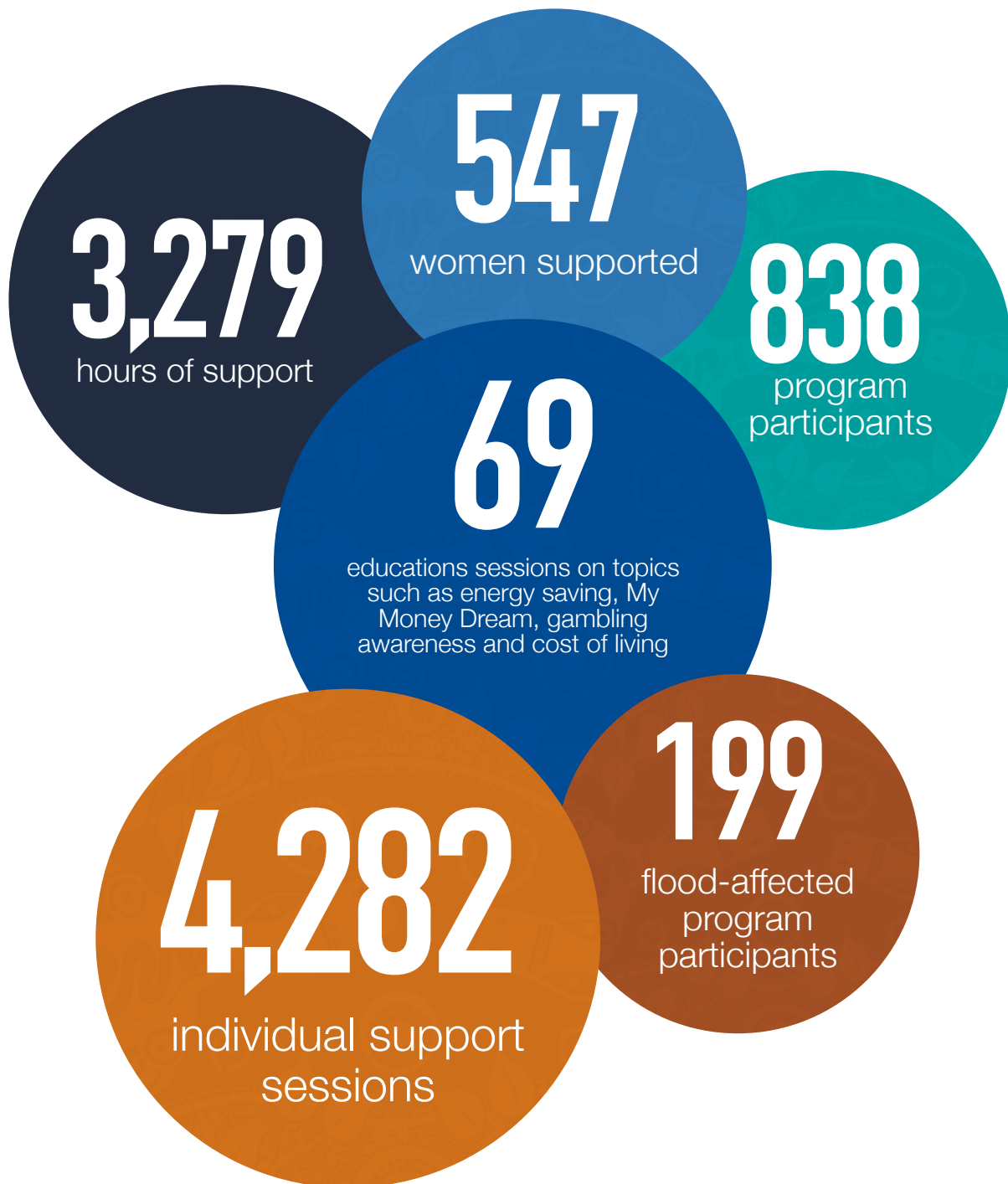
Christina* is in her 40s and a mother of teenage children. The family had fled a long period of physical, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control. Christina attended financial counselling with a complex financial situation based around direct and indirect impacts of abuse, including a mortgage for a home in a town she fled, car loans, multiple credit cards and utility debts. Christina was struggling with the high cost of living, paying high rent while still being responsible for a joint home loan. CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes was the first service Christina had disclosed her full situation to.

Our financial counsellor contacted all creditors to immediately flag as high risk for security purposes, to prevent current location being disclosed and place debts on hold. We arranged food vouchers to assist with immediate needs. Referrals were made for domestic family violence and court support, specialist children and property law advice, Child Support, NSW Victims Support, housing support, physical and mental health services. New accounts were set up with a new bank and providers solely in Christina's name. Our financial counsellor negotiated the release of multiple electricity and telco debts, and the reduction of unsecured loan amounts.

This challenging situation required holistic support to this very vulnerable client and her family. By slowly building trust and connection with Christina, the financial counsellor was able to connect her with specialist support. Christina is now receiving support from Victims Services, which includes counselling for herself and the children, and financial support domestic violence payments. Christina expressed her appreciation for all the assistance provided and has described feeling that she has a little bit of control back over her own life.

*Name changed to protect identity.

Snapshot



Flood recovery support a 'weight off the shoulders' for disaster survivor

Amanda* first presented to our support table in the Recovery Access Point (RAP) centre at Eugowra Showground on 1 December 2022. She was traumatised from her life-threatening experience during the disastrous flood event of 14 November 2022, when she lost her home, car, all possessions and only escaped in the clothes she was wearing. Amanda described feeling overwhelmed, upset and lost. Amanda was covered in mosquito bites and extremely sunburnt, with her skin peeling off. She had spent hours on a roof clinging to her young child until they were rescued and evacuated via helicopter and taken to the showground.

Amanda's main priority was keeping a roof over her children's heads. While she had been issued with an emergency accommodation caravan, based at the showground, it only had space for Amanda and her young child. Her teenager was unable to fit and had been couch surfing since the disaster.

Keenly aware of the shock and devastation, our financial counsellor sat quietly with Amanda, listening and offering assistance.

Amanda was facing an uncertain future, with the owners of her rental property deciding not to repair the home, and, with 250 houses flood affected, little option of securing another place to live in the foreseeable future.

When it came to finances, Amanda was also in a state of flux, facing an uncertain timeline for recovery and restoration of life as normal.

Over time, we helped Amanda apply for a disaster grant through her bank. Our financial counsellor contacted creditors and utility providers. Because many were located interstate, with little knowledge of the flooding situation in NSW, we provided media footage to explain the severity of Amanda's situation. Through the financial counsellor's advocacy, Amanda received debt relief.

Amanda said: 'It is a big relief and a weight off my shoulders to have someone listen to my story, to feel that I have been helped and not so alone with the stress of my finances. Thank you for sticking with me and not walking away. The financial counsellor taking care of things and assisting everyone with their issues and still being present and helping after seven months is such a relief. To know that we have someone to go to get help for absolutely anything has been so good for not just myself, but for everyone in our town. We all love the financial counsellors and think they are amazing. When we have all been a bit down and feeling lost, we know we can depend on the CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes financial counsellors. They have been a great support.'

*Name changed to protect identity.



*Eugowra in the aftermath
of flash flooding.*





HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has a deep commitment to helping families build positive and healthy relationships, even when they face challenging circumstances and times of transition.

We have for many years offered relationship and parenting programs and mediation that have built more positive futures. In 2022–23, our support for healthy relationships expanded with the opening of the Broken Hill Children's Contact Service, and the roll-out of the Men's Behaviour Change Program to five western NSW locations.

A first for the state's most westerly city, the Broken Hill Children's Contact Service is a safe, nurturing and impartial space where children of separated parents can connect with family they do not live with. Its opening reflects our commitment to responding to local needs and is the realisation of a long campaign by the city's social and legal services. Read more on page 39.

In 2022–23, our Men's Behaviour Change Program, SEEDS, achieved full accreditation, consolidating its earlier strong start as a pilot. We secured funding to run the initiative at Forbes, Parkes, Condobolin, Narromine and Bourke – five communities with concerning rates of domestic and family violence. By April 2023, Men's Behaviour Change Program groups were meeting across all five locations.

Our Healthy Relationships services are needed as much as – or more than – ever. The average support hours we provide per client has increased, aligning with our observations that families are presenting with increasingly complex needs. Families accessing Healthy Relationships services are often referred from other CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes programs such as financial counselling or homelessness services, with issues such as financial and housing stress also affecting family relationships. The addition of the Men's Behaviour Change Program and the Children's Contact Service enable us to respond to families effectively through integrated and holistic service models.

Programs and services

Broken Hill Children's Contact Service

Broken Hill

Enables children of separated parents to have safe contact with the parent they do not live with, in circumstances where parents are unable to manage their own contact arrangements, through facilitated changeover, supervised visits, off-site supervision, supported monitored visits, telephone/internet-based supervision, unsupervised on-site visits, conduct appropriate referrals and reports to court.

Family and Relationship Services

Forbes, Parkes, Narromine, Condobolin

Supports men and their families in maintaining positive relationships, especially during times of need or change. Services include parenting programs, anger management, Dads in Schools, individual support and relationships support.

Men's Behaviour Change Program (MBCP)

Forbes, Parkes

Supports men who cause harm to change their behaviours that stem from the deeply entrenched attitudes and beliefs that trigger domestic and family violence. Through an integrated approach, victim-survivors are supported simultaneously.

Regional Family Dispute Resolution

Broken Hill

Aims to re-establish a positive and productive relationship between separated parents to assure that their children are cared for, supported and nurtured and that both parties are financially secure.

Targeted Earlier Intervention

Broken Hill, Menindee, Wilcannia, Bourke, Narromine/Trangie, Forbes/Parkes/Peak Hill, Lake Cargelligo

Supports families to improve the wellbeing of children through supported playgroups, parenting advice and education, mentoring and peer support, individual support and community activities

Communities for Children (CfC)

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes is a CfC Facilitating Partner. Facilitating Partners fund other organisations, known as Community Partners, to provide services targeted to their community as identified by a local committee. Dubbo, Wellington, Narromine

Provides intensive family support, parenting education, school holiday and after-school activities, disability-focused education for parents and children, and community events, with a focus on families with children aged 0–12 years.



Funding

- Department of Communities and Justice
- Department of Social Services
- Attorney-General's Department

Highlights

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes achieved full accreditation with NSW Department of Communities and Justice as a Men's Behaviour Change Program provider for Forbes, Parkes, Condobolin, Narromine and Bourke. By April 2023, Men's Behaviour Change Program groups were meeting across all five locations. We also won funding under the Australian Government's Strong and Resilient Communities – Inclusive Communities initiative to enhance the Men's Behaviour Change Program through the establishment of peer support networks for victim-survivors. Our new initiative to the region is called SistaCare. In Bourke, we formed a partnership with NSW Corrective Services for the co-facilitation of the Men's Behaviour Change Program.

We secured funding from the Australian Government to establish and operate a Children's Contact Service at Broken Hill. This much-needed service opened its doors in February 2023. We welcomed our first family in May.

We have maintained many telepractice offerings for clients, specifically for the delivery of parenting education. Our qualified and experienced practitioners have been able to deliver parenting workshops from their community across the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, reaching families in communities that may normally miss out by offering flexible options, including after-hours workshops. This has enabled greater flexibility in line with our person-centred approaches.

'I just want to say thanks for the opportunity to do the program. I think this program should be offered to all men as I believe it would help them to be able to understand their feelings and how their behaviours can hurt others.' – Program participant



Families embrace 1-2-3 Magic[®] and Emotion Coaching delivered through telepractice

FamilyCare senior support worker Belinda works out of Warren and Nyngan. She is trained in parenting programs and is passionate about sharing this knowledge to assist family members to build skills.

Here, she reflects on how telepractice has enabled her to reach more families.

'For three weeks in May, I ran 1-2-3 Magic[®] & Emotion Coaching online via Zoom. The course equips parents with the skills to manage children's difficult behaviour. Uptake was initially a little slow, but with the support of my FamilyCare colleague at Condobolin and social media posts, we gained 10 participants for the program. This is the biggest enrolment to any online session I have run to date, with numbers about five times the typical level.

'I had eight participants for the morning sessions and two for the evening sessions. I believe having two time options enabled those parents who work to participate. All the participants engaged with the program and really enjoyed learning about child brain development. I even had one father and a grandmother participate, which was great to have not just mothers of the children join in.'

Separated dad and mum take steps towards cooperative parenting

Tim* moved away from Broken Hill to secure more reliable work, but as a result, he hadn't seen his children aged 5 and under since February. Various attempts to agree on arrangements to visit the children and to arrange regular FaceTime communication with the children had proved fruitless. The intake and pre-mediation sessions with the children's mother, Daina*, disclosed a history of intoxication and verbal abuse from Tim during the relationship and threats to remove the children from her care since separation. Initially reluctant to engage in a family dispute resolution process, ultimately Daina agreed to participate by way of private sessions. Although at first Tim denied Daina's claims, he then conceded he had engaged in threatening behaviour, motivated from his perspective by frustration at Daina's unwillingness to come to any agreement.

After conducting five individual private sessions with our Regional Family Dispute Resolution Program, agreement was reached that Tim visit Broken Hill to spend time with the youngest child, and that he then have the older children in his care for the July school holiday period. The agreement was subject to Tim having another adult with him during the time period (such adults being pre-approved by Daina) and that Tim not consume alcohol or drugs while the children are in his care. Furthermore, Daina would have FaceTime communication with the children at a specific time each evening, and that the agreement be recorded in a written parenting plan and that further family dispute resolution take place after the children's stay with Tim. These arrangements have given cause for hope that they will be the start of cooperative parenting into the future.

*Names changed to protect identity.

Snapshot

1,842

program
participants/
clients

6,867

individual
support
sessions,
comprising:

2,022

in Targeted
Earlier Intervention

557

in Family and
Relationship Services

354

in Regional Family
Dispute Resolution

2,599

in FamilyCare

8

in Children's
Contact Service

1,327

in Men's Behaviour
Change Program

5,755

hours of
support

1,223

new
participants

33

events

CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

The programs of our Cultural Engagement portfolio are responsive to the specific needs of Aboriginal people in our rural and remote communities. Our team members work closely with individuals and families in culturally appropriate ways to build their skills and develop their knowledge about healthy lifestyles and relationships and to provide networks of support. Our staff bring insight gained from both training and life experience to an environment where disadvantage is often present. Aboriginal early childhood educators, Aboriginal family workers and men's workers, youth housing support workers, and youth workers provided an invaluable 1,280 hours of support across all Cultural Engagement programs in 2022–23. We deliver services to some of our most remote residents, endeavouring to ensure people are not alone in challenging times, and ultimately to change lives for the better.



Programs and services

Aboriginal Families as Teachers (AFaT)

Bourke, Narromine, Forbes

Supports Aboriginal children aged 0–5 by providing activities such as home visits and playgroups to help them learn, grow, and successfully transition into early childhood education and school.

Aboriginal Family Health Services (AFHS)

Bourke, Narromine

Offers a variety of activities such as educational workshops, individual support, cultural program, and peer support groups to support and educate Aboriginal families and communities in relation to family and domestic violence and healthy lifestyle choices.

Aboriginal Men's Program

Bourke, Broken Hill, Condobolin, Narromine

Aims to improve the life and life expectancy of Aboriginal men through an integrated delivery of individual support, group activities and community events with a focus on healthy living and healthy relationships.

Aboriginal Men's Hub

Bourke

Reconnect

Bourke, Brewarrina

Supports young people aged 12–18 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to family and relationship breakdowns, disconnection from education, employment and community.

Youth Club

Bourke

Provides activities and support to young people aged 12–18. Activities include individual support, group activities, life skill workshops, excursions and camps. The program supports and encourages young people to be active and positive role models within their community.

Funding

- NSW Department of Education
- NSW Health
- Department of Social Services
- Mary Ward International Australia
- Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- Catholic Mission
- Oxfam



Aunty Sharron mirii Bell (second right) at Narromine.

Highlights

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes youth worker Buddy Moore was part of an initiative with PCYC and NSW police districts to take a group of young people on a trip from Bourke to the Central Coast. During the three days, the kids were welcomed by the Darkinjung people, traditional owners of the land on the Central Coast, who gave a cultural tour of a sacred site and told Dreamtime stories about the 'saltwater mob'. The young people also had an opportunity to drive a police boat out on the bay, go snorkelling and visit local PCYCs.

We sponsored a wonderful culture and language roadshow, bringing Aunty Sharron mirii Bell to Bourke, Forbes and Narromine. Aunty Sharron is a proud Wiradjuri Gamilaraay woman and founder of Indigenous Insights, which focuses on early childhood, cultural education and wellbeing. She performed seven concerts during the week, the young audience members following her lead to use language to name Australian animals. Aunty Sharron shared with the children the importance of acknowledging Mother Earth and Father Sky and its people who have walked Mother Earth for thousands of years. This was a concert that not only connected with children but adults as well. It was the first time that some of our Elders had heard their language spoken so fluently in many years and it was wonderful to see their faces as they went back to their childhood. Aunty Sharron had every child dancing and stomping the ground and then Dinawan the Emu came and shared some cheeky stories before the Shake-A-Leg (Hokey Pokey) was performed in language.



Mum supported through her time of grief

Our Aboriginal women's support worker engaged with Tully* in May 2022. Tully's story is one of sadness and heartache but also one of strength and determination. Tully is a young Aboriginal mother of five. Tully's two eldest children live with their father. Her youngest three children live with her. Initially Tully was very hard to engage into our service. She would always say she would come to groups but never showed up. Home visits were cut short by Tully. Our Aboriginal women's support worker did not give up; she continued to invite Tully to groups and continued with home visits, even though they were short. During these visits Tully started to share a bit about her story, the hurdles she had encountered raising her children as a single mother and her experience of domestic and family violence. Through these conversations Tully started to realise that the Aboriginal women's support worker did understand what she was going through and that she was not judging Tully and her family life, she was there to help and support.

Later in 2022, Tully had to deal with a loss that no mother should have to ever deal with. Tully's daughter's young life was cut short due to a tragedy near her home. Tully rang the Aboriginal women's support worker when she arrived at the hospital asking if she could come and sit with her while the medical staff examined her daughter. That was a difficult night for both women, waiting for the examination to be complete so Tully could see her daughter and say goodbye. After saying goodbye Tully could not return to her home; she could not face the house without her daughter being there and she did not want to be close to where the tragedy had taken place.

Our Aboriginal women's support worker spent many hours helping Tully with her grief and offering support during this very sad time. Overnight Tully had become homeless and was staying with different family members. The Aboriginal women's support worker contacted the Department of Communities and Justice Housing in relation to finding Tully a new rental property, given private rent was not an option due to cost and availability. Tully's current landlord was also checking if they had available properties.

Tully's daughter's funeral was held two weeks after the tragedy. Even on this day, Tully could not go to the house.

In November, Tully was offered a property in a nearby city, which she accepted because she no longer wanted to reside in the town she had lived in. Although Tully was very excited about getting a house it also meant that Tully had to go back to her old home and start packing up her personal belongings. Tully asked the Aboriginal women's support worker if she would come to the house with her.

Our Aboriginal women's support worker and Tully have developed a real connection through this tragedy. On occasions Tully has travelled back to the town to attend women's group and she still shares her feelings and how she is travelling whether they be good days or bad. The ongoing support that Tully is receiving from the Aboriginal women's support worker helps her to manage her emotions. This experience has also shown Tully that she is a strong young Aboriginal woman and helped her to grow and to ask for help and accept help when she needs it.

*Name changed to protect identity.



Activities prepare Billy* for big school

Billy* and his mum have been part of Aboriginal Families as Teachers (AFaT) for five months. When the family joined the program, they were homeless and living in the women's safe house. At the tender age of four, Billy had experienced many things that have impacted on his developmental milestones and learning. Billy's mum had been in and out of rehab and refuges since Billy was born. On numerous occasions, Billy was living in foster care with extended family members while mum was getting help.

Billy is a very energetic and boisterous boy, who has difficulty concentrating and remaining focused on certain activities. When Billy joined AFaT he was not enrolled or attending any early childhood education. During intake and assessment our AFaT worker was able to witness how Billy and his mum interacted with each other. Mum found it difficult to maintain Billy's attention and he would not follow her instructions. At this initial assessment it was recommended mum enrol Billy into the local preschool and daycare to help Billy with his learning and social development, and get ready for school.

Our Aboriginal early childhood educator assisted the mum in enrolling Billy into preschool and applied for free childcare assistance for Billy to attend daycare two days per week. Billy loved going to preschool; he loved playing with other children and outside activities. The AFaT worker continued to visit Billy twice per week to help him reach his developmental milestones. On suggestion from preschool, our AFaT worker helped mum apply for

support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) because Billy would require additional support in school.

Although Billy was attending structured early childhood education, our AFaT worker continued to visit Billy weekly. On these occasions the worker would sit with mum and Billy and do activities to prep Billy for school. Our worker created a learning booklet for Billy that contained various activities for his mum to teach him in their spare time. She also shared some parenting tips to help mum maintain Billy's attention during these activities.

Billy's mum feels more confident about Billy starting school. She feels that the support and activities she received from the Aboriginal early childhood educator helped Billy develop school-ready skills. She is also feeling more confident as a parent and looks forward to seeing how Billy settles into school next year.

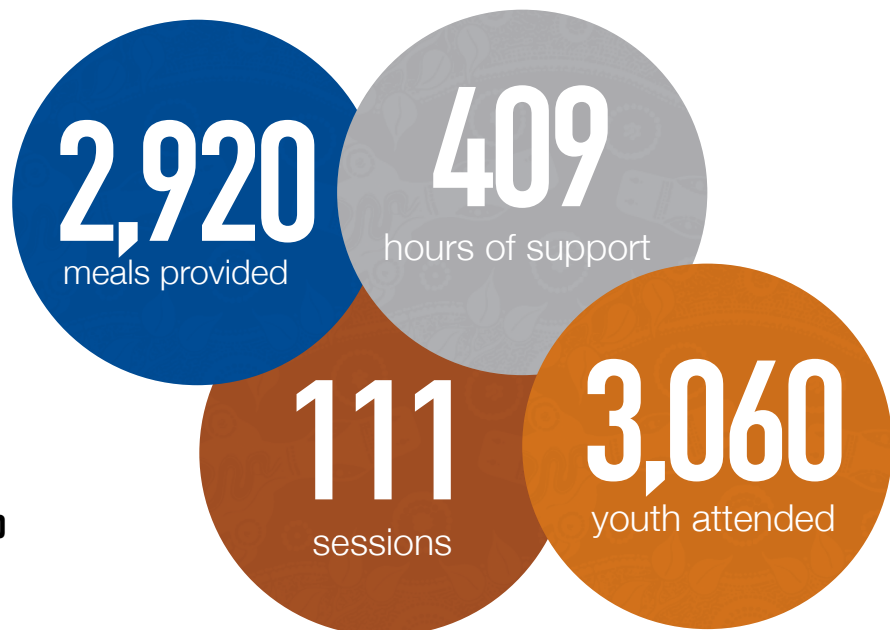
Billy's mum said: 'Billy and I have gained so much from the AFaT program. We have learnt together and my confidence in Billy going onto school certainly has grown. Billy enjoys going to preschool and I hope he settles into big school easily. Without your support I don't know if I would have felt comfortable sending him, but Billy is so excited and he cannot wait to go. Thank you for coming and sharing activities with us to help his educational growth.'

*Name changed to protect identity.

Snapshot



Youth Club



Wilcannia hairdresser

KIDS YOUTH CLUB DELIVERS LOCAL SOLUTION TO A LOCAL NEED



‘The CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes program is what the youth of Bourke needs to give them the best opportunity in life.’

Kids Youth Club supports young people at Bourke to develop a positive lifestyle and habits at a crucial stage in their life.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes launched the service in July 2021 after local agencies, including NSW Police and others identified a gap in services and a need to keep young people off the streets at night.

Kids Youth Club engages, supports and provides nutritious meals to young people three evenings a week in a safe environment.

It is a collaborative venture to enable linkages and referrals.

Kids Youth Club is held at the PCYC Bourke on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings.

These are some thoughts from Constable Dylan Schetor on the Youth Club:

‘CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes encourages a few key points throughout the nightly programs that help develop positive habits. Healthy and nutritious meals are served to the children, and when meals are served, all children are seated at tables for the duration of the meal. Throughout the short duration of my time in Bourke, I have already seen an increase in their table manners, social skills and the ability to settle down to eat a meal with each other.

‘For the entirety of the night, young adult staff from the PCYC, Buddy Moore and myself are constantly roving the gymnasium, and I have seen their ability to identify authoritative figures develop, especially when it comes to conflict resolution. Many of the youth approach any of us when they have an issue with any of their peers, rather than trying to sort it out violently among themselves.

‘The younger people in the community are conveyed home shortly after dinner is served, providing routine and structure to the night. The older youth are then free to socialise or stay at the PCYC for as long as

they want. I feel this is one of the key aspects of the program. The younger children spend hours playing, burning their energy, before being fed and taken home where they tend to stay. The older kids are free to remain at the PCYC, keeping the youth off the street where they are at risk.

‘During my time here, I have seen the culture in the youth shift, and I put that solely down to the way CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has been working with PCYC staff and myself. The program is run by a team where there is a clear common goal, the goal being that we all want what is best for the youth of Bourke. [CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes youth worker] Buddy Moore is the main navigator in achieving that goal.

‘Since my first day in my position, I have felt nothing but welcomed and respected by the entire team. They have given me free rein to develop programs that I feel would positively influence the youth, which I did in holding weekly boxing classes at the PCYC. I was quickly welcomed into the culture that we are trying to create here, which is that we are all in this together and there should be no dividing lines in the community when it comes to moulding our youth. We promote a culture that we are all under the same roof, and we should be working TOGETHER. I may wear a blue uniform, but the team here sees me as one of them, just another person who has the same goals trying to help the youth to a better life.

‘I can clearly see the influence that the youth program has on the youth in Bourke. I have seen an increase in school attendance, growing trust and rapport with authoritative figures, and above all else, kids being given the opportunity to be kids despite any issues in their home life that may be restricting their ability to do so.

‘The CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes program is what the youth of Bourke needs to give them the best opportunity in life.’

COOEE CUTS OFFERS WELLBEING AND CONNECTION IN WILCANNIA

Cooee Cuts is so much more than an affordable hair salon for the remote clients it serves.

The social enterprise opened at Wilcannia in September 2022 to put hairdressing within reach of the community. Operating four days a month, an appointment at Cooee Cuts is as much about positive wellbeing, self-care and social connections as it is about a new hairstyle.

We partnered with Mildura-based hairdresser and former Wilcannia resident Juliann Mutch to deliver the professional and affordable service.

Wilcannia has a population of 745 people, more than 60% of whom are Indigenous (2016 Census data). Broken Hill, the nearest service centre, is a two-hour drive away, often putting a haircut out of reach.

The value of this salon has been demonstrated by the community response.

Originally opening three days a month, this has been expanded to a fourth day to cater for demand. Juliann said Cooee Cuts was booked out every trip.

The emphasis is on bringing a positive wellbeing service to Wilcannia and surrounding areas.

'It's time out, pamper, value and self-care,' Juliann said.

When some clients first sat down in the Cooee Cuts chair, they had never been to a hairdresser before, and instead had trimmed their own hair. They had certainly never had a shampoo and head massage, pamper and blow-dry.

'To sit there and experience something like that, that is shown with care, is a lovely experience for them,' Juliann said.

Some clients drive two hours from remote areas for their appointments.

'These ladies say they love the outing, pampering, and sometimes it's simply enjoying the female conversation in a male-predominant and isolated environment,' Juliann said.

'They also spend money in the township, getting groceries, petrol, going to the post office, and having a meal.'

The social enterprise has opened up an opportunity for students of Wilcannia Central School to gain life skills and confidence in the workplace.

Juliann mentored students as they participated in her work readiness program, 'Be the Best You Can Be', all in the supportive environment of Cooee Cuts.

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

We would like to thank CatholicCare [Wilcannia-Forbes] for supporting the students at Wilcannia Central School.

Our alternate learning program aspires to assist every student in achieving their educational and post-school destination pathway goals and this program aligned with our goals. Life skills and wellbeing programs like Juliann Mutch's work readiness program 'Be the Best You Can Be' are an important part of our overall strategy because they support our students' growth and achievement.

Students were trusted with real life responsibilities like customer care and communication. They needed to carry themselves professionally and with confidence, having an empathetic and flexible mentor like Juliann Mutch meeting the students at their level and guiding them through the process was key to the program's success.

The program was such a great success that Juliann expanded it to the students from our mainstream school. We really appreciate the time and effort that CatholicCare's Cooee Hair and hairdresser, Juliann Mutch have invested in the students at Wilcannia Central School and hope that this partnership continues to grow in 2024.

Trish Coulson
Head Teacher Welfare

Nadia Mills
Executive Principal



Hairdresser Juliann Mutch at the launch of Cooee Cuts.



SAFE HOMES

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has a strong record of delivering a range of homelessness services and in the past 12 months our Safe Homes portfolio has expanded. We added Staying Home Leaving Violence and Youth Head Leasing to our suite of services. These provide much-needed capacity for our regions, where homelessness remains a significant – albeit often hidden – issue. Staying Home Leaving Violence recognises leaving an abusive relationship can be difficult, and aims to prevent women and their children from becoming homeless. Ready to innovate to meet community need, we are also delivering a hybrid telepractice model of Staying Home Leaving Violence for the Lachlan and Weddin local government areas.

In the Parkes, Forbes, Lachlan, Weddin, Cowra, Bourke and Cobar local government areas, communities are experiencing extreme rental shortages due to a range of factors, among them flooding. Rental properties have become less affordable, increasingly moving out of reach of people from across a spectrum of incomes. We continue to use our resources and innovation to meet these challenges for clients. We also work to bring these issues to the attention of those in power and the broader community in the pursuit of solutions.

'I would not be here today without all your support.' – Program participant

Programs and services

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS)

Parkes, Forbes, Cowra, Condobolin, Lake Cargelligo, Cobar and Bourke

Homelessness support for women, men, young people and families, through a range of initiatives, among which are a women's refuge at Forbes and women's safe house at Bourke for women escaping domestic and family violence.

Domestic Violence Response Enhancement

Condobolin

Focused on women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Staying Home Leaving Violence

Parkes, Forbes, Cowra

Offers support to women with or without children who wish to stay in their own home or a home of their choosing while leaving domestic and family violence.

Staying Home Leaving Violence (pilot)

Hybrid telepractice model for Lachlan and Weddin

Offers support to women with or without children who wish to stay in their own home or a home of their choosing while leaving domestic and family violence.

Youth Head Leasing

Parkes, Forbes, Cowra, Bourke and Cobar

Assisting young people looking to enter the private rental market.

Funding

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Highlights

We delivered ongoing intensive support to almost 1,000 clients across all sites.

After devastating flash flooding at Eugowra in November 2022, our team was involved in immediate disaster response, as well as disaster recovery, including a family fun day and barbecue in January and a movie night in March.

Communities in local government areas of Parkes, Forbes, Cowra, Lachlan and Weddin have not previously had access to the Staying Home Leaving Violence program (funded by Department of Communities and Justice). The two formats of this program together assisted 61 clients and provided 517 hours of support from March (when they became fully operational) to 30 June 2023.

In August 2022, we held a Homelessness Week event at Forbes, featuring speakers from CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes, the social housing sector, and clients who were experiencing or had experienced homelessness. Clients shared their experiences and how we had been able to support them. This in-person event was complemented by an online event featuring a panel of local speakers, which was later posted to our YouTube channel.

We hosted an awareness event to mark Youth Homelessness Matters Day on 19 April 2023 at Parkes, and later that month at Cobar, to shine a light on the issue.

Young man's life starts to spiral out of control but with a helping hand he starts afresh

Joseph*, aged in his teens, had a full-time job and was paying a weekly rate at a local caravan park all on his own, without any government assistance. This all came to an end when he had a disagreement with another person, resulting in a physical altercation and Joseph breaking his hand. His life started a downward spiral: he lost his job, and then his accommodation because he could not fund it due to losing his job. He was on his own and unsure of what to do next.

Joseph attended a CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes office with a friend who was a client of the organisation. Joseph was withdrawn – he would barely speak. Our support worker gradually built rapport and trust with Joseph.

'So that I didn't overwhelm the client, we did little things each visit,' Joseph's support worker said.

'We started with Links2Home and a food voucher, and then a doctor's appointment, so that a doctor could support him with his mental health and his injured hand.

'Then we moved on to getting all his identification together to apply for a Centrelink payment, which would then lead to a housing application.'

This happened over a period of two weeks, and temporary accommodation was only 28 days. Joseph's support worker discussed longer-term solutions, including refuges, and there being a refuge at Orange. Joseph was on board with this option. His support worker arranged a time with Veritas House at Orange and sat with Joseph to complete a referral over the phone. The next day the client was approved and his spirits seemed improved also. His support worker gained approval from the CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes team leader to purchase a bus ticket to take Joseph to Orange. Joseph was closer to safe accommodation at Veritas House, he just had to get through the night.

The next day Joseph's grandmother rang his support worker to say Joseph was with the police and would miss the bus. His support worker cancelled the bus ticket and advised Veritas. Veritas was understanding and held the room. Later that day, Joseph and his mum called and said he had been released and needed to leave town. Joseph's mum said she would pay for the bus ticket if the accommodation was still available. The next day Joseph boarded the bus, to start his new life.

The support worker has called Joseph since to check-in.

'Joseph spoke more in the phone call than he has in the whole month that we worked together,' the support worker said.

*Name changed to protect identity.

Snapshot

996

clients

14,364

individual
support sessions

591

women
supported
by SHS

4

events

9,469

hours of
support

286

clients
affected by
DFV

110

accommodated
in the safe house
and refuge

40.5%

SHS clients
aged 25 years
and under

NEW CHILDREN'S CONTACT SERVICE FOR BROKEN HILL



'The Children's Contact Service reflects our commitment to responding to need, and is the realisation of a long campaign by the city's social and legal services.'

Separating and separated families in far-western NSW can now access a safe, nurturing and impartial place for children to see their other parent or extended family at the new Broken Hill Children's Contact Service, opened in February 2023.

The child's needs are the primary focus of the service, and its purpose is to allow children to stay connected with both parents and other significant people in their lives, in situations where families are unable to manage their own contact arrangements.

Children's Contact Services operates in more than 60 locations across Australia, but prior to February, the nearest location to Broken Hill was at Mildura, a three-hour drive away.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes received \$2 million in Australian Government funding over four years to establish the Children's Contact Service and it has brought a valuable and much-needed service to the Broken Hill community.

'The purpose of the Children's Contact Service is to provide children the opportunity to re-establish or maintain a meaningful relationship with both parents, as well as grandparents and other significant people in their lives,' CEO Anne-Marie Mioche said.

'The Children's Contact Service reflects our commitment to responding to need, and is the realisation of a long campaign by the city's social and legal services.'

The Broken Hill Children's Contact Service provides a safe, non-judgemental and positive environment for young people up to 18 years of age, and their parents.

Its professional team is headed up by our Healthy Relationships – Children's Contact Services delivery leader Mark Braes, who has a wealth of experience in the sector.

'We know that for some separated parents, experiences of worry, fear and anger can make it difficult to manage child contact arrangements and the co-parenting relationship,' Mr Braes said. 'Our team of contact workers facilitate safe, positive and child-focused contact visits.'

'The centre has a range of age-appropriate resources to help children enjoy time with their visitor, and contact workers are present during visits and can provide support to children and parents.'



Watch
our video

BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The programs of our Better Health and Wellbeing portfolio provide targeted assistance to improve the way people feel and function in their lives.

In Australia, more than two in five people aged 16–85 years have experienced a mental disorder in their lifetime (*Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2020–2022, 2023*). The survey, which involved almost 16,000 Australians, also found one in five Australians have experienced a mental disorder in the previous 12 months.

Through the Family Mental Health Support Service, we direct early intervention support to children and young people showing signs of, or at risk of developing, mental illness. In 2022–23, we supported 5% more clients than last year.

Support in this sphere of health rightly extends beyond the person experiencing a mental disorder or condition. Our Family and Carer Mental Health Program wraps around those who may otherwise feel overwhelmed or alone.

In 2022–23, the number of family members and carers assisted increased by more than 26% to 398 participants. In the 12-month period, the program received a rise in referrals from NSW Health's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. The addition of three peer workers to the program's team has built on the strength of its existing support workers.

Secure accommodation is recognised as one of the multiple and interconnected components of wellbeing. The Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing Program assists people living in social housing who are at risk of tenancy failure to address the issues that are affecting their tenancy. Support is tailored to address complex factors affecting an individual's life, often including domestic and family violence, mental health, disability and trauma. The program aims to help tenants either maintain their existing tenancy, with no further breaches, or make a positive exit into other accommodation. This relatively new addition to our suite of programs is already guiding individuals in the Parkes and Forbes local government areas towards better life outcomes.

Programs and services

Family Mental Health Support Service (FMHSS)

Support workers based at Parkes, Forbes, Bathurst, Orange, Broken Hill and Wilcannia.

Support workers outreach to Lithgow, Portland, Kandos, Cowra, Blayney, Molong, Trundle, Condobolin, Peak Hill and Menindee.

Provides early intervention support to children and young people aged up to 18 who are showing early signs of, or are at risk of developing, mental illness, with the support of their families and carers.

Family and Carers Mental Health Program (FCMHP)

A mix of support workers and peer workers based at Parkes, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo and Broken Hill, and covers all towns in the Western NSW and Far West Local Health Districts.

Provides education, support groups, individual support, and advocacy to people caring for someone with a mental illness or mental health challenges.

Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing (STSH)

Forbes, Parkes

Assists people living in NSW Department of Communities and Justice social housing to maintain their tenancy and increase their overall wellbeing.

‘[The] mum discussed with me her daughter is doing well now and is finding school enjoyable.’ — family mental health support worker

Funding

- Department of Social Services – FMHSS
- NSW Ministry of Health – FCMHP
- Department of Communities and Justice

Highlights

We delivered support to more than 1,100 clients across all sites and all three portfolio programs.

The recruitment of three peer workers has grown the capacity of our FCMHP team. We have delivered 16 community events to increase education and awareness.

Our team members in both the FCMHP and the FMHSS have engaged in professional development to further equip them to meet the needs of participants in their respective programs.

The FMHSS team organised a mental health expo at Broken Hill featuring keynote speaker Sam Webb, who co-founded mental health charity LIVIN in 2013 after the death of a good friend to suicide. Sam, who is also an actor and known for his roles in *Home and Away*, *Neighbours* and *Australian Survivor*, is based in Los Angeles and spoke from the heart about experiences he had in the past and present in relation to mental health. He spoke candidly about strategies for how to talk to people if you are not feeling OK, and how to help a friend in need, and this included his mantra 'it ain't weak to speak'. About 160 students and community members attended the expo. The attendees also had the opportunity to speak to several mental health services within the community to gather information and resources after Sam's talk.

The FMHSS has seen continuous strong referral pathways from schools, health services and other agencies in 2022–23.



Keynote speaker Sam Webb at the Broken Hill Mental Health Expo.

Mum's hold on tenancy grows firmer with support and she starts making plans for the future

Millie* was distressed because she feared yard maintenance issues at her public housing property may lead to her losing her tenancy. Millie had previously been homeless for five years and had moved around between homeless shelters and temporary accommodation prior to securing the Housing NSW residence. Millie became a client of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes's STSH in May 2023 after Housing NSW advised the program that the property was unkept, especially in the front and rear yard.

When our support worker went out to meet with Millie for the first time, Millie was extremely anxious and upset at the prospect of losing her tenancy but they chatted about the situation. Millie had a small child with special needs who required a lot of her time and attention. Millie said it was sometimes difficult to get things done because of her little girl's special needs. Millie showed the support worker the property and they came up with a case plan for her so they could work together to achieve some short-term and long-term goals.

We organised for a skip bin to be delivered to the property and encouraged the client to load it with as much rubbish from the yard as she could. We also arranged for some general yard maintenance to be done, including front and rear lawns mowed, gutters cleaned and gravel spread around the front yard. She also saw to the removal of a toxic oleander bush that Millie was worried her daughter could come into contact with. We encouraged Millie to continue with her clean-up efforts, with a plan to return in two weeks. The support worker kept in contact with Millie over the phone during that time.

Two weeks later when our support worker returned, Millie had made a brilliant effort – all the rubbish had been removed, the lawns were done and the outside of the residence looked completely transformed. Millie was also in really good spirits. The worker said how great the place looked and how proud she was of Millie for doing so much in a short amount of time, and Millie shared some of her other future plans and asked the worker if she could also assist with those. Millie agreed to a referral to CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes's FamilyCare program to look at engaging in a playgroup for her daughter and also for her to meet new people.

*Name changed to protect identity.

Support worker advocates for overwhelmed carer

Yvette*, was facing a difficult situation that had left her worried about whether she could continue as a foster carer. Yvette had been the carer of Lucy*, 14, for about three years. Lucy had a history of numerous placements, but Yvette and Lucy enjoyed a close relationship. Yvette had been advised by Lucy's case managers to apply for a Therapeutic Home-Based Care allowance, which required a home assessment. The assessment had been done, and it contained comments that Yvette felt were disrespectful, judgemental and without any factual basis. Her confidence was undermined. A panel had been convened to decide on approving the allowance, and it would rely on the report in its deliberations. Yvette had been given three days to respond to the assessment.

Distressed, Yvette turned to CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes's FCMHP. In sessions with her support worker, they discussed a number of key issues, including whether Yvette wanted to continue as a foster carer, the repercussions for Lucy's mental health if she were placed in a youth group home, and how Yvette wanted to respond to the assessment's comments. With help from her support worker, a three-page response was drafted and submitted to the case management organisation.

Yvette was approved for the allowance. She was very grateful for the support of the CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes program and team member.

*Names changed to protect identity.

FMHSS continues to support young people with skills, strategies to cope with adversity

Mat*, a young person, was struggling with social cues, making friends at school and separation from his mum when going to school. Mat would become heightened in his emotions and refuse to attend school. At intake with the FMHSS there was a discussion about the family's history with mental health. Mat's mum and dad were open about this family history and their concerns about its effects on their son. Mat's social and emotional connections with his peers were lacking and his friendships were also struggling.

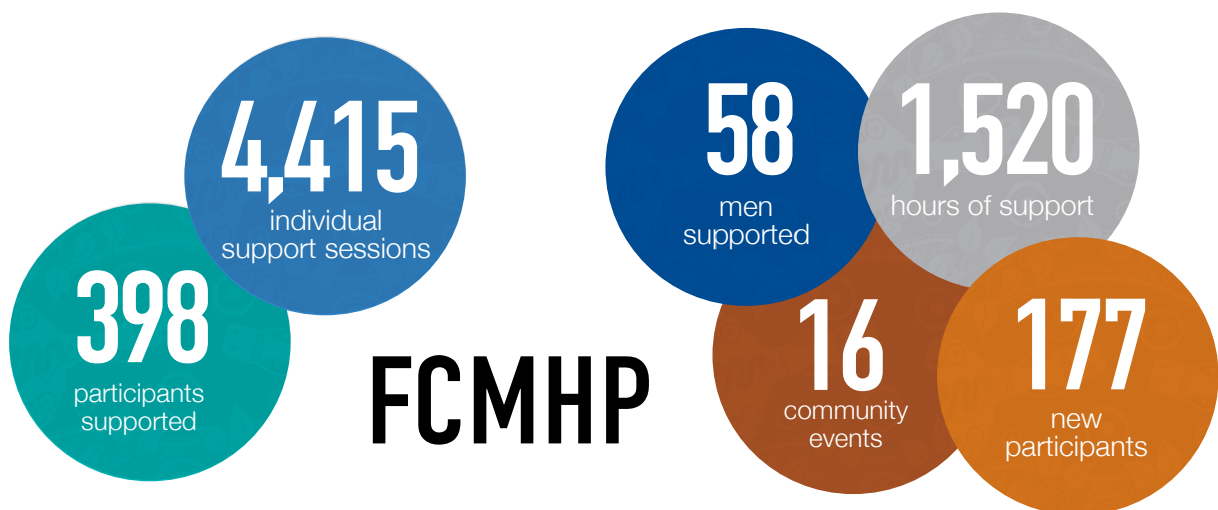
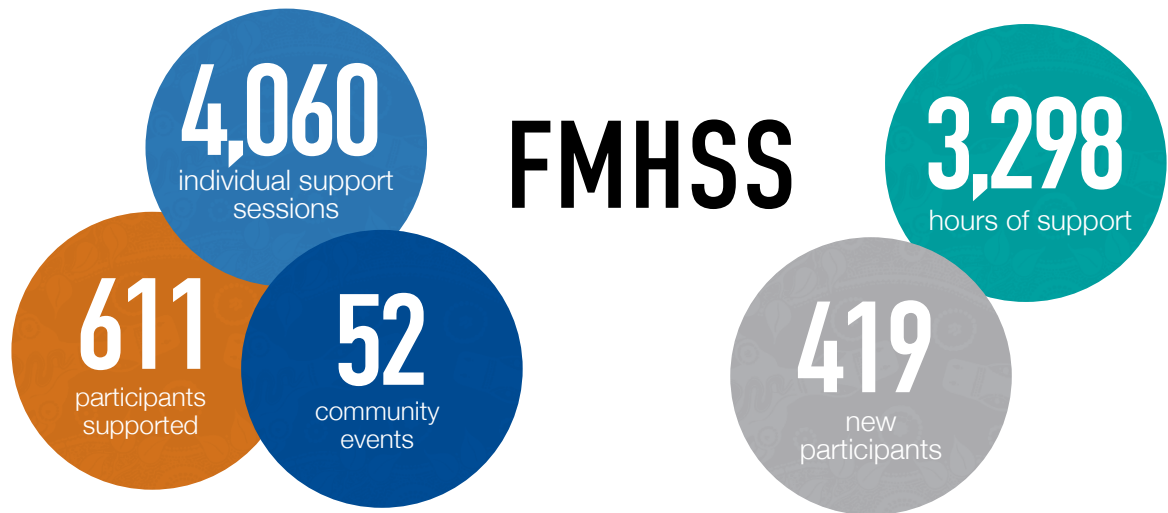
Throughout the sessions with the FMHSS support worker, Mat identified he did not have many friends, and his coping skills were low with dealing with this situation in the school playground and at home. His support worker started sessions with Mat engaging in understanding of what a good friend was and how to form a friendship. Mat started understanding his emotions better by using feeling cards, drawing social settings, discussing the school environment, and his family supported the same communication at home. Mat was linked into the DRUMBEAT Program, delivered by another FMHSS support worker at the school, which really helped with establishing friends and understanding areas of connection through rhythm. This program supported emotional learning with healthy relationships and teamwork with supportive relationships.

The FMHSS support worker noticed a huge difference in Mat's sessions and his discussion about friends was nice to see. On reflecting back to Mat's family, they noticed he was going to school with no separation and was talking about new friends he had made. Mat's mum was impressed with his commitment to engage with the FMHSS and the DRUMBEAT Program. She also discussed attending DRUMBEAT on a regular weekly basis to support her wellbeing and connection with Mat.

*Name changed to protect identity.



Snapshot



SYLO CAFÉ

Sylo Café opened in July 2022, bringing to fruition our first social enterprise at Forbes.

Its purpose is to provide training and, ultimately, career pathways for people who face barriers to employment, while also serving quality food and beverages.

Sylo was buzzing in its opening months, embraced by our community, before two major floods disrupted its operations in November 2022.

Despite the setback, we remain committed to the project, undertaking repairs to have the cafe reopened in the second half of 2023.

Café manager Fionn Young has been part of the team from the start and is passionate about its success.

‘We were definitely busier than we ever imagined we were going to be, right up until the floods, so that was brilliant,’ she said, recalling the café’s first months.

In the months to the November 2022 flooding, the cafe was also able to start offering opportunities to a number of local people facing barriers to employment.

One of those was a client of a CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes program who was rebuilding her life.

‘She was just the most wonderful addition to our team,’ Fionn said. ‘We saw her confidence grow from when she first started with us. It was lovely.’

Fionn is finding it rewarding to be leading the café while providing an opportunity to train and mentor individuals who may need some extra support during a challenging time in their life.

‘For me personally, I’ve always worked in hospitality, so always wanted to go to the best place in town, but to be able to say that the hospitality job that I do also has a bigger cause than just feeding someone is quite nice,’ she said.

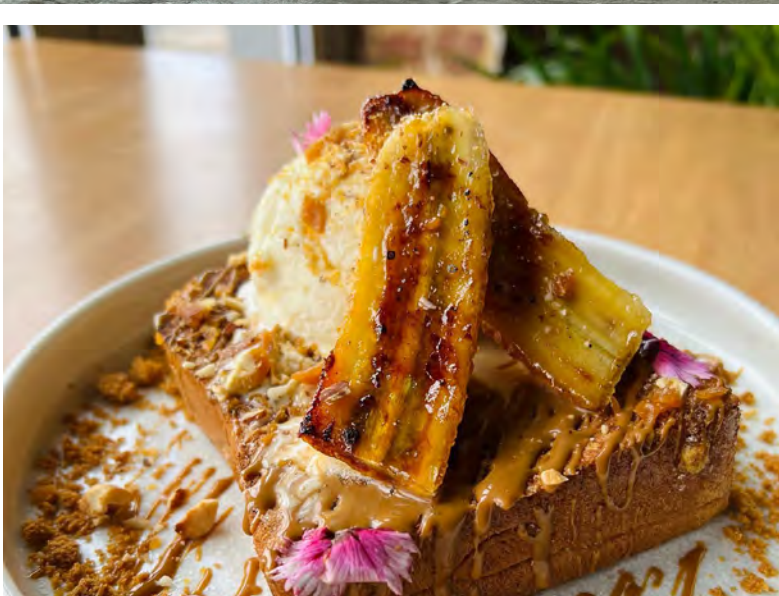
The Sylo staff also included juniors entering the workforce for the first time.

‘It’s brilliant to give people their first job and everyone, especially the juniors, are just so keen to start a job and learn something new and earn an income and meet new people as well,’ Fionn said.

Sylo’s opening in July 2022 marked a new chapter for the stately 1890s landmark chosen as its home, which had been unused for several years.

We have appreciated community members’ support for Sylo and have been encouraged by their shared love of the building’s history and ambiance.

We look forward to welcoming our customers and staff back to Sylo soon.



OUR EXECUTIVE

Anne-Marie Mioche

Chief Executive Officer



Anne-Marie Mioche commenced as CEO of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes in January 2017 and brings a strong commitment to the values embodied in principles of Catholic social justice.

Anne-Marie is passionate about doing all she can to support work environments that nurture care, compassion and service to those in need.

Previously she has led several national not-for-profit companies and associations, including Families Australia and Carers Australia, which she established. During her career, Anne-Marie has been employed in the political sphere as an adviser to an Australian Government Minister and has worked at senior levels in the Australian Public Service.

In the Australian Government Department of Health, Anne-Marie headed a taskforce that was responsible for developing Australia's first national strategy for the prevention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide. She has had responsibility for and managed \$45 million worth of projects, including programs for the Stolen Generations and programs around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing.

Anne-Marie has extensive knowledge and understanding of government policy as well as rural and remote issues and challenges in the lives of First Australians.

Kate Gibson

Deputy CEO



Kate Gibson has worked with CatholicCare for more than 10 years as the Director of Programs and Service Delivery and now the Deputy CEO. She had previously worked at the Catholic Education Office as a Senior Education Officer and Coordinator of Schools Curriculum. She was awarded the Brother John Taylor Award for Excellence in Catholic Education for her significant commitment to education within the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes for over 20 years.

Kate has lived and worked in Broken Hill, Trundle and Forbes, and has held management positions at several schools in our diocese.

Kate is very aware of the social issues impacting our diocese and has a strong commitment to the CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes mission, vision and values. Her central focus is ensuring that we are providing the highest quality of service for our participants and communities with an emphasis on continual growth and improvement.

She has specifically trained in Planning, Techniques and Communication in Public Participation, Mercer Job Evaluation, Staff Supervision, and participated in the Harvard Business School for Social Enterprise.

Margie Johnson

Chief Financial Officer



Margie Johnson has more than 20 years of experience in accounting, including management accounting, business management, taxation and superannuation. Margie is a Certified Practising Accountant and has worked for CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes since 2007.

Margie has a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics from the University of Sydney and a Master of Accountancy from Charles Sturt University.

Using her knowledge and experience, Margie has guided CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes through its transition to a company and with the Executive Team will continue the journey of growth and expansion of services to achieve the strategic objectives.



Lynda Edwards with her NSW
Premier's Woman of the Year
award at the 2023 NSW Women
of the Year Awards ceremony.
Photo: © Salty Dingo 2023

CATHOLICCARE WILCANNIA-FORBES APPLAUDS BOARD MEMBER WINNING TOP WOMEN'S AWARD

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes CEO Anne-Marie Mioche congratulated Board Member Lynda Edwards who won the prestigious 2023 NSW Premier's Woman of the Year Award in March.

Ms Edwards was also named NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year at the NSW Women of the Year Awards presentation in Sydney.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes team members watched the livestream of the event with anticipation and then excitement at Ms Edwards's success.

Ms Mioche said the organisation was thrilled the important work of Ms Edwards had been recognised on the state stage.

'Lynda, a proud Wangkumara and Barkandji woman, is a dedicated advocate for First Nations people in the financial sector,' Ms Mioche said. 'Her work has contributed significantly to fairer financial outcomes for First Nations people.'

'Her valuable contribution to our community in western NSW also includes serving in the voluntary role of director of the CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes Board.'

OUR BOARD



Stefanie Loader

BSc (Hons), GAICD

Chairperson and Company Director, Member of the Nominations & Remunerations Committee

Stef is a former mining industry executive and aspiring small-scale farmer. She has lived and worked in remote communities in Laos, Peru, Canada, London and New Delhi and now calls regional NSW home.

Stef's focus is on building diverse, regional economies and strong supportive regional communities.

This includes the work of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes in encouraging strong social networks and wellbeing, supporting vulnerable and potentially vulnerable people as well as growing economic activity.

'I want to see my region, the central west and western NSW communities, grow and thrive for many years to come. That's why I am on the board of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes.'



Dr Mark Buhagiar

Adjunct Professor UTS (Faculty of Health)

PhD MHM BAppSc (Physio), GAICD

Deputy Chairperson and Company Director, Member of the Finance & Risk Committee

Before taking on his current role as the Head of Clergy Health and Wellbeing for the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta, Mark worked for more than 15 years with the healthcare sector in a variety of clinical, research and management roles.

He has experience in both the public and not-for-profit sectors, with particular focus on residential aged care, rehabilitation, and palliative care.

'I am on the Board of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes because its drivers align with my own – to empower individuals, families and communities in a practical and tangible manner that is inspired by our Creator and imbued with a spirit of justice.'



Allen Duggan

Company Secretary, Public Officer and Company Director

Allen has been a solicitor for more than 50 years. He has worked as a consultant, sole practitioner, and as a partner in firms in Sydney.

Practising since 1969, Allen has vast experience in land and property law, commercial law, estate planning, succession and family law.

He credits his career with giving him the skills to serve the community with more than 10 years on the CentaCare Advisory Board and now as a director of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes along with other service organisations.

'My love for law comes down to a feeling of being able to help people, really in its most simple form.'



Bernard Boerma

Company Director, Member of the Nominations & Remuneration Committee

Bernard is a PhD student and teaches at the University of Sydney. He is a non-executive director of several not-for-profit human services agencies and a research institute.

He has held senior leadership, executive and policy development roles in the human services sector, including 13 years as the CEO of CatholicCare Sydney. Bernard has research interest in social justice and the impact on human service non-government organisation values when operating in a market-based service context.

His passion is to build a just society and a better world in which all people are treated with dignity and have an opportunity to contribute.



Michael Digges

Company Director, Chairperson of the Finance & Risk Committee

Michael worked in senior management roles in private industry before his current role as the Executive Director, Administrator and Finance of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. The Chancery provides administrative and accounting support to the parishes. Michael is also the Financial Administrator for the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes.

'I see my role on the board of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes as both a support to management and also exercising oversight on behalf of the Diocese. Outreach to those less fortunate, in particular, our Indigenous brothers and sisters, is something that I regard as an essential duty of the Catholic Church that I strongly support.'



Lynda Edwards

Company Director and Member of the Finance & Risk Committee

Lynda is a descendant of the Wangkumara/Barkindji people of far west NSW and is a passionate advocate for financial inclusion, fairness, justice and financial resilience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. In 2023, Lynda was awarded NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year and NSW Premier's Woman of the Year.

Lynda joined the consumer advocacy movement in her role as Coordinator Financial Capability with Financial Counselling Australia. Lynda is also a past team member of CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes.



Bishop Columba (second left) with the CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes Board and executive.
Photo: Copper.Co Photography



Karen Larkman

Company Director, Chairperson of the Nominations & Remuneration Committee

Karen has significant international experience in senior executive positions relating to Safeguarding, Child Protection and Adults at Risk of Harm.

She was appointed to the position of inaugural Director of the Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office for the Archdiocese of Sydney in 2015, and since November 2020, she has been the Acting Director for the Professional Standards Office NSW/ACT.

Karen has relevant industry knowledge including corporate governance, an understanding of federal and government funding in relation to welfare agencies, and financial and non-financial performance management indicators.

Karen holds an MBA (Exec), a BA (Hons) in Social Work and is an accredited mediator. Karen is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is a board member for Australian Catholic Redress Ltd.



Michael Moore

Alternate Company Director, retired 19 April 2023

Michael is a Chartered Accountant who has worked for several dioceses of the Catholic Church for more than 25 years.





FINANCIAL REPORT

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes Ltd

The Registered Company Auditor for the year ending 30 June 2023 was Crowe Audit Australia. The Audited Consolidated Financial Report is available from the CEO upon request.

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June

	2023	2022
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	4,975,082	4,934,008
Accounts Receivables & Other Debtors	328,993	9,863
Inventory	11,868	29,363
Financial Assets	1,581,656	1,483,899
Other Current Assets	107,586	114,121
	7,005,184	6,571,254
NON - CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, Plant & Equipment	1,469,673	1,426,254
Right-of-Use Assets	2,271,718	1,274,957
	3,741,391	2,701,211
TOTAL ASSETS	10,746,576	9,272,465

	2023	2022
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable & Other Payables	990,708	708,374
Lease Liabilities	338,976	303,240
Income in Advance	3,417,841	2,485,042
Employee Provision	824,926	776,021
	5,572,452	4,272,676
	2023	2022
NON - CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease Liabilities	1,994,132	972,168
Employee Provisions	141,340	119,309
	2,135,472	1,091,477
TOTAL LIABILITIES	7,707,924	5,364,153
NET ASSETS	3,038,652	3,908,312

Statement of Change in Equity as at 30 June

	Retained Earning	Asset Revaluation Reserve	Total
Balance at 01 July 2022	3,861,556	46,756	3,908,312
Surplus (Deficit) for year	(869,660)	-	(869,660)
Balance at 30 June 2023	2,991,896	46,756	3,038,652
Balance at 01 July 2021	4,490,306	-	4,490,306
Asset Revaluation Reserve	-	46,756	46,756
Surplus (Deficit) for year	(628,750)	-	(628,750)
Balance at 30 June 2022	3,861,556	46,756	3,908,312

Statement of Cash Flow as at 30 June

	2023	2022
Cash Flows generated from Operating Activities	647,484	336,242
Cash Flows generated from Investing Activities	(330,292)	(375,568)
Cash Flows generated from Financing Activities	(276,118)	(286,431)
Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash & Cash Equivalents	41,074	325,757
Cash & Cash Equivalents at the Beginning of the year	4,934,008	5,259,765
Cash & Cash Equivalents at the End of the year	4,975,082	4,934,008

WITH THANKS

The important work undertaken by CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes is only possible thanks to the generous support of state and Commonwealth governments, businesses, benevolent trusts, sectors of the Catholic Church and individual donors. This support allows us to provide quality services to families and communities of western NSW.

The Australian Government

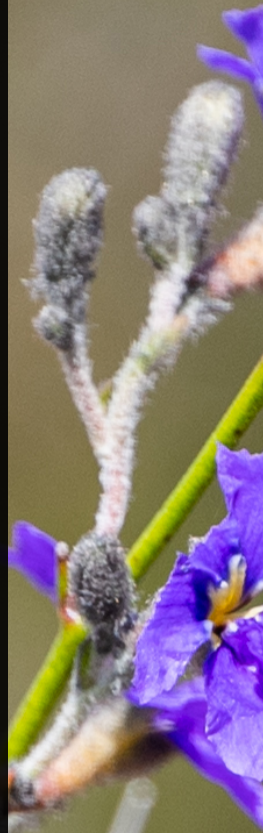
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Office For Women
- Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Attorney-General's Department

NSW State Government

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Education
- NSW Health
- NSW Fair Trading
- Crown Lands, Department of Planning and Environment
- Women NSW

Non-Government

- Catholic Mission
- Mary Ward International Australia
- OxFam





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Bourke
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Brewarrina

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Brewarrina
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Broken Hill
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Cobar
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CatholicCare
Wilcannia-Forbes