

Thursday February 22, 2024

**MEDIA RELEASE**



## ***CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes supports communities in challenging year***

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes delivered more hours of support and assisted more clients in 2022-23 as natural disasters and rising financial stress caused strong demand for social services.

A total of 4590 people across western NSW received support from the organisation in the 12 months to June 30, a 7.5 per cent increase from the previous year.

The hours of support delivered by CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes jumped by 14 per cent to 15,159 hours in the same period.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes serves the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, which spans the western 52 per cent of NSW and 414,398 square kilometres.

Statistics demonstrating the organisation's impact have been published in its latest annual report.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes mobilised to provide support in the wake of flooding at Eugowra and communities along the Lachlan catchment in late 2022 that caused great loss and hardship.

"With the unprecedented flood disaster, our financial counsellors met a new community need as events unfolded," CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes chief executive officer Anne-Marie Mioche said.

"During November and December 2022, we assisted 199 residents affected by flood, and in many cases, resulting trauma. Our disaster recovery support sessions at Eugowra and Forbes continue."

The cost of living swelled<sup>1</sup> and the Reserve Bank of Australia lifted interest rates 10 times in the 12 months to June 30.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has seen increased financial stress across all demographics.

"Our financial counsellors negotiate and advocate on behalf of people who are experiencing financial hardship or are at financial risk," Ms Mioche said.

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

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes also launched new services to meet community needs.

"We established the Broken Hill Children's Contact Service in February 2023, after securing funding from the Australian government," Ms Mioche said.

"By April 2023, our Men's Behaviour Change Program groups were meeting at Forbes, Parkes, Condobolin, Narromine and Bourke. This program works with men to develop strategies to help them be accountable for their actions, and work towards non-abusive relationships."

Ms Mioche paid tribute to CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes team members.

"Our team is our strength," she said.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics data, <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/cpi-rose-08-cent-june-2023-quarter>

“Our team members are the reason we are able to make such a positive difference for our clients.”

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Some highlights of the 2022-23 year:

- CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes’s Kids Youth Club at Bourke has been a great success. Kids Youth Club provides activities and support to young people aged 12-18 to help them develop a positive lifestyle at a crucial stage in their life. It engages, supports and provides nutritious meals to young people three evenings a week in a safe environment. In 2022-23, the Kids Youth Club was attended by 3060 young people and it provided almost 3000 meals and more than 400 hours of support. It is a collaborative venture and is held at the PCYC Bourke.
- We launched affordable hair salon Cooee Cuts at Wilcannia in September 2022. The social enterprise puts hairdressing within reach of the remote community. Cooee Cuts operates 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.
- We deliver Specialist Homelessness Services to Parkes, Forbes, Cowra, Condobolin, Lake Cargelligo, Cobar and Bourke. The program provides homelessness support for women, men, young people and families. This is done through a range of initiatives, among them a women’s refuge at Forbes and a women’s safe house at Bourke for women escaping domestic and family violence. In 2022-23, our Specialist Homelessness Services supported 591 women. Together our women’s refuge at Forbes and our women’s safe house at Bourke accommodated 110 clients.
- Through the Family and Carer Mental Health Program, we provide education, individual support, support groups and advocacy to people caring for someone with a mental illness or mental health challenges. The Family and Carer Mental Health Program covers all towns in the Western NSW and Far West Local Health Districts. In 2022-23 the Family and Carer Mental Health Program supported almost 400 participants, provided 1520 hours of support and held 16 community events.

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

**Supporting individuals, families and communities in western NSW**