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**MEDIA RELEASE**



## ***Walkabout Barber and beauty time a space for healthy conversations***

Fresh haircuts and a safe space to talk have come to the heart of far-western NSW, thanks to a partnership between CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes and Walkabout Barber.

The two organisations teamed up to put on events at Menindee, Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Cobar and Narromine from May 9 to 13.

At each location, the Walkabout Barber and Walkabout Beautiful bus, which is fitted out as a mobile salon, provided professional hairdressing and beauty services.

Launched and led by Brian Dowd, Walkabout Barber not only provides trims and treatments but also trauma and recovery workshops to equip individuals and communities.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes sponsored the tour, and Jane Kemp, the organisation's executive leader of Aboriginal strategic development said it had been a successful initiative.

Ms Kemp said community members had embraced the events, with the 60 barber and 60 beauty appointments available each day easily filled.

Attendees were able to chat with Brian and his team of three barbers and two beauty therapists.

"Walking in the bus while clients were having cuts, the conversations were relaxed, honest and rewarding," Ms Kemp said.

"Young men talking about friends they have lost to suicide, their future and what they want out of their life.

"Men and boys smiling up, looking real neat with their new haircuts.

"Primary school boys showing off the patterns in their hair, real proud.

"Young girls having their eyebrows waxed or tinted for the first time.

"The conversations happening in the bus allowing people to speak and ask for help if they need it.

"Brian sharing his story of how he had a very promising future in football, how that changed, how he hit rock bottom and how he turned his life around.

"Being amongst a group of teenage boys who sit there quietly and listen to his story – that's priceless, especially if that young boy knows he can ask for help if he needs to."

Brian said it had been a fantastic week, connecting with community and having amazing conversations.

"Seeing young people come through and get a haircut, and just the smile on their face, even if it's for that moment, for that day, for that week, they feel good about themselves," he said.

“They’re confident, their head’s held high, their shoulders are straight back, and you can see the difference, walking in and walking out.”

**Ends.....**

*CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes provides social services, caring for the wellbeing 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



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