



Capital  
Region  
Community  
Services

# Annual Report

2024 - 2025

**An Inclusive Connected  
Community**

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# Acknowledgement of Country

Capital Region Community Services acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across the Capital Region where we support community. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded, and the land always was and always will be Aboriginal lands.

We pay our respects to the traditional Elders across the region, past and present, and thank them for caring for the land, waters and skies, and for their culture, teaching and knowledge passed down through generations.

## Ngunnawal land



Ngunnawal Country encompasses the Canberra region, including the city and parts of surrounding NSW.

The area is characterised by its diverse landscapes, including rolling hills, bushland, rivers and open plains. The Molonglo River, the Murrumbidgee River and the Brindabella Ranges are some of the natural features that hold cultural and spiritual significance for the Ngunnawal people.

## Yuin land



Our Budawang Early Learning Centre is located on Yuin land in Milton, New South Wales.

The Yuin people are the traditional custodians of this region, which stretches from the Shoalhaven River in the north, to the Victorian border in the south, and along the South Coast of New South Wales. Their culture is deeply connected to the mountains, rivers and coastal areas of this land.



## Message from **Our CEO**



### **Welcome to the CRCS Annual Report 2024–25**

This year has been a defining chapter for Capital Region Community Services—a year of innovation, consolidation and resilience. It has been marked by opportunities to strengthen our impact, successes that demonstrate the power of community, and challenges that have shaped our future direction.

Our work continues to be guided by three impact pillars: **Connection and Belonging, Purpose and Wellbeing,** and **Choice and Control.** These pillars are more than words; they represent the foundation of our programs and the outcomes we strive to achieve. Through these lenses, we have delivered services that foster inclusion, empower individuals, and create pathways for people to live with dignity and independence.

We embraced opportunities to deepen collaboration and co-design. Working alongside Community Services # 1 to deliver the CATS Program and our partnership with ARACY to develop the Child and Family Wellbeing Framework, ensuring our services reflect best practice and respond to the evolving needs of families. We advanced our Social Impact Framework, embedding a culture of measuring what matters—connection, wellbeing, and empowerment—across all programs. Our digital transformation journey continued, making our services more accessible and transparent, and positioning us to meet the expectations of a modern, connected community.

Our successes this year speak volumes about the dedication of our team and the trust placed in us by the people we serve. Participant feedback tells a compelling story: the majority feel supported, respected, and connected through our programs. These results affirm that our work is not only meeting immediate needs but is creating lasting change. Our workforce has been central to this achievement, living our values of respect, inclusion, accountability, ethics, optimism, and innovation while building capability for the future.

Employee feedback reinforces this positive trajectory. In our latest engagement survey, **91% of employees reported clarity about their job expectations, 86% agreed they have the tools they need to do their work, and 92% described CRCS as inclusive.** Importantly, employees overwhelmingly expressed that they feel respected and aligned with CRCS's vision and purpose, demonstrating a strong cultural foundation that supports both individual and organisational success.

However, this progress has not been without challenges. Rising demand for integrated services has required agility and innovation. Resource pressures and sustainability considerations led to difficult decisions, including the closure of Belconnen Early Childhood Centre, and our complete withdrawal as a registered provider of NDIS services. These decisions were not taken lightly; they reflect our commitment to focusing resources where we can deliver the greatest impact and ensure long-term viability. We also experienced the closure of the Bruce Early Childhood Centre which had been a part of CRCS for 40 years; this was as a result of a decision by CIT to redevelop the site and relocate their services. Policy shifts and funding changes have further tested our adaptability, reinforcing the importance of strong partnerships, evidence-based practice, and advocacy for systemic change.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to building inclusive, connected communities across Belconnen, Canberra and the wider Capital Region. We will continue to invest in workforce capability, expand co-design approaches, and leverage digital solutions to enhance service delivery. Most importantly, we will keep listening to the voices of those we serve, ensuring that every individual feels supported, valued, and empowered to thrive.

Finally, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Board of Directors. Their leadership, guidance, and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in navigating this year's opportunities and challenges. Together with our employees, volunteers, partners, and community, we are shaping a future defined by opportunity, resilience, and shared success.

**Mandy Green**  
CRCS Chief Executive Officer

## Message from **the Chair**



It is my privilege to present the 2024–25 Annual Report for Capital Region Community Services (CRCS). This year, our organisation has continued to demonstrate the power of community, compassion, and collective action across the Capital Region.

The challenges of loneliness and social isolation remain significant, particularly in Canberra and the ACT, where recent research shows that 40% of residents experience loneliness. Against this backdrop, CRCS's work has never been more vital or more impactful. Our commitment to connection, purpose, and choice is evident in every program and service we deliver. The results speak for themselves: 71% of participants say we help them connect with their community, 85% trust us to act in their best interests, and 92% feel they are always treated with respect. These outcomes are a testament to the dedication of our employees, volunteers, and partners, whose efforts ensure that every individual who comes to CRCS feels valued and supported.

This year, we have seen remarkable progress in strengthening our organisational culture. Our people report high levels of clarity in their roles, access to the resources they need, and a growing sense of respect and inclusion. The Board is particularly proud of the strides made in aligning our work with CRCS's vision and values, fostering an environment where optimism, accountability, and innovation thrive.

We have also deepened our commitment to evidence-based practice and continuous improvement. The development and implementation of our Social Impact Framework and the co-designed Child and Family Wellbeing Framework, in partnership with ARACY, are significant milestones. These frameworks not only guide our work but also ensure that we measure what matters—real outcomes for children, families, and communities.

Our impact is perhaps best illustrated through the stories shared in this report: from older adults finding renewed purpose and connection through involve social groups, to children and families thriving in our early education and family support programs, to young people building skills and confidence

for the future. These stories remind us that behind every statistic is a person whose life has been changed for the better.

We are pleased to report an annual surplus of \$79,060 for the 2024/25 financial year, marking a significant turnaround from the deficit of \$188,335 recorded in the previous financial year. A key contributor to the improved financial result was the increased income from government funded services. The ACT Government's Community Assistance and Transport Scheme (CATS) had its first full year of operation and showed strong demand within the community. In addition, service outputs in the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) were increased across all services, most notably Transport. This positive result reflects our continued focus on financial sustainability and strengthening our capacity to deliver high-quality community services.

On behalf of the Board, I extend our deepest gratitude to our volunteers and employees, particularly the senior leadership team led by our wonderful CEO Mandy Green. Your dedication, compassion, and professionalism are the foundation of our success. Volunteers have contributed thousands of hours, supporting everything from transport and gardening to creative and social groups. Your generosity and care create genuine belonging and make a real difference in the lives of those we serve. To our employees, your commitment to living our values of respect, inclusion, accountability, ethics, optimism, and innovation is evident in every interaction and every achievement. Thank you for your unwavering support, your adaptability in times of change, and your ongoing pursuit of excellence.

We also thank our community partners, supporters, and, most importantly, the people we serve, for your trust and engagement.

As we look ahead, the Board remains focused on strong governance, strategic leadership, and ensuring that CRCS continues to be a beacon of inclusion, respect, and excellence.

Together, we are building a stronger, more connected Capital Region—one where everyone has the opportunity to belong, contribute, and thrive.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

**Deiwane Bakkum**  
Chair, CRCS Board of Directors

# Our People



In our 50th year, we celebrated the people who make CRCS a workplace built on connection, care and community spirit. 85% of employees said their work aligns with our vision, and 87% feel respected at work — reflecting a values-driven culture where people feel supported and proud of what they do.

Our employee survey showed that 92% describe CRCS as inclusive, and 79% have opportunities to share ideas, highlighting a workplace that values openness, collaboration and creativity.

This year we recognised long-term contributions from Julie Gorell (32 years), Graham McKercher (32 years), Nadira Jesmin (28 years), Rose Lawatsch (25 years), Melinda Smith (19 years) and our CEO Mandy Green (17 years).

Our people also include our volunteers, who give their time each week, and our Board, whose leadership guides our direction and impact.

## What Participants Said

Our annual survey highlights the care, skill and dedication of CRCS employees and the values that guide our work.



**92%**

said they are always treated with respect



**85%**

trust CRCS to do the right thing



**73%**

rated services as high or very high quality

Because people are our greatest strength, we continue to invest in training, development and career growth to build capability across our workforce.

## Continuous Learning at CRCS

At CRCS, learning never stops. We invest in our people so they can keep growing and meet the changing needs of our community.

- 86% of employees said their managers encourage development
- We promote from within, creating clear career pathways
- 103 employees completed trauma-informed training
- Many others gained first aid and safety qualifications
- Educators' Day brought teams together to learn and connect

Robust onboarding ensures every employee understands our values, meets safety standards and protects those we support.



Victoria Choice  
Chair,  
Joined 2023



Ellen Samuels  
Secretary,  
Joined 2023



Deiwane Bakkum  
Director,  
Joined 2024



Margaret Anderson  
Director,  
Joined 2023

## CRCS Board and Executive Leadership

On 30 June 2025, the CRCS Board of Directors was:

- Victoria Choice, Chair, Joined 2023
- Ellen Samuels, Secretary, Joined 2023
- Dewani Bakkum AM, Director, Joined 2024
- Margaret Anderson, Director, Joined 2023

### Board members who left during the financial year:

- Jane Godkin, Treasurer, Resigned March 2025
- Catherine McCarthy, Director, Resigned November 2024
- Fiona Goode, Director, Resigned October 2024

### On 30 June 2025, the CRCS Executive Leadership Team was:

- Mandy Green, Chief Executive Officer
- Sandra Sheehy-Cox, Executive Manager – Living Well
- Karyn Ferraris, Executive Manager – Business and Infrastructure
- Jo Cole, Executive Manager – Child, Youth and Family



Read more about  
this online

## Employee and Volunteer Awards

The CRCS All Star Awards is held each year to honour exceptional employees and their impact on our organisation. These awards reflect our core values and recognise the people who strengthen our culture and the difference we make in the community.

We also celebrate our Good Fun Awards, which acknowledge the creativity, teamwork and spirit that make CRCS a positive and connected place to work. Together, these awards recognise both value-driven impact and the everyday contributions that shape our organisation.

### 2024 Winners

#### All Star Awards

- Accountability – Livia Campos
- Respect – Ingrid Brito
- Optimism – Therese Beckman
- Leadership – Stella Shin
- Ethics – Faith Flaherty
- Inclusion – Celeste Simeon-Wilfing
- Innovation – The Governance Team (Fliss, Lyne, Ally, Mel)
- Volunteers – Helen Souter

#### Good Fun Awards:

- Buzz Lightyear – Paul Collins
- Chief Fun Fairy – Larah Nicholls
- Rookie of the Year – Amy O'Dell
- Safety Superstar – Bohee Seo
- Walking Wikipedia – Krystal Carter
- Dream Team – Families Team (Kasia, Sonam, Passang, Shirin)

## Highlights

### Farewell to Graham McKercher – A CRCS Legend

After 32 years with CRCS, we farewell Graham McKercher, our long-serving Senior Manager – Transport. Since starting in 1992, Graham helped grow the program from one car to a fleet of 12, now delivering over 60,000 trips each year. His leadership has supported thousands of older adults and people with disability to stay connected to their community.

Beyond transport, Graham championed the 10/10 Project, lent a hand at events like Relay for Life and the Seniors' Expo, and was recognised as a 2023 Westfield Local Hero finalist. Graham's humour, care and community spirit have left a lasting legacy — we're deeply grateful for his contribution and wish him all the best in his next chapter.



### **Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group**

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group brings together CRCS employees who are helping to shape our first Reflect RAP – the foundation stage of our reconciliation journey.

The group focuses on strengthening respect, relationships and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by building cultural awareness, developing community partnerships and embedding inclusive practices across CRCS. This work is an important step in making reconciliation part of everyday practice across our organisation.

**Artist:** 'Inclusive Connections', by artist Sarah Richards, 2022



### **Celebrating Early Childhood Educators' Day**

On 4 September, we celebrated Early Childhood Educators' Day across our five CRCS centres, recognising the dedicated teams who make a lasting difference in children's lives. Our educators create safe, playful spaces where children learn, grow and thrive: always placing each child at the centre of every decision.



### **Celebrating Together**

At CRCS, we make time to have fun and connect. From Talk Like a Pirate Day (enthusiastically led by Fliss, our Senior Manager – Governance, Quality and Compliance) to Book Week, Halloween, the Canberra Day Appeal, and Beyond Blue morning tea, these moments remind us we're in it together. They're a chance to share a laugh, check in, and strengthen our team spirit. Our End of Year Celebration brings everyone together to recognise and thank employees for their incredible work throughout the year.



### **25 Years of Care and Connection**

This year we celebrated Rosario (Rose), who achieved her Certificate III in Early Education and Care after more than 25 years with CRCS. Now completing her Diploma, Rose works in the Preschool Room at Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre alongside Brianna and Ruthie, helping children feel safe, confident and ready to learn.



### **Inclusion Through Food: Cooking, Culture and Connection**

At Bruce Early Childhood Centre, Hiromi and Shirley guided toddlers in making sushi, turning lunchtime into a cultural learning experience. Activities like this help children explore new cuisines, learn about healthy eating, and celebrate diversity — a reflection of CRCS's inclusive culture, where 92% of employees describe it as an inclusive workplace.



### **Living Our Vision by Creating Community**

At CRCS, our vision of inclusive, connected communities is brought to life by people like Therese. As an Involve facilitator, she uses art, sewing and drumming to help older community members build confidence and connection. Her “why not” attitude turns every activity into a chance to share stories, learn and laugh together.

Learn More: [crcs.com.au/meet-therese](https://crcs.com.au/meet-therese)

# CRCS Volunteers

**Volunteering 2024–25:** *Action that makes a difference*

Across CRCS, volunteers create opportunities for independence, social connection and community pride. Whether driving, gardening or supporting creative groups, they make daily life easier and more enjoyable for participants.

Just as importantly, volunteering strengthens the volunteers themselves, building their confidence and belonging, and a sense of personal impact that lasts well beyond the hours they give.

Many have given more than 15 years of service, while others, like Living Well participant Helen, proudly contribute as both volunteer and participant, committed to giving back to her community.



Read more about  
this online



### **Involve Volunteers: Helping Social Groups Thrive**

Our Involve social groups are supported by seven dedicated volunteers, many of whom are also participants. From welcoming people on arrival to lending a steady arm or helping order lunch, their small acts of kindness make a big difference.

In 2024–25, volunteers contributed 15,852 hours to Involve, helping ensure everyone feels safe, included and confident to join in. Their generosity and care create the genuine sense of belonging that makes Involve so special.



### **Volunteer Drivers on the Road**

Volunteer drivers are an essential part of the Living Well family, helping older adults reach appointments, activities and social groups. In 2024–25, nine dedicated volunteers contributed around 50–60 hours each week and brought an incredible 87 years of combined experience — with Gil, Jeremy and Tony each serving more than 15 years.

Their service goes beyond transport; it's about connection. For many passengers, a lift means conversation, laughter and a sense of belonging. As one team member said, *“Volunteers are that extra special piece that keeps our wheels turning.”*



### **The 10/10 Project: Gardens of Gratitude**

Sixty volunteers from Housing ACT, ACT Health, Programmed, Department of Social Services, CRCS employees and the local community came together to transform gardens at eight homes across Canberra. The project brought people together through practical teamwork, showing how combined effort contributes to big outcomes. The improved gardens provide safe, accessible outdoor spaces where families, children, pets and people with mobility challenges can relax and enjoy their surroundings.





### **Helen's Flowers at Belconnen**

Helen, a long-time volunteer and Involve participant, continued to brighten the Belconnen Community Centre with her flower arrangements. Her words reflect the experience of many: "Involve means enjoyment and life. It's like belonging to a bigger family." Her story is a reminder of how volunteering shapes not just community spaces, but also a person's own sense of belonging and worth.

Learn More: [crcs.com.au/helens-story](https://crcs.com.au/helens-story)

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### **Children's Week at GECC**

Volunteers joined preschoolers for a gardening project, marking Children's Week and the theme "Every child has the right to a safe and clean environment." The intergenerational activity sparked energy, laughter and a sense of shared achievement. It also models for children how community members of all ages can make a positive impact together.



## Case Study

### VolunCHEERing with the Yarn and Stitching Group

Every Thursday afternoon, Fliss swaps her desk at CRCS for a seat around the table with the Yarn and Stitching group. From 1 to 4 pm, she joins participants at the Belconnen Community Centre to share stories, laughter, and creativity.



For Fliss, volunteering has become one of the highlights of her week. *“Watching participants’ projects start with a simple ball of yarn and a pattern to the final product and seeing their sense of accomplishment and joy in their own and other participants’ projects is an uplifting experience for all involved,”* she says.

But it’s not just about the craft. The group is a place where friendships form, stories are shared, and connections are built. *“Hearing their stories of the lives they have lived, about their friends and families and their crafty and non-crafty adventures is an honour, and with each story shared you know that friendships are being forged,”* Fliss reflects. These moments help reduce the risk of isolation and create a real sense of belonging.

### More Than Craft

Involve groups like Yarn and Stitching are inevitably more than about the craft itself. They are about helping people to make and sustain connections with others, supporting mental and physical wellbeing, and ultimately, independence.

It’s no wonder that CRCS participants tell us they feel this way. In recent feedback:

- **100% of participants said the team treated them with respect**
- **83% said they trust CRCS to do the right thing by them.**
- **100% said CRCS meets or exceeds their expectations.**
- **83% said CRCS helps them connect with their community.**

These results show the difference it makes when staff like Fliss step outside their usual roles to connect directly with people in community. Her “volunCHEERing” each Thursday brings added joy to participants while giving her a deeper understanding of their experiences, which she brings back into her work at CRCS.

# CRCS Social Impact



Read more about this online

## ***How we create connection, purpose and choice across the Capital Region***

At CRCS, social impact is the foundation of how we work alongside individuals, families and communities. Guided by three impact pillars, we measure what matters: belonging, wellbeing and people having genuine influence in their lives.

The pillars shape our programs and help us understand what's working – how people connect, how their wellbeing improves, and where they feel more in control.

## **Our Three Pillars of Impact**

### **1. Connection and Belonging**

*Reducing isolation and strengthening community ties.*

People thrive when they feel part of something bigger. We create opportunities for meaningful connection – reducing isolation, building friendships and strengthening community ties.

- **71%** say CRCS helps them connect with their community
- **83%** would recommend us to family and friends
- Across social groups, youth spaces, early learning and community activities, people are finding places where they feel welcome and valued.

### **2. Purpose and Wellbeing**

*Highlighting growth, resilience and positive change.*

Wellbeing grows when people feel supported, respected and able to adapt. Our programs nurture resilience and help people build confidence, skills and a sense of direction.

- **92%** say they are always treated with respect
- **93%** of Bungee participants learned strategies to cope when things go wrong
- Co-developed with ARACY, our Child and Family Wellbeing Framework strengthens how we understand and measure positive change.

### 3. Choice and Control

*Ensuring participant voices are front and centre.*

Everyone deserves a say in the decisions that shape their lives. We put people at the centre—listening deeply, supporting informed choices and empowering individuals to set their own goals.

- **100%** say CRCS follows up when they raise concerns
- **85%** trust CRCS to act in their best interests
- From youth services to aged care, participants tell us they feel heard, supported and in control of what happens next.

#### **What This Means for Our Community**

Across all programs – youth engagement, family support, early education and care, Living Well, Bungee and more – our impact is clear:

- People are more connected and less isolated
- Families feel supported and hopeful
- Children and young people are building resilience
- Older adults feel respected and in control
- Communities are stronger, more inclusive and better supported.

“We now have a brighter future ahead with a much more optimistic view of what we can achieve.” – Chris and Matt, Family Support participants

**Across every program, our focus is the same: supporting people to connect with others, strengthen their wellbeing and have a say in what matters to them.**

# Setting the Standard in the Capital Region



Read more about  
this online

Across the Capital Region, CRCS is recognised for strong practice, trusted relationships and sector leadership. These features showcase how we're shaping better outcomes for children, families, young people and older adults — and strengthening the systems that support our community.

## Supporting Parents, Strengthening Futures



Across the Capital Region, CRCS is helping to shape what quality, evidence-based support for parents looks like, and how strong families lead to better mental health for everyone. Supporting families has always been at the heart of what we do, and it remains one of our biggest priorities. We know that when parents feel confident and connected, children have a much better chance to thrive – and that's good for the whole community.

Let's be real, parenting can be tough. There's no manual, no magic formula, and every child is different. But when we help parents build strong, positive relationships with their children and give them the tools to parent with confidence, we're also supporting better mental health for the whole family.

At CRCS, we love the work we do with families. Children do best when they feel safe, loved and understood. That connection with a parent or carer helps them manage stress, deal with challenges and build resilience. And for parents and carers, feeling supported makes things a lot easier. It reduces stress, boosts confidence and helps them respond calmly when things get tricky.

It's not just about fixing problems. Strengthening relationships sets children up for life — helping them learn to manage emotions, communicate and build healthy relationships of their own. Parents also feel more connected, less isolated and more capable.

And the best part? Support doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes it's just about giving parents space to reflect, share and learn new approaches. CRCS offers a range of evidence-based programs that are free for families and available for all stages of parenting.

Research shows that investing in families pays off. For every dollar we invest, there's a return of up to three dollars in savings across health, education and justice. Investing in families is one of the smartest things we can do for mental health.

At CRCS, we're proud to be part of that change. By giving parents and carers the right tools and support, we're helping set the standard for family wellbeing and mental health promotion across the Capital Region. We want every family to have the chance to build a strong foundation for the future.

### Social Impact Framework



At CRCS, we want to understand the difference we're making, and how we can keep doing better. Our Social Impact Framework helps us measure what matters: how our programs improve people's lives, strengthen communities and create lasting change.

This year, we took major steps to strengthen our approach. We embedded impact frameworks within our Youth and Living Well programs, helping teams track outcomes in real time and use data to shape practice. We also continued our partnership with ARACY, co-developing both a Child

and Family Wellbeing Framework and an Evaluation Framework that bring evidence and lived experience together. These tools give our teams a clearer picture of what's working and where we can go further.

We shared our learning nationally through an ARACY NEST Framework webinar, showcasing how CRCS is leading the way in collaborative, evidence-informed practice. Our work drew strong interest from other community organisations looking to strengthen their own impact measurement and evaluation approaches.

To make our framework more accessible, we refreshed its design to align with CRCS's new branding and developed the guiding principles for Pillar 6, focused on continuous improvement and learning. We also gathered valuable insights through our Annual Participant Survey, ensuring the voices of participants directly inform how programs are designed and delivered.

Partnership remains central to how we work. This year, we continued to co-facilitate communities of practice, share resources and training, and collaborate with local and national partners to improve outcomes across the sector. Our Network Coordination program plays a key role by connecting services, identifying gaps and building practical pathways between organisations so that children, young people and families can access the right supports at the right time. Together, we're building a stronger evidence base, and a stronger community.

## Child and Family Wellbeing Framework



This year, we took another big step forward in understanding what wellbeing really means for the children and families we support. Working with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), we co-designed a Child and Family Wellbeing Framework that reflects the unique strengths, challenges and aspirations of our community.

Built on evidence and shaped by real experiences, the framework helps us stay focused on what matters most: supporting every child and family to feel safe, valued and connected. It gives our teams a shared language and a clear way to measure progress over time, with real change in people's lives.

The CRCS framework draws on ARACY's Nest Wellbeing Framework, which is Australia's first national evidence-based model for child and youth wellbeing, and adapts it to fit our local context. Together, we've created a model that guides how we design programs, train our people, and measure impact.

Our framework focuses on six key areas that help children and young people thrive:

- Healthy
- Valued, Loved and Safe
- Material Basics
- Learning
- Participating
- Positive Sense of Identity and Culture

By embedding this framework across our programs, we're setting a new benchmark for community-led wellbeing. It's helping us build stronger partnerships, evaluate our impact more meaningfully, and share what works within CRCS and across the broader sector.

## Aged Care Participant Advisory Group (ACPAG)



The Aged Care Participant Advisory Group (ACPAG) continues to strengthen the voice of older adults in how CRCS services are planned and delivered. ACPAG is a group of Living Well participants who meet bi-monthly to provide advice, share feedback and help improve the quality, accessibility and relevance of CRCS aged care services.

Over the past year, the group has seen stronger collaboration and communication between participants and CRCS. Chair Sue Randall said, *“The biggest change has been that CRCS is really listening. Through the business arising document, we’re seeing outcomes achieved and participants feeling heard.”*

The “business arising” process now tracks feedback and outcomes from each meeting, ensuring issues are followed up and resolved. One example was the introduction of additional driver training following participant feedback — a practical improvement that strengthened safety, trust and accountability across the service.

“Participants have the opportunity to provide feedback and know they can have their say without any worry or retribution,” Sue said. “Communication is inclusive and open.”

## Networks in Action: Identifying Gaps, Building Pathways



The Network Coordination program brings together four Canberra organisations to identify service gaps and find better ways to support vulnerable children, young people, and families. Funded by the ACT Government's Health and Community Services Directorate, CRCS proudly hosts the Belconnen Network Coordinator role.

This role is all about collaboration. Listening to what's missing in the community, connecting partners, and finding practical ways to make sure no one falls through the cracks.

One gap the coordinator identified was for young people who were leaving CRCS Youth Services once they reached the upper age limit. Without continued opportunities for connection, many risked feeling isolated or losing their sense of belonging.

To address this, the Network Coordinator worked closely with the CRCS Youth Engagement Team and Community Development Officer to explore options that reflected young people's interests and goals. Through this collaboration, a partnership was formed with the University of Canberra's Connect Up program, a community-driven initiative that helps 18- to 30-year-olds in Belconnen and Bruce build meaningful, lasting connections. Supported by the UC Health Research Institute, Connect Up focuses on turning where young people live into where they belong.

The impact of this work is clear. Young people accessing our services consistently tell us that CRCS helps them feel part of their community, not just while they're in our programs but as they move into adulthood.

**86% of youth participants said CRCS helps them connect with their community**

## Keeping Children Safe at CRCS



At CRCS, nothing is more important than the safety and wellbeing of children. Safeguarding is not just policies and procedures – it’s a culture and understanding the responsibility we hold with the utmost seriousness. Children, families and communities place their trust in us, and we are committed to honouring that trust every single day.

*As CEO, I truly believe that keeping children safe is one of the most important things we can do. When we put safeguarding first, we help every child feel valued, supported, and able to grow in a happy, secure environment. It’s all about giving them the best chance to thrive. – Mandy Green, CRCS*

This year, our Education and Care participants told us:

- 100% said they trust CRCS to do the right thing
- 100% said we meet or exceed their expectations
- 86% said our team always treated them with respect

These results are a strong endorsement of our approach – but we are never complacent. We’ve strengthened our child safety measures in line with new ACT and NSW standards, including:

- tougher reporting requirements
- regular audits of programs
- regular audits to ensure our employees understand their roles and responsibilities
- regular audits of employees and their screening
- a strict “no personal devices” policy wherever children are present.

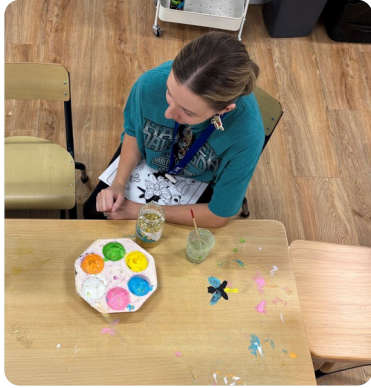
Every new employee is fully screened, trained and supported before they ever work alone with children.

This year also marked an important step forward: we partnered with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) to co-design the CRCS Child and Family Wellbeing Framework. Grounded in ARACY’s nationally recognised Nest Framework, this evidence-based model ensures children are not only safe, but also thriving – healthy, loved, learning, participating, and connected to culture.

# Early Childhood Education and Care



Read more about this online



## Giving Children the Best Start in Life

At CRCS, our early education and care programs nurture children’s learning, confidence and wellbeing from the start. In partnership with the ACT Government and the Children’s First Alliance, we ensure every child — including those experiencing vulnerability — can access high-quality early learning that builds strong foundations for school, belonging and lifelong participation.

Child safety is at the heart of everything we do. Families place deep trust in our educators, and we honour that trust through strong safeguarding practices and a culture of respect. This year, 100% of families said they trust CRCS to do the right thing and that we meet or exceed expectations, with 86% saying our team always treats them with respect.

We strengthened our safeguarding approach by introducing regular learning-space audits, strengthened reporting processes and a strict no-personal-devices policy. Every educator is fully checked, trained and supported before working independently with children, ensuring a safe, high-quality learning environment for all.

## What Parents Say

*"The level of care the staff have for my child is amazing."*

*"The educators are incredible. Friendly, kind, engaging."*

*"There's genuine relationship-building with my child and family."*

### **ECEC a Glance 2024–25**

Across five centres, we supported 478 children and 422 families in 2024–25, reflecting strong community trust in our early learning programs.

### **3-Year-Old Initiative**

Forty children accessed two free days of early learning weekly, supporting priority families and helping children build confidence and connection before school.

### **Children's Services Program**

Ninety children and 79 families accessed fully funded care, supporting those facing hardship or crisis with 848 days of early learning.

### **Three-Year-Old Preschool**

Over 35 children joined free preschool, developing social, language and physical skills through play-based learning aligned to the national framework.

### **Start Strong NSW**

Thirty-two children at Budawang Early Learning Centre accessed subsidised preschool places, easing family costs and supporting access to quality early education.

## Highlights

### **Children's Week – Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre**

Children celebrated Children's Week by planting flowers and learning about caring for the environment, supported by volunteers who helped create a warm, special sense of community and belonging.

### **Book Week – Belconnen Early Childhood Centre**

Children celebrated Book Week with dress-ups, storytelling and sensory play, bringing favourite books to life and creating a fun, imaginative atmosphere for everyone.

### **Mother's Day – Budawang Early Learning Centre**

Families shared creative activities and afternoon tea, celebrating mums and carers through connection, play and moments that strengthened the sense of belonging in the Budawang community.

### **Holi – Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre**

Children explored colour, music and dance during a joyful Holi celebration, learning about Indian culture, diversity and togetherness through a vibrant, hands-on experience.

## **Case Studies**

### **A Heartfelt Farewell to BECC and Bruce Early Childhood Centres**



In May 2025, CRCS farewelled Bruce and Belconnen Early Childhood Centres after more than 40 years. We supported every child, family and educator through a thoughtful, caring and well-planned transition.

### **Learning and Wellbeing in the Natural World**



At Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre (GECC), our Child and Family Wellbeing Framework guides how we help children learn, grow and feel their best. Two recent activities – welcoming Timmy the Turtle and creating a Reconciliation Garden – show what this looks like in action.

These activities reflect what families told us matters most for wellbeing. In our consultation, 93% of families said outdoor play and time in nature are key, and the most valued themes were learning (93%), health (86%), participation and identity and culture (57%).

# Outside School Hours Care



Read more about this online

## ***Friendship, Fun and Support Before and After School***

Our Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) programs at Florey Primary and Charnwood-Dunlop schools provide safe, welcoming spaces for children from preschool to Year 6. Each day, our Educators create an environment where children feel at ease and can start and end their day with friends and fun. For families, OSHC provides the confidence to work, study and balance responsibilities knowing their children are happy, safe and cared for. Many of the families we support – including single parents, sibling groups and families facing challenges – rely on OSHC to stay connected and balance work and family life.

Children build friendships, explore interests and learn through play, developing confidence, teamwork and social skills in a relaxed setting. Guided by the national Belonging, Being and Becoming framework, Educators encourage choice and independence through activities like crafting, sport, cooking and quiet time.

We also run School Holiday Programs at both schools, offering enriching activities, incursions and excursions that keep children learning, socialising and having fun outside of term time.

## **Impact Snapshot**

- 147 children from 130 families supported in 2024–25
- Healthy breakfasts and afternoon teas served daily
- Choice-led activities that encourage independence, connection and wellbeing.

## **Case Study**

### **Cooking Up Teamwork and Friendship**

At our Outside School Hours Care program, activities are designed to help children unwind, connect and learn from one another. At Outside School Hours Care, activities help children unwind, connect and learn from one another. One afternoon, a cooking activity saw children make banana and cinnamon rolls together. Each child chose a role—measuring, mixing or rolling dough—and took turns using utensils, listening and helping each other. When the rolls were ready, they chose to share them with everyone for afternoon snack, reinforcing cooperation and inclusion.

These simple moments show what makes OSHC valuable: children build friendships, practise teamwork and feel proud of contributing. For families, it's reassuring to know their children are supported in a safe, social and confidence-building environment.

# Supporting Families

At CRCS, we know that strong family relationships are the foundation of wellbeing. When parents and carers feel confident and connected, children are more likely to thrive – and that benefits the whole community. Across Family Foundations, Family



Read more about this online

Education and Family Support, we work alongside families to strengthen relationships, reduce stress and build confidence through early intervention, therapeutic support, group learning and one-on-one case work.

## Connection and Belonging

Trust and relationships sit at the centre of everything we do. At Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre, Wraparound Child and Family Practitioners became a familiar support for families and educators, delivering 68 therapeutic sessions and 18 referrals. Nineteen families strengthened parent-child relationships, with 100% saying they were completely satisfied and would recommend the program.

Family Education delivered 15 parenting and community groups over 100 sessions, attended by 241 participants. Programs such as Circle of Security, Tuning in to Kids, and the Yurwang Gulwan and Yurwang Bullarn women's and girls' groups provided culturally safe, inclusive spaces to connect and learn.

Family Support practitioners worked with 92 families (327 people), helping stabilise housing, reduce stress and rebuild community connections. Every participant said they felt respected, supported and able to trust CRCS.

## Purpose and Wellbeing

Using evidence-based frameworks such as Circle of Security and Seasons for Growth, parents learned strategies to manage emotions, strengthen bonds and respond confidently to their children's needs. Many reported feeling calmer and more capable, with impacts flowing into daily routines, finances and overall wellbeing. More than 352 families engaged in CRCS family programs this year.

## Choice and Control

Every family's needs are different, so flexibility is essential. Support ranged from one-off conversations to long-term case management and parenting programs delivered online or in person. Families shaped their goals, expressed concerns and guided decisions in ways that worked for them.

"Massive emotional support and practical linking to supports. I wouldn't be this far into reaching critical goals without this support."

Program Area	Focus	Families / Participants Supported	Key Highlights
<b>Family Foundations</b>	Early intervention therapeutic support for children 0–5 and their carers	19 families	100% satisfaction; 68 therapeutic sessions; 18 referrals for additional supports
<b>Family Education</b>	Parent education, community and cultural groups	241 participants (171 parents/carers, 70 children/young people)	15 group programs, 100 sessions
<b>Family Support</b>	Case management and practical family assistance	92 families (327 people total)	100% said they felt respected and supported

## Case Studies

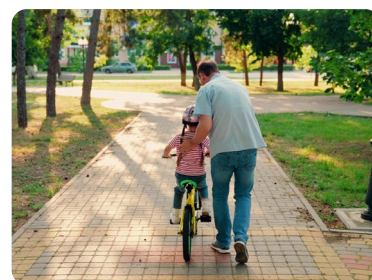
### Supporting Milli Through Big Changes and Big Feelings

For five-year-old Milli, starting preschool brought big changes and big feelings. With Wraparound support, her family and educators helped her feel safe, understood and confident in her new environment.



### Gus's Story: Finding Confidence as a Dad

Gus, a single father of five, found new confidence and connection through Circle of Security, learning practical ways to strengthen relationships and respond differently to his children's needs.



### Reconnecting with Culture and Belonging

When Claire sought support to help her son reconnect with culture, our team linked them with Elders, services and safe spaces. Today, Daniel feels proud, connected and supported.



# Playgroups

*Creating Inclusive Spaces for Children and Parents*



Read more about  
this online

CRCS playgroups give children aged 0–5 and their families a safe, welcoming place to connect, play and learn. More than weekly sessions, they help build friendships, strengthen community ties and support early development — making a real difference to family wellbeing. Parents and carers choose sessions that suit their needs and can access CRCS educators and child and family practitioners for guidance whenever they want it. Many families tell us their children grow in confidence: *“My son was too scared to go in at first, but with the support of staff, he’s now thriving.”*

Over 1,300 families attended 195 playgroups this year, with a further 80 delivered in partnership with ACT Child and Family Centres. Parents consistently highlight the friendships, support and sense of community these groups provide.

Our inclusive playgroups ensure every family feels they belong. The Atfaal Family Playgroup supports Muslim families through culturally responsive activities; the Koori Playgroup offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families a culturally grounded space; and our NEIST Playgroup supports children who may be neurodivergent or have developmental delays. Families like Kyle’s see children move from distress to confidence within weeks.

Playgroup activities are designed to spark social, emotional and cognitive growth — and support parents too. Many tell us they leave feeling uplifted, connected and more confident in their parenting journey.

## Case Study

### Kyle’s Story: Finding Calm at NEIST Playgroup

Three-year-old Kyle arrived at playgroup distressed. With CRCS educators and a safe space, his confidence blossomed. By week three, he explored freely, bringing relief to his mum and showing playgroups’ empowering role.



# Neurodevelopment Early Intervention Support and Training (NEIST)

*Early Support for Neurodiverse Pathways*



Read more about  
this online



Neurodevelopment Early Intervention Support and Training (NEIST) supports children and families with autism, ADHD and other neurodevelopmental conditions through early intervention, tailored education and practical family training. Alongside individual sessions, the weekly NEIST Playgroup at Ngunnawal offers a safe, inclusive environment where children can learn through play and families can connect, share experiences and receive guidance.

In 2024–25, NEIST delivered 370 intensive education sessions for children from preschool to adolescence. These sessions focused on speech, play, emotional regulation and social skills — foundational tools that build confidence, communication and independence at home, school and in the community. Families also accessed training and resources to help them support their child’s development every day.

This year, NEIST partnered with the Bungee Youth team to make Bungee groups more inclusive for neurodivergent children. Together they trialled smaller groups, two facilitators and sensory-aware activities. The changes helped children feel more comfortable and confident, with 93% of participants reporting improved self-belief and 93% saying Bungee taught them ways to cope when things go wrong. These inclusive practices are now embedded in the program.

Through its playgroup and therapeutic support, NEIST fosters connection, understanding and belonging — helping children thrive and giving families the confidence and support they need.

## Case Study

### Finding Confidence Through Learning

Jamie, once shy, grew confident and curious through playful sessions with his educator Maria. Now he asks questions, shares jokes, and joins play – a transformation his family calls “amazing.”



# Involve Social Groups



Read more about  
this online

Involve provides a safe and welcoming space for older community members to participate in thoughtfully designed programs that strengthen connection, activity and emotional wellbeing. In 2024–25, the program continued to grow with the successful transition of social groups from Communities at Work, new activities at the Ngunnawal Community Centre, and additional employees joining CRCS to ensure continuity for participants.

## Connection and Belonging

Involve plays a vital role in reducing isolation and helping older adults feel part of their community. This year, 75% of participants told us Involve helps them connect with their community. Just as importantly, every participant said they are treated with respect all of the time, and 83% said they trust CRCS to do the right thing by them. These results highlight the importance of Involve as a space where older people feel valued, included, and connected.

*“Involve means enjoyment and life. It’s like belonging to a bigger family and we all care and share our happy times or our sad times.” – Involve participant.*

## Purpose and Wellbeing

Equally important is the sense of purpose and wellbeing that Involve brings. For 81% of participants, this includes feeling consulted and having choice and control over the services they receive.

Behind these figures are real stories of people whose lives are enriched by being part of Involve.

The Aged Care Participant Advisory Group (ACPAG) also helps guide programs like Involve, ensuring they remain accessible, relevant, and meaningful. By listening to the voices of older adults, ACPAG makes sure activities reflect what matters most to participants and support their independence, wellbeing, and sense of community.

*“I have been a member of Involve for a few years now, as a walker with the Walky Talky group, this offers me the opportunity to walk in safety in areas I would not otherwise visit with other like-minded people whose company is such a joy to share. – Involve participant*

*Also as a member of Best Club, this group have been such a happy caring and sharing group who really look out for each other. The activities and entertainment provided have become the highlight of my week, and friendships have been formed.*

*The CRCS team who help us with these activities are just wonderful, I can’t speak highly enough of their care and interest with each individual, the fact they listen and act on our needs.*

*I felt I would like to share with you the enormous gap this has filled in my life, Involve has been a true blessing to my life."*

### Impact Snapshot:

- **82%** said the program meets or exceeds their expectations
- **91%** reported they get the service they need most or all of the time
- **81%** told us they feel consulted and have choice and control over the services they receive
- **100%** said CRCS follows up when they raise things about their services – showing accountability and reliability, and ensuring no one falls through the cracks.

### Involve at a Glance

1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025



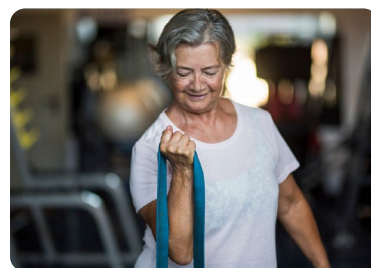
### Growing together:

- Welcomed **100 new participants** from Communities at Work
- 8 social groups transitioned to CRCS and continue to run
- Expanded into **Ngunnawal Community Centre** for greater accessibility
- **5 employees** transitioned to CRCS to support continuity and relationships.

## Case Study

### Christine's Story: Staying Active and Independent

At 77, Christine has been part of the Involve program since 2021. She manages several ongoing health conditions but continues to live independently, supported by strong connections with her daughter in Canberra and her sons and grandchildren interstate.



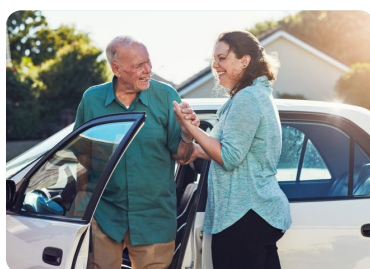
Determined to stay active and engaged, Christine chooses activities that support both her physical health and her sense of purpose. Every Monday she attends the woodwork group at the Ngunnawal Community Centre, where she has created pieces ranging from lazy Susans to footstools and enjoys learning new skills. She also prioritises her fitness, attending at least two gym sessions each week, including the Multi-strength and Build Fitness classes that help her stay strong, mobile and confident.

For Christine, Involve is more than a program — it's a source of connection, motivation and achievement. By combining creative and physical activities, she is shaping the healthy, independent lifestyle she wants.

# Aged Care and Transport Services



Read more about this online



### Choice and Control

Everyone deserves to live life their way. This year, CRCS prepared for the new Aged Care Act, which strengthens rights, voice and choice. A key highlight was our community information session Unpacking the Changes to My Aged Care, co-hosted with ADACAS, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, Carers ACT and Ageing Australia. Participants gained practical knowledge, learned how to access independent advocacy, and felt more confident navigating care options.

Feedback was strong: 100% said our information was easy to understand, and 80% said we

follow up when they raise questions. Trust remains high, with 83% saying they trust CRCS — and no one saying they do not.

Older adults also shaped services through the Aged Care Participant Advisory Group (ACPAG), which provides ongoing feedback and helps guide decision-making. Choice also extends beyond aged care services at home, with Living Well Transport giving people the freedom to travel where and when they choose.

“I work overseas so it is difficult for me to support my parents with their support needs. I’m grateful to the team for their exceptional support of my Mum and Dad.” – Child of Living Well participant

### **Purpose and Wellbeing**

Wellbeing means living with purpose, not just meeting daily needs. This year, participants told us CRCS “meets or exceeds expectations every time,” with 100% saying they feel respected. Individualised care plans helped people regain independence — such as one participant who rebuilt confidence after a stroke through domestic support, speech practice and gentle neighbourhood walks.

Transport also strengthens wellbeing by supporting access to appointments, hobbies and social life. Eighty per cent said they consistently receive the service they need, and nearly 90% said we follow up on questions or concerns.

“The drivers are always kind and make me feel comfortable. I never feel like a burden.” – Transport participant

### **Connection and Belonging**

Belonging grows through everyday relationships. This year, 83% of participants said CRCS helped them connect with their community. Many also joined Involve groups or received one-on-one social support, reducing isolation and strengthening friendships.

Nearly 1,000 people used CRCS Transport, travelling over 500,000 kilometres, supported by staff and nine long-serving volunteer drivers.

Together, Aged Care, Transport and Involve ensure older people feel connected, respected and supported to live life on their terms.

### **Transport Volunteers**

Alongside our professional drivers, volunteers play an essential role in keeping our community moving.

- **9** volunteer drivers
- **50–60 hours/week** on average
- **3** drivers with 15+ years each
- **87 years** of service combined

### **Aged Care at a Glance 2024–25**

- **5,432 hours** of house cleaning
- **2,870 hours** of gardening
- **3,152 hours** of individual social support
- **1,566 hours** of personal care
- **449 hours** of flexible respite
- **412 people** supported by 45 dedicated employees

### **Transport at a Glance 2024–25**

- **986 participants** supported
- **503,721 kilometres** driven
- **835 referrals** provided

Transport delivered through **CHSP, HCP and NDIS programs**, reaching residents from Bonner to Banks and everywhere in between.

## **Case Study**

### **Peggy's Story: Living Well on Her Own Terms**

This year, Peggy moved from the Commonwealth Home Support Programme to a Home Care Package after major surgery and increasing medical needs. She required in-home nursing, equipment, domestic help, home and garden support, and assistance to attend appointments and shop.



With so many priorities, managing her budget became challenging for both Peggy and her Care Coordinator. Despite these needs, Peggy remained highly independent and capable of planning her own care. After discussing options, she trialled self-managing her package, with CRCS providing support only when needed. This shift gave her greater control and freed more of her budget for essential services and equipment.

Since transitioning, Peggy has found self-management empowering and effective. It has reduced her stress and given her confidence, knowing she can access the right supports at the right time — in a way that suits her.

# Wellbeings

Wellbeings is CRCS's allied health practice, offering psychology and counselling for children, young people, adults and families. By providing accessible and responsive care, Wellbeings helps people manage challenges, build resilience and strengthen their overall wellbeing.



Read more about this online

In 2024–25, the team delivered 873 appointments across 933 hours, supporting individuals of all ages — from children experiencing anxiety to young people navigating big transitions, and adults seeking clarity through therapy or assessments. Families also gained practical strategies to support their loved ones with confidence.

This year, Wellbeings expanded to include ADHD and autism assessments for people aged six and over, complementing CRCS's existing NEIST programs for younger children. For many, a diagnosis provides clarity, affirmation and a stronger voice in schools, workplaces and health settings.

Feedback highlights strong impact: 100% of participants felt respected, trusted CRCS to do the right thing, and said their expectations were met or exceeded. A further 83% said Wellbeings helped them feel more connected to community — showing that therapeutic support builds both resilience and belonging.

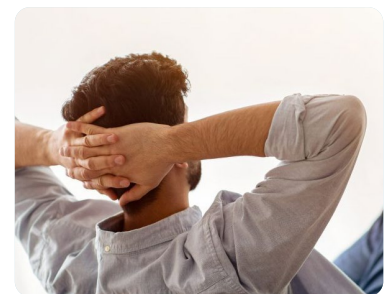
## Impact Snapshot

- **873** appointments delivered (933 hours of care)
- **100%** felt respected by our team
- **100%** trust CRCS to do the right thing
- **100%** said CRCS meets or exceeds expectations
- **83%** said Wellbeings helped them connect with their community

## Case Study

### Jason's Story: From Overwhelmed to In Control

At 35, Jason was close to quitting his job as stress, missed deadlines and low confidence took over. After trying Wellbeings, CBT gave him practical tools to challenge negative thinking, understand his anxiety and manage pressure more effectively. As he used these strategies, his



confidence and performance improved, deadlines were met, and he felt able to speak up and find balance with his manager. Jason says he almost walked away, but the right support helped him rebuild wellbeing and purpose.

# Bungee Youth Resilience



Read more about this online



The Bungee Youth Resilience Program, supported by ACT Health and Community Services, uses creative arts to strengthen children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Designed for school-aged children in the ACT, Bungee offers a safe, expressive space where participants can explore emotions, build resilience and feel connected. These early skills help young people manage challenges now and support confidence and belonging long into the future.

In 2024–25, 386 young people took part across schools and community settings. Through art, they developed friendships, learned strategies to cope with stress, and discovered new ways to express how they feel. Survey results show strong outcomes: 93% said Bungee helped them feel more confident, 86% found ways to calm themselves, and 84% said it helped them make friends.

Parents and teachers also see meaningful change. One parent shared, *“His confidence and love of art has grown significantly. He now uses art to regulate and communicate his emotions.”*

- **Emotions**, 87% said Bungee helped them express emotions
- **Calm**, 86% found new ways to feel calm
- **Friends**, 84% said Bungee helped them make friends
- **Support**, 93% said they now know who to go to with problems
- **Confidence**, 91% felt more confident and believed in themselves
- **Resilience**, 89% learned strategies to cope when things go wrong.

## Bungee at a Glance 2024–25

- 386 young people engaged across schools and community
- 38 arts groups in 25 schools (304 sessions)
- 6 community groups (96 sessions)
- 85 hours of individual counselling
- 2 exhibitions showcasing young people’s artwork
- 3 “Tuning Into Teens” parenting programs

## Case Study

### Creating Belonging Through Art

A lively group of ten- and eleven-year-old girls joined an eight-week Bungee program to strengthen social skills and resilience. Early challenges around communication and friendship tension eased as art became their way to understand emotions and perspectives. Inkblot paintings



and clay “friendship figures” opened space for reflection, laughter and connection. They proudly shared their work in a “Bungee Friendships” exhibition for classmates and families. By the end, the girls were listening, cooperating and supporting each other — growing into a kinder, more connected group.

## Highlight

### Bungee Art Exhibition



Held twice a year, the Bungee Art Exhibitions showcase the creativity and resilience of our young artists. Families, friends and facilitators come together to celebrate their achievements and stories through art.

# Youth Engagement Services



Read more about this online



## Connection and Belonging

This year, more than 400 young people came through the Belconnen Youth Centre (BYC), with over 3,200 attendances across drop-ins, holiday programs and daily activities. A further 142 joined our school holiday programs, enjoying safe, structured fun throughout the year.

With 100% of participants hearing about BYC from friends, the centre is a genuinely welcoming, peer-driven “third space” between school and home — a place to relax, share food, play games and get support. Survey results show strong impact: 71% felt respected by our team, 86% said CRCS meets or exceeds expectations, and 86% said we help them feel connected to community.

BYC reflects our community’s diversity, with one in four participants identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and one in ten living with disability.

## Impact Snapshot

**100%**

*heard about BYC through friends*

**758**

*young people attended Friday drop-ins*

**1 in 4**

*identify as Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander*

**11%**

*living with disability — highlighting accessibility & inclusion*

**86%**

*said CRCS helps them connect with community*

## Identity and Voice

Bit Bent and Dungeons & Dragons give young people safe, welcoming spaces to connect, express themselves and build supportive friendships. Bit Bent, our weekly LGBTQIA+ social group, runs two sessions — ages 10–17 and 18–25 — ensuring everyone feels comfortable and included.

This year, Bit Bent recorded 619 individual engagements, showing its strong place in local youth culture. Every participant over 18 first heard about the group from a friend, highlighting the trust and belonging that drive its growth.

The groups are diverse, with one-third of Bit Bent participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. For many, Bit Bent and D&D are the first places they feel fully accepted, where their identity, culture and voice are genuinely respected and celebrated.

## Standing Proud with Our Young People



Young people celebrated Wear It Purple Day with CRCS and Libraries ACT through drag costumes, a pride parade, performances, an author reading and a disco—promoting visibility, acceptance and support for LGBTQIA+ young people.

## Bit Bent – At a Glance

**619**

*individual engagements*

**100% (18+)**

*heard via friends*

**33%**

*CALD participants*

**71%**

*felt respected by the team*

## Building Skills

CRCS helps young people build practical skills and confidence through the Pre-Learner Driving Course, Employment and Education Hub, and Bridge to Brighter Futures. These programs create opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach.



This year, seven Pre-Learner Driving Courses supported 120 young people to gain safe-driving knowledge and feel confident before getting behind the wheel. The Employment and Education Hub recorded 105 engagements, helping young people develop foundational skills, overcome barriers and plan their futures. In partnership with CIT Canberra, Bridge to Brighter Futures delivered 25 sessions for 11 participants, who built confidence and completed four weeks of work experience, opening pathways into study and employment.

*“(The best thing was) getting driving lessons with a professional and getting my P’s.”* – Pre-Learner Participant

Supported by ACT Health and Community Services, the Youth Engagement Service uses the Advantaged Thinking Framework to help young people work toward their own goals.

## Individual Support

Some young people need one-on-one support to make real progress. Housing instability, health issues and financial stress can make it difficult to stay engaged at school, work or in daily life. This year, CRCS youth workers supported 100 young people through individual planned support appointments — listening, advocating and helping them navigate complex housing, health and financial systems. Just as importantly, they offered consistent encouragement and belief in each young person’s potential.

The impact is strong: 71% said they trust CRCS to do the right thing, and 71% felt heard in shaping their support. These results reflect the respectful, supportive relationships our team builds every day.

*“I got a place to stay today! Can you believe it!”* – Young person

## Beyond Youth Services

Youth services look different for every young person — a safe place to spend time, learning to drive, or support through challenges like conflict or housing stress. This year, 42% of participants were aged 18–25, showing the need for continued support as young people transition to adulthood. We’re strengthening referrals and expanding opportunities in education, employment and community life. Encouragingly, 86% of young people said our services meet or exceed expectations. Our goal remains simple: to be there when needed and help young people build strong foundations for adulthood.

## Case Studies

### A Bridge to Brighter Futures for James

James discovered Bridge to Brighter Futures through Dungeons & Dragons nights at The Corner. With an interest in tech and creativity, he worked with CRCS youth workers to map his goals and secured a work-experience placement with the Marketing and Communications Team. There, he



contributed ideas for social media and youth engagement, gaining confidence and seeing his skills valued. The experience helped him enrol at CIT and continue building his future through Education Support sessions, giving him direction and a stronger sense of purpose.

### Planned Support: Evie's Journey

When 15-year-old Evie came to the Youth Centre, she was escaping severe domestic violence. Within days she sought police support and entered temporary accommodation, but the months that followed brought homelessness, illness and major barriers. Too young for most services, she struggled



to access crisis housing, income, health care and education, despite protection orders. With consistent advocacy, Evie slowly rebuilt stability. Now 16, she has safe accommodation, counselling, income support and growing independence — showing the vital role youth workers play when systems fall short.

## Highlights



### T25 Health Clinic at Belconnen Youth Centre

The T25 Clinic offers free, confidential weekly health support for young people, providing easy access to nurses and practitioners and empowering them to seek advice and take charge of their wellbeing.



### Ballroom Dancing Workshop

A free 10-week Ballroom Dancing Workshop brought people 16+ together to learn Vogue Femme and runway, building confidence, self-expression, body positivity and a strong sense of belonging.



### Breakdancing at Belconnen

Breakdancing sessions at Belconnen Community Centre let young people learn new skills, build confidence, get active and connect with others while exploring breakdancing — now an Olympic sport.



### Recognition for LGBTIQ+ Inclusion

The Belconnen Youth Centre received an ACT Government Certificate of Appreciation for our commitment to LGBTIQ+ inclusion, supporting ballroom classes and a Wear It Purple Day celebration.

## Belconnen Community Centre

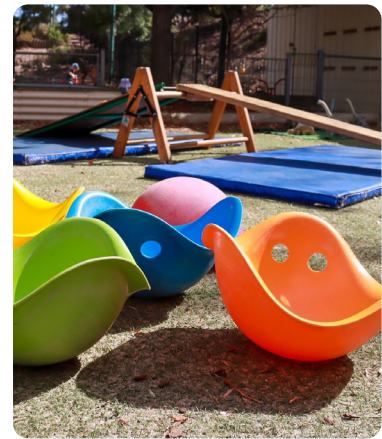
The Belconnen Community Centre is a welcoming hub where people connect, learn and take part in community life. With a sports hall, gym, theatre and flexible rooms, it supports everything from fitness and arts to meetings and social groups. Affordable hire ensures community organisations can access quality spaces that reflect CRCS



values of inclusion and wellbeing. Many locals visit daily for programs, appointments or connection, and the Centre also provides a safe place for people experiencing homelessness to access a shower. Survey results reflect this trust: 85% trust CRCS, 83% would recommend us, and 92% feel consistently respected.

## Compliance and Governance

Good governance means people can trust CRCS to deliver safe, high-quality services. In 2024–25, we completed more than 400 hours of quality audits and 136 improvement actions, maintained accreditation against the QIC Standards and Secure Local Jobs, and partnered with Dementia Australia to strengthen accessibility. We also kept a strong focus on child safety, risk management and workplace wellbeing.



Governance is about more than compliance — it ensures people feel safe, respected and informed. Clear policies, rights statements and accessible feedback pathways help participants shape their experience. Survey results show most participants trust CRCS, feel respected and rate our services highly.

**85%**

*trust CRCS to do the right thing*

**3 in 4**

*rate CRCS services as high quality.*

# Our Key Supporters

Thank you to our employees, volunteers, participants, and community partners. Your support powers CRCS and makes real impact possible.

## List of Thanks and Acknowledgements

1 and One Consulting	Braidwood Public School
10 Yards Aranda	Budding Theatre
A Gender Agenda	Bunnings Belconnen
A Village for Every Child	Can the Can
ACT Community Services Directorate	Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy
ACT Council of Social Service	Canberra Blind Society
ACT Education Directorate	Canberra Environment Centre
ACT Government	Canberra Festival Ballet School
ACT Health Directorate	Canberra Health Services
ACT Housing	Canberra Institute of Technology
ACT Policing	Canberra Raiders
ACT Regional Community Services Alliance	Canberra Region Rugby League
ACT Skip Hire	Canberra Seed Savers Coop
Alderman	Captains Flat Public School
ALDI Australia	Care Financial
Alzheimers Australia	Charnwood-Dunlop School
Argyle Housing	Child Players ACT
Australia Catholic University	Child Youth Protection Services
Australian Childhood Foundation	Children First Alliance
Australian Federal Police	Communities at Work
Australian Red Cross	Community Law
Baringa Early Learning Centre	Community Services #1
Barnardos Our Place	Conflict Resolution Service
Belconnen Community Council	Cooma North Public School
BPD Awareness ACT	

Cooma Public School  
Council of Australian Governments  
Cultural Facilities Corporation  
Cut Price Skips  
Daydream Machine  
DeafACT  
Defence Member and Family Support  
Deloitte  
Dementia Australia  
Department of Health and Aged Care  
Department of Regional NSW  
Department of Social Services  
Directions Health Services  
Dolly Parton Imagination Library Kippax  
Domestic Violence Crisis Service  
Doris Women's Refuge  
Drama Stars Academy  
Early Years Community of Practice  
Elrington Lawyers  
Empress Eyrie  
EveryMan  
Families ACT  
Florey Primary School  
Fraser Primary School  
Ghawazee Moon Bellydance  
Ginninderry  
Ginninderry Conservation Trust  
GoBoat Canberra  
Green Oak Theatre  
Grill'd Woden  
Gugan Gulwan  
Gumnut Dance  
Gundaroo Public School  
Gungahlin Child and Family Centre  
Hands Across Canberra  
Helyer and Co  
Housing ACT  
iPlay Belconnen  
Ickle Pickle Productions  
Initiatives for Women in Need  
Insane Championship Wrestling  
Jindabyne Central School  
Karinya House  
Kennards Hire Belconnen  
Kingston Reid  
KPMG  
Legal Aid  
Libraries ACT  
Lids 4 Kids  
Lush  
Marymead  
Mecure Hotel Canberra  
Men's Sheds  
Menslink  
Meridian  
Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services  
Monaro Family Support Service  
Multicultural Hub Canberra  
Narrabundah Early Childhood School  
National Nursing Agency  
Navitas English Language Group  
NDIS / EACH  
North Canberra Hospital / Calvary Hospital  
Northside Community Services  
OneLink  
OPC IT  
Orange Sky  
OzHarvest  
Palliative Care Australia  
Perform Australia

Perinatal Wellbeing Centre  
Programmed  
Queanbeyan Players  
Questacon  
Radford College  
Reclink Australia  
Relationships Australia  
Roundabout Canberra  
RSL LifeCare  
Scullin Community Group  
SEE Change  
Sentinel Apartments  
Share the Dignity  
SiTara's Story  
Social Outcomes Lab  
Sophie Edwards Choir  
St Vincent de Paul  
Stockland Ridgecrest Village  
Suburban Land Agency  
Tara Cheyne MLA  
Tempo Theatre  
The Men's Table  
The Salvation Army  
The Smith Family  
Toora Women Inc.  
Transport Canberra and City Services  
Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre  
Uniting Care Kippax  
University of Canberra  
Victim Support ACT  
Villagio Sant' Antonio  
VolunteeringACT  
Walking Football  
WaterWombats  
West Belconnen Child and Family Centre  
Westfield Belconnen  
Woden Community Service  
Women's Legal Centre  
Woolworths Canberra  
Youth Coalition of the ACT  
YWCA Canberra



## Capital Region Community Services

*An Inclusive Connected Community*

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