

# Annual Report

2024



Capital  
Region  
Community  
Services

*An Inclusive Connected Community*



# 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



We feel privileged to this year open the Budawang Early Learning Centre, 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.

## Capital Region Community Services Limited

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# Message From Our Chair



## Victoria Choice Chair

On 12 January 2024, I was privileged to be appointed chair of the Capital Region Community Services (CRCS) Board. Before stepping into this role, I already knew CRCS as a trustworthy, respected organisation with a strong ethical foundation. Since then, I've come to see firsthand how well this reputation is earned.

CRCS cultivates a collaborative, innovative culture that makes a real impact across our service areas. CRCS employees are fully committed to delivering quality programs – from early education to aged care, youth programs to transport, therapeutics to community engagement – all in support of our purpose to promote community wellbeing. This dedication shines through in our 2023 Employee Satisfaction Survey, showing an increase in inclusivity up from 83% to 91%, and 83% of employees feeling connected to CRCS's vision.

I want to thank our employees and volunteers for their daily efforts, as well as our leadership team – CEO Mandy Green, Deborah Bampton and Sandra Sheehy-Cox – and my fellow board members for their support and dedication to CRCS's purpose.

As chair, my primary focus is on ensuring strong governance and upholding high standards, including compliance with Quality Innovation Performance (QIP) Accreditation against the QIC Health and Community Services Standards. These measures reinforce our commitment to safety, quality and positive community outcomes. To meet new governance requirements under the Aged Care Reforms, we've established two advisory bodies – the Quality Care Advisory Body and the Consumer Advisory Body – which enhance our responsiveness to participant needs and help us maintain care quality.



This year, CRCS expanded its Social Impact Framework, underscoring our commitment to measurable outcomes that inform our strategy and provide insights for government and partners. This framework will guide service delivery across

all programs, with impact tracking via the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) and a focus on participant belonging and connectedness, wellbeing and our provision of a safe space. Key outcomes for 2023-24 include:

- CRCS Involve senior social group participants averaged a PWI score of 77, above the Canberra average of 75.9.
- 92% of young people aged 10–17 feel a sense of belonging at the Belconnen Youth Centre (BYC), with 100% of young people aged 18–25 feeling the same.
- 88% of surveyed young people (ages 10–17) identified as LGBTQIA+, underscoring CRCS as a safe, inclusive space for diverse communities.
- 100% of participants in the Bungee Youth Resilience Program at an ACT primary school rated their ability to express feelings and emotions as "strongly agree," a 60% increase from pre-attendance survey results.

To address the 2022-23 budget deficit, we made strategic financial adjustments, including dissolving the NDIS support coordination team and closing six outside school hours care sites. These steps, along with strengthened financial oversight, reduced our deficit by \$400,049,

bringing the 2023-24 result to -\$188,335 and positioning us for a balanced budget next year.

Looking forward, I'm optimistic about CRCS's future as we strengthen governance, launch new initiatives, expand our programs, and deepen our impact across the community.

# Message From Our CEO



## Mandy Green Chief Executive Officer

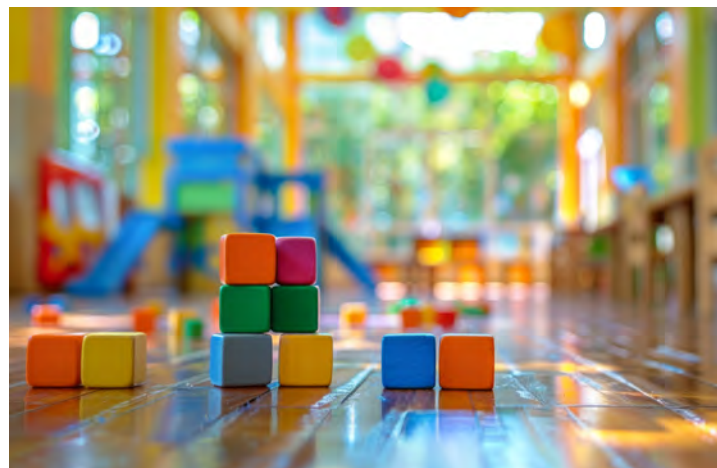
For over five decades, CRCS has put our community and participants at the heart of our purpose. Our aim is to create inclusive connected communities and empower people to live their best life. In 2023-24, we remained committed to driving meaningful social change by delivering person-centred services that respond directly to the needs and feedback from our participants.

This year we focussed on further developing our Social Impact Framework to sharpen our focus, align our vision and demonstrate our tangible outcomes. The framework guides our efforts, enabling us to target areas that yield the most benefit to our community and participants, and to measure our work. We have started to see the benefits of this work and the outcomes we have been able to measure across a number of programs has been encouraging.

During the year, we laid groundwork for new early childhood initiatives, in line with the ACT Government's Best Start for Canberra's Children: The First 1000 Days Strategy. Included was planning to pilot the INFANT program to provide new parents with practical skills for their baby's first year. Additionally, we planned the CRCS Wraparound pilot at Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre, where dedicated Child and Family Practitioners will work closely with Educators, our sector colleagues, parents, carers and other support networks to offer holistic support to families by meeting them where they are.

In February, we opened our fifth early childhood centre – Budawang Early Learning Centre in Milton, NSW. This 35-place centre for children aged two to five has been operating at high capacity, offering local families access to modern facilities with spaces for arts, music and physical activities.

Significant effort was dedicated to preparing for the launch of a new ADHD and autism assessment program, set to begin in the next financial year.





Available to individuals aged six and over, the introduction of these services reflects CRCS's commitment to expanding its therapeutic offerings and addressing the growing demand for comprehensive support in the community.

I was proud to complete my tenure of three years as a co-chair of the ACT Children First Alliance, a network of not-for-profit providers of children's services. Collectively we operate 45 early learning centres with more than 3,400 places for children. The Alliance was established to develop and communicate a shared vision for early childhood education and care in the ACT to ensure that all children have access to ECEC. Together, we have achieved a lot and have a great working relationship with the ACT Government and our regulator.

We are one of five organisations to formalise the new ACT Regional Community Services Alliance. The Alliance brings together CRCS, Communities at Work, Woden Community Service, Northside Community Service and Community Services #1 to elevate and represent the perspectives and priorities of the Canberra community. The Alliance has developed a strong advocacy policy platform, and I look forward to progressing this with my colleagues.

In collaboration with Community Services #1, we successfully tendered for the ACT Government's Community Assistance and Temporary Supports Program (CATS), providing medical

and allied health transport while CS#1 offers care coordination and bridging support. This consortium ensures that individuals needing short-term support receive well-integrated care.

To adapt to changing priorities, we realigned our resources by discontinuing NDIS support coordination and closing six NSW outside school hours care sites due to these operating environments no longer being viable. While these decisions were difficult, they allow us to focus on areas where we can most effectively meet community need. We continue to support people with disability through our inclusive programs, events and social groups for families and individuals.

Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the commitment of our employees, volunteers, community sector partners, and the support of ACT, NSW, and Australian governments. Our people remain at the core of our purpose.

I thank the CRCS Board for their invaluable guidance. I also extend my gratitude to our outgoing board members – Peter Humphries, Carolyn McPherson and Christopher Ermacora – whose contributions have left a lasting impact.

Looking to the new financial year, I am eager for the opportunities ahead as we launch new initiatives, strengthen existing programs and expand our reach. I'm confident we will achieve even greater outcomes for our community.

# Treasurer's Report



**Jane Godkin**  
Treasurer

It is my pleasure, as Treasurer of Capital Region Community Services, to present the 2023-24 annual accounts to our members for the first time.

Highlights of the 2023-24 financial year included the introduction of the Community Assistance and Temporary Supports Program, revaluation of our building assets, and the movement of our teams into CRCS owned buildings.

The year was not without its challenges. In December 2023, made the difficult decision to close our NSW outside school hours care (OSHC) centres. In addition, we exited the NDIS Support Coordination program, bringing an end to that chapter of our service delivery stream.

The organisation recorded a deficit for 2023-2024 of (\$188k), a \$400k improvement from the prior year's deficit which was just under \$600k. This improvement was driven by increased income during the year of \$1.5m, due to additional grant funding being received, and whilst expenditure also increased by \$1.1m, the overall impact to the business has been an improved bottom line.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of our CEO, Mandy Green, Senior Finance Manager Marion Eade, the Executive Leadership Team, Board Chair Vicky Choice, and my colleagues on the board. Each has played an essential role in navigating the complexities of this year and positioning us for a stronger future.

**For further details, please refer to the “Financials at a Glance” on page 85 and our audited financial statements.**

# About CRCS

Since 1975, Capital Region Community Services (CRCS) has delivered a diverse range of high-quality, integrated, and inclusive programs to individuals, families, children, and young people across Belconnen and the broader capital region. We collaborate with community members, local organisations, and businesses to create responsive programs and activities that foster self-determination and reduce social isolation—placing the community at the heart of everything we do.

## Our Vision

Inclusive, connected communities within the Capital Region.

## Our Purpose

We empower people to live their best lives through:

- building and connecting communities
- delivering relevant, person-centred services
- providing choice and opportunity.

## Our Strategic Goals

 **Strengthen our innovative and collaborative capacity to achieve greater social impact.**

 **Engage and connect with communities in the Capital Region.**

 **Be inclusive, responsible and exceptional as an organisation and an employer.**

 **Provide high quality services, placing people and the community at the heart of everything we do.**

## Our Values



We are respectful



We are accountable



We are inclusive



We are ethical



We are optimistic



We are innovative

We demonstrate our values by working collaboratively, being accountable, responsive and flexible. Our community support services aim to keep people living well at home for longer and to ensure reablement to assist with flexible and positive community based lifestyles.

# Snapshot 2023–24

## Education and Care

**764**

children provided quality education and care across 5 early childhood centres

**501**

total number of children who attend our 206 playgroup sessions

## Family Services

**307+**

families supported through case management, educational programs, playgroups and more

## Youth

**3,500+**

young people engaged through Belconnen Youth Centre (up 50% from 2022-23)

## Transport Services

**891**

people provided transport with a total 26,580 trips

**411,295**

kilometres driven to get participants to their destination

## Compliance

**300+**

internal audit hours and 231 improvement actions completed

## Aged Care

**16,109**

hours of seniors social group programs

**1,990**

events and activities facilitated to 180+ senior community members

**24,220**

hours of domestic help, personal care and social support delivered

## Therapeutic Services

**227**

sessions of psychology and counselling services provided

## Grants

**\$7,959,214**

received in grants and subsidies

# Social Impact

CRCS is committed to the continuous improvement of our service offerings and the methods we use to deliver them. Our primary objective is to ensure that our efforts create meaningful change and help build inclusive, connected communities within the Capital Region. Over the last six months of the 2023/24 financial year, we continued the development of our "Theory of Change" and "Social Impact Framework." These will unify our organisational vision and demonstrate tangible outcomes, enabling us to focus strategically on the areas that yield the greatest benefit for our community. Our commitment to social impact directly aligns with the ACT Government's Commissioning Roadmap 2022-24. The roadmap outlines a 10-year reform of the way that the ACT's human services system is designed, funded and delivered to ensure that all services and programs are meeting the needs of the community.

A Theory of Change is a roadmap that shows how and why the actions we take will lead to the positive changes we want to see. It is essential because it keeps us focused and aligned with our mission. At CRCS, our "why" is "Inclusive, connected communities within the Capital Region, so people can thrive and live their best lives." We have also documented additional community sector outcomes to highlight where and how CRCS fits into the wider Community Services ecosystem.

Our Social Impact Framework is trauma-informed, evidence and strengths based. We focus on the potential, talents and capabilities of individuals, rather than their deficits.

One example is the CRCS Youth Program, which uses the evidence-based Advantaged Thinking framework. This framework has proven effective in helping young people build the confidence and skills to achieve positive outcomes and harness their own talents and capabilities. The implementation of the Advantaged Thinking framework has already resulted in positive

feedback from participants. Young people involved in the program have expressed feeling more comfortable and connected with youth workers, reporting an increased sense of trust and safety.

This is the first time CRCS has created a comprehensive Social Impact Framework, reaffirming our commitment to service excellence and leadership in this space. By measuring our outcomes effectively, we contribute valuable data that can help the government and partner organisations enhance their broader community impact.

CRCS measures social impact within our youth, aged care and Bungee Youth Resilience programs. Going forward we will extend this to all program areas, to increase positive outcomes and increase the wellbeing of the Capital Region. This approach will enhance our ability to inform stakeholders and guide future decision making. Our data collection and analysis include quantitative and qualitative insights that enrich our understanding of our social impact.

# OUR PEOPLE



# Board of Directors

On 30 June 2024, the CRCS Board of Directors was:



**Victoria Choice**  
Chair  
Joined 2023



**Catherine McCarthy**  
Vice Chair  
Joined 2021



**Jane Godkin**  
Treasurer  
Joined 2024



**Ellen Samuels**  
Secretary  
Joined 2023



**Margaret Anderson**  
Director  
Joined 2023



**Dewani Bakkum AM**  
Director  
Joined 2024



**Fiona Goode**  
Director  
Joined 2024

Board members who left during the financial year:

- Peter Humphries, Chair, Left December 2023
- Carolyn McPherson, Treasurer, Left November 2023
- Christopher Ermacora, Secretary, Left August 2023

On 30 June 2024, the CRCS Executive Leadership Team was:



**Mandy Green**  
CEO



**Deborah Bampton**  
Deputy CEO



**Sandra Sheehy-Cox**  
Executive Manager  
Education and Care



**Heidi Prowse OAM**  
Executive Manager  
Strategy and Impact

At CRCS, people are at the core of everything we do – from our dedicated employees to our incredible volunteers. We celebrate individual and team achievements, recognising the vital role they play in delivering our strategy, programs and services. Their commitment drives our growth and strengthens our impact across the community.



## Volunteers

CRCS was built on a foundation of volunteer support. Established in the late 1960s by a group of local church members and doctors, the organisation began as a neighbourhood support group, known then as Belconnen Community Service (BCS), providing voluntary assistance and connection for Canberra's residents.

With services like friendly visits through the "Welcome Wagon" and bereavement counselling, volunteers were foundational to BCS. It wasn't until the early 1970s that our first part-time employee joined, yet volunteers remained vital, offering essential services across the region.

Today, around 30 volunteers from diverse backgrounds contribute to CRCS's transport and youth programs, involve social groups, and community and recreation services, continuing the legacy of our founders.

We thank our volunteers for their commitment and the value they add to CRCS programs and the wellbeing of our participants. It is their dedication that has continued to grow our community, and we know that we couldn't do what we do without you.

## All Star Awards



### Respect

Sonam Tshomo



### Accountability

Jenny Park and Kasia Zapasnik-Grodecka



### Inclusion

Angel Hellyer



### Ethics

Natasha Svilicich



### Optimisim

Shirley Khor



### Innovation

Therese Beckmann and Livia Pitz



### Leadership

Qin Bao

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, with the Executive Team presenting the awards.

Congratulations to the following CRCS employees who were recipients of a 2023 All Star Award.

## Good Fun Awards

### Backlog Blaster:

Mel Smith

### Chief Fun Fairy:

Hiromi Hanna

### Encore Encore:

Katyani Pandey

### Rookie Rockstar:

Madelene (Maddey) Bochenek

### The Sensei:

Fliss Henss and Marion Eade

### Top Gun Team:

Bruce Early Childhood Centre

## Giving Tree Appeal Volunteers

- Elly Crome
- Twinky Parappilly
- Ruth Whitworth
- Fliss Henss
- Natalie Ware
- Lyne Bowman
- Dominique Henss
- Michelle Hall
- Braulio Melo
- Rachel Martin
- Heidi Prowse OAM

## Celebrating Julie's Legacy at CRCS

After nearly 33 years of service, Julie is stepping into a new chapter, leaving a profound legacy at CRCS. Beginning her journey in 1991 as a family day care Educator, she played a pivotal role in supporting family day care networks and later transitioned into senior roles at CRCS, including Senior Manager of People and Culture. Julie was instrumental in streamlining policies, implementing the ELMO online learning platform, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.



On 13 August 2024, we honoured Julie with a heartfelt morning tea at our offices in Bruce. The event, filled with good food and conversations, included speeches from Mandy Green and Katyani, who reflected on Julie's dedication, wisdom, and unwavering work ethic. Katyani said to Julie, "You have many striking qualities, just to mention a few: your cooking, work ethic, your wisdom, dedication and commitment. I wish I could clone you, and I think we have said that many times."

Julie and Mandy reflected on their long-standing relationship, particularly their regular Thursday chats, where they openly discussed workplace changes and challenges. Mandy said, "From the most vocal challenger to one of my most cherished colleagues."

Though retiring from her permanent position, Julie has graciously offered to continue to support CRCS on a casual basis for a while longer. We look forward to many more moments of learning and laughter with her.



# Local Heroes

Recognition and awards program that shines a spotlight on the most successful hero for each Westfield Centre in the organisation or group they represent, and each receives a \$5,000 grant.

Each award \$30k community grants

Thank you for voting

Westfield Local Hero announced soon

Westfield Local Heroes



## Graham's 30-Year Milestone at CRCS

This year at CRCS, we celebrated Graham McKerchar for his 30 years of dedicated service and for being a finalist in the Westfield Belconnen Local Hero Awards. Graham won an impressive \$5,000 for CRCS, funds that were allocated towards our community initiatives, including the 10/10 Project, the Giving Tree Appeal, and support for vulnerable families across our region.

As the Senior Manager for Transport, Graham oversees about 30,000 trips annually, covering approximately 411,000 kilometres, ensuring that approximately 1,000 registered participants, particularly older people and people living with

short-term health conditions or disability, have access to essential transportation and social connection. His leadership extends beyond transport management to initiatives like the 10/10 Project, where he provides gardening support to those currently unable to manage it themselves due to circumstance and life challenges.

Over the past year, Graham's dedication to service was complemented by significant professional achievements, including earning a Certificate in Transport Management and successfully completing the Bus Operator Accreditation Scheme training course.



## Celebration of Appreciation of Our Aged Care Employees

On 7 August 2023, we celebrated Aged Care Employee Day with a delightful afternoon tea, honouring our incredible team members who dedicate themselves to caring for older Australians. This special day recognises employees working in residential care, in-home care and retirement living. We celebrated our employees and strengthened

the bonds that make our team truly special. The afternoon was lively, with delicious food and fun games like Celebrity Heads and the “Who Done It” mystery game. Each employee received a well-deserved certificate of appreciation, to thank them for their dedication and hard work.



## Executive Team Visit to Belconnen Offices

On 20 December 2023, the CRCS Executive Team made a memorable visit to our Belconnen offices, bringing with them not just cards and chocolates, but a festive cheer to express gratitude to over 200 employees for their exceptional work and support throughout the year.

The visit was made even more special by the unique cards provided by Daydream Machine, an ACT based organisation that supports young neurodivergent individuals in exploring their interests in music, arts and technology. The cards, designed by students of Daydream Machine, added a personal touch to the gesture, with \$2 from each card purchased going back to the artist to support their creative endeavours.

# WORKING GROUPS



## Child Safe Working Group

Our Child Safety and Wellbeing Working Group is committed to fostering the safety, happiness and wellbeing of the children and young people we support. In alignment with the Council of Australian Governments' National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, we continue to work hard to fully integrate child safety into every aspect of our leadership, governance and organisational culture. This commitment extends across all CRCS operations, from transport services to marketing and communications, education and care,

recruitment and onboarding practices, ensuring that the National Principles are embedded in everything we do.

During the 2023-24 financial year, the working group completed a comprehensive organisational risk assessment and management plan. Currently, we are developing the CRCS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure, which is scheduled for release in the next financial year.

## Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Working Group

The Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Working Group continues to drive changes that reflect our commitment to fostering inclusive practices, celebrating diversity, and delivering culturally responsive services across CRCS. During the 2023-24 reporting period, the group made significant progress in policy updates and community engagement, while planning the future direction of the group.

One of the key achievements was the update to the CRCS Parental Leave Policy. Revisions to this policy were made in partnership with the Rainbow Working Group, to ensure inclusive language for all. The policy offers greater flexibility, inclusivity and paid leave entitlements to any carer. The policy provides equal benefits to the primary and secondary carer and ensures gender-neutral language to reflect our dedication to supporting all families.

Another change that was made was to the wording of CRCS position descriptions, in order to highlight how inclusive and diverse our workplace is. Our job advertisements are written to appeal to those of any background or who may be neurodiverse, so that anybody feels welcome to apply.

CRCS celebrated cultural diversity with a Diwali event held at Belconnen Community Centre, inviting employees and participants to join in the

festivities. The event featured traditional activities like Diya painting, where participants created and took home their own clay lamps. Katyani, the chair of our Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, explained the significance of Diwali (Deepavali), and the centre was decorated beautifully for the event, with traditional food supplied. The Involve participants gave feedback that they particularly enjoyed this event and the chance to meet and mingle with the CRCS employees.

CRCS also strengthened its relationship with the community through participation in external events. We hosted a stall at the SiTara's Story event "Colour in Canberra" at ANU, where we talked about CRCS services and our commitment to diversity, also highlighting our work towards women in leadership empowerment.

Looking ahead to 2024-25, CRCS plans to combine the Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Working Group with the Rainbow Group and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Committee. This consolidation is part of a strategy to bring more diverse voices together and to amplify our efforts across these groups that all share a common goal of fostering diversity and inclusion and every level.

## Rainbow Working Group

The Rainbow Working Group supports CRCS in becoming an inclusive, responsible and exceptional organisation by advising on LGBTIQ+ awareness, improving policies and systems, removing barriers, fostering community connections, and promoting education and celebrations, ensuring that LGBTIQ+ individuals feel welcomed, valued and respected.

In support of Bisexual Awareness Week and Celebrate Bisexuality Day, the working group shared two interviews on the CRCS intranet, highlighting personal stories to deepen community understanding of bisexuality. The working group hosted a lively Mardi Gras watch party on 2 March at the Belconnen Community

Centre, uniting participants and employees in celebration of diversity and inclusion. On 25 August, Belconnen Community Theatre hosted a family-friendly event for Wear it Purple Day, showcasing young LGBTIQ+ performers to promote visibility, community, and acceptance across our community. CRCS became a partner of Canberra's LGBTIQ Directory, published by Fuse Magazine on behalf of the ACT Government. The directory provides a central place to find support, community and business pathways.

In collaboration with the Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, the CRCS Parental Leave Policy was updated with inclusive language and leave entitlements available to any carer.

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## WHS and Wellbeing Committee

The Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and Wellbeing Committee was formed in 2024 following the merge of the WHS Consultative Committee and Mental Health and Wellbeing Group. The committee, consisting of employee, management and WHS representatives meets bi-monthly to initiate, develop and carry out activities designed to ensure employee's health, safety and wellbeing at work.

Over the past 12 months, these groups, in conjunction with the CRCS Program Manager – WHS and Risk, have overseen activities including:

- the ACT Government's Healthier Work Gap Assessment Tool review, a tool that is designed to support maturation of health, safety and wellbeing strategies for employees and workplaces
- implementation of safety noticeboards across all CRCS sites with integrated toolbox talks and safety signage
- centralised first aid kit management
- review and implementation of a robust framework and documentation to support employees to return to work safely after injury or illness
- rigorous workplace inspections at all CRCS workplaces
- Wellbeing Wednesday – articles and resources made accessible on the CRCS intranet
- engagement in awareness days including R U OK? Day and Wellbeing Priori-Tea as part of Mental Health Month ACT.

The committee's collaborative efforts have strengthened CRCS's commitment to creating a safer, healthier and supportive workplace for all employees.



# EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS



# Giving Tree Appeal

Each year, with generous donations from the community, CRCS prepares and distributes up to 100 hampers for families and individuals in the Capital Region. These hampers contain delicious treats, special decorations, and a gift for each family member, ensuring everyone has something to feel festive during the holiday season.



In 2023, we received generous donations from the community in the form of gifts and monetary donations totaling an incredible \$3,903.39. This generosity enabled us to purchase a variety of gifts and food items and create 80 wonderful hampers that brought holiday cheer to many individuals and families.

## 10/10 Project

In our annual “Backyard Blitz” style event, the 10/10 Project brought together 56 volunteers who dedicated part or all of their day to rejuvenating the gardens of nine vulnerable households in Canberra. This event takes place every October (the tenth month), aiming to complete the garden transformations within 10 hours.



Volunteers, donning their best outdoor workwear and armed with gardening tools generously donated from local sponsors, spent the day clearing, pruning, mowing and trimming the yards of these deserving households. Their efforts were directed towards families who might face eviction due to yard conditions, those physically unable to maintain their gardens, homes with unsafe outdoor areas for children or older people, and properties at high fire risk as summer approaches.

This year's volunteers came from CRCS, ACT Health, Housing ACT, Programmed, and the Department of Social Services contributing their time and energy to fill 12 skips with grass clippings, weeds, tree cuttings and other debris. Despite the physical demands of the day, the spirit of camaraderie and the smiles on the faces of those who were helped made it a fulfilling experience with all agreeing that it is worth the sore muscles and extra boost of vitamin D following winter.

Morning tea and lunch was prepared by the Belconnen Community Centre's Social Bean Café and delivered by volunteer teams, providing a moment of rest and social interaction.

Reflecting on the day, one volunteer noted the transformative impact of their collective effort, “Just seeing the before and after, what we could achieve as a team in just one day, and the look on the resident's face – it was incredible.” Another touching moment came when a family felt safe to let their puppy play outside for the first time, free from worries about snakes and critters in the overgrown grass.

The 10/10 Project not only rejuvenates properties but also renews spirits. Each year, this project strengthens the bonds within our community, ensuring support for those who need it most, from entire families to their furry friends.





## The Amazing Belco Race

The Amazing Belco Race 2023 was an exciting community event that saw nine teams safely racing around the Belconnen area to complete a seriously fun set of challenges and tasks. Participants engaged with great gusto completing creative challenges that included riding a child's bike around Lake Ginninderra, deciphering clues to pack the perfect children's backpack for Roundabout Canberra and searching for a clue

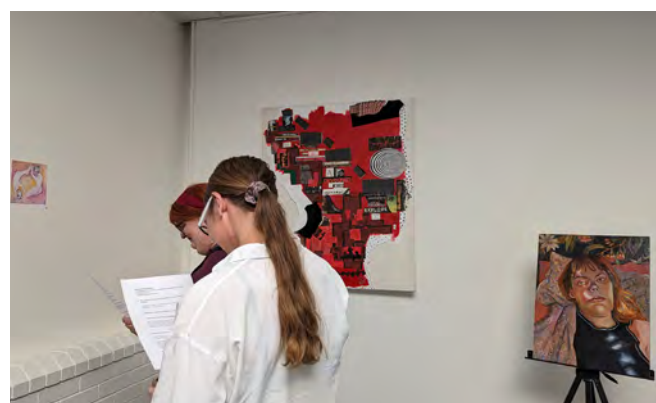
and putting their cryptography skills to the test to find page 141 of a particular book in the Belconnen Library. After the race, everyone gathered for team awards, social drinks, sharing stories and laughs about the day's adventures. The event raised \$4,875 which went towards our Christmas Giving Tree Appeal. Congratulations to the winning team – Thinkndo!

## Beyond the Binary

In January 2024, the Belconnen Community Gallery hosted a remarkable exhibition, Beyond the Binary, showcasing the talents of local intersex, trans, and gender-diverse artists. This captivating event celebrated artistic expression and diversity, offering visitors a chance to experience a wide array of artworks that challenge norms and celebrate individuality.

Spanning various mediums, including paintings and sculptures, each piece told a unique story reflecting the diverse experiences and perspectives of the artists. The exhibition provided a platform for these talented individuals to share their voices, fostering understanding and acceptance within the community. The event was

a resounding success, drawing art enthusiasts, community members, and supporters alike, all eager to engage with and celebrate the creativity and resilience of the featured artists.





## Bungee Art Exhibition and Rav Hind YOGIE

Bungee art exhibitions, held at the end of each school semester in June and December, have become a celebrated showcase of young artistic talent in the Capital Region. These exhibitions highlight the creativity and skill of participants from the Bungee Youth Resilience Program, an inclusive resilience-building initiative that promotes social connection and emotional wellbeing through the arts. The program supports children and young people aged five to 18, offering art-based programs in schools and community settings across the ACT. At these showcases, we witnessed incredible creativity and artistic expression on display. The events have been enjoyed by the artists, their family and friends, their school community and a diverse group of community members.

Bungee programs are made possible by the wonderful CRCS Youth Team, including Rav Hind, whose dedication and passion have been

instrumental in fostering a supportive and inspiring environment for participants. Rav's efforts were recognised with a YOGIE Award nomination in December 2023, a testament to his positive impact in empowering young people in our communities.





## Canberra Day Appeal 2024 and Hands Across Canberra Giving Day

Each year CRCS participates in the Canberra Day Appeal, and this year was a heartwarming testament to the community spirit and generosity of the Capital Region. A culmination of marketing efforts and community support saw CRCS raising \$7,994.98 – topping last year's efforts!

Thanks to our fundraising campaign and the enthusiastic support of local individuals and companies, the appeal included a range of activities and events aimed at giving back to the community and supporting our vital programs and services. Every dollar donated was matched up to the first \$2,500 by Hands Across Canberra, effectively doubling the impact of early donations. Aldermere partnered with CRCS, matching additional donations up to \$1,500, further amplifying the fundraising efforts.

CRCS was honoured to host the Canberra Giving Day launch at the Belconnen Community Centre. The event was a significant success, catering to a large crowd and gaining media coverage from WIN TV, Riotact and Canberra Daily. Special thanks to the seniors from one of our Involve social groups who delivered a captivating ukulele performance.

One of the highlights of this year's appeal was winning a \$500 prize from Hands Across Canberra for a short video we created on the importance of giving where you live. This recognition further motivated our efforts and showcased the impact of community involvement.



CRCS's early childhood centres and outside school hours care programs played a pivotal role in the appeal, engaging children in meaningful activities that taught them the value of generosity. Children participated in creating 'coin snakes' with collected coins from their families.

One touching story involved Logan from the Florey outside school hours care program, who generously donated coins from his piggy bank. He and his peers proudly calculated the total value of their coin snake. Another inspiring moment featured Mia and Saskia, who donated \$10 towards their coin snake creation, collaborating with friends to extend the snake. The funds raised during the appeal supported various CRCS projects, including the 2023 Giving Tree Appeal.



## Impact Day at CRCS

Impact Day at Belconnen Community Centre was a testament to the power of community collaboration, thanks to the enthusiastic involvement of Deloitte volunteers. A team of 12 to 15 Deloitte employees dedicated their time to revitalising our centre, giving it a spruce up with a fresh coat of paint. This makeover not only brightened the physical environment but also uplifted the spirits of everyone involved, fostering a stronger sense of community and connection. We are immensely grateful to the Deloitte team for their hard work and commitment to giving back to the community.



## Mental Ill-Health Awareness

In October, as part of Mental Health Month and in partnership with MIEACT, CRCS hosted the Prioritea event. The initiative aimed to raise awareness of mental health by engaging CRCS employees and the broader community. The event connected participants to a wide range of mental health services and resources, enhancing their understanding of mental health support.

The event created a welcoming and interactive environment, offering various activities such as a playgroup for families, art projects, board games, a free movie screening, and a sausage sizzle. Guest speakers from MIEACT shared personal stories of living with mental illness, providing valuable insights into accessing support and maintaining personal wellbeing.

By fostering a relaxed atmosphere where mental health topics were approachable and accessible, CRCS successfully lowered the barriers to seeking help. The event also encouraged open discussions on mental health, breaking down stigmas and addressing common misunderstandings.

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## Mardi Gras Watch Party

On 2 March 2024, the Belconnen Community Centre was alive with the spirit of Mardi Gras, as we hosted a watch party that brought together the community in a colourful (and sparkly) celebration of diversity and inclusion. The event featured free entertainment and light snacks, with non-alcoholic drinks available for purchase, creating a welcoming atmosphere for all attendees. Guests were encouraged to showcase their rainbow best, with the best-dressed attendee winning a CRCS gift pack.





## Grand Opening of Social Bean Café and Emporium

On 30 November 2023, CRCS celebrated the grand opening of the Social Bean Café and Emporium at the Belconnen Community Centre, an event that marked a significant enhancement to our long-established café.

From 4pm to 10pm, the Belconnen Community Centre buzzed with excitement as over 20 local businesses and artisans came together to showcase their unique products. The event attracted a diverse crowd, eager to explore the handcrafted treasures, recycled gems, and one-of-a-kind creations offered by our community's talented artisans, at this new Emporium.

The Social Bean Café, a beloved fixture in the community for many years, hosted a special dinner featuring a Her Kitchen Table takeover. Guests booked tables for sittings at 6pm and 8pm, where they were treated to home-cooked meals from around the world, lovingly prepared by migrant and refugee women from Canberra. This culinary experience not only delighted the palate but also celebrated the rich cultural tapestry of our community.

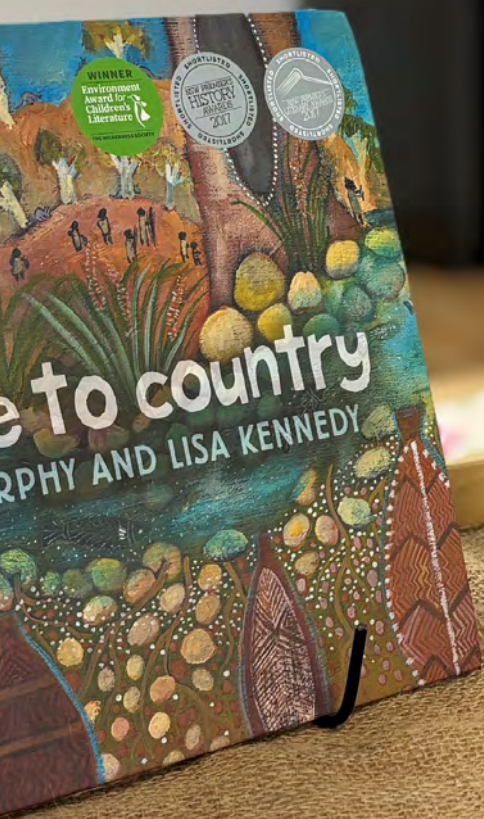
The grand opening served as both a celebration of the new Emporium and a reaffirmation of the Social Bean Café's role in fostering community connections and supporting local businesses. It was a vibrant showcase of creativity and community spirit, reinforcing CRCS's commitment

to cultural expression and local entrepreneurship.

The evening was a success, with the venue filled to capacity. It was an inspiring demonstration of how community-driven initiatives can create meaningful impact, providing a platform for local artisans to thrive.



# EDUCATION AND CARE



## Early Childhood Centres

We operate five early childhood education and care centres, located in Belconnen and Bruce ACT, and Milton NSW. During the reporting period we provided education and care for 261 children aged six weeks to five years:

- Belconnen Early Childhood Centre: 47 children
- Bruce Early Childhood Centre: 48 children
- Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre: 59 children
- Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre: 72 children
- Budawang Early Learning Centre: 35 children



During 2023-24, CRCS provided Three-year-old Preschool to 37 children across our four Canberra early childhood centres. An ACT Government initiative, the program offers up to 300 hours of free, quality early learning, increasing access to Canberra families and preparing children to make a successful transition to school. Three-year-old Preschool supports children's wellbeing, development and lifelong learning through a play-based curriculum under the National Quality Framework. The program is being delivered as a key part of Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT preschool program delivery model.

We take pride in supporting children and families from diverse backgrounds and cultures, including those enrolled under the Community Services Directorate (CSD) Children's Services Program (CSP) funding due to significant trauma, such as homelessness, domestic abuse and mental health challenges. Many children facing these difficulties struggle with social skills and emotional intelligence, often falling behind their peers in developmental milestones.

Our Educators are dedicated to providing tailored support that meets each family's evolving needs. We recognise the broader impact of these situations on families – enrolling children in education and care services allows parents and caregivers to implement strategies for recovery and rebuilding their lives. Our holistic, trauma-informed approach emphasises family advocacy and collaboration with CSD, creating safe and empowering environments where all family members can thrive and overcome adversity.



# Case Study:

## The Positive Impact of Emergency Care

Kate and her eight-month-old daughter, Mia, entered the Emergency Care program at a CRCS early childhood centre following a mental health episode. A survivor of domestic violence, Kate had faced significant trauma and needed urgent support for herself and her daughter. Initially, Mia received 12 weeks of care, which was later extended to provide support until Kate could become financially independent.

Recognising the need for ongoing support, Kate connected with various organisations and professionals to aid her journey, including Toora Women Inc., ACT Together, Karinya House and DVCS and Acacia Calvary Hospital. This network provided crucial mental health assistance, ensuring both Kate and Mia could begin healing from their trauma.

When she started at her early childhood centre, Mia struggled with emotional regulation, displaying heightened sensitivity to unfamiliar faces and crying children. However, with the consistent support of the centre's Educators and community, Mia gradually developed emotional resilience. The nurturing environment helped her overcome these challenges, leading to

significant milestones in her development including crawling, pulling herself up, and eventually taking her first steps.

Mia's progress is a testament to the power of a caring, close-knit community. The Educators formed genuine connections with her, fostering her emotional growth and adaptation to new surroundings. As a result, Mia is now ready to transition to the toddler's room, a move that reflects her growing confidence and ability to embrace new experiences.

In a proud moment, Kate recently secured employment, a significant step toward stability and self-sufficiency. She expressed pride in being able to cover Mia's fees independently, marking a key milestone in her personal journey.

This case demonstrates the transformative impact of a supportive community, showing how compassion, resilience, and the right resources can help families overcome adversity and thrive. The centre's ongoing commitment continues to empower Kate and Mia as they navigate new challenges and embrace a brighter future.

## Budawang Early Learning Centre

Budawang Early Learning Centre, located on Yuin land in Milton NSW, officially opened its doors on 5 February 2024. Catering to children aged two to five years, the centre quickly became a notable success in early childhood education. The initial weeks were marked by a warm welcome for families, highlighting a commitment to creating an inclusive and stimulating environment for young learners. Parents and children were introduced to engaging activities that set the tone for holistic development from day one. In a remarkably short period of time, this 35-place centre reached full capacity and now maintains a waitlist.



The centre features spacious, well-lit classrooms equipped with modern learning tools and resources. The outdoor playground provides a safe space for physical activity, encouraging children to explore and play. Specialised areas for arts, music and physical activities nurture every child's interest and talent. Budawang's educational programs balance structured learning with play-based activities, promoting cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.



In May, Budawang hosted its grand opening event, which was a significant milestone. Attended by families, local dignitaries and community members, the event underscored Budawang's role in the community and its mission to provide exceptional early childhood education. The centre's ongoing engagement with the local community, through events and partnerships, strengthens its presence in the south coast region and enhances its impact.

Budawang also celebrates diversity and inclusion through events like Harmony Day, where children participate in various cultural activities, learning about and appreciating different cultures. These events teach children values of empathy and inclusiveness.

Positive testimonials from parents praise the knowledge and empathy of the centre's Educators, its enriching programs and safe, nurturing environment. This feedback indicates Budawang's success and its positive impact on families, providing peace of mind and supporting children's development.

The centre's dedication to innovation and quality education positions it to make a significant impact in early childhood education, shaping the futures of many young learners and laying the groundwork for lifelong learning and development.



# Case Study:

## Supporting a Family Through Funded Program Transitions

Claire joined the Belconnen Early Childhood Centre (BECC) in 2022 through the Children's Support Program (CSP), with continued extensions until January 2024. At that point, she transitioned to the ACT Government's Three-Year-Old Preschool Initiative. The BECC director worked closely with Melissa, Claire's mother, to facilitate the referral, which was approved. Claire and Melissa had escaped severe domestic violence, and the perpetrator was incarcerated following multiple attacks. The family found BECC to be a safe and supportive environment, and together with the CRCS Children's Service Administration Team, they ensured a smooth transition to long-term funding.

Before the CSP approval expired, the CRCS team guided Melissa through the process of applying for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS), helping with documentation and creating a payment plan. In May 2024, when CRCS announced the closure of BECC, several open day and trial sessions were offered to help families transition to our Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre (GECC). Claire thrived in the new outdoor space, and Melissa appreciated that the centre was not in a public area due to

safety concerns related to past stalking incidents. CRCS accommodated their transition with a series of orientation sessions.

To make the move financially viable, a payment plan was arranged for Melissa, and the CRCS team explained the accounts process in detail, enabling her to plan her budget. Based on feedback from Melissa and other families, the centre introduced flexible payment options and enhanced communication strategies to keep parents informed about their child's progress.

Claire received comprehensive support through tailored educational and wellbeing programs that helped her settle and thrive in her new environment. These efforts have contributed to her social, emotional and cognitive development, offering Melissa peace of mind as she balanced work and caregiving responsibilities.

The collaborative support provided by both BECC and GECC has significantly impacted Claire and Melissa, fostering a safe, stable and nurturing environment for their family.

## Outside School Hours Care

We operated eight outside school hours care (OSHC) services in Belconnen and the Snowy Monaro region, providing care for 386 primary school children. With a focus on middle childhood development, we provide a stimulating and engaging curriculum. We develop our program of planned and structured learning experiences in response to children's needs, interests and choices.

- Charnwood-Dunlop School: 77 children
- Florey Primary School: 88 children
- Jindabyne Central School: 30 children
- Cooma Public School: 44 children
- Cooma North Public School: 30 children
- Captains Flat Public School: 9 children
- Braidwood Central School: 55 children
- Gundaroo Public School: 53 children



During the reporting period, we faced the challenging decision to close six OSHC services in NSW due to unsustainable operating conditions.

## School Holiday Program

During the school holidays, we operated programs at our OSHC service locations, catering to 117 children from preschool to Year 6. Throughout the year we delivered 60 sessions addressing a range of play-based curriculum including activities such as cooking, science experiments, sports and games, arts and crafts, singing and dancing, water play and bike riding. Our busiest days at each service saw attendance of:

- Charnwood-Dunlop School: 23 children
- Florey Primary School: 18 children
- Jindabyne Central School: 14 children
- Cooma Public School: 20 children
- Cooma North Public School: 17 children
- Braidwood Central School: 14 children
- Gundaroo Public School: 11 children



# Case Study: Community Impact Initiative with Roundabout Canberra

On 1 August, 23 preschoolers from two CRCS early education centres participated in a donation drive for Roundabout Canberra. The children engaged in collecting items from their families and then visited Roundabout Canberra to sort and prepare the donations.

This initiative not only fostered a sense of community involvement among the children but also enhanced their understanding of community needs and the importance of giving. The event was featured on WIN News Canberra, showcasing the positive impact of our young participants in supporting the local community.



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND RECREATION



Ginninderra  
Early Childhood  
Centre

Capital  
Region  
Community  
Services

Inclusive Connected Communities

02 8264 0200  
CRCS.COM.AU

## Network Coordination

The Network Coordination program is a collaboration between four Canberra organisations to identify areas of unmet need and gaps in service delivery that impact vulnerable children, young people and families, and develop strategic and collaborative partnerships to address these gaps. Funded by the ACT Government's Community Services Directorate, we host the role of the Belconnen Network Coordinator. The Network Coordinators meet fortnightly to reflect on the key service gaps and discuss initiatives and collaborations.

The Belconnen Network Coordinator also meets monthly with the Youth Coalition, Families ACT and the ACT Council of Social Service to share work they are individually or collectively working on, ensure collaborative and complementary work programs, and support each other's initiatives.

Throughout the year, the Belconnen Network Coordinators established new connections across Canberra and strengthened existing partnerships, including:

- Collaborating with OrangeSky and local emergency relief and homelessness providers to explore options for working better together to deliver local support to homeless or vulnerable community members.
- The formation of a partnership between A Village for Every Child, ACT Government Community Services Directorate and the Belconnen Network Coordinator to facilitate the Early Years Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP focuses on holistic child development including wellbeing, education, disability and the social determinants of health. The first CoP, titled "Courageous Conversations", was delivered to over 40 teachers, Educators, community service providers and health professionals.
- Continued engagement with Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) through A Village for Every Child to look at needs of 0–5-year-olds and their families in the Belconnen region.
- Worked with Onelink as Network Coordinator lead to support their work in the Child, Youth and Family Services Program (CYFSP).
- Facilitated networking and collaboration opportunities between the community sector and ACT Government Education and Health Directorates, and Libraries ACT.
- Discussions facilitated between Belconnen Network Coordinator, Marymead and CRCS Youth Team to address the transition of young adults leaving care to Belconnen Youth Centre to maintain strong community connections and an ongoing pathway to support into early adulthood.
- This year, the CRCS Community Development and Network Coordination Teams collaborated with the Scullin Community Group, Ginninderry, and Ginninderry Conservation Trust to launch the Backyard Bushwalks program. Held in May, this initiative offered families from Scullin and nearby suburbs the chance to explore local nature with guidance from a Conservation Trust ranger.

While attendance was modest, the event provided valuable insights for enhancing future community engagement. A sausage sizzle hosted by the Ginninderra Rotary Club capped off the day, and we are now exploring ways to expand Backyard Bushwalks into a 10-week program aligned with school terms.

## Community Development

CRCS continues to focus on building empowered, connected and sustainable communities across the Capital Region. Our efforts bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds to foster collaboration, promote inclusivity and create a sense of belonging.

In March, CRCS hosted a vibrant all-ages Mardi Gras Parade Watch Party at the Belconnen Community Theatre, celebrating diversity and the LGBTQIA+ community. This event, filled with lively performances and creative expressions, highlighted our commitment to inclusivity and community connection.



CRCS also supports environmental sustainability through initiatives like the Gawari Mada Micro Forest, by assisting with an auspicing arrangement for the Adopt-a-Park and Community Garden Grants. We assisted volunteers in engaging the community with educational events and planting days, and opportunities for schools and institutions

to visit the space as it evolved, promoting a greener and more connected future.

The Backyard Bushwalks program, launched in collaboration with local partners, provided guided nature experiences for families and is being developed into a 10-week series.

CRCS partnered with Initiatives for Women in Need (IWIn) in April to host a STEM Symposium, empowering women interested in entering science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Supported by Telstra, the event showcased inspiring women leaders and offered a platform for networking and knowledge-sharing.



On Canberra Giving Day, CRCS proudly hosted the launch event, drawing significant community attention to the largest regional fundraising initiative. Organised by Hands Across Canberra, the event showcased the impact local charities have in supporting the community.



We continue to partner with Westfield Belconnen for our fortnightly BBQs at the Westfield bus interchange. This event has become a staple, providing a space for community engagement. The Youth Team's presence helps engage vulnerable youth and prevent incidents, while ACT Policing use the event to build rapport with young people, aiding in de-escalation during crises.



The Community Development Team remains active on the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) CDNet Steering Committee, supporting community development improvements across the ACT.

Finally, CRCS launched Community Fashion Finds at the Belconnen Community Centre, a pre-loved fashion shop promoting sustainable

clothing practices. Our monthly events provide an eco-friendly space for community members to exchange items, reduce waste and support environmental sustainability.

Our Community Development team has also worked with a range of organisations including:

- Migrant And Refugee Settlement Services
- Palliative Care Australia
- ACT Health Directorate, Advance Care Planning team
- ACT Health Directorate, P.A.R.T.Y.
- Dementia Australia
- Canberra Raiders
- Belconnen Community Council
- Scullin Community Group

- Ginninderry Conservation Trust
- RecLink Australia
- Child Players ACT
- Queanbeyan Players
- Tempo Theatre
- Westfield Belconnen
- ACT Policing
- Meridian
- Elrington Lawyers

# Case Study: Tell Us What You Want Community Day

On 7 June, CRCS hosted its first "Tell Us What You Want Community Day" at the Belconnen Community and Youth Centres, gathering valuable feedback from participants, centre users and community members. The event featured free activities such as sports, craft groups, music, fitness programs, and a family-friendly movie screening, with local charities and a sausage sizzle encouraging engagement.

Posters remained on display for two weeks to collect additional feedback. With 89 attendees and over 200 responses, the insights gained will inform program planning for the next financial year, ensuring CRCS offerings reflect community needs.



# Aged Care Participant Advisory Group

CRCS's Community Development Officer provides secretariat support to the Aged Care Participant Advisory Group (ACPAG), established to offer advice and feedback to the CRCS Board on aged care and seniors programs from the perspective of participants and their representatives.

ACPAG members provide advice on program design, implementation, and evaluation, feedback on policies and procedures affecting participants and their representatives, and input on communication and outreach strategies to improve accessibility and effectiveness. They also identify barriers to access and recommend improvements to service quality.

This year, the group introduced several key changes, including appointing an independent CRCS co-chair to work alongside a participant-appointed co-chair. The CRCS co-chair also joined the Quality Care Advisory Body, ensuring ACPAG's work is represented at board level.

## Other Partnerships

### Daydream Machine

Daydream Machine, founded by 2022 ACT Local Hero Luke Ferguson, is an ACT based business offering programs that empower neurodivergent youth aged nine to 21 to explore their talents in music, arts, and technology. Through tailored programs, it provides a safe, inclusive, and dynamic environment for young people with disabilities to thrive.

Throughout the year, Daydream Machine featured a shop in the CRCS Emporium, stocking some of the most incredible digitally designed earrings, a selection of blank cards, clothing, coffee mugs and more. The partnership resulted in a Daydream Machine Art Exhibition at the Belconnen Community Gallery, with hopes for this to become a regular space to showcase the work of Daydream Machine's talented artists. One of the talented young artists was commissioned to paint the door of our Social Bean Café, adding a creative touch to its official reopening and reflecting the spirit of both the cafe and the Emporium. As one participant put it, Daydream Machine "is just cool kids doing cool stuff".



## Rainbow Reads

In partnership with ACT Libraries, Rainbow Reads is a book club for LGBTQIA+ youth and allies aged 10 to 25, supported by the CRCS Youth Team. Monthly sessions are co-facilitated by team members from both ACT Libraries and CRCS Youth, with participants choosing the books. Rainbow Reads is a great way to build friendships and social networks with like-minded people.

## Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth (P.A.R.T.Y.)

CRCS, in partnership with ACT Health, facilitates the P.A.R.T.Y. (Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth) program at the Belconnen Youth Centre, educating young people on risk awareness and trauma prevention. For full details, see page 80.



## Speaker Series

On 10 May, as part of our ongoing Speaker Series, CRCS hosted an informative session on Estate Planning and Advance Care Planning at the Belconnen Community Theatre. In collaboration with Elrington Lawyers and the ACT Health Directorate, the session covered essential topics such as estate planning, wills, enduring Power of Attorney, and advance care planning. Participants were provided with valuable resources and practical guidance, along with the opportunity for open discussions and morning tea.

The session drew approximately 50 attendees, including aged care participants and their family members, community members, CRCS employees, and staff from other community organisations. Due to strong interest, we plan

to host this session again in the coming year to accommodate the demand and further support our community's planning needs.



## Venues

During this reporting period, CRCS continued offering community venues, including the Belconnen Community Centre (BCC) and Humpy Hall in Scullin, for both CRCS programs and external hire. We actively partnered with local organisations to maximise BCC usage, ensuring it remains a vital community resource. Notable collaborations include wheelchair rugby hosted by the Canberra Raiders and Daydream Machine. Additionally, a new online reservation system was introduced to streamline venue bookings and improve accessibility.



## Sports Hall

The sports hall is well-equipped to accommodate and support regular local sporting and fitness activities, including social badminton for children and adults, accessible fitness classes, dance aerobics, pickleball, and wheelchair rugby, hosted by the Canberra Raiders. Throughout 2022–23, the hall was utilised 877 times.



## Meeting Rooms

We offer two versatile meeting rooms, suitable for a variety of purposes, including meetings, small events, discussion groups, as well as relaxation and gentle exercise sessions. Meeting room one was booked 236 times, while meeting room two had 322 bookings.



## Gym

Our fully equipped gym offers a variety of fitness and strength training classes designed to cater to the diverse needs of our community. The gym includes a comprehensive selection of fitness equipment, such as cardio and weightlifting machines, free weights, yoga mats, fitness balls and more.

Over the past year, we facilitated a wide range of classes, including yoga (both chair and floor), strength-building, mature strength and fitness, and Swiss ball sessions, alongside general open gym times for independent workouts.

In October, we had the pleasure of hosting local artist Tivien Andrews-Homerang's exhibition Heartbreak and Herbal Tea. This unique showcase highlighted the Belconnen Community Centre's adaptability, with the gym's spacious area serving as a creative venue for the exhibition.



## Belconnen Community Theatre

Our 145-seat theatre, designed with step-free access to dressing rooms and dedicated wheelchair seating, stands as the most accessible venue of its kind in Canberra. The intimate theatre space, equipped with the essentials to help keep costs to a minimum, provides a blank canvas for cost conscious hirers seeking a theatre or auditorium style space. During the 2023–24 period, the theatre was in use for approximately 45 days, hosting events for organisations including Child Players ACT, Green Oak Theatre's Cabaret, Perform Australia, Budding Theatre and Tempo Theatre.



## Belconnen Community Gallery

The Belconnen Community Gallery offers an affordable alternative to commercial galleries, showcasing a mix of amateur, professional and community-focused exhibitions. Throughout the year, the gallery was booked by a total of 13 different hirers.

Community Fashion Finds was held in the gallery one Saturday each month. Facilitated by Jacky Yanik, the pop-up shop provides affordable, pre-loved fashion to promote sustainable clothing practices and reduce waste.

- CRCS Bungee Youth Resilience program
- CRCS Involve
- Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness
- 'Dark Snow' by John Brookes
- Daydream Machine
- Beyond the Binary
- Meridian Spill the Tea Disabili-Tea Art Exhibition.



# Case Study: Beyond the Binary

In January 2024, the Belconnen Community Gallery hosted a remarkable exhibition, *Beyond the Binary*, showcasing the talents of local intersex, trans and gender-diverse artists. The event celebrated artistic expression and diversity, offering visitors a chance to experience a wide array of artworks that challenge norms and celebrate individuality. Spanning various mediums, including paintings and sculptures, each piece told a unique story reflecting the diverse experiences and perspectives of the artists. The exhibition provided a platform for these talented individuals to share their voices, fostering understanding and acceptance within the community. The event was a success, drawing art enthusiasts, community members, and supporters alike, all eager to engage with and celebrate the creativity and resilience of the featured artists.

*Beyond the Binary* was made possible with support from the ACT Government Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs.



## Art Room

Our well-appointed art room, designed for both wet and dry media, supports a variety of creative pursuits including painting workshops, craft sessions, and community art projects.



## Humpy Hall

Nestled in the peaceful setting of Scullin, Humpy Hall provides a unique and welcoming community space ideal for hosting a wide range of activities, including group meetings, small functions, exercise and dance classes, and more. During the reporting period, Humpy Hall was booked 414 times.



## Tiny Tumblers

Tiny Tumblers is an educational gym play initiative held in the sports hall at the Belconnen Community Centre, designed for children aged two to four years. The program encourages children to explore their physical abilities in a safe and supportive environment, helping to build their confidence and coordination. In 2023-24, we conducted 150 Tiny Tumbler sessions.



# FAMILIES



## Family Support

During 2023–24, we provided case management support to 78 families, including 97 adults and 206 children and young people. These families sought assistance with a range of goals, including improving mental health, disability support, managing housing instability, addressing substance use concerns, and enhancing parenting skills.

Throughout the reporting period, the team established a regular co-location at Narrabundah Early Childhood School during school terms. This initiative helped to strengthen relationships with both the school and the local community, improving accessibility to our services in the region. The team also participated in various community events including:

- Collaborating with A Village for Every Child to facilitate the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Kippax, including hosting the launch at Belconnen Community Centre and enrolling 29 families.
- Participating in the CRCS Belconnen Youth Centre's Wear it Purple Day celebration event.
- Celebrated World Mental Health Day at the Belconnen Community Centre, hosting a special Loose Parts playgroup session for families.
- Collaborated with the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre to celebrate Children's Week.
- Attended CRCS Friday BBQs at Westfield Belconnen.

The Family Support Team has worked collaboratively with government and community services to improve the wellbeing of families and has strengthened its networks and connection.

The team works closely with the CRCS Family Education Team, regularly co-facilitating playgroups and community groups to provide ongoing support for families.

## Imagination Library

In October 2023, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Kippax pilot was launched at Belconnen Community Centre through the Village for Every Child initiative. As an enrolling partner alongside other community organisations, CRCS Families enrolled 29 families with children aged 0-5 living in the suburbs of McGregor, Holt, Higgins and Latham. The program provides free monthly books for a minimum of two years, aiming to enhance school readiness in Belconnen by promoting early literacy at home and encouraging families to read together and strengthen the relationships of parents, carers and siblings.



# Case Study: Supporting Bella and Rick's Family

Bella and Rick live in a private rental with their two sons, Jim (5), who has an autism level 3 diagnosis, and Nik (7), who experiences developmental delays. The family faced challenges related to housing, transportation for Jim's schooling and therapy sessions, and day-to-day parenting strategies tailored to their children's developmental needs. Bella was also struggling with her mental health, adding to family pressures.

The family sought support for respite care, after-school care services, financial assistance, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) connection, Bella's mental health, and higher education pathways.

Family Support successfully connected the family with Carers ACT, enabling respite care for Jim. The family was linked with the YWCA for Nik's after-school care, and financial assistance was secured through Centrelink to cover fees. Bella found time for self-care and joined a peer support group for mothers of children with autism.

The Family Support team assisted the family to establish links with the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to support Jim's needs and receive a disability parking permit through Access Canberra. Family Support arranged and collected essentials from Roundabout Canberra and Uniting Care Kippax to help the family regain stability and ease financial pressures. Additionally, Family Support provided information on study pathways, and Bella was assisted in applying for Australian citizenship as a step toward further education.

Both children were enrolled in swimming classes, and the parents built strong networks around them. The family's overall wellbeing and ability to access vital resources significantly improved, positively impacting the entire family unit.

# Family Education

Our Family Education team is dedicated to delivering a variety of educational programs aimed at strengthening family connections and supporting early childhood development.

## Playgroups

We offer weekly playgroups during school terms, providing social support and educational activities for families with young children who are not yet in school. Over the past year, we facilitated 206 playgroup sessions, with approximately 150 individual families participating, including 501 children.

The five regular playgroups include:

- Playgroup at Latham Preschool
- Loose Parts Playgroup at Westfield Belconnen
- Play Sessions in the Park at Ngunnawal
- Koori Playgroup at West Belconnen Child and Family Centre
- Atfaal Muslim Playgroup at Gungahlin Child and Family Centre

These playgroups create a welcoming environment for children to learn and play while providing parents and carers the opportunity to connect and share experiences.

The Koori Playgroup and Atfaal Playgroup offer culturally familiar environments that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Koori) families and Muslim (Atfaal) families. These playgroups provide safe and inclusive spaces where community members can connect, share cultural traditions and engage in activities that reflect their heritage.

The Family Education team established a memorandum of understanding to continue its partnership with the Good Start in Life Project following its cessation in December 2023. The program offers free weekly occupational therapy services provided by the University of Canberra to participants of the Loose Parts Playgroup and Latham Playgroup.



We formalised our partnership with West Belconnen Child and Family Centre to co-facilitate psychoeducation and community groups, and continue to co-facilitate groups at local ACT Government Child and Family Centres in Gungahlin, West Belconnen, and Tuggeranong. Our valued agreement with Westfield Belconnen for the facilitation of the Loose Parts Playgroup remains in place.

# Case Study: Building Confidence and Connections – Pamela and Jackson’s Journey

Pamela first attended Loose Parts Playgroup with her 2-year-old son, Jackson, while she was 28 weeks pregnant with her second child. When they first started attending the playgroup, Pamela was shy and quiet and Jackson preferred staying close to her rather than interacting with others. Pamela confided to the Family Education Team that her husband was frequently away for work and that she had struggled to connect with other parents since having Jackson. Her goal for attending the playgroup was to make at least one friend and help her son engage with children his age, encouraging him to explore and play independently.

Through weekly attendance and encouragement from the Family Education Team, Jackson gradually became more comfortable, starting to explore and play independently. Pamela received support in understanding “watch over me” and “delight in me” moments, helping her better engage with her son’s development. The team also facilitated introductions to other parents, allowing Pamela to form meaningful connections. By the end of Term 3, Jackson’s confidence had grown, and Pamela had established friendships scheduling playdates and feeling more socially connected.





## Community Groups

In partnership with the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre, we co-facilitate three key community groups, providing targeted support and connection:

- **Yurwan-Gulwan – Koori Girls:** A culturally safe group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls aged 8 to 16, offering a space to explore and strengthen their cultural connections.
- **Young Parent's Group:** A social support and playgroup for parents under 25 and their children, featuring fun and educational activities each week to foster community and learning.
- **Yurwang Bullarn Strong Women's Group:** This program brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women together in a safe, welcoming environment, facilitated in partnership with the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre.

In June, CRCS employees received training from Yerrabi Yurwang on brain health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. They also participated in training to facilitate the Deadly Brains Playgroup, which promotes healthy brain development. Moving forward, CRCS will continue supporting the weekly Deadly Brains Playgroup, led by Yerrabi Yurwang.

## Psychoeducation Groups

Family Education delivered five to seven psychoeducation groups each term, either independently or in collaboration with local ACT Government Child and Family Centres. Circle of Security and Tuning in to Kids programs continue to be offered both in person and online, increasing our reach and providing greater program accessibility to families. These groups focused on key parenting and emotional support programs, including:

- **Circle of Security:** An eight-week program designed to enhance the attachment and security between parents and children up to 10 years old.
- **Tuning in to Kids:** A program that helps parents support their child's emotional intelligence development.
- **Seasons for Growth:** Supports children aged six to 18 in coping with significant life changes related to loss and grief, enhancing their social and emotional wellbeing.

In 2023–24, we facilitated 19 psychoeducational groups, reaching 97 participants over four school terms.

Several psychoeducational groups were co-facilitated in partnership with Child and Family Centres in West Belconnen and Tuggeranong. We also provided groups for the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, Narrabundah Early Childhood School and Fraser Primary School.

*“Parents reported a greater sense of confidence in their parental capacity and a deeper understanding of their children's developmental needs. They also learned effective strategies for managing their children's strong emotions.”*



## Healthy Habits

We received the opportunity to facilitate Healthy Habits through Healthy Canberra Grants: Focus on Children and Families. Healthy Habits is an eight-week program held each term to support parents and carers in developing healthy routines for children up to two years old, with a focus on meeting early developmental needs. Throughout the year, 23 families participated in the Healthy Habits program.

This program was offered in schools across the Belconnen area, which has been identified in

a national study as needing additional support for children's development prior to school age. Hosting the program within schools strengthens the relationships between children and their families with their school and community. During the year we also facilitated Healthy Habits sessions at CRCS's Holt Hub to provide greater accessibility to nearby families.

## Family Foundations

Family Foundations is an early intervention therapeutic program designed to strengthen healthy, secure relationships between children aged up to five years, and their parents or carers. This year we provided online sessions to provide flexibility to families with work commitments and enable parents and carers of sick children to attend.



The level of support provided varies depending on each family's unique needs, with families receiving an average of 1.5–2 hours of direct engagement per week, excluding preparation and administrative time.

During the reporting period, we supported 27 families, including 53 children, through 94 individual appointments. Additionally, we provided 16 group sessions through two groups of eight sessions each.

***“ Most families who exited the program reported an increased awareness of their parenting skills and enhanced confidence in their parenting capabilities. ”***

Family Foundations facilitated two Circle of Security Parenting groups for families referred by the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, with 10 participants in total.

We reviewed and considered opportunities to integrate Family Foundations services into our early childhood centres, developing a wraparound support model for families of the centres. Planning and development took place in May and June, paving the way for the launch of Wraparound@GECC in July 2024.

## Supportive Tenancy Service

This year marks the last full year of the Supportive Tenancy Service (STS), which is set to conclude in 2024-25. The program has operated for 14 years, led by a consortium of Woden Community Service, Capital Region Community Services, and YWCA Canberra, with joint funding from the ACT and Australian Governments.

Since its inception, STS has made a substantial difference, managing over 5,000 referrals to support housing stability and prevent homelessness for Canberrans.

STS has provided essential support for individuals and families, delivering first-response assistance,

case management, advocacy and outreach to address housing challenges across public, community and private sectors. By balancing landlord perspectives with the needs of participants, the program has helped sustain tenancies and identified alternative housing solutions where needed.

In 2023-24, STS worked with 203 participants, many of whom faced increased pressures due to the current housing crisis, domestic violence and mental health challenges. As the program concludes, it leaves a legacy, having reduced homelessness risk and strengthened housing stability across the ACT.

## Case Study: Empowering Parents Through the Family Foundations Program

The Family Foundations program supported the Smith family – Abigail (40), Mark (45), Erica (5) and Paula (3) – for five months. Both parents are professionals working full-time, and Abigail sought assistance due to concerns about Erica's clingy behaviour, difficulty concentrating, and challenges following instructions. These behaviours not only affected Erica's daily activities and participation in school and recreational activities but also impacted her younger sister, Paula.

Abigail's primary goals included developing strategies to manage Erica's strong emotions and learning how to effectively respond to her daughter's behaviours. Interventions focused on problem-solving techniques, providing choices to empower the children, and using visual routines to enhance daily

structure. The program also emphasised the importance of self-care for parents and strategies for fostering social connections within the community.

Upon completing the program, Abigail reported significant progress. She learned to challenge her negative thoughts about parenting Erica, recognising that with practice, this would become more automatic and less triggering. Abigail gained a deeper understanding of her children's developmental needs and felt more confident in supporting both Erica and Paula during emotionally challenging times. The family's participation in the Family Foundations program has led to improved dynamics and healthier interactions among family members.

# SENIOR SERVICES



## Home Care Packages (HCP)

As an approved Home Care Package provider in the ACT and NSW, we offer a variety of in-home and social support services, helping individuals in our community maintain their independence and continue living at home for longer. As of 30 June 2024, we were providing support to 35 participants through Home Care Packages.

## Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

The Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care, offers essential entry-level support to older Australians who require assistance to stay healthy and independent while living at home. As of 30 June 2024, we had 382 participants actively receiving services such as domestic help, personal care, social support (including shopping and outings), home maintenance and gardening. Throughout the year the CHSP program delivered 24,220 hours of care through these service types. We delivered a further 16,994 CHSP transport trips.

A key highlight of our CHSP offering is our social group program, Involve, which remains popular. This includes regular outings across the Canberra region and activities hosted at the Belconnen Community Centre. During 2023-24, we delivered 16,109 hours of social group programs, featuring standout activities such as the weekly BEST Club social events and the Mature Multi-fitness group exercise classes.

## Community Assistance and Temporary Supports Program (CATS)

In October, the ACT Government's Community Assistance Support Program (CASP) transitioned to Community Assistance and Temporary Supports Program (CATS). This ACT Government funded program supports eligible participants to remain safely at home, discharge quickly from hospital, improve health and wellbeing, stay connected with family and community, and maintain independence.

CRCS partnered with Community Services #1 (CS#1) to deliver support services for individuals in need of short-term assistance or help transitioning to long-term care programs. Through this collaboration, CRCS provides medical and allied health transport, while CS#1 offers care

coordination and bridging support, ensuring participants receive seamless and integrated care.

During the reporting period, we provided a total of 7,173 trips through the CASP and CATS programs, of which 7,114 were delivered through CATS.

# Involve Social Group and Events

Staying connected enhances health, happiness, purpose, and overall wellbeing. Knowing this, the CRCS Involve team creates diverse and inclusive activities to suit a range of interests.

In 2023-24, our Involve social group for seniors offered regular programs focused on fostering social connections and wellbeing, including:

- BEST (Belconnen Energetic Seniors on Tuesdays) Club, featuring games, guest speakers, activities, outings and exercise
- Walkie Talkies (social walking trips)
- Ukulele and drumming sessions
- Art and craft workshops and exhibitions
- Bunnings workshops
- Treasure Hunters (op shop excursions)
- Fitness and strength training classes.

With over 180 active participants, and 1,990 events and activities in the reporting period, these social groups, including those funded through CHSP, helped seniors living at home stay connected. Involve activities are supported by our Get Involved newsletter, a monthly electronic and hardcopy newsletter that promotes the schedule of upcoming events.

## Our Impact

Using the personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) we surveyed Involve participants before and after they joined the program. Personal safety, standard of living and personal relationships were the highest rated PWI domains – and CRCS made an impact.

♥ 77

Participants averaged a Personal Wellbeing Index score of 77. That's above the Canberra average of 75.9.

✓ 87%

of participants feel in control of their choices and decisions

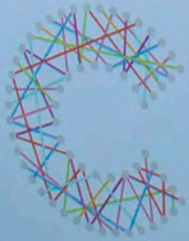
✓ 81%

of participants said that Involve provides groups and activities that help them achieve their goals.

“ *My quality of life improved since joining Involve.* ”  
– *Involve participant*



# TRANSPORT



**Capital  
Region  
Community  
Services**

**Ph: 02 6278 8124**

Transportation is often a significant barrier for many in our community, including seniors, individuals living with disability and those facing short- or long-term health challenges. We are committed to providing safe, reliable, accessible and convenient transportation services to those who need them most, all while fostering stronger connections within our community.

In 2023-24, we expanded our transportation services to enhance accessibility and create new opportunities for participants. This included facilitating regional adventures, allowing individuals to travel further afield and broaden their experiences.

During the reporting period, we supported 891 participants, providing a total of 26,580 trips that covered 411,295 kilometres. Our dedicated volunteers contributed significantly to this effort, traveling 62,294 kilometres and providing 2,453 hours of support for our transport program.

CRCS Transport Services supports the following government programs:

#### Australian Government

- Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)
- Home Care Package (HCP)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

#### ACT Government

##### Health Directorate

- Community Assistance Support Program (CASP)
- Community Assistance and Temporary Supports Program (CATS)

##### Community Services Directorate

- Community bus services for individuals who are ageing, recovering from a medical episode or living with a disability.

These programs enable us to provide essential transport services to those in need, enhancing their mobility and community connections.



# CRCS Coach

## Short Excursions

The CRCS 45-seater passenger coach has provided us with the opportunity to expand our transport services and offer a variety of unique outings and adventures for some of our early childhood centre (ECC) and outside school hours care (OSHC) children. In collaboration with the relevant CRCS Education and Care teams, we facilitated the following excursions:

- Participants from the Florey and Charnwood OSHC programs visited Gold Creek Country Club, Melba Tennis Courts and Hoyts Belconnen.
- Our Bruce ECC and Ginninderra ECC made a special visit to Roundabout Canberra as part of donation drive and community involvement activity.

**“ These excursions have enhanced the social experiences and wellbeing of our participants, and nurtured their community engagement and connectedness. ”**



## Day Trips

Our Transport Team planned varied and exciting coach tours that allowed participants to explore the region, discover new sights, and enjoy unique lunch locations. Our day trips provided opportunities for passengers to visit:

- Harden, featuring stunning silo art.
- Towns such as Adaminaby, Berrima, Bowral, Braidwood, Bungendore, Cooma, Cootamundra, Crookwell, Gundagai, Jindabyne, and Jugiong.
- Junee, with two trips to see the Canola Trail and a visit to the Railway Museum.
- A theatre trip to Sydney to see Tina Turner and a visit to Fitzroy Falls.
- The Cowra Japanese Gardens, a favourite destination with two visits throughout the year.
- Mogo, where we enjoyed trips to the zoo and shopping at Mogo Village.
- In spring, we travelled to the Goulburn Lilac Festival, Tulip Tops Gardens, and the beautiful towns of Berry and Berrima for breathtaking floral displays and events.
- Cherry picking in Young, a perennial favourite. Our second visit to Young included time at the stunning Landra Castle.
- A river cruise and lunch from The Boatshed in Batemans Bay.

Additionally, our private charters took the coach to the Snake Gully Cup in Gundagai, Bowral Town Centre, Wollongong, Crookwell and Cooma.

It was rewarding to be part of these adventures, supporting individuals in getting out and about to experience new journeys and create lasting memories.

## Case Study: Batemans Bay River Cruise

In January, CRCS Coach Tours introduced the Explorer Series with a delightful three-hour lunch cruise on the MV Escapade along the scenic Clyde River. Highlights of the cruise included a stop at Nelligen, The Boatshed's famous fish and chips, and a chance to enjoy the river's tranquillity from the comfort of a beautifully refurbished vessel. Departing early from Humpy Hall and Belconnen Community Centre, then later departing Bateman's Bay at 3pm to return home, the excursion was enjoyed by all. This memorable day on the water provided a unique and enriching experience for our community.



# THERAPEUTIC SERVICES



## Wellbeings

Wellbeings is a multidisciplinary allied health practice offering psychology and counselling services that prioritise accessible, holistic care for individuals aged five and up. Our clinicians provide personalised assessments, education and therapeutic interventions to address a broad range of challenges, including stress, trauma, relationship issues, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, mental health conditions, parenting concerns, grief, perinatal mental health and dementia. In the 2023–24 financial year, Wellbeings delivered 227 sessions (230 hours) of care. Wellbeings operates on a fee-for-service model and is eligible for Medicare rebates with a GP referral.

In 2023–24 significant effort was dedicated to preparing for the launch of a new assessment program, set to begin in the next financial year. This program will provide specialised assessments for individuals aged six and above with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The introduction of these services reflects CRCS's commitment to expanding its therapeutic offerings and addressing the growing demand for comprehensive support in the community.

Wellbeings has also been working towards developing an outreach service to youth accommodation in partnership with Barnardos, set to launch next financial year.

## Case Study: Supporting Neurodivergence and Mental Health

Anna, diagnosed with autism in late adolescence, was referred to Wellbeings for psychological support. Her autism went undiagnosed in childhood, and chronic medical conditions had affected her mental health, self-esteem, and confidence. By her teens, she often felt overwhelmed and struggled to find her place. Starting therapy, she gained stability and comfort with her neurodivergent identity, supported by family, friends, and funded care.

Her goals included pursuing education, a career, and independent living. Therapy focused on trauma-informed, neuroaffirming approaches, addressing challenges like anxiety, emotional regulation, and task initiation. Over 10 months, Anna built a strong alliance with her psychologist, becoming more comfortable expressing her authentic self and reducing masking. Therapy themes included self-advocacy, relationships, and self-care, supporting her ongoing personal and life goals.

## Early Autism Education

The Early Autism Education (EAE) program provides early developmental support for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), related conditions and general learning delays. Through individualised, in-home or clinic-based sessions, EAE focused on building communication, cognitive, play and social skills to help children thrive in daily life and educational settings. In 2023–24, EAE supported 13 children and families, providing 647 sessions of intensive support.

Considerable effort has been dedicated to the planning and development of transitioning the EAE program into the Neurodivergent Early Intervention Support and Training (NEIST) program.

Set to launch in the next financial year, NEIST will introduce a new playgroup for neurodivergent children under five years and their parents and carers, providing an opportunity for earlier intervention. This is an invaluable service for families, providing guidance and support during those crucial formative years. Through key partnerships and our internal services, we can also connect families with further support, including one-on-one counselling services if needed. The rebranding and expansion of services have been thoughtfully designed to also include support and training for families, early childhood services and schools and individualised intensive learning programs.

## Case Study: A Journey of Growth and Progress

An energetic five-year-old boy was part of our Early Autism Education (EAE) program for nearly two years. Initially, other professionals were discouraged by his hyperactivity and challenges in maintaining focus, as he often engaged in repetitive sensory-seeking behaviours. However, we saw his potential and tailored strategies to meet his unique needs.

We used sensory toys he liked to build trust and encourage play. Short, structured activities gradually increased his focus from a few seconds to several minutes, boosting his confidence and expanding his play skills from simple actions to interactive routines filled with anticipation and laughter.

A major milestone was completing a five-piece shape puzzle. After months of hand-over-hand guidance, he placed the first piece on his own, progressing to more complex puzzles and showing growth in attention, motor skills, and problem-solving.

His speech, once limited to repetitive sounds, improved through music-based learning, expanding his vocabulary to recognise body parts, animal sounds, and everyday objects. Each new skill laid a foundation for his continued growth in communication and social connection, with the EAE program playing a key role in these achievements.

## Bungee Youth Resilience Program

Supported by the ACT Health Directorate, Bungee Youth Resilience Program (Bungee) is an early intervention and preventative mental health program designed to enhance emotional wellbeing through the arts. It supports children and young people aged five to 18 by offering arts-based activities that promote resilience, self-esteem, social connections and emotional health. Led by CRCS Bungee facilitators with mental health expertise, participants are encouraged to develop new skills, express emotions, and cope with adversity in supportive environments. The program focuses on fostering psychosocial wellbeing through achievable, individualised goals, enhancing resilience, and improving social and emotional skills.

In schools, Bungee delivers structured, tailored and interactive programs for one term. At Belconnen Community Centre, Bungee extends over a semester, allowing deeper relationships to form between facilitators and participants. The Bungee team work with CRCS Wellbeings therapy and assessment service to identify families who may benefit from individual counselling, which is available at any stage of participation in the program.

In the 2023-24 reporting period, 264 young people engaged in Bungee programs, and 22 schools participated in 24 art-based groups. There were 217 participants in the groups, and eight young people received individual counselling. Four community art groups participated in Bungee.



## Our Impact

We surveyed young people before and after joining the Bungee Youth Resilience Program to understand their feelings and measure the program's impact on their confidence, connectedness and wellbeing.

**“ Bungee is the best and the facilitators are awesome. ”**  
– Community Group Participant

### Bungee – School Groups

**↑ 67%**

Participants said they feel they can deal with things when they go wrong

(Increase of 67% since joining Bungee)

**♥ 100%**

Participants feel confident and believe in themselves

(Increase of 20% since joining Bungee)

### Bungee – Community Groups

**↑ 33%**

Increase in young people who feel that they have a place at the table with others

**↑ 22%**

Young people said they have a close bond with family and friends

## Cool Kids Anxiety Program

CRCS Therapeutic Services team as an accredited facilitator, supported by ACT Health Directorate, continues to deliver the Macquarie University's Cool Kids program, which is a structured 10 session course run over 10 weeks, designed for children aged seven to 12 and their parents, to help them manage anxiety. Based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), the program teaches practical skills for understanding and addressing anxiety disorders, including generalised anxiety, social anxiety, separation anxiety and more. The program covers topics such as learning about anxiety, parenting an anxious child, facing fears and developing coping skills like assertiveness and problem-solving.

Both children and their caregivers actively participate, attending group and individual psychoeducation sessions. Each participant receives a workbook, and the program addresses not only the child's anxiety but also how parent behaviours can reinforce anxious tendencies.

**“ In Term 4 2023, 83% of participants reported feeling more confident in managing anxiety. ”**

Clinical measures taken before and after the program showed reductions in anxiety levels and improvements in both child and family functioning. A total of 35 people attended the program throughout the 2023-24 reporting period, highlighting its impact on helping families manage anxiety together.

# YOUTH SERVICES



Our Youth Services Team provide a range of programs and support services for young people aged 10 to 25 that benefit their social, emotional and developmental needs.

At the heart of our services is the Belconnen Youth Centre (BYC), a safe and welcoming space where young people can drop in to relax, study, play games, connect with peers or access guidance from our team.

The BYC is also equipped with essential amenities, including a washing machine, dryer, kitchen facilities, basic toiletries and a shower. Our youth services include a regularly scheduled activities and events, case management and mental health support through targeted programs.



During the 2023-24 reporting period we engaged with approximately 3,500 young people, an increase of over 50% from last year. Our commitment to fostering belonging and connection among participants has delivered significant social impact.

According to our youth survey, 92% of 10 to 17 year olds and 100% of 18 to 25 year olds feel they belong at the BYC. All young adults aged 18-25 report feeling a greater sense of belonging with

others after engaging at the centre. This sense of belonging is further demonstrated by 92% of 10 to 17-year-olds and 100% of 18- to 25-year-olds feeling comfortable talking to CRCS Youth Workers. All participants aged 10 to 25 reported that they feel like part of a group of friends following engagement with the Belconnen Youth Centre.

## Bit Bent

Our LGBTQIA+ support group for young people and their allies, offered in two groups: one for those aged 10 to 17 years and another for those aged 18 to 25 years. Bit Bent provides a culturally safe and participant-led environment where LGBTQIA+ young people and their allies can

socialise, receive support and share experiences. This year saw a significant increase in participation, with 88% of 10 to 17-year-olds and 68% of 18 to 25-year-olds identifying as LGBTQIA+.



## BBQs at Westfield Belconnen

We provide a monthly BBQ at the Westfield Belconnen Bus Interchange, reaching out to the community with BBQ food while promoting our services. The BBQ engaged with approximately 3,120 community members from January to June 2024, with roughly 90% of those attending being young people.

## Games Drop-In

Our weekly Games Drop-In session offers a relaxed environment where young people can play board games, card games or use the Nintendo Switch.



# Case Study: First BYC Mario Bros and Smash Bros Competition

"Luigi out of nowhere!" and "Boombbox! No way!" were just some of the excited exclamations filling the Belconnen Youth Centre on Thursday 6 July 2023, during the inaugural BYC Mario Bros and Smash Bros electronic gaming competition. Open to youths aged 10 to 25, the competition drew 15 to 20 enthusiastic participants, who competed vigorously for free session prizes at the iPlay entertainment centre in Westfield Belconnen.



## Friday Dinners

Friday nights are a highlight at the Belconnen Youth Centre, where young people gather for a shared meal in a safe and welcoming space. With youth workers on hand to support and engage, Friday Dinners have become a key part of our drop-in services, offering an opportunity for young people to form connections and feel a sense of community.

These Friday Dinners are made possible thanks to the generous contributions from ALDI, Woolworths, and OzHarvest. Their donations are essential, not only for Friday dinners but also for other events, and their support helps us continue creating meaningful experiences for young people.

## School Holiday Program

Our school holiday program is open to young people aged 10 to 25, offering a range of fun and unique activities during the ACT public school holiday period. During the 2023-24 reporting period, we engaged approximately 300 young people across the programs, with activities both in the centre and off-site.

A highlight was during the autumn 2024 school holiday program, where we successfully ran a

fully booked laser tag activity, provided free of charge to participants. This event attracted a mix of regular attendees and new young people, who had not visited Belconnen Youth Centre before. As a result of this activity, several of the new young people continued to engage with our school holiday program, participating in the remaining activities and events.

## Pre-Learner Driver Licence Course

The first Pre-Learner Driver Licence Course session was run in January 2024, with a smaller group of participants who had been attending the Belconnen Youth Centre for years without the opportunity to progress towards getting their provisional license. Since this first session, the course has become an essential part of our youth services, equipping young people with the knowledge and confidence to achieve their driving goals.

These sessions are now fully booked months in advance and are successful due to the personalised support we provide. Youth workers take the time to ensure every young person understands the content, encouraging them to ask questions and seek help when needed. This is especially important for young people with disability, who often require extra time or tailored explanations to grasp the material fully. As a result, all participants can pass the course, building their confidence and skills.

## Easy P

The Easy P program offers eligible young people the opportunity to receive free driving lessons, tailored to meet their individual needs. This program is designed to help participants gain confidence and skills behind the wheel, supporting them in working towards their provisional driving license. The number of lessons each participant receives is based on their specific requirements, with a minimum requirement of one driving lesson per week.

While the primary focus of Easy P is on driving lessons, the program often extends beyond the road. Many participants receive additional support to achieve broader personal goals, ensuring a holistic approach to this service, as well as access to ACT Health's Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth (P.A.R.T.Y.) program.

During the reporting period, 24 young people were inducted into the Easy P program, with a varied number of lessons depending on their individual needs and progress.



## Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth (P.A.R.T.Y.)

Through a partnership with ACT Health, CRCS facilitates the P.A.R.T.Y. (Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth) program at the Belconnen Youth Centre. This impactful initiative educates young people on risk awareness and trauma prevention through interactive 1.5-hour sessions about driving risk, life support activity and medical equipment used for trauma patients. Activities encourage responsible decision-making, empathy and resilience, supporting safer choices

and building essential life skills in our youth community. P.A.R.T.Y. is an integral part of the Pre-Learner's Driver Licence Course provided at no cost through the CRCS Youth team, ensuring that young people achieving their learner licence have more awareness of driving risks and safe decision making.

### Short Term Casework

The Youth Team provided short term case work (planned support) to 53 young people during the reporting period, focusing on employment, training and re-engagement in education. Our

youth workers helped these young people set and work toward their goals, with the vast majority demonstrating positive progress.

## Case Study: Sparrow's Journey to Self-Discovery through Bit Bent

Sparrow, a 16-year-old using they/them pronouns, has attended Bit Bent for three years. Initially, they felt conflicted about their identity, often using pronouns and clothing that didn't align with their non-binary ideals, but lacked the funds to buy outfits that would affirm their gender identity.

Sparrow shared these concerns with Rav, the Bit Bent program facilitator, who helped them explore their gender identity and understand how clothing affected their self-expression.

Rav suggested they attend Meridian's clothes swap, an LGBTIQ+ event, to find gender-affirming outfits affordably. Rav also recommended the bi-monthly non-binary meetup, A Gender Agenda, providing a supportive space for self-exploration.

With Bit Bent's support, Sparrow now feels more comfortable in their identity and wardrobe, contributing positively to their sense of self within the group.

## Our Impact

We surveyed young people aged 10 to 25 who engaged with CRCS Youth Services to assess their sense of belonging and connectedness, and our ability to provide a safe and inclusive space.

Young people we worked with identified as



Feedback from young people tells us that for the most part, they feel comfortable engaging with CRCS Youth Workers and feel like they fit in and are part of a group since engaging with the Belconnen Youth Centre.



# GRANTS



We were awarded funding for three grant programs over the 2023–24 financial year. These grants have helped CRCS expand the reach of our services across the Capital Region.

### **Early Childhood Education and Care for Dependents of People Attending High Intensity Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs.**

The ACT Government Health Directorate awarded CRCS a \$406,908 grant, strengthening support for early childhood education and care for children whose parents or carers are participating in high-intensity alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) treatment, support or harm reduction services in Canberra.

This funding extends a seven-year commitment, providing 1.5 full-time placements at CRCS early childhood centres. Enrolments are made through ATOD service providers Toora Women, Directions Health Services and the Salvation Army Canberra Recovery Services. Through this grant, CRCS is committed to creating a nurturing environment where children can thrive, supporting families as they engage with vital health services.

### **Community Assistance and Temporary Supports (CATS) Program**

CRCS and Community Service #1 was awarded \$13,583,388.50 from the ACT Government Health Directorate to deliver medical and allied health transport services, bridging supports and care coordination through the Community Assistance and Temporary Supports (CATS) Program for the period 1 October 2023 through to 30 June 2030. The funding was received in partnership with Community Services #1.

The CATS program provides eligible individuals experiencing short-term health challenges, illness, or injury with vital support services to assist in daily living. These services are designed to help people maintain their health, reduce the risk of hospital admission, and, if hospitalisation is necessary, provide transport back home.

For more information about CATS, see page 64.

### **INFANT Program**

The ACT Health Directorate awarded CRCS \$75,000 to deliver a pilot of the INFANT program in Belconnen, Gungahlin, Molonglo Valley and Tuggeranong. The program is designed to equip first time parents with essential skills and knowledge about healthy eating and active play for their babies.

This evidence-based initiative offers four interactive group sessions at key stages of the baby's development. INFANT works with parents and caregivers to promote healthy eating, physical activity, reduced screen time for babies from birth, and the importance of self-care for parents and carers. This grant will allow CRCS to work with over 120 families across the Capital Region.

# Accreditations and Audits

At CRCS, accreditations, audits and compliance are foundational to our work, ensuring quality, safety and accountability. Our commitment to these standards strengthens our operations and enables us to consistently deliver trusted, impactful services

to the community. During 2023-24 we completed 231 improvement actions and invested over 300 internal audit hours as part of our quality assurance and improvement efforts.

## Workplace Gender Equality Act

In accordance with the requirements of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012, we lodged our annual public report with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency on 29 May 2024. We are proud to promote gender equality through:

- flexible working arrangements
- paid parental leave
- support for carers
- subsidised childcare
- policies, processes and training to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination
- access to paid domestic violence leave.

## Quality Innovation Performance Accreditation

CRCS undertook accreditation by Quality Innovation Performance Ltd against the Quality Improvement Council (QIC) standards in November 2022. In February 2023, we were awarded full accreditation against the QIC Health and Community Services Standards 7th edition for the period of three years.

## Bus Operator Accreditation Scheme

We achieved Bus Operator Accreditation from the NSW Government Transport for NSW in February 2024, confirming compliance with the Passenger Transport Act 1990 to provide coach services for a period of three years.

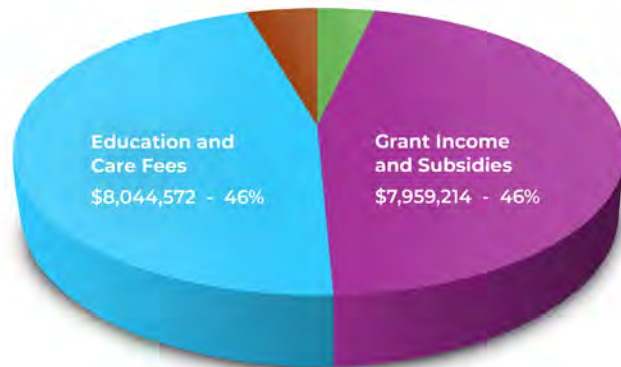
## Secure Local Jobs

We maintained our Secure Local Jobs Certification, valid from April 2023 to October 2025.

# Financials

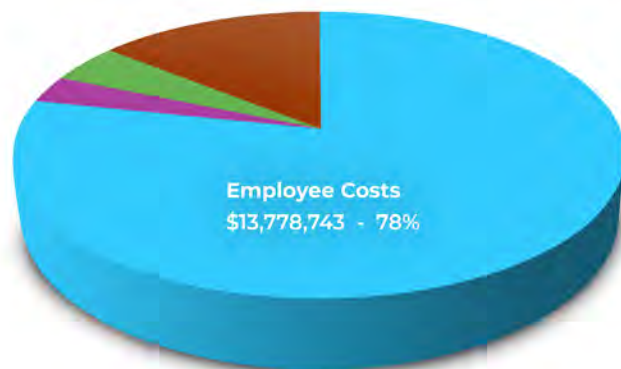
## Income Sources

- **Other Income**  
\$778,370 - 4%
- **NDIS Income**  
\$626,449 - 4%
- **Grant Income and Subsidies**  
\$7,959,214 - 46%
- **Education and Care Fees**  
\$8,044,572 - 46%

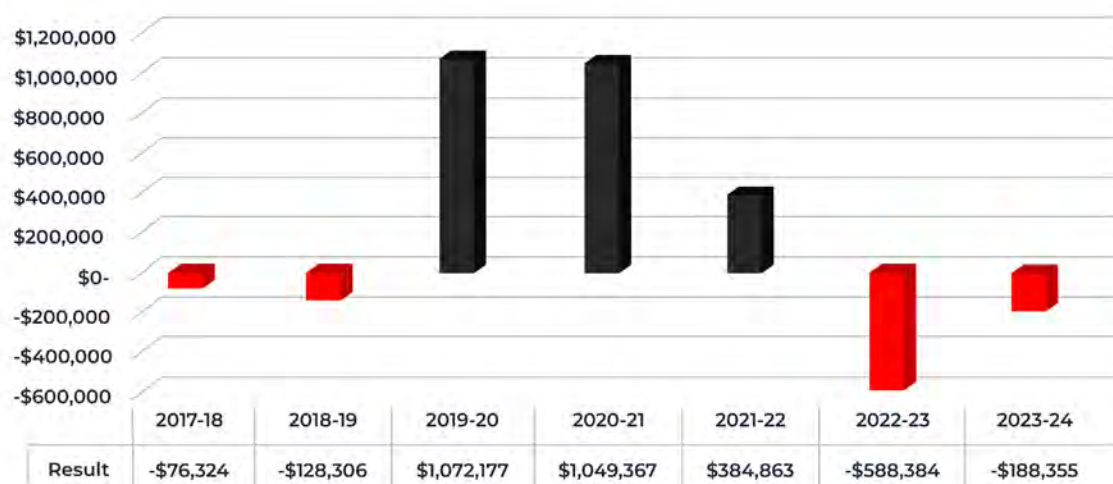


## Expenditure Sources

- **Other Costs**  
\$2,503,045 - 14%
- **Participant/Activity Costs**  
\$534,798 - 3%
- **Depreciation & Building Related Costs**  
\$780,354 - 4%
- **Employee Costs**  
\$13,778,743 - 78%



## Financial Results 2018-24



# Thanks and Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the contributions of like-minded organisations, schools, businesses, governments and community members who have enabled our achievements in 2023–24.

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