

Capital Region Community Services

2022–23 Annual report

Inclusive, Connected Communities



Capital
Region
Community
Services



Acknowledgement of Country

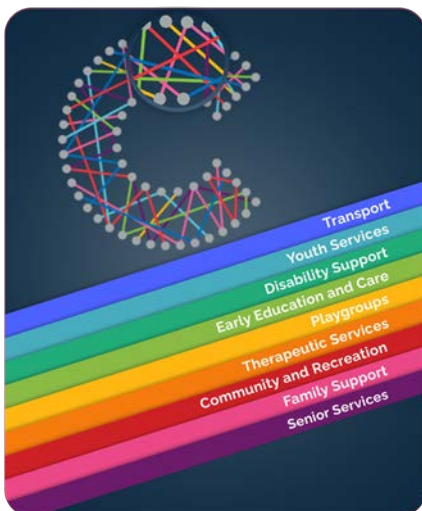
Capital Region Community Services acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across the Capital Region where we support community. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded, and the land always was and always will be Aboriginal lands.

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.



Inclusive Connections, by Sarah Richards

The key themes of *Inclusive Connections* are connection, journey and diversity and it is hoped that all who view the piece can feel that inclusion and connection to the CRCS journey.



CRCS brand story

At CRCS, we are about helping our community to 'connect the dots' throughout their life.

In our refreshed branding, we have assigned each program a representative colour. Our brand includes lines and circles in these colours, to represent our organisation and the diversity of our programs, services, participants and community.



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Message from our Chair



Peter Humphries,
CRCS Board Chair

The past year has seen continued growth in the size and range of services provided by CRCS. We are now seeing the development of an organisation with the potential to provide services and support to the very young all the way along the 'life span' to the very elderly. The continued growth in the organisation is, of course, what we want to see, while always making sure that we maintain our strong community links.

Throughout the year, our services have continued to assist our valued Aged Care, Transport, Families, NDIS and Youth participants, and our Education and Care services supported families across the Capital region. We again pay tribute to our committed front-line workers whose dedication and skill ensure that we are doing all we can to meet the needs of our participants.

CRCS has proudly partnered with other organisations over the past 12 months to deliver a range of supports and services, including the Community Services Directorate, Westfield Belconnen, A Village for Every Child, Libraries ACT and so many more.

CRCS has continued to grow its presence in the Capital Region over 2022–23, and we have welcomed new teams at the Braidwood out-of-school-hours care (OSHC) program and the Wellbeing therapeutic services program. Our Transport service has also continued to grow through ever-increasing demand and the purchase of a coach in the last financial year.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to provide feedback to CRCS over the past year. Feedback from participants, their families, the community, funders and our employees is critical in driving improvements across our full suite of programs and services.

Organisations such as CRCS are central to the wellbeing of our communities as they often support the most vulnerable and in need. But, without our successful collaboration with so many others, it is work we couldn't do. Therefore, on behalf of the CRCS Board and the Executive Team, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to local and state governments in the ACT and NSW, the Commonwealth Government, and other



community sector and commercial organisations for their enduring support and commitment to supporting people of all backgrounds, ages and cultures within our communities.

The ability to rise to the challenges of the past year, all the while embracing change and growth, has been critical to the success of CRCS over the past 12 months. This is in no small part due to the positive and dedicated leadership provided by our CEO, Mandy Green, and the Executive team which, over the course of the year, included Sandra Sheehy-Cox, Deb Bampton, Heidi Prowse, Karyn Ferraris, Jenelle Tinham and Allison Sullings.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank everyone in CRCS who has worked so hard to ensure we achieve our vision, purpose and strategic goals.

I also want to thank the Board of Directors for their excellent work over the past year, including Mike Pamphilon, Chris Ermacora, Carolyn McPherson, Catherine McCarthy and Vicky Choice. Being part of the Board has provided

us with the opportunity to contribute to the continued delivery of relevant and effective human services and to finding new opportunities where we can truly make a difference.

Beyond the effective delivery of our services, our employees and volunteers continue to do more than required in our communities, such as participating in community events like the Volunteering Expo and Relay4Life, taking up roles on working groups both within CRCS and across the Capital region, and organising or contributing to Giving Tree hampers, the Canberra Day Appeal and the 10/10 project.

The coming year will no doubt bring its share of challenges. From my experience so far, I have no doubt that CRCS has the capacity to not only meet these challenges but to again demonstrate just how much an effective community-based organisation can achieve.

Peter Humphries
Chair



Message from our CEO



Mandy Green,
Chief Executive Officer

It is with pleasure that we launch the annual report for 2022–23, a year that, in many aspects, has been a testament to the resilience, commitment, and spirit of our Capital Region Community Services (CRCS) family.

In this year of many triumphs and inevitable challenges, I've observed with pride and admiration the unwavering dedication of our team. At the forefront of this dedication, I must acknowledge Karyn Ferraris and Jenelle Tinham for their invaluable contributions to CRCS during their tenure as Executive Managers. Their passion and commitment have been the cornerstone of our achievements, and it was with great sadness that we said goodbye to them during this financial year. I thank Allison Sullings for her contribution as Executive Manager, and I'm pleased that we continue to have Ally as part of the CRCS family (albeit in another role where her skills and experience will continue to support the quality and compliance of our Education and Care Services). I also have the pleasure to extend a warm welcome to Deborah Bampton, Heidi Prowse and Sandra Sheehy-Cox, who have joined our Executive Team, bringing with them fresh perspectives and boundless enthusiasm.

The support and guidance of the Board of Directors have always been our lighthouse, steering us through uncertain times and ensuring we remain true to

our purpose. A special word of gratitude goes to the Directors who stepped down this financial year, Peter Henss and Michael Pamphilon. I thank them for their unwavering support and tireless contributions.

Congratulations to our 2022 All Star Award winners, who are the living embodiments of CRCS's values, vision, and purpose. Witnessing our outstanding team members being celebrated for their dedication is genuinely heartwarming. Our employees and volunteers truly are the beating heart of CRCS. Their daily contributions breathe life into our vision, and the Executive Team and the Board hold their efforts in the highest regard.

A significant highlight this year was our 10th 10/10 Project. Even with the curveballs that the weather and pandemic restrictions threw our way, our adaptable team managed to rally together on 8 December 2022. The day saw 45 volunteers revitalising several community yards and gardens. Their hard work not only transformed physical spaces but also rekindled the spirits of our residents. The 10/10 Project remains one of our proudest initiatives, and the anticipation for our 11th run is palpable.

Our dedication to education and care continues, and I am very proud that our Bruce and Belconnen centres have achieved a rating of "Exceeding National



Quality Standards". Recognition like this for our outstanding Educators is so important, as their impact on the lives of children is immense. Quality education and care in early years has a profound impact, with evidence demonstrating that it leads to enhanced health, education and employment outcomes in later stages of life. These foundational years are pivotal in fostering self-esteem, resilience and a robust capacity for learning. It's in these moments that we shape the trajectory of every child's future, setting the groundwork for continuous growth and learning.

This year, we achieved QIC Accreditation, which was a whole-of-organisation commitment. This accreditation was a key action under our strategic goal to provide high-quality services. My sincere thanks go to everyone who worked tirelessly to achieve this significant strategic milestone.

Our programs and services have continued to provide high-quality person-centred services to individuals across the capital region, and I hope you enjoy reading the annual report with some highlights and case studies that demonstrate the impact our skilled and talented employees bring to their work.

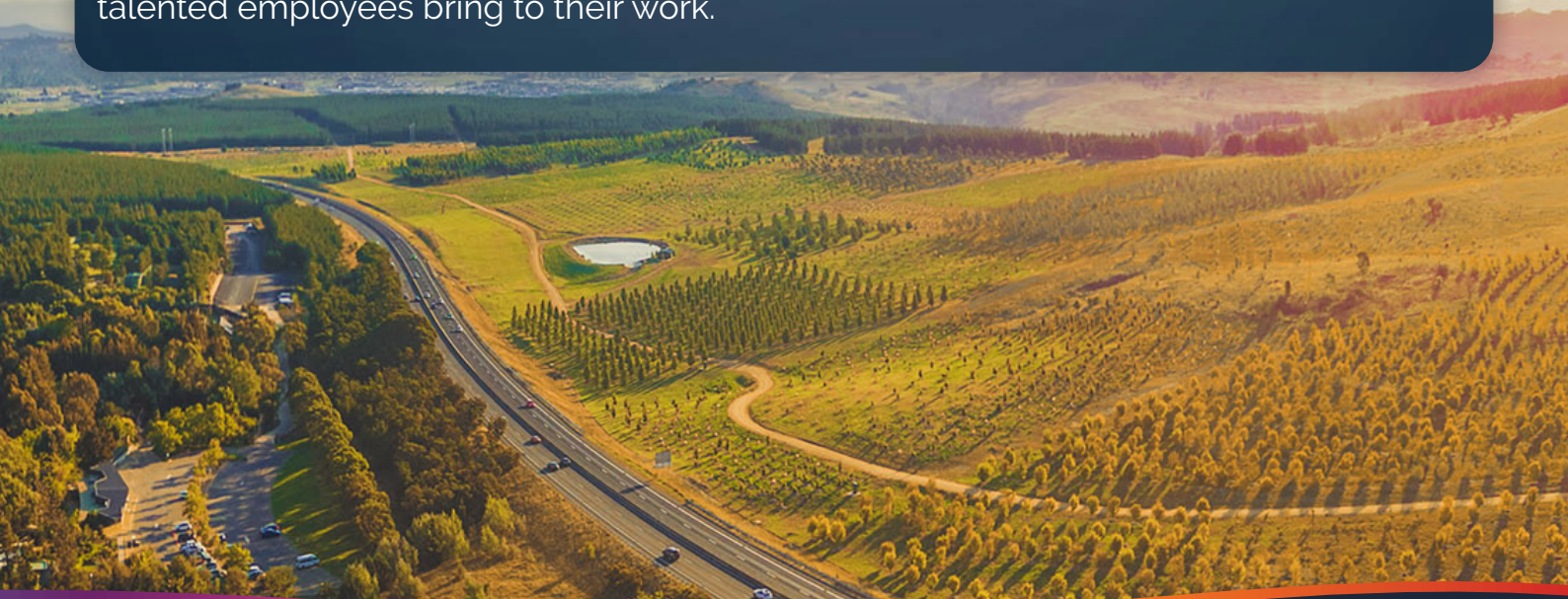
This year, our Strategic Working Groups have been diligently aligning with our goals of inclusivity, responsibility and excellence. The Mental Health & Wellbeing Working Group participated in the ACT Government's Healthier Work Gap Assessment Tool Pilot. This tool provides a holistic view of a healthy workplace and has given us insightful feedback. The resulting report not only indicates our present organisational health but also offers clear, actionable recommendations for the upcoming financial year. As CEO, I'm heartened by our team's proactive approach to workplace wellbeing and our promising trajectory for even greater employee care.

In closing, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to every single individual connected to CRCS. Without the daily dedication of our employees and volunteers, our vision would remain just that: a vision.

We move forward, hoping for another year of growth, success, and community service.

Warm regards,

Mandy Green
CEO



Treasurer's report



Carolyn McPherson,
CRCS Board Treasurer

It is my absolute pleasure as Treasurer of Capital Region Community Services to present the 2022–23 annual accounts.

Highlights of the 2022–23 financial year included the new revenue stream following the purchase of our coach the previous financial year, and the purchase of an additional office building at Thynne St, Bruce.

We experienced challenges across the period in a number of areas as a result of COVID-19 and influenza outbreaks, including in our early education and care centres where we had to reduce opening hours for a period of three months, as we were struggling to meet staffing ratios.

The organisation recorded a deficit for 2022–23 of \$588,384, a \$973,247 decrease from the prior year's surplus of \$384,863. There was an increase in income during the year of \$754,842, while expenditure increased by \$1,728,089.

The key financial management opportunity identified by the Board and Management for the coming financial year will be determined by the incoming Treasurer; however, I expect there will be a close focus on a return to a financial year surplus for CRCS. This will be achieved in part by the strategies in place within early education and care and other areas requiring our attention.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the CEO Mandy Green, former CFO Karyn Ferraris, and the Executive Leadership Team. Working with Mandy, Karyn, Marion and the team has been a highlight over my five years as Treasurer. I leave knowing the CEO, Deputy CEO and the Executive will continue to build on the success of the last five years.

Carolyn McPherson
Treasurer

For more information, please view the Financials at a glance on page 59 and our audited financial statements.



About Capital Region Community Services

Since 1975, Capital Region Community Services (CRCS) has provided a wide range of high-quality, integrated and inclusive programs and services to individuals, families, children and young people in the Belconnen and wider capital region. We work with community members, local organisations and businesses to develop responsive programs, services and activities that support self-determination and reduce social isolation, placing community at the heart of everything we do.

Our vision

Inclusive, connected communities within the Capital Region.

Our purpose

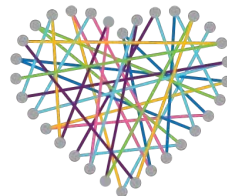
We empower people to live their best lives through:

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

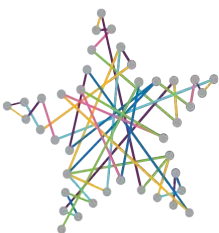
Strategic intent 2020–30



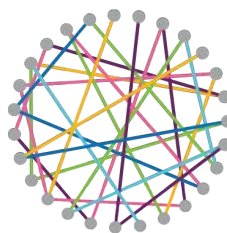
Engage and connect with communities in the Capital Region.



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



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



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

Our values



We are respectful



We are accountable



We are inclusive



We are ethical



We are optimistic



We are innovative



2022–23 Snapshot



Education and Care

Provided early childhood education and care to **196 children** aged six weeks to five years.



Had **Belconnen Early Childhood Centre** assessed as **Exceeding the National Quality Standards**.



Provided out-of-school-hours care to **290** primary school children in Belconnen and Snowy Monaro region.



Playgroups

Facilitated 189 playgroups, with around **700** individual families attending.

Disability Support

Supported 259 people with disability to make the most of their National Disability Insurance Scheme plan.



Community and Recreation

Had over **2500 bookings** for our facilities.



Senior Services

Ran over **17,300 hours** of social group programs for seniors with a Commonwealth Home Support Program.



Corporate Completed **128 actions**

as part of our quality assurance and improvement efforts.



Youth Services

Engaged around **2000 young people** with youth services.



Family Support

Provided family case management **support to 61 families.**



Facilitated **23** psychoeducation groups, with **126 attendees.**



Supported 27 families, including **52 children,** with our Family Foundations early intervention therapeutic program.



Therapeutic Services

Provided over **3000 hours** of assistance in total to **20 children** through our Early Autism Education program.



Helped 23 children manage their anxiety through Cool Kids Anxiety program.



Transport

Provided over **26,000 passenger trips** across our transport programs, **supporting 770** participants and travelling **363,293Kms.**

Our people





All Star Awards

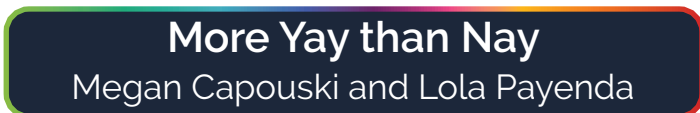
The All Star Awards is an annual prize-giving event that recognises exceptional employees and their contribution to our organisation. Awards themes are based on our core values, with special recognition awards from the Executive Team. Congratulations to our CRCS family members who received a 2022 All Star Award!



Volunteers: Giving Tree Team

- Samantha Ball
- Marion Eade
- Adam McEvoy
- Dechen Choden
- Alison Barton
- Rachel Martin
- Natalie Ware
- Cristina Ocampo
- Braulio Melo
- Lyne Bowman
- Narrele Kelley
- Tracy Hitchins
- Jessica Johnson

Good Fun Awards





Board

Board members on 30 June 2023:

Peter Humphries,
Chair



Joined 2019

Carolyn McPherson,
Treasurer



Joined 2018

Christopher Ermacora,
Secretary



Joined 2018

Catherine McCarthy
Vice Chair



Joined 2018

Victoria Choic,
Director



Joined May 2023

Board members who left during the financial year:

- Peter Henss, Chair, left October 2022
- Michael Pamphilon, Director, left March 2023.

Executive Team

On 30 June 2023, our Executive team was:

Mandy Green,
CEO



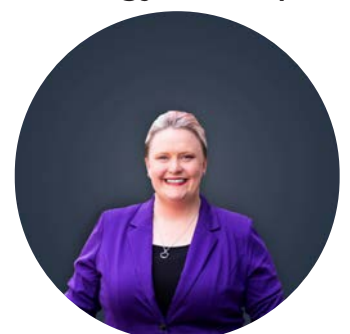
Deborah Bampton,
Deputy CEO



Sandra Sheehy-Cox,
Executive Manager
Education and Care



Heidi Prowse,
Executive Manager
Strategy and Impact





Volunteer and employee highlights



Heidi Prowse recognised with an OAM

On the King's Birthday, 12 June 2023, His Excellency the Governor General announced that Heidi Prowse, our Executive Manager of Strategy and Impact, would receive the prestigious honour of a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to community health.

Heidi has been a community leader for over 15 years, working with Camp Quality, Cystic Fibrosis ACT and Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT) to further their causes and reach more people. Heidi joined our Executive Team in December 2022 with a continued passion for community engagement and support as the Executive Manager – Strategy & Impact.

"When I found out, I was filled with gratitude. I have always considered the honour being awarded at the end of your career, but for me I feel like I'm only just getting started," Heidi said.

"My career has been dedicated to helping the lives of others. I have a personal mission to solve complex community issues and I'm willing to get in from the ground up to create change. I look forward to continuing that work with Capital Region Community Services."

We congratulate and pay tribute to Heidi's exceptional support of our community.



Graham McKerchar receives COTA Positive Ageing Award

In November 2022, Graham McKerchar, then a Program Manager for Transport, was awarded the COTA Positive Ageing Award in the Seniors Transport Achievement category.

Sponsored by the ACT Government, businesses and several agencies, the ACT Positive Ageing Awards recognise and celebrate those who provide outstanding service provision, advocacy and affirmative commitment to improving the lives of older Canberrans.

On our social channels, many congratulated Graham on this achievement, including Sue Aylen, who said:

"Congratulations Graham. I have known you for over 16 years and have personally seen the effort you put into the Transport program over the years. I've seen the respect you have for your employees and volunteers and how this is reciprocated. This award recognises everything you have done and obviously continue to do for the community. Congratulations my friend."

Graham was later promoted to the role of Senior Manager – Transport and celebrated his 30th work anniversary. Congratulations to Graham: your passion and commitment to serving the community should be recognised and celebrated every day!





National Volunteer Week



While most volunteers don't give up their time and energy to receive recognition, it was nice to see two of our valued heroes get noticed during National Volunteer Week 2023.

Carole Jensen and Irene Hewitt emerged as unofficial spokeswomen with appearances on ABC Radio Canberra and in Canberra Weekly. Both were terrific, explaining the joys of volunteering, particularly with the BEST and Involve groups at CRCS.

Carole was at a bit of a loose end when she first decided to volunteer her time, which is no longer the case. "I just love helping people," she said.

And it has also helped develop Carole's networks. "I've met Irene through volunteering; sometimes you meet

someone, and you just connect," she said. The pair have become close friends over the past decade, including holidaying together.

Irene Hewitt started her volunteering journey as a childcare minder in 1974.

Those of you who know Irene may know she loves photographing all the events, excursions and interactions she shares with her community groups. She develops the pictures and hands them out in personalised envelopes to those photographed. Employees and volunteers cherish these mementos.

We are grateful to have many incredible volunteers across our programs.



Strategic working groups

Our Strategic Working Groups have had a busy year, taking steps to help us meet our goal to be inclusive, responsible and exceptional as an organisation and employer.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Committee



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Committee plays a vital role in developing and implementing our Reconciliation Action Plan.

A key activity by the working group during 2022–23 was to identify an authentic pathway to creating our second Reconciliation Action Plan, drawing on the experience from implementing our first plan and considering the growth and further diversity of the organisation.

Notably, the group has invested time in listening and learning. They undertook a Walk on Country with Richie Allan, Cultural Director of the Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, who provides valuable advice to organisations on culture and creating safe workplaces for Aboriginal people to thrive in. This enabled the review of the organisation's Acknowledgement of Country and its use, and the implementation of employee cultural competency training as part of the onboarding process.

We recognise the important work still to be done. The working group and the Executive Team will focus on developing our second Reconciliation Plan in the next financial year.



Child Safe Working Group

Our Child Safety and Wellbeing Working Group was established within the reporting period to help ensure we are a Child Safe Organisation and compliant with the Child Safe Standards. The Group works to ensure our children and young people are safe, happy and thrive, and embed child safety into our systems, practices and decision-making.

During the 2022–23 financial year, the working group:

- completed the External Child Safe Standards Audit
- developed a Child Safety and Wellbeing Committee with representation from across the organisation
- created action plans for each portfolio
- drafted a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure
- drafted a Child Safety and Wellbeing Risk Assessment
- developed a Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing for our website.

Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Working Group

The Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Working Group helps us foster inclusive work practices, celebrate diversity and deliver culturally responsive and relevant services.

Throughout 2022–23, the group mainly focused on accessibility upgrades and improvements to our facilities and services. These include:

- removing keypad entry to our accessible bathrooms
- upgrading tapware in the Belconnen Community Centre bathrooms
- advocating to the ACT Government to repair or replace the lift services in the Chandler Street Offices and Belconnen Community Centre
- purchasing guidelines from Inclusion Australia to support our move to a more inclusive organisation
- applying for a successful grant to run a dementia café in the next financial year.

We also celebrated Harmony Day in March and continued our relationship with Her Kitchen Table, a social enterprise that connects food lovers to authentic and culturally diverse foods.

As part of our commitment to building stronger relationships and supporting our culturally linguistic and diverse community, we partnered with SiTara's Story and provided advice and guidance around their second annual fundraising Gala, attended by the working group Chair and members of the Executive Team.



Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Working Group

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group has enjoyed a year of connecting employees to a wide range of wellbeing events and initiatives through the weekly Wellbeing Wednesday communications. In addition, over the reporting period, the working group worked to engage staff with:

- RUOK? Day, connection event and mental health conversation tips
- the Cool and Crafty series, showcasing the wellbeing benefits of crafty pursuits over winter
- a Valentine's Day celebration, where employees were encouraged to show colleagues their appreciation
- a Soup & Solstice get-together at Belconnen Community Centre
- a Wellbeing Priori-Tea as part of Mental Health Month ACT 2022.

The working group was also involved in external events coordinated with other areas of CRCS, including:

- A Mental Health Month ACT/BPD Awareness Week exhibition in the Belconnen Community Centre Gallery
- Relay for Life
- Sausages, Serendipity and Shaving Foam lunchtime event as part of Mental Health Month ACT 2022.

To improve our workplace health, safety and wellbeing programs, the working group took part in the ACT Government's Healthier Work Gap Assessment Tool Pilot. Part of the Healthier Work program redevelopment, this tool is designed to expand understanding of what makes a healthy workplace. It includes health, safety and wellbeing strategies across all areas of business that protect, support and promote positive health outcomes. The report provides a great snapshot of where we are currently sitting as an organisation and key recommendations for improvements in the next financial year.

Festive Outfit Day

On 20 December 2022, our employees were encouraged to pull out their festive favourites, sprinkle the tinsel, put on bells and bling up their outfits to get into the festive vibes! The Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group asked to see the best holiday outfits, whether it be an ugly sweater, fancy frock or traditional dress, to celebrate our diversity.

Much fun was had, featuring the Grinch who stole Christmas (AKA the CRCS NDIS Coordination team), the Community Care team's elves, and an Addams Family Christmas with the Youth team.





Rainbow Working Group

The Rainbow Working Group continued ensuring we are a safe and welcoming place for LGBTQIA+ community members.

June was an exceptionally busy month for the working group members as they celebrated and acknowledged all things pride for World Pride Month! This included informing employees about historical and current facts about the pride movement and how they can be an ally to LGBTQIA+ people.

In 2022–23, the Rainbow Working Group also:

- celebrated the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) with a Rainbow Lanyard Drive
- provided advice to employees on how to be allies for LGBTQIA+ people
- celebrated International Lesbian Visibility Day
- held a stall at FreshOut Fair Day, Canberra's largest LGBTQIA+ event
- provided feedback on internal training, forms, policies and procedures to promote inclusivity
- hosted an LGBTQIA+ art exhibition for World Pride Month, featuring an eclectic mix of art by LGBTQIA+ artists
- celebrated Trans Day Of Visibility
- celebrated Wear it Purple Day by:
 - encouraging staff to adopt pronouns in their email signature blocks
 - encouraging all CRCS employees to wear purple to demonstrate their commitment to fostering supportive, safe, empowering and inclusive environments for rainbow young people
 - hosting a lunchtime Purple Trivia session
 - working with Social Bean Café to sell purple berry muffins and vanilla cupcakes with purple icing.





Sustainability Working Group

The Sustainability Working Group actively supports and promotes sustainable and responsible practices in delivering our services and supports to the community.

In 2022–23, the group:

- promoted the ACT Container Deposit Scheme to return cans and bottles, including raising \$168.90 towards our Giving Tree appeal and diverting 168g bottles from landfill
- established an employee Buy Nothing group, where programs can list items that are surplus to their needs to repurpose for another program to use
- promoted sustainability workshops being held in our community
- established Lids4Kids Donation Stations at participating sites
- provided employees with tips on being more sustainable at the office and at home
- encouraged employees to celebrate awareness days linked to sustainability, including Earth Hour, National Recycling Week and Plastic Free July.

In a big tick towards one of our Strategic Goals is that, led by the working group, the following sites achieved Business Recycling Program Accreditation:

- Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre
- Belconnen Youth Centre
- Bruce Early Childhood Centre
- Belconnen Chandler Street Office
- Trevor Pearcy House.

Our remaining sites are working through their accreditation process.

2023 Business Clean Up Day

On 28 February 2023, a small but mighty team of employees donned Clean Up Australia vests and gloves and set forth to conquer rubbish around the Belconnen Community Centre and the car park across the road used by many of our employees and participants. Aside from collecting several bags of food wrappers, straws, receipts, drink containers and other rubbish (including a clown's bow tie), the team was sobered by the volume of cigarette butts, with 1460 collected.

After a huge amount of rubbish collecting, sorting, counting and logging, cobwebbing, raking and sweeping, the team celebrated their success with a cup of tea and some sweet treats.

The Business Clean Up Australia Day initiative of Clean Up Australia Day gives businesses the chance to contribute to this wonderful cause while supporting employee engagement and team-building through shared experiences.



Events and fundraisers



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Relay 4 Life

The CRCS Family team participated in the 24-hour Relay For Life event on 1 and 2 April 2023, raising \$3,809 for Cancer Council ACT.

The team had a fantastic time connecting with the community over a common cause: to celebrate survivors and carers, remember loved ones lost and fight cancer. They completed at least 625 laps, which was nearly 250 kilometres!

Some iconic moments included three employees in unicorn onesies and one of the relayers walking while crocheting.

Belconnen Community Centre Open Day



On 16 May 2023, we hosted a free community open day at the Belconnen Community Centre. The day featured a wide range of fun and engaging activities for our community, including:

- Acknowledgment of Country followed by a breathtaking Acknowledgment Dance led by Emma Laverty featuring the talented children from Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre
- children singing
- wheelchair rugby with Canberra Rugby
- playgroups
- social badminton matches
- a local art exhibition
- drumming by our Involve senior social group.

The day was filled with laughter, joy and an overwhelming sense of community spirit. We could not have asked for a better turnout or a greater display of togetherness.

Giving Tree

During the last term of 2022, we promoted our annual Giving Tree appeal to provide hampers filled with gifts and delicious seasonal items to make the holiday season a bit brighter for people in our community who need it the most. The Marketing Team ran a campaign to encourage donations of cash, food and gift items. Funds collected through our can and bottle recycling initiative at various CRCS locations also went towards this important appeal.

Thanks to the generosity of community members and local organisations that supported the appeal in various ways, we collected enough donations for 73 Christmas hampers, which helped to deliver hope and happiness to 171 people.



10/10 Project

Our 10th 10/10 Project was held a bit later than usual due to weather delays. It also looked a bit different as we adapted to COVID-19 guidelines. Despite all the challenges, a fantastic team of 45 volunteers rolled up their sleeves on 8 December and worked together to transform several yards and gardens in our community. The positive outcomes achieved are the hallmark of the 10/10 Project!



Significant differences were made at each of the properties, restoring residents' pride in the yards and gardens they can now safely access again.

We were incredibly proud of the volunteers' hard work and their special interactions with the community. We can't wait to get out there for our 11th 10/10 Project in October 2023!

Hands Across Canberra Appeal

We participated in the annual Hands Across Canberra Giving Day, held this year on 8 March 2023. This is the capital region's largest fundraising drive where, for 48 hours, the first \$5,000 donated to participating charities is matched by Hands Across Canberra.

We ran a great campaign to encourage the community to support our community with a donation. We also participated in challenges by Hands Up For Canberra to win extra cash prizes. One donation had this little message:

*My community, oh how great it can be,
Filled with so much love and positivity.
People from all walks of life, come together as one,
Supporting each other, always flourishing with happiness.
We celebrate our heritage and culture with pride,
With festivals and parades, that we cannot hide.
Our community is unique, one of a kind,
A place where happiness and joy, you'll always find.*

Our early childhood education centres got involved too, holding a coin snake challenge to see which centre could make the longest coin snake. Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre was the winner of the day!

Thanks to the support of the community and employees, we raised \$5,492. These funds will support our community projects, including 10/10 and Giving Tree.

Programs: Education and Care



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Early Childhood Centres

We run four early childhood education and care centres in Belconnen and Bruce. Over the year, we provided education and care to 196 children aged six weeks to five years:

- Belconnen Early Childhood Centre: 52 children
- Bruce Early Childhood Centre: 40 children
- Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre: 44 children
- Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre: 60 children.

Our Bruce Early Childhood Centre was assessed by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) as Exceeding National Quality Standards during the period, joining Belconnen Early Childhood Centre, which received the rating in 2020.



We are proud that our services support children and families from diverse backgrounds and cultures, including many enrolled under the Community Services Directorate's Children's Services Program (CSP) funding due to suffering significant trauma, such as homelessness, domestic abuse, mental ill-health or other life-changing events.

Many children who have experienced this trauma struggle with social skills and emotional intelligence, and are well behind their peers in reaching developmental milestones. Our Educators work hard to ensure they provide effective support that meets the evolving needs of each family.

We also recognise the impacts of such situations on the wider family. Enrolling children in education and care services provides parents and carers who have experienced adversity to implement ways to recover and rebuild their lives. This is complemented by our services' holistic and trauma-informed approach, which emphasises family advocacy and collaboration with community services. We aim to create safe and empowering environments where all family members can flourish and overcome adversity.



Case study: Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre

Located inside our Belconnen Community Centre, Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre has easy access to our wrap-around services and is used by many families with additional needs.

One of our preschoolers, Liam*, lives in a safe house with his mother. He has been enrolled at Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre two days a week since early 2023, under emergency care funded by the CSP.

Over this time, Liam has developed positive and respectful relationships with his Educators and peers. He seeks comfort from his Educators when he feels sad or has misunderstandings with his peers during their play. He also celebrates his achievements when he has finished drawings and paintings, proudly announcing it to his Educators and brother. He shows understanding about friendships, loves imaginative play and enjoys being part of Educator-led group activities, especially baking.

Liam is very independent for his age and demonstrates significant autonomy in his feeding, cleaning and dressing rituals. He also chooses his own activities during free play.

Educators have enjoyed observing Liam's love of painting and drawing, including the fine motor control he is developing in these activities. His gross motor skills are also progressing well, and he enjoys exercises that involve combinations of movements, including confidently climbing on obstacle courses.

We will continue supporting Liam's learning and development through the planning cycle and play-based education, as well as helping his mother, where applicable and appropriate, to ensure Liam's ongoing wellbeing and support.

** Names have been changed to protect individuals.*





Case study: Belconnen Early Childhood Centre

Kate* is a single mother who fled a domestic violence situation with her three-year-old son, Lucas*, and sought refuge at a local women's shelter. Her Case Worker at the shelter applied for emergency childcare for Lucas through CSP funding and was granted three days a week at Belconnen Early Childhood Centre. The centre is renowned for its commitment to fostering a nurturing environment and promoting children's overall wellbeing, so social services often seek it to support families who have experienced trauma.

Acknowledging that both Kate and Lucas needed safety and warmth, the centre's team worked within their philosophy of "It takes a community to raise a child" to determine the best way to nurture both Lucas and Kate through collaboration with the community.

The team took a trauma-informed approach in designing Lucas' care and educational plan. They received specialised trauma-informed practice training from our head clinical psychologist, enabling them to understand and respond to Lucas's needs in a compassionate and empathetic manner. This approach helped create an environment where Lucas felt safe, valued and supported as he navigated the challenges associated with his experiences.

Understanding that Kate was an integral part of Lucas's recovery journey, the team engaged in open and frequent communication with Kate, involving her in decision-making processes and

encouraging her active participation in Lucas's education and development.

The team also forged partnerships with various community services to provide comprehensive support to the family.

After identifying that Lucas's receptive and expressive language was far behind his peers' development, the team leveraged our partnership with the University of Canberra's Good Start in Life project, which gives Early Childhood Educators access to allied health programs, including speech therapists, occupational therapists and nutritionists. We also invited Lucas to join our 'Learning Language and Loving It Program', which we implemented to upskill our Educators in children's language development.

The collaborative efforts of the team, Kate and our community stakeholders yielded strongly positive outcomes. Lucas showed significant improvements in his language development, emotional wellbeing, social skills and overall development. With the centre's support to gain access to the resources and support networks needed to thrive as a single mother, Kate has regained confidence in her parenting abilities and started rebuilding her life.

We are proud to have played a pivotal role in supporting the family's healing process, and continue to focus on providing holistic support to enable families to overcome adversity and build a brighter future.

** Names have been changed to protect individuals.*

These case studies demonstrate our commitment to the ACT Wellbeing Framework's focus on wellbeing for future generations. As noted in the framework:

"Our children and young people are our best expression of the need for wellbeing to be considered over time and in a sustainable way – not just from their personal point of view but so that the environmental, social and economic systems that support the community are themselves sustained."



Case study: Bruce Early Childhood Centre

The dedicated team at our Bruce Early Childhood Centre (Bruce), located on the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) Bruce campus, worked hard over the year to elevate the quality of education and care they provide.

They proactively initiated a thorough review of the centre's Quality Improvement Plan to assess alignment with both the National Quality Framework standards and CRCS's objectives. Through this process, they identified areas for improvement and developed clear goals, strategies and timelines to address gaps. They also established a culture of continuous improvement and reflective practice.

In acknowledgment of the immense value of continuous professional development, CRCS organises frequent training sessions and workshops for all Educators. These are designed to enhance expertise in pedagogical practices and child development and integrate the principles and practices outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework into everyday routines.

The Bruce team actively cultivates and strengthens collaborative partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including other CRCS teams and external organisations, to foster a community-oriented approach to education and care. Through their active engagement with the Early Childhood Education and Care sector at CIT, they participated in regular excursions throughout 2022-23, such as Burrumbah Play Sessions and Library Story Times.



These excursions allow the children at Bruce to explore new experiences, interact with different environments and broaden their understanding of the world. By observing diverse teaching practices during these interactions, our Educators learn and incorporate these insights into their pedagogical approaches. This partnership also benefits CIT, as their teachers and students apply their learning while leading sessions, deepening their understanding of early childhood education.

The Bruce team's unwavering commitment to providing exceptional education and care, dedication to continuous improvement and professional development, and collaborative partnerships resulted in Bruce achieving an Exceeding Rating in the Assessment and Rating process against the National Quality Standards. This achievement establishes the centre as a preferred choice for families seeking high-quality early learning experiences.



School Holiday Program

We operated school holiday programs from our out-of-school-hours care service locations, catering to children from preschool to year six. Our busiest days at each service saw attendance of:

- Charnwood: 33 children
- Florey: 30 children
- Jindabyne: 20 children
- Cooma Public: 18 children
- Cooma North: 13 children.

Out-of-school hours care

Over the 2022–23 financial year, we ran five out-of-school-hours care services in Belconnen and the Snowy Monaro region, providing care to 290 primary school children:

- Charnwood Dunlop School: 85
- Florey Primary School: 93
- Jindabyne Central School: 40
- Cooma Public School: 46
- Cooma North Public School: 26.



Programs: Community Support & Recreation



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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 Community Services Directorate, we host the role of the Belconnen Network Coordinator. The Network Coordinators meet regularly 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 collaboratively working on, ensure collaborative and complementary work programs and support each other's initiatives.

Over the year, the Belconnen Network Coordinator established various new connections across Canberra and built on existing partnerships and collaborations, including:

- working with Roundabout Canberra to engage our Early Education and Care team with Roundabout's winter appeal
- collaborating with Orange Sky and Westfield Belconnen to identify a suitable space for Orange Sky's laundry van to support local homeless or vulnerable community members in the Belconnen region
- being on the Connections Working Group as part of the A Village for Every Child initiative, including planning and growing the Evatt Collective at Evatt Primary and hosting a forum for schools and workers supporting primary school aged children and families
- collaborating with A Village for Every Child, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) and the ACT Community Services Directorate (CSD) to plan and run the inaugural Early Years Community of Practice.
- connecting DeafACT with the CRCS Youth Team to explore ways to support deaf and hard-of-hearing youth in Canberra.
- attending meetings and forums representing a wide range of communities, including:
 - the Youth Housing and Homelessness Forum
 - Joint Pathways group of Specialist Homelessness Services in the ACT
 - Practice Leaders Group for people running programs with CSD's Child, Youth and Family Services Program
 - CRCS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Working Group
 - Meeting of ACT Peaks
 - Multicultural Matters Meeting
 - Network Coordinator Governance Group
 - Northern Region Network
 - Child and Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector Network Planning Day
 - Ginninderry Diwali planning sessions
 - Parenting Peer Support planning session
 - presentations at various schools.

The Network Coordinators also began writing the Network Service Guidelines. They redesigned and ran the Network Coordinator Survey to gather more robust information on the trends that program managers and frontline workers see in the sector and help determine any necessary changes to the Network Coordination program.



Rainbow Reads

In 2022, the Belconnen Network Coordinator identified that LGBTQIA+ young people in the Belconnen region lacked ways to connect in a safe and supportive space. They leveraged connections with A Village for Every Child, Libraries ACT and the Youth Engagement team at CRCS to consider how to address this need and consulted the CRCS Bit Bent program youth program.

Based on this collaboration, they organised an LGBTQIA+ youth book club called Rainbow Reads as a collaboration between CRCS and Libraries ACT. Libraries ACT supplies the venue and a staff member and has committed to growing its young LGBTQIA+ book collection; CRCS provides a staff member and organises young people to attend.

Rainbow Reads was initially held monthly; however, participants quickly required this increase to fortnightly. Over the 2022–23 reporting period, we ran 16 sessions with 63 participants.

The group is an opportunity for young people to come together, discuss books, and widen their opportunities to access the Belconnen Library. It has also formed a tight partnership between the CRCS Youth Engagement Team and Libraries ACT, which led to the launch of the Belconnen Donut Stress Homework Club.

The Belconnen Network Coordinator continues to stay engaged with Rainbow Reads, working closely with both teams to support the partnership.

Community Development

Our community development work aims to foster community-led development of sustainable, empowered and connected communities in the capital region. We endeavour to enrich our neighbourhoods by engaging and supporting those who are best placed to affect meaningful change.

From August to October 2022, we hosted community events in the new suburb of Ginninderry to engage the community and muster residents' enthusiasm to run community outreach forums themselves into the future. Hundreds of people attended these events, which were organised around the themes of sustainability, safety and Diwali.

In September 2022, three staff attended the Love Your Sister Family Fun Day, an outdoor event to safely re-engage with families experiencing health complications or in immunocompromised situations following the impacts of COVID-19. The event provided a range of fun, interactive activities designed to encourage participation and bring joy while also seeking feedback from families, carers and representatives about how our programs and events can better meet the needs of those with ongoing health conditions.





We worked extensively over the first half of 2023 to improve our community development approach and social impact framework through a collaborative partnership with Social Outcomes Lab and Australian Catholic University. This work focused initially on seniors (aged 65+) and people in health crises seeking support through the Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP).

We undertook social impact surveys of seniors participating in our Involve social group and people engaged in our CASP support to help us better understand the experiences of vulnerable communities and improve our services and collaborations.

The surveys found a need for:

- expanded social, health and mental health programs, which we actioned through a revised activity calendar
- better understanding of the barriers to participation, including financial and transport/ accessibility
- a Participant Advisory Group to build ongoing program feedback mechanisms and improvements, which has since commenced.

Our Community Development Officer is an active member of the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) CDNet steering committee and supports facilitating its Community of Practice. They help enhance community development practice across the region by participating in community sector network meetings, such as the Multicultural Matters Meeting, and work closely with Network Coordination.

Over the reporting period, our Community Development Officer has also worked to promote community development within the region and seek residents who can help identify community engagement opportunities. They also supported the establishment of Holt Micro Forest and Scullin Community Group.

They have also enhanced relationships with organisations such as Share the Dignity, Lush and Orange Sky Laundry to create safe spaces, accessible essential items and links to services for people experiencing homelessness.

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

- Defence Member & Family Support
- Transport Canberra and City Services
- Roundabout Canberra
- The Men's Table
- Canberra Environment Centre
- Village for Every Child
- Ginninderry
- SeeChange.





Rugby league partnership

In March 2023, we proudly announced a partnership with Canberra Region Rugby League (CRRL) for its Centenary and 2023 Season Launch celebrations. The Centenary marks an important milestone for rugby league in the region. We were excited to be part of the celebrations and look forward to the next 100 years of the sport.

Over the past century, rugby league has been an integral part of the lives of many Canberrans. The game's growth in the region is a testament to the commitment of clubs and their loyal volunteers.

This partnership is focused on connecting young people in the sport to support services when and if they need them. Throughout the season, CRCS attended events, provided advice regarding player behaviours and upskilled CRRL management about various mental health, youth, social and family support services.



Speaker Series

In June 2023, we ran a series of community information and entertainment events to build knowledge and understanding of topics identified through a community needs analysis. Topics included:

- **6 June: Local History and Culture:** Insights into Canberra's plans to attract huge stage performances (from Gordon Ramsay, CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation) and why finding family military records can sometimes be problematic (by Australian War Memorial librarian Jennie Norberry).
- **15 June: Cyber Security:** How to avoid cyber criminals (featuring cyber expert Andrew Millen and representatives of Care Financial).
- **22 June: Social Connection:** The immeasurable value of friendship and having fun socialising as we enter an age where we have time on our hands, but we don't always know how to spend it (featuring Dr Shamaruh Mirza, scientist, co-founder of SiTara's Story and ACT Local Hero 2023, and Beth Lefevre from our People and Culture team, who is a breast cancer survivor who started the Younger Women's Cancer Support Group).
- **29 June: Health & Wealth:** How living with physical challenges doesn't mean you can't be healthy, wealthy and successful (Canberra Blind Society Eyes for Life mentors Paralympic gold medallist Lindy Hou OAM and Peter Granleese, a campaigner and advocate for better community services), plus some tips on keeping warm while staying energy efficient from St Vincent de Paul's Home Energy Efficiency Program.



Venues

We have a range of community venues used both for our programs and available for hire by external groups. These are located at the Belconnen Community Centre (BCC) and Humpy Hall in Scullin.

Over the reporting period, we reached out to other community groups to establish collaborative ventures to ensure the Belconnen Community Centre is being used to its capacity and supporting the community. Examples of relationships include the Red Cross's work with refugees, Walking Football's support for people with limited mobility and Navitas, which holds English language classes at the BCC.

Meeting Rooms

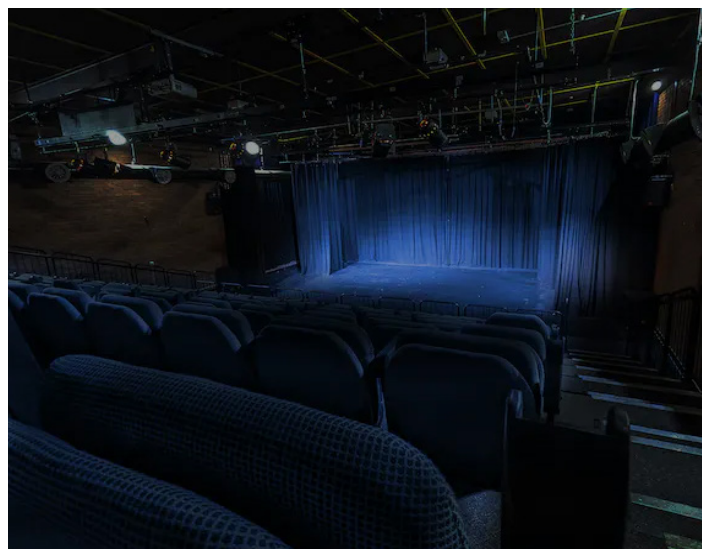
We have two multipurpose Meeting Rooms available for meetings, small functions, discussion groups, or relaxation and gentle exercise classes. Meeting room one was booked 198 times in the reporting period; Meeting room two was booked 364 times.

Sports Hall

Our Sports Hall is equipped for a variety of activities, including badminton, volleyball and half-court basketball. Over 2022–23, the Sports Hall was used 1344 times.

Gym

In our well-equipped gym, we run programs for a range of community members. There were 328 gym bookings in the reporting period.



Belconnen Community Theatre

With no steps to dressing rooms and wheelchair seating, our 145-seat theatre is the most accessible theatre of its kind in Canberra. Over the 2022–23 period, our theatre was used on 138 days by a total of 16 organisations.

Belconnen Community Gallery

The Belconnen Community Gallery is an affordable alternative to commercial galleries focused on providing a balance of amateur, professional, and community-based exhibitions. The Gallery was booked 150 days over the year, with a total of 10 hirers.

Art Room

For creative pursuits, we have a well-appointed Art Room suitable for both wet and dry media. The room was booked 120 times in 2022–23.

Humpy Hall

Located in Scullin, Humpy Hall offers a unique community space that can host a range of activities, groups, meetings, small functions, exercise/dance classes, etc. There were 417 bookings of Humpy Hall in the reporting period.



Mental health awareness exhibit

A new relationship with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) Awareness ACT resulted in a collaborative Mental Health Month ACT/BPD Awareness Week exhibition in the Belconnen Community Centre Gallery. In September and October 2022, BPD Awareness ACT participants exhibited their works inside the gallery, while the CRCS Mental Health Working Group exhibited works outside the gallery and throughout the community centre. The celebration was such a success that they have booked to exhibit again in 2023.



Tiny Tumblers



Tiny Tumblers is an educational gym play program run at the Belconnen Community Centre for children between two and four years old. It encourages children to challenge themselves and explore their physical abilities in a safe environment, developing their confidence and coordination.

Due to the lack of a facilitator, we could not provide Tiny Tumblers for much of the year. However, we still managed to hold 52 Tiny Tumblers sessions, with a total of 336 participants.



Programs: Senior Services



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Home Care Packages

As an approved Home Care Package provider in the ACT and NSW, We provide a range of in-home and social support services that enable people in our community to live independently in their own homes for longer. As of 30 June 2023, we were supporting 51 participants with Home Care Packages.

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

Funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care, CHSP provides entry-level in-home support for older people who need some help to maintain their independence and keep well while still living at home. As of 30 June 2023, we had 411 active CHSP participants, providing support such as domestic assistance, personal care, social support (shopping and social outings), home maintenance and gardening.

One of the most popular elements of our CHSP support is our social group program, including regular outings in the Canberra region and groups held at the Belconnen Community Centre. In 2022-23, we ran 17,316 hours of CHSP social group programs. The most popular included a trip to Bowral, a BBQ lunch and a tram ride to lunch in Civic.





Involve social group

Through our Involve social group for seniors, we offered regular programs focused on wellbeing and social connections throughout 2022–23, including:

- Walkie Talkies (walking trips with options for those who want to walk and those wanting a chat)
- board games
- ukulele and drumming
- art and craft workshops
- Belconnen Energetic Seniors on a Tuesday (BEST) Club, with games, guest speakers, activities, outings and exercise
- language lessons
- book club.

We had over 45 active participants in our social groups.

This includes our social groups to provide connection for seniors still living at home through CHSP.

Case study: Involve making music

In May 2023, there was standing room only at the Raiders Club in Belconnen for drumming and ukulele performed by our amazing Involve senior social group.

The Involve senior social group took its act 'on tour', visiting the BEST Club (Belconnen Energetic Seniors who meet on Tuesdays) for a marvellous morning of music, singing and tea.

Led by our multi-talented program facilitator, drummers concentrated hard on the rhythm but also reflected on the value of socialising at the group meetings and the significant cognitive value of the Involve drumming classes.

Our Involve drummers are available to perform at other community events upon request.



Programs: Disability Support



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NDIS support

We are a registered National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) provider with a well-established, friendly and efficient National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Support Coordination team registered to deliver services in the ACT and NSW.

Our Support Coordinators help NDIS participants coordinate their plans and services, collaborate with external stakeholders, undergo reviews, appeals or reassessments, and make the most of their NDIS plan.

Over the 2022–23 reporting period, our Disability Support team supported 259 people.

Team members attended a range of networking and stakeholder events across the capital region to build connections with the community. They had a particular focus on expanding our services in Goulburn and attended the Goulburn Disability Expo, Goulburn Interagency Forums, and Goulburn Disability Working Group.

Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP)

Throughout 2022–23, we supported 101 participants receiving support through CASP, an ACT Government-funded program that aims to enhance health and wellbeing and facilitate independence and community participation for people aged under 65 years who require home and community support for daily living activities due to a health issue.

Participants access services including home maintenance and gardening, domestic personal care and shopping support, and our Transport services.



Programs: Youth Services



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Our Youth Service provides a range of supports for young people aged 10 to 25, including our Belconnen Youth Centre, case management and a schedule of regular events:

- **BBQ:** a monthly free meal at the Westfield Belconnen Bus Interchange to reach out to young people in the Belconnen area
- **Bit Bent:** a culturally safe, participant-led weekly social group for LGBTQIA+ young people and their allies, offered in two groups: 10 to 17 years and 18 to 25 years
- **Donut Stress:** a weekly homework club for young people aged 12 to 18
- **Dungeons and Dragons:** a weekly fantasy roleplaying game where young people create characters and explore fantasy worlds together
- **Friday Dinners:** a weekly, safe and welcoming drop-in service for young people to come together, enjoy a delicious dinner and make new friends, with youth workers providing a fun and relaxed atmosphere
- **Games Drop in:** a weekly session for young people to play board/card games or use our Nintendo Switch in a casual, social environment
- **Rainbow Reads:** a fortnightly book club for LGBTQIA+ young people and allies aged 10 to 25.

From July to December 2022, Youth Services engaged with 992 young people.

From January to June 2023, Youth Services engaged with approximately 1,320 young people, noting that estimates were made for some larger events.

Of those young people, 26 were engaged with short-term casework (planned support), with concerns primarily related to employment, training and re-engagement in education. The vast majority of young people who actively engaged in short-term planned support demonstrated positive progress towards their goals and needs.

The team provided individual support ('incidental case work') for an additional 88 young people, where our Youth Workers helped young people with specific issues or concerns. Types of support provided included help to research a topic, complete forms, attend appointments or practice a skill, or discussing the young person's concerns. These interactions help young people to feel more open to accessing service support.

In April 2023, we held our Youth Week in the City event, which saw a strong level of engagement from young people and the broader community. This event showcased the vibrant and diverse young talents of the Canberra region.





Case study: Keys to success

Getting your license is a rite of passage for many teenagers and can give an immense feeling of freedom and independence at this crucial age. That's why our Youth Services team partnered with the Road Ready Centre to run Easy P's.

During the reporting period, this program engaged five young people from the Belconnen Youth Centre in free driving skill training by qualified and experienced driving teachers. Participants included single parents and a full-time carer.

Given that this program was launched shortly before the end of the financial year, we look forward to reporting more participants in next year's annual report.

Cody Rousell, a participant in the program, said the opportunity was life-changing. "I 100% would have struggled to ever get my P's without this," he said.



Bungee

The Bungee Youth Resilience Program is a short-term, inclusive early intervention and preventative mental health support program that promotes emotional wellbeing through the arts. Bungee supports children and young people aged five to 18 through small art-based groups (offered via school or community classes) with activities strategically designed to build resilience, enhance wellbeing, promote positive self-esteem, build social connections and cultivate positive emotional health. This is complemented by individual counselling support.



In the 2022–23 reporting period:

- 208 young people engaged in Bungee group programs
- Seven young people and families engaged in individual counselling across 56 sessions.

Programs: Families



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Family Support

We provided case management support to 61 families during 2022–23, consisting of 77 adults and 157 children and young people.

These families identified various goals, including strengthening their mental health, support for disabilities, coping with housing instability, addressing drug and alcohol concerns, and improving their parenting.

There were periods throughout the financial year where we could not provide full services due to staffing limitations, but the Family Support Team adapted their services as required to continue providing these essential supports.

During the reporting period, the Family Support team established regular co-location at Narrabundah Early Childhood School during school terms to build and strengthen accessibility and relationships with the school and community in that region. They also attended several community events, such as Tracks to Reconciliation, primary school BBQs and Neighbour Day events.

The team also provided ongoing support to our Family Education services through regularly co-facilitating playgroups and community groups.

Case study: Family Support

Danielle* is a single mother caring for five children aged between three and 14 years. She moved to Canberra with her children due to safety concerns.

Being a single parent in a new environment, Danielle found it challenging to find and navigate services available for her and the children. Further, the older children were struggling to settle into their school environments as they were experiencing bullying.

Our team helped Danielle organise childcare assistance for three children through the Children Services Program (CSP) and connected the older children to Gugan Gulwan's tutoring and music programs. They helped the family obtain essential furniture, homewares and schooling materials through brokerage and Roundabout Canberra. With Danielle's

consent, our team referred her to Care Financial and helped her to work with ACT Housing to arrange the completion of outstanding maintenance items.

Danielle and her children have now settled within their home environment. All outstanding maintenance has been completed and the home is now appropriately furnished.

By working with our Family Support team, Danielle gained awareness of support services for herself and her children and established the necessary connections. The extended CSP support and the Three-Year-Old Initiative helping Danielle with the younger children. The older children changed schools and settled in well.

** Names have been changed to protect individuals.*



Family Education

Our Family Education team provides educational groups and programs to help strengthen families.

Playgroups

Playgroups provide weekly social support and educational activities for families with children not yet in school. We provide four playgroups each week during school terms:

- Playgroup at Latham Preschool
- Loose Parts Playgroup
- Play sessions in the Park in Holt
- Play sessions in the Park in Ngunnawal.

Over the year, we facilitated 189 playgroups, with around 700 individual families attending overall.

We also co-facilitated the Koori Playgroup in 2022 with the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre.

Case study: Loose parts

Loose Parts is the name given to loose, tactile, moveable materials and everyday objects that enable children and parents/carers to create and recreate their own environments and play experiences. Play that emerges through engagement with these loose parts objects is free of expectation, providing opportunities to create play rather than conduct directed or constrained play, as is common with many toys and resources for children.

Loose Parts Play at Westfield Belconnen was started by The Good Start in Life team at the University of Canberra (UC) with support from our Early Education and Care team. As the project evolved, the Good Start in Life team could not continue being the primary facilitators of Loose Parts, so our Families team took over, with students and supervisors from the UC Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology streams attending to support the families and CRCS.



During the financial year 2022–23, we facilitated 57 Loose Parts Play sessions, including three at John Knight Memorial Park. Over the year, 565 unique families attended, with children aged from 2 months to 11 years old.



Case study: Playgroups

John* is a single father with two daughters, aged two and four. He takes one day a week off work to care for his children.

He started to attend a CRCS playgroup with his daughters. Initially, John would settle his daughters into the group, then spend the time observing them rather than communicating with other parents/carers or engaging in play with his daughters.

The Group Facilitator started engaging with John and gradually invited him to engage with his daughters and others around him. He identified to our facilitator that he struggles with anxiety and can have difficulty socialising and establishing relationships. However, he was bringing his

children to the playgroup as he recognised the benefit of socialisation for their development.

Over time, John started communicating and participating with other parents/carers at the playgroup and has built social connections. His confidence in socialising and building relationships has visibly increased. John has stated that he now looks forward to the weekly playgroup as it is excellent for his children to play with others and makes him feel like part of a community.

** Names have been changed to protect individuals.*

Community groups

We co-facilitate three community groups with the Belconnen Child and Family Centre:

- **Yurwan-Gulwan – Koori Girls:** a group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls aged eight to 16 years old to come together and explore their connection with culture in a culturally safe and supported environment
- **Young Parent's Group:** social support and playgroup for parents aged under 25 years and their children, providing fun and educational weekly activities
- **Yurwang Bullarn Strong Women's Group:** a program designed to bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in a safe and welcoming environment, facilitated in partnership with West Belconnen Child and Family Centre.

Psychoeducation groups

Family Education also provides five to seven psychoeducation groups each term, independently or with local child and family centres. These cover:

- **Circle of Security:** an eight-week parenting program designed to strengthen the attachment and security between parents and children up to the age of ten years
- **Tuning in to Kids:** teaching parents how to help their child develop emotional intelligence.

Over the 2022–23 year, we facilitated 23 psychoeducation groups with 126 attendees.



Healthy Habits

The team also runs Healthy Habits. These eight-week programs each term support parents and carers to develop healthy habits for their children aged up to two years, focusing on developmental needs.

This group is facilitated at schools in suburbs in the Belconnen area identified in a national study as requiring additional support for children's development before school age. Being facilitated in schools allows children and parents/carers to establish relationships with the schools before children begin school.

Over the year, 23 families engaged with the Healthy Habits program.



New developments

During this period, the Families team established a memorandum of understanding with the University of Canberra's Good Start in Life Project to establish free Occupational Therapy services for two of Family Education's playgroups during school terms.

They also began establishing an agreement with the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre (WBCFC), where the Family Education team co-facilitates psychoeducational and community groups.

Case study: Family Education

Beth* is 37 and has two sons, aged four and six. She indicated that she experiences anxiety issues.

Beth engaged with our Family Education team and requested help to increase her parenting capacities, communication and attachment with her children.

During an intake meeting, Beth mentioned that her older son has sensory and anxiety issues and sometimes refuses to attend school. Although she always tries to be emotionally and physically available for her children, Beth stated that she sometimes cannot understand her son's behaviour. She expressed a strong desire to learn new tools and techniques to be the best parent she can, as she feels vulnerable and

upset when she has a difficult time with her children.

The Family Education team introduced Beth to our Circle of Security course to enhance the quality of her caregiving relationship with her children and support her to recognise and respond to their attachment needs. During the eight-week program, Beth realised she had ignored sensory sensitivities when her son was young. Upon completion, she now knows how to help and support her son, and expressed that she has learned a number of new parenting strategies to help form secure attachments with her children.

** Names have been changed to protect individuals.*



Family Foundations

Family Foundations is an early intervention therapeutic program that promotes strong, secure and healthy relationships between children aged up to five years and their parents/carers. The intensity of support provided varies based on the complexity of issues for each family. Families receive an average of approximately 1.5 hours of direct engagement each week, not including preparation or administrative requirements.

Early in the period, we offered online-only services due to COVID-19 restrictions. This limited the number of participants as some families chose to wait for in-person services.

During the reporting period, we supported 27 families, including 52 children. The vast majority of families who exited the service in this period noted that Family Foundations had increased their awareness of their parenting and their parenting capability.

Family Foundations started facilitating Circle of Security for seven families referred by the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation & Advocacy (CAHMA). They also provided ongoing support to our Family Education services, regularly co-facilitating playgroups and community groups, and began working on ways to actively offer their services within our early childhood centres by developing a wrap-around service for our families.

Case study: Family Foundations

A single mother in her late 20s with two young children, Jessica* was living in supported accommodation after leaving a controlling relationship.

Jessica identified that she was struggling and had limited support. She reported a history of mental ill-health, and noted that her daughter was displaying behaviours that Jessica found challenging, putting pressure on the relationship.

Jessica reported struggling to engage with services in the past as she had felt judged and insecure about her parenting abilities. However, she reached out to Family Foundations for help to better understand her daughter's behaviour and to develop and implement routines for her family.

Our Family Foundations team worked with Jessica to understand her existing routines and household rules, then developed reminders and positive activities to help embed them and build positive connections and attachment. They also supported Jessica to increase

her knowledge of child development, emotion coaching, strategies to support her children, why children may exhibit certain behaviours and other parenting skills.

For Jessica, the team looked at ways she could incorporate self-care into her routines, reviewed her support needs. They helped her develop self-advocacy and calming skills.

Jessica completed the Family Foundations program and implemented routines that were successful for the family. She encouraged the children's father to implement similar routines and strategies to provide consistency for her children.

Jessica noted that Family Foundations had helped her better understand her parenting experiences. This had supported her growth as a parent and enabled her to implement new skills and understand and support her children's emotions.

** Names have been changed to protect individuals.*



Supportive Tenancy Service

The Supportive Tenancy Service (STS) is a consortium of Capital Region Community Services, Woden Community Services and YWCA Canberra. It is jointly funded by the ACT and Australian Governments under the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

This consortium provides support, advocacy and referral for people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or living in unsatisfactory housing. We use a strengths-based approach in a trauma-informed and person-centred framework to bring about positive outcomes for our participants.

Over the 2022–23 year, the service assisted 100 people across the three consortium members.

Case study: Supportive Tenancy Service

Fred* is in his 80s and has past trauma and resultant physical and mental health challenges that had led to long-term hoarding and squalor, putting his tenancy at risk. These issues were compounded by social isolation, as Fred had no family and his only support service was the Older Person's Mental Health Team.

In addition, multiple services had refused to provide services due to Fred's temperament.

STS supported Fred to access a care package through My Aged Care and organised ongoing services to help clean and remove unwanted items and clutter from his property.

Fred responded positively to his STS Case Worker, who worked with his aged care provider and community service property owner to support his tenancy. They attended Fred's home twice a week to help him improve his property condition. The Case Worker's ability to tolerate Fred's

temperament enabled them to re-engage other services at his property.

They also provided Fred with information on emergency and mental health crisis services and arranged fortnightly appointments with services to check on his progress and support needs.

During this period, Fred continued to struggle with his mental and physical health. STS had to contact emergency services numerous times to ensure his safety, following Fred's contacting them as one of his few avenues of support when unwell.

However, over time, Fred's mental health improved to the point that the Older Person's Mental Health team was able to withdraw their service. The housing provider has reported ongoing improvement in the state of the property, and Fred's tenancy is no longer at risk.

**Names have been changed to protect individuals.*

Programs: Therapeutic Services



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Over the 2022–23 year, we took stock of the counselling and psychology services provided through our Wellbeings program. We realised that, to meet the needs of our community, we needed to change our focus from being a purely mental health approach to providing a combination of mental and allied health services.

Throughout the year, we considered how best to implement the revised program, including developing connections with services and programs across the region to allow us to provide the best quality care possible. We also determined the necessary skills to provide these services and recruited a multidisciplinary team.

We are pleased to have launched a revised Therapeutic Services program in July 2023. This holistic service provides support and advice on every step to help adults, children and young people to improve their mental health and wellbeing. We look forward to providing more information on the outcomes of this change in the next annual report.

Early Autism Education

Early Autism Education (EAE) is an early developmental program for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), related conditions and general learning delays that builds on each child's strengths and interests to develop skills for life.

Our in-home or clinic-based sessions use teaching strategies tailored to each child's style of processing information. We focus on speech, communication, cognitive, play and social skills to enable children to engage in everyday life activities, education and social settings.

In 2022–23, we provided Early Autism Education to 20 participants, including five new participants. At the end of the period, we had 11 active participants.

This support constituted 3078 hours of services.

In the coming financial year, we plan to expand our EAE service offering in response to demand, with:

- parent education groups
- centre-based small-group education sessions
- structured social groups
- support training for people working in the education sector.



Testimonial from an EAE participant parent:

"We are so incredibly grateful to have [CRCS's EAE Senior Supervisory Educator] Fiona's highly skilled therapeutic assistance for our daughter. Fiona has been an integral part of our daughter's team for nearly three years now and we would be lost without her. Our daughter has grown tremendously with Fiona's support [through the EAE program].

Fiona's approach continues to transform to meet the changing needs of our daughter. She has a beautiful connection with our little one, and is the best of both worlds—highly skilled and deeply caring."



Cool Kids Anxiety Program

The team also continues to deliver Cool Kids, a program that is heavily inclusive of parents and seeks to increase parent/carer capacity to support children experiencing anxiety.

Cool Kids Anxiety Program is a structured, 10-session program that teaches children and their parents how to better manage a child's anxiety. The program is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and involves the participation of children and parents. It focuses on teaching practical skills, with topics including:

- learning about anxiety
- learning to think realistically
- parenting and anxious children
- facing fears using 'step ladders'
- learning coping skills such as assertiveness and problem-solving.

We facilitated four program sessions of Cool Kids during the reporting period, with a total of 23 children attending.

Programs: Transport



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Transportation can be a significant barrier for seniors and people living with disability, and we are committed to providing safe, reliable, and convenient transportation services to those who need it most. We also provide transport to help connect our communities.

In 2022-23, we provided over 26,000 passenger trips, over the following programs:

- Home Care Package (HCP)
- Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP)
- Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- Community Bus for people who are ageing, recovering from a medical episode or living with disability.



This supported 770 participants, with our Transport team travelling 363,293 kilometres.

The Transport team provided these services with the generous help of many volunteers from our community, without whom this service would not be possible. Over the year, volunteers travelled 42,338 kilometres and delivered 1,842 hours of transport support.

After obtaining our new 45-seater coach in May 2022, we were pleased to run a wide range of excursions, including:

- taking children in our out-of-school-hours care services to Hoyts, Inflatable World Kambah, the Australian National Botanical Gardens and Cockington Green
- day trips to events like the Sydney Royal Easter Show, the Bowral Tulip Time Festival, the Brigadoon Highland Gathering in Bundanoon
- visiting local sights, including the Cowra Japanese Gardens, private gardens across the Monaro High Country, Yarrangobilly Caves in the Snowy Mountains, Tulip Top Gardens in Sutton and the Nan Tien Temple in Wollongong
- food-lover experiences, including wineries and chocolate in Murrumbateman, a cooking class in Kangaroo Valley and cherry-picking in Young
- trips to the theatre to see Kinky Boots in Parramatta and Cinderella at the Lyric Theatre in Sydney
- a three-day tour of the NSW south coast.

The coach was also hired for various events, including a wedding!



Case study: Cherry picking

In December 2022, members of our Involve seniors group took part in our day trip to Young, which included a visit to the Ballinaclash fruit orchard, cellar door and farm gate shop. The knowledgeable staff from the family-run orchard taught participants the skill of cherry picking.

We were lucky to have a beautiful, sunny day for our trip, and the participants had a wonderful time picking cherries to take home while bonding and laughing together.



Grants

We received funding from five grant programs over the 2022–23 financial year.

Paddy's Park Play Days

The ACT Government's Suburban Land Agency granted \$16,880.37 to work with Ginninderry, a joint venture between Riverview Projects and the Suburban Land Agency, on Paddys Park Play Days. Inspired by the 'play outside movement', these events encouraged locals to leave their screens and head outside into shared spaces to connect with their neighbours and community. They aimed to foster a creative economy by spotlighting local talents, promoting intergenerational interactions, embracing multiculturalism and encouraging local empowerment.

We were involved in three Paddy's Park Play Days during the financial year. They were the perfect opportunity for residents to come together with their community and enjoy the outdoors over fun activities and entertainment, with a particular focus on sustainability.



Children and Young People Wellbeing Recovery Initiative: Bungee in Cooma

In December 2022, the Department of Regional NSW initiated a grant targeting the wellbeing of children and youth in regional NSW. The objective was to aid their recovery from present challenges and bolster their resilience for future adversities.

We worked with Monaro Family Support Services (MFSS), Cooma Public School and Cooma North Public School to develop a proposal to extend our Bungee program to their communities. Bungee is an inclusive program that builds resilience through the arts while fostering emotional wellbeing and social connections. It operates within a small, secure and supportive group set-up, with professional artists and support workers at its core. Workshops are thoughtfully designed, catering to participants' skill levels, needs and interests.

With the generous grant of \$35,000, we are set to empower MFSS staff to deliver every aspect of the Bungee program. This includes training, quality assurance and pilot program evaluation in Cooma. This marks an exciting leap toward bringing the remarkable Bungee program to the Cooma region.



Community Engagement Grants Round 4: Dementia training

We received a Community Engagement Grant of \$9,191.90 from Dementia Australia. This initiative supports projects that contribute to a more inclusive community for individuals living with dementia.

This funding will enable our employees who provide support services for individuals living with dementia to participate in Dementia Australia's acclaimed training course. By equipping our team with advanced knowledge and skills, we aim to further elevate our performance in providing exceptional support to individuals affected by dementia.

Community Support and Infrastructure Grant: Defibrillators

We secured \$8,000 through the Community Support and Infrastructure Grant (CSIG) program run by the ACT Government's Community Services Directorate (CSD) to purchase four portable defibrillators and essential accessories. This has enhanced our medical readiness and transport program capabilities, and is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to community safety.

Cardiac arrest affects thousands of Australians annually, with survival rates outside hospitals being dishearteningly low. Quick defibrillation within the crucial initial minutes significantly increases the chances of survival. The pandemic further heightened heart-related deaths across age groups, making the need for proactive measures evident.

Canberra Foundations Collaborative: Psychological Assessment Suite Upgrade

The Canberra Foundations Collaborative, a collaborative effort between the local community and philanthropic foundations (Hands Across Canberra, the Snow Foundation and the John James Foundation), provided funding to enable us to upgrade our psychological assessment suites.

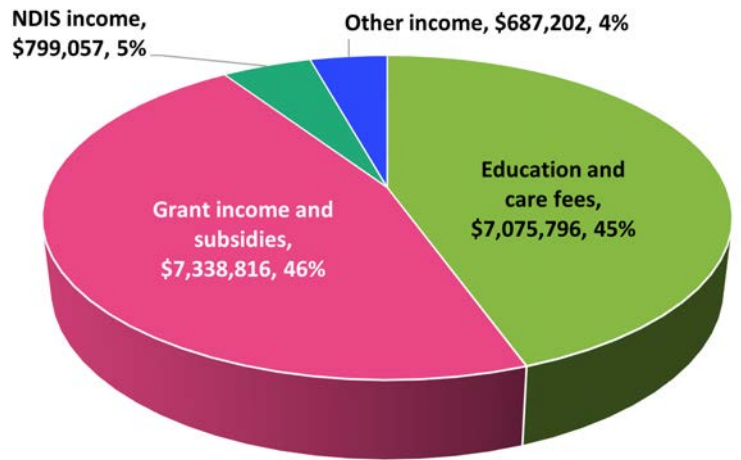
The dire situation in youth mental health services in Canberra has been widely acknowledged, with prolonged waitlists leaving many young people in distress. This issue is further compounded for those grappling with neurodevelopmental disorders, who face many barriers ranging from societal stigmatisation to geographical and financial limitations. These barriers hinder access to the appropriate health and diagnostic services they need.

Thanks to a grant of \$27,762.73 from the Canberra Foundations Collaborative, we hope to help address these shortcomings by acquiring essential psychological assessment tools to facilitate formal diagnoses related to ADHD, ASD and learning disorders. By reducing the financial burden, these diagnostic assessments become more accessible to vulnerable community members, ultimately decreasing waitlists and improving community health and wellbeing.

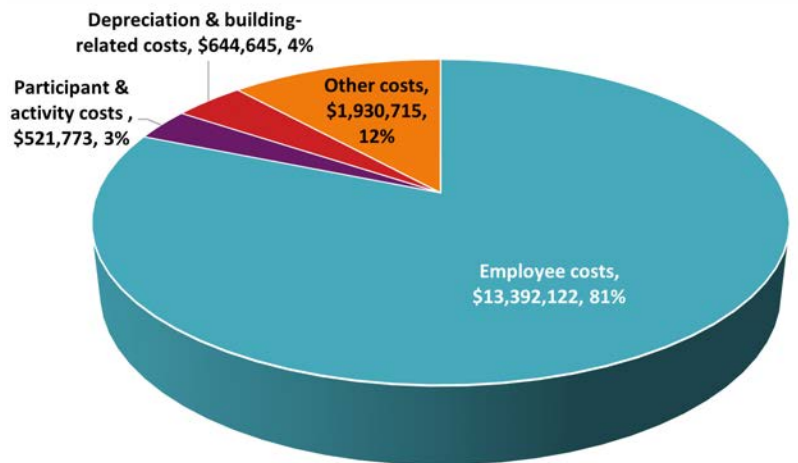


Financials at a glance

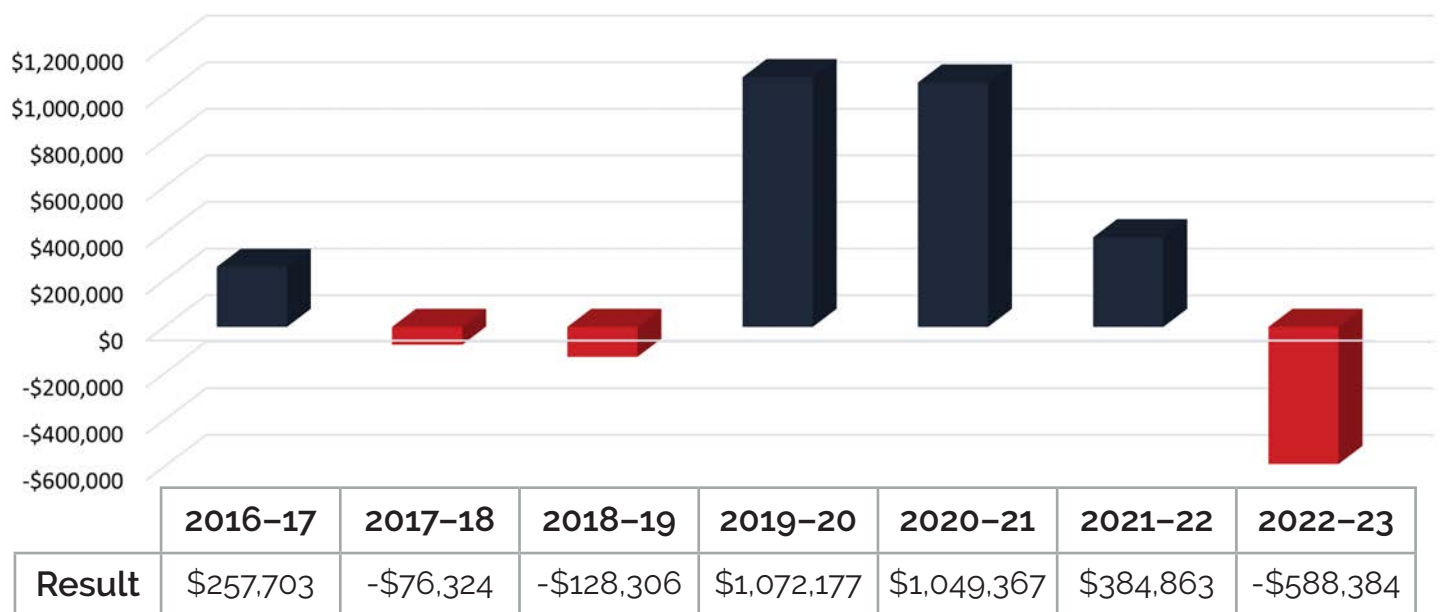
Income sources



Expenditure



Financial results 2017-23





Accreditations and audits

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 2023. 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.

QIP Accreditation

We 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.



NDIS

We undertook our NDIS mid-term audit in November 2022. In December, our certification was maintained against the NDIS Practice Standards.

Secure Local Jobs

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

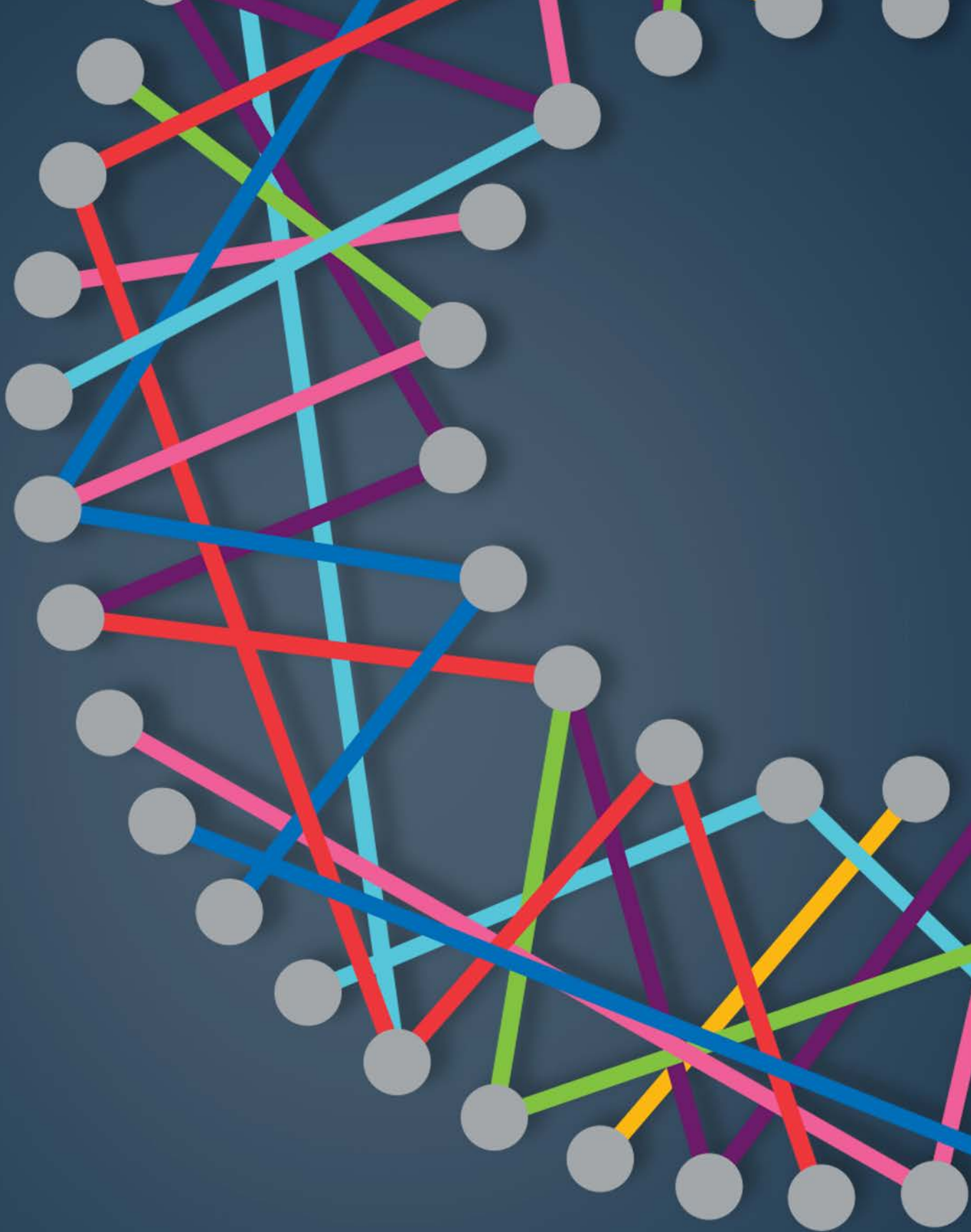
With thanks

We acknowledge the contributions of like-minded organisations, schools, businesses, governments community members who have enabled our achievements in 2022–23.

- A Gender Agenda
- A Village for Every Child
- ACT Education Directorate
- ACT Health
- ACT Housing
- ACT Skip Hire
- ACTCOSS
- Alderman
- Alzheimers Australia
- Argyle Housing
- Australia Catholic University
- Australian Childhood Foundation
- Australian Federal Police
- Belconnen Child and Family Centre
- Baringa Early Learning
- BPD Awareness ACT
- Braidwood Public School
- Budding Theatre



- Bunnings Belconnen
- Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation & Advocacy
- Canberra Blind Society
- Canberra Environment Centre
- Canberra Festival Ballet
- Canberra Health Service
- Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT)
- Canberra Raiders
- Canberra Region Rugby League (CRRL)
- Canberra Seed Savers Coop
- Cancer Council
- Care Financial
- Charnwood Dunlop School
- Child Players
- Child Youth Protection Services
- Children's First Alliance
- Comms@Work
- Commonwealth Bank of Australia
- Community Services #1
- Community Services Directorate
- Cooma North School
- Cooma Public School
- Cultural Facilities Corporation
- Cut Price Skips
- DeafACT
- Defence Member & Family Support
- Dementia Australia
- Department of Health and Aged Care
- Department of Regional NSW
- Department of Social Services
- Doris Women's Refuge
- Drama Stars Academy
- Early Years Community of Practice
- Empress Eyrie
- Families ACT
- Florey Primary School
- For Purpose
- Ghawazee Moon Bellydance
- Ginninderry
- Green Oak Theatre
- Gugan Gulwan
- Gumnut Dance
- Gundaroo Public School
- Hands Across Canberra
- Ickle Pickle Productions
- Insane Championship Wrestling
- Karinya House
- Kennards Hire Belconnen
- Kingston Reid
- KPMG
- Legal Aid
- Lush
- Men's Sheds
- Meridian
- Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services (MARSS)
- Monaro Family Support Services
- Narrabundah Early Childhood School
- Navitas English Language group
- North Canberra Hospital / Calvary Hospital
- Northside Community Service
- OPC IT
- Orange Sky
- Perform Australia
- Perinatal WellBeing Centre
- Queanbeyan Players
- Radford College
- Radford Junior School
- Red Cross
- Roundabout Canberra
- RSL Life Care
- SeeChange
- Sentinel Apartments
- Share the Dignity
- SiTara's Story
- Smith Family
- Social Outcomes Lab
- Sophie Edwards Choir
- St Vincent DePaul
- Stockland Ridgecrest Village
- Suburban Land Agency
- Tempo Theatre
- The Men's Table
- Toora Domestic Violence
- Transport Canberra and City Services
- Uniting Care Kippax
- University of Canberra Good Start in Life Project
- Villagio Sant' Antonio
- Volunteering ACT
- Walking Football
- Water Wombats
- West Belconnen Child and Family Centre
- Westfield Belconnen
- Woden Community Service
- Women's Legal Centre
- Youth Coalition
- YWCA Canberra



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