

2021
Annual Report



Capital Region Community Services acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the ACT region - the Ngunnawal People. We pay respect to the Elders of the Ngunnawal Nation, past, present and emerging, and acknowledge their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this city and this region. CRCS acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, waters, and the community.

Love oddisey by Margy Duke

'Love drives humanity. On this journey a swirling of fullness is the landscape we travel upon and through. As a moth is drawn to a flame, we as humans are drawn to LOVE.'

Our Vision

Inclusive, connected communities within the Capital Region

Our Purpose

Empowering people to live their best life through building and connecting communities; delivering relevant, person-centred services; and providing choice and opportunity.

Our Values

Respect: we are considerate and thoughtful towards ourselves and others

Optimism: we are positive, resilient and flexible

Inclusion: we welcome diversity and celebrate difference

Ethics: we are ethical and transparent in our operations

Accountability: we are responsible and accountable for our actions

Innovation: we celebrate and incorporate creativity in all of our services relevant, person-centred services; and providing choice and opportunity.

Contents

Message from our Chair.....06
Message from our CEO.....10
Treasurer's Report.....14
About CRCS.....18
Statistical Snapshot.....20
Our People - The CRCS Family.....22
Strategic Working Groups.....30
Stories from our Centres, Programs & Community.....34
Thanks & Recognition.....58







Message from our Chair

Peter Henss



The last two years have seen unprecedented change across the communities CRCS serves. At times it has felt as though our worlds have contracted due to the ever-present threat of COVID-19 and lockdowns; whilst simultaneously expanding as we have embraced technologies to connect to others through our work, personal lives and ultimately in serving our growing and evolving communities. One constant is that Community and people have remained at the very heart of the work CRCS does and has been at the forefront of every person's mind as we have navigated the past year.

In the 2019-2020 Annual Report, the Chair (Chris Ermacora) highlighted the launch of the 10-year Strategic Plan and how it contained "clear goals and solid performance indicators". On that point I firstly want to acknowledge Chris for his leadership as Chair during that period. Chris subsequently stepped aside as Chair to meet other commitments thus requiring a vote to fill several vacant positions on the board. Secondly, I am pleased to report that the performance against this strategic plan is progressing very well indeed with this Annual Report providing an opportunity for reflection. CRCS is in a very strong fiscal position and has been in a position to invest in new office accommodation at Bruce with occupancy taken up in the second half of 2020.

CRCS responded positively to community needs over the past year by utilising our resources and playing an active role in supporting 'Ken Behrens' in need, but also expanding our reach to support the Capital Region as a whole. Sadly, we know that there will be continued hardship ahead for many people as communities continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic for the foreseeable future. CRCS remains unwavering in its commitment to support those in need by providing access to high quality supports and services. With this in mind, this past year CRCS laid the foundation to support our community to navigate available services and supports in times of crisis with the new CRCS Connect Team, new transport options and many new and exciting opportunities to deliver quality connected services.

On behalf of the Board of CRCS, it has been a pleasure to see CRCS work with local, state and commonwealth governments and other community sector organisations to grow supports available in communities within the ACT and Goulburn-Mulwaree, Yass Valley, Queanbeyan-Palerang, Hilltops, Bega, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Snowy Valleys, Eurobodalla, Wingecarribee and Upper Lachlan shires.

We are proud that CRCS has supported people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures over the past year and we are particu-larly excited to witness our expansion to include new and exciting opportunities and loca-tions.

As a company limited by guarantee and with an ever expanding remit, it is important to maintain a skills-based Board to support the embedded planning, accountability and evaluation systems of the organisation. Several Board members uplifted their skillsets by completing the Australian Institute of Company Directors Company Directors Course further enhancing the Board's ability to contribute to the Strategic Goals of CRCS within a strong governance and risk framework that is aligned with best practice. I particularly want to call out the Board's Research and Innovation and Governance Sub-Committees, who continue to do the heavy lifting to support the Board with decisive and informed decision-making.

I also extend my thanks to my Board colleagues for their dedication, commitment and professionalism throughout the past year. Their extensive experience, knowledge and collective wisdom has helped to consolidate CRCS's strategic goals and lay the foundation for a dynamic and exciting year ahead. I would also like to thank the contributions of Loi Lam and Vanessa Gale who resigned from the board this period to take up new and exciting professional and personal opportunities.

Additionally, I would like to welcome new board members, Catherine McCarthy who has a strong legal and governance background and comes from the Goulburn community; and Mike Pamphilon who has strong family ties to CRCS through BCS and has extensive experience working with organisations to enhance business practices and technological systems to benefit both employees and participants. Thank you all again.



Albert Einstein famously said "in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity". Certainly, the ongoing challenges within our global and regional environment have provided CRCS with many opportunities over the past year to grow, evolve and make a difference in the lives of the communities and people we serve. The ability to rise to the challenge, embrace and lead change is in no small part to the CRCS family consisting of employees and volunteers who contribute to this work and the leadership provided by our CEO, Mandy Green and the Executive Team comprised of Karyn Ferraris, Jenelle Tinham and Allison Sullings. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your individual and collective contributions. We recognise that even in the midst of your own individual turbulence that the pandemic has brought, you have steadfastly, passionately and whole-heartedly remained focussed on our participants, our community and our organisation. We look forward to continuing the honourable work as a Board over the coming year and continuing to support the excellent work being undertaken by CRCS in our communities.

Peter Henss
Chair

Message from our CEO

Mandy Green



It is with great pleasure that I present our 2020/2021 Annual Report.
I recently had the opportunity to read through our organisations Annual Reports for the past 20 years. What struck me is the consistent requirement to respond to change year after year and each Executive Director/CEO Report over this period has highlighted this in their opening paragraph. This reporting period is very much in line with the change theme which I see is a strength of this organisation. I celebrated 12 years of employment with CRCS on 1 July 2020 and I have never seen CRCS more pro-active and responsive. Our Vision, Purpose and Values have never been more evident in our people and the alignment of our work with our Strategic Plan has never been so distinct and purposeful. It hasn't been an easy year but it certainly has been an honour to lead CRCS through this reporting period and that is entirely because of our dedicated and amazing employees, volunteers, Board and community.

Like 19/20, this reporting year CRCS continued to navigate the uncertainty and risks associated with Covid-19. Notwithstanding that, CRCS has made some significant inroads in engaging and connecting with communities within the Capital Region. CRCS opened an office at 110 Auburn Street in Goulburn and established a play group, Tiny Tumblers and Home Care Packages as well as significant community engagement activities.



CRCS has been working with the Yass community in collaboration with Gininderry, Yass Valley Council, Zacs Place, Anglicare, Headspace, BEC and schools to support young people within the community. CRCS have been working with key stakeholders in the Braidwood region and thanks to this collaborative work, CRCS will be supporting the Braidwood Central School with our Bungee Youth Resilience Program in Term 1 2022.

Our commitment to high quality services was evident in the successful NDIS Quality and Safeguards Audit which saw commendable outcomes achieved by our NDIS Support Coordination Team and key support areas from across the organisation. CRCS also began the journey towards QIC Standards Accreditation against the QIC Health and Community Services Standards which we aim to achieve in early 2022.

CRCS again shone in our innovation and collaboration capabilities within this reporting period. The innovative and collaborative work that has been undertaken is significant which is an achievement during a time of lockdowns and uncertainty. Throughout this reporting period CRCS has continued to work with the Children's First Alliance, Regional CEO's Network, act as Community Co-Chair of the CYFSP Directors Forum, STS Governance and many other collaborative forums. CRCS also became a key community partner with the Canberra Relief Network (CRN) and oversaw the Connect Centre for the CRN. In addition, CRCS was appointed as the Financial Delegate and member of the CRN Governance Group.

CRCS also became a provider of the ACT Governments three-year-old preschool initiative, joined the University of Canberra's "A Good Start in Life" project and partnered with the Australian Catholic University to provide placements for students studying Social Work. CRCS is also a partner with Uniting Care Kippax and other stakeholders within the "Village for Every Child" social impact project. An exciting collaboration for CRCS was to work with Her Kitchen Table (HKT) to successfully receive a grant to install a commercial kitchen within the Belconnen Community Centre to support the food artists of HKT and the wider community. The kitchen will be completed in early 2022.



CRCS have seen a significant investment in IT and implementation of systems within this reporting year. It was an exciting achievement to have implemented ELMO Payroll in May 2021 along with Xero Finance, Turnpoint for our aged care and NDIS Services and ELMO HR which will come on board in the 21/22 reporting period.

In August 2020, CRCS made the very sad decision to cease operating our NDIS Groups programs. This had a significant impact on the participants of the groups, our employees and the community. It was an incredibly sad time for CRCS.

The two major factors which impacted on CRCS and forced this decision to be made were the changes to the NDIS Price Guide which removed the support items that CRCS were using to provide groups for participants and the ongoing limitations, concerns and unpredictability in relation to COVID-19.

CRCS were also extremely sad to lose the St. Matthews Outside School Hours Care Program which CRCS had been operating for over 12 years. CRCS was invited to tender for the program and was unsuccessful in our bid to continue to operate this program.

CRCS have made a commitment to improving the services and experiences of our community, people who access our services and our employees and volunteers. To assist us in our commitment, CRCS have established Strategic Working Groups to improve our organisational competence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultural diversity and inclusion, LGBTIQ+ people and our environmental footprint and sustainability.



In closing, I would like to thank the employees and volunteers of CRCS who make our organisation exceptional – without you CRCS does not exist. A huge thank you to the Board for their excellent governance and support to me and CRCS. Thank you to the Executive Team who are passionate about CRCS and work very hard to ensure we achieve our Vision, Purpose and Strategic goals. Finally, I would like to finish by celebrating the 2020 CRCS All Star Award winners. (See page 25)

Mandy Green
CEO

Treasurers Report

Carolyn McPherson



It is my absolute pleasure as Treasurer of Capital Region Community Services (CRCS) to present the 2020 - 2021 annual accounts to our members.

2020 - 2021 has been yet another extraordinary year for CRCS with COVID-19 continuing to present us with both opportunities and challenges. Our people, participants and families were faced with even more difficult circumstances relating to COVID-19 and their resilience and adaptability was evident in the united response to the operational challenges that an exposure to COVID-19 presents – quarantine, isolation and safety – all while maintaining a sense of connectedness. I would like to acknowledge our CEO, CFO, and the Executive Team for their direction, their ongoing support to the organisation, their employees, their participants and all their families.

The organisation recorded a surplus for 2020-2021 of $1,049,367, a small decrease from the profit of $1,072,177 recorded in 2019-2020. Income for the year increased by approximately 16% while expenditure increased by 18%.

The reported surplus would not have been possible without CRCS being eligible for the continued Commonwealth Government Job Keeper initiative in the first quarter of 2020-2021. The financial support from Job Keeper provided CRCS with increased financial stability during the peak of the COVID-19 event and enabled our programs and services to continue to operate and it provided a degree of security for our people.

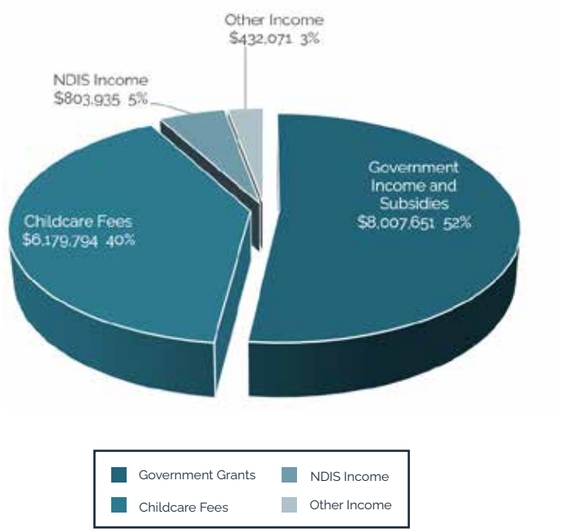
The key financial management challenge in the coming year for the Board and Management will be to build on the efforts of recent years and continue to grow and develop our services through identifying and capitalising on opportunities as they arise, properly supporting the needs of our people and investing in our infrastructure to ensure it can meet the needs of our communities.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the CEO, Mandy Green, CFO Karyn Ferraris, the Executive Leadership Team, Board Chair Peter Henss and my colleagues on the CRCS Board.

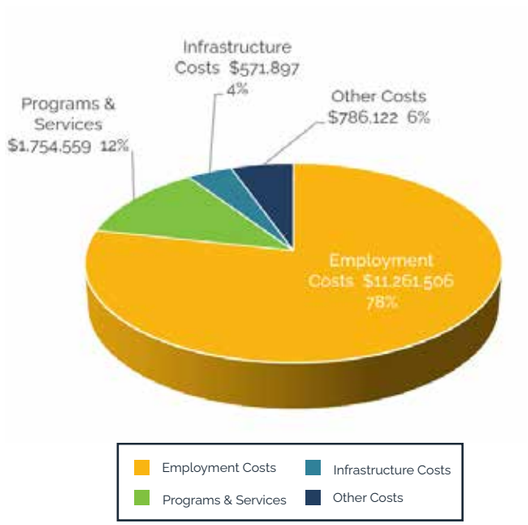
Carolyn McPherson
Treasurer

Financials at a Glance

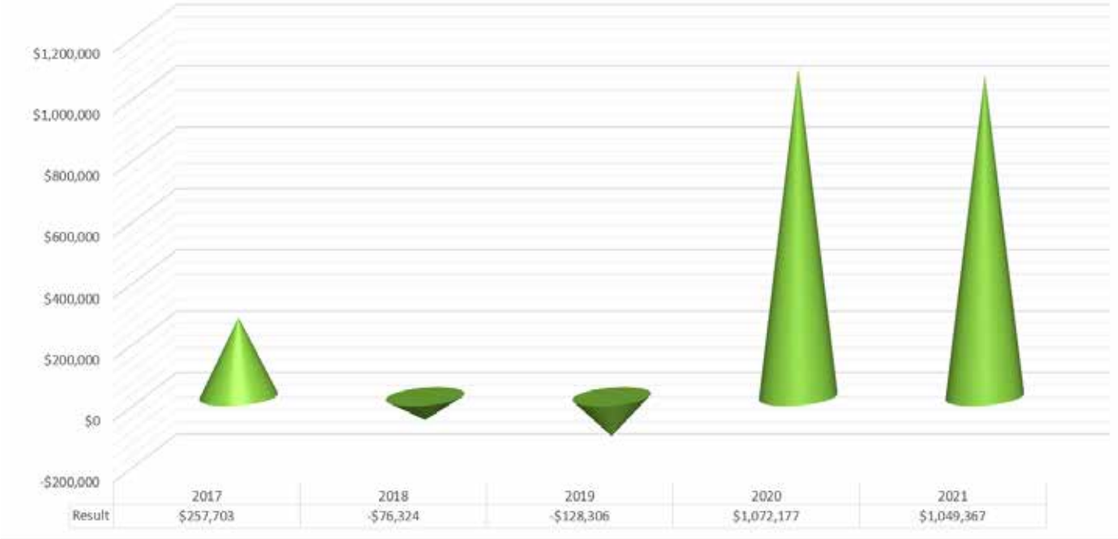
Income Sources 2020- 2021



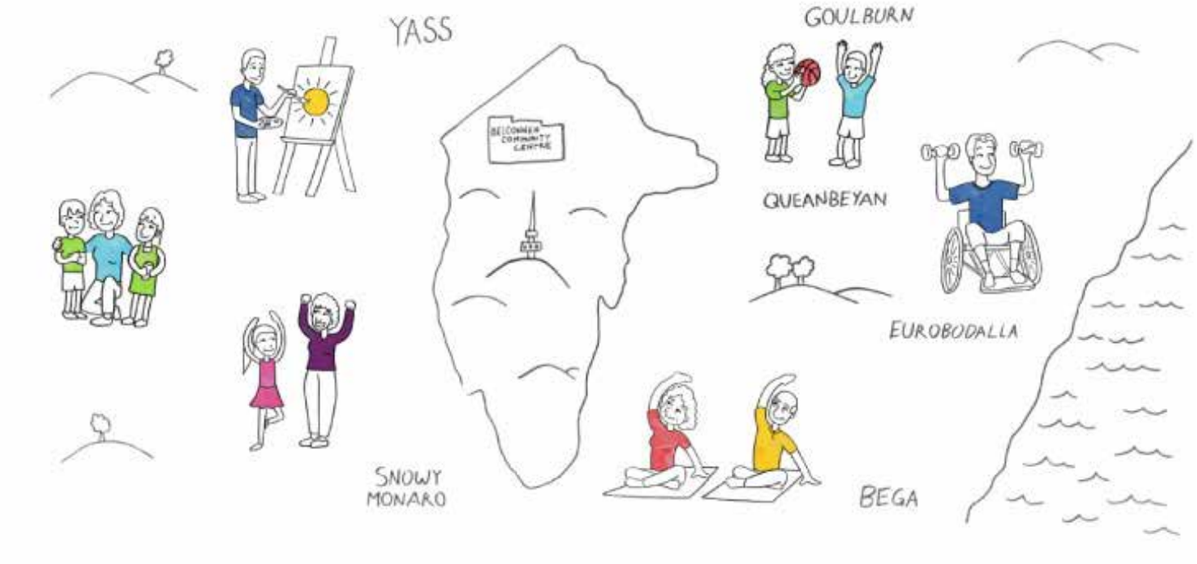
Expenditure 2020-2021



Financial Results 2017-2021



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Result	$257,703	-$76,324	-$128,306	$1,072,177	$1,049,367



About CRCS

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.

CRCS works 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.

CRCS Strategic Intent 2020 - 2030

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.

Statistical Snapshot

In the year 2020-2021 Capital Region Community Services Provided:

1,153 Hours
Of Personal Care

7,870 Hours
Of CHSP Social Group Programs

4,604 Hours
Of Domestic Assistance

288 Hours
Of Flexible Respite



4,166 Hours
Of Social Support

2,507 Hours
Of Home Maintenance

1,115 Hours
Community Care Case Management

26,207
Passanger Trips Provided

478 Children
Received care and education at our Early Childhood Centres.

BECC	Bruce	BRECC	GECC
100 Children	116 Children	143 Children	119 Children

2,089 Participant Engagement
In Youth Programs

233 Participants
NDIS Support Connection Program

381 Children
Were part of our After School Care Program

Florey	Charnwood
209 Children	172 Children

324,397 Km Travelled
That's being 8.09 times around the world

Our People

The CRCS Family



What makes CRCS so special is the professionalism and quality of our people.

Our employees and volunteers at CRCS are very different and special in their own way, but what they all have in common is their work ethic, their values, and their genuine care for the community. Without their hard work and dedication, CRCS wouldn't be able to deliver its high quality programs and services and be recognised as a leader in the community service provider sector.

Our people is what we are most proud about, and we are forever grateful for our CRCS Family. To all of them we want to say:

Thank you!

All Star Awards

The All Star Awards is an annual prize-giving event which recognises exceptional employees and their contribution to CRCS. The awards themes are based on CRCS's core values, with special recognition awards from the executive team. Congrats to our CRCS family members who won the 2020 All Star Awards in 2020!

Respect
Katyani Pandey

Inclusion
Graham McKerchar and Ronny Kareni

Optimism
Masia Ermacora

Accountability
Yolanda Ayala Rivas

Ethics
Melissa Gryglewski

Leadership
Livia Simao Pitz

Inspiring Volunteers
Adelle Thompson

Executive Award Recipients:

- *Julie Gorell*
- *Masia Ermacora*
- *Mathew Hall*
- *Lauren Kapper*
- *Ingrid Brito*
- *Skyla McClellan*

Funny Awards:

- ***Walking Wikipedia:*** *Nicole Warren*
- ***Rookie of the Year:*** *Lyne Bowman*
- ***Bright Light:*** *Brianna Johnson*
- ***Buzz Lightyear:*** *Mathew Hall*
- ***McGyver:*** *Felicity Henss*
- ***Songbird:*** *Sarah Helmers*
- ***Kookaburra:*** *Waleed*

I’m proud to be part of the CRCS Family because...

“I’m proud to be part of the CRCS Family because I have developed strong friendships that I will take with me for my whole life.”

“I'm proud to be part of the CRCS family because you give me a big chance to be working with children and I love that and also working with very nice people.”

“I’m proud to be part of the CRCS Family because every single person I’ve met here is genuinely committed to empowering people and strengthening communities.”

“CRCS is full of amazing, wonderful, caring people and I really do believe everyone should be proud to be a part of this amazing family.”



“I’m proud to be part of the CRCS Family because my team is supportive and positive to make little changes in early years education every day.”



“I'm proud to be a part of the CRCS Family because it gives me an opportunity to learn and grow not only as a professional but as a person too.”

“I’m proud of our culture at CRCS and the unique talents that every person brings with them to contribute to the meaningful work we do. Every person is respected, valued and appreciated which makes it a truly great place to work.”

What I like the most about CRCS is...

“ What I like the most about CRCS is a supportive environment at BRECC.”



“ What I like the most about CRCS is the community that surrounds it. The people I've met through work are some of the most wonderful, kind, caring and fun people in the world.”



“What I like the most about CRCS is that the saying “family is made of blood relatives” has been proven time and time again not to be the case. The CRCS Family is my family. They are caring, supportive and compassionate towards me as an employee, I love my CRCS family.”



“Our positive attitude and genuine care, respect and support for each other. ”

“Working at CRCS gives me opportunity to support positive outcomes in children’s learning. ”

“What I like the most about CRCS is that the work we do every day contributes to making the world a better place for everyone. ”

“What I like most about CRCS is the way we support our community.”

Our Volunteers

CRCS incorporates volunteers in many of its programs and also its policies, procedures and guidelines. At CRCS we often refer to volunteers as unpaid employees as we view our volunteers' contributions, performance development, supervision and work experience as integral to all the work we undertake. CRCS recognises the considerable and unique contribution that volunteers make to CRCS participants and the community. Thank you for your gift – you make a difference in the lives of people every day!



Meet Ann

Ann has been providing admin support with us for over 5 years. CRCS is only one of the multiple organisations where she volunteers her time to assist her community.

Currently, Ann works at one of our offices once a week and what she most cherishes about her volunteering experience at CRCS is being able to assist the elderly in our community with practical support that enhances their lives.

Thanks Ann for your wonderful work at CRCS!



Meet Neil

Neil joined CRCS as a volunteer for the transport program 6 months ago. He was looking to spend some of his free time giving back to his community, and one of his closest friends who is also a CRCS employee recommended him to join the CRCS Family.

Neil helps our participants once a week with their transportation needs. He takes them to and from medical appointments, recreational activities, shopping and more. He says the past 6 months with CRCS have been an incredibly positive experience and he feels very good to be able to help people within the community and even had the opportunity to chat to them. We are so lucky to have a volunteer like Neil!



Meet Adelle

Our super-amazing CRCS volunteer and family member
There's no questioning how popular Adelle is at Ginninderra Early Childhood Centre (GECC); the children are naturally drawn to her no matter where she goes!

It's all fine with Adelle "I love the children here!" she says.
One child in particular has developed a very strong connection with Adelle and is more than happy to spend all day in her arms. Adelle in turn, shows so much love and affection to her and the other children in her care. This is one of the many reasons she won the Exceptional Volunteer Award at the CRCS All-Star awards last year.

CRCS Strategic Working Groups

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



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

This year the group shared a range of free training resources offered by specialist community services and organised an Australian Citizenship Day exhibition at the Belconnen Community Gallery for employees to exhibit meaningful items and stories from their culture. They also supported employees' Harmony Day celebrations, and filmed a blind taste testing of diverse foods to mark International Day of Tolerance to remind everyone that our differences are worth celebrating.



Additionally, the group created and shared a video for International Mother Language Day where CRCS employees described what speaking their mother language meant to them, and shared their knowledge and wisdom with employees to help CRCS to not only support diversity, but to wholeheartedly celebrate it!



The Rainbow Working Group helps ensure CRCS is a safe and welcoming place for LGBTIQA+ community members.

This year the group registered all CRCS locations with the 'Welcome Here' initiative, marked Transgender Day of Visibility by installing transgender flag stickers on the Community Centre bathroom doors, and supported employees and volunteers to understand acronyms and key definitions,

They also encouraged employees to participate in the international Wear it Purple Day movement, shared articles and LGBITQ+ resources, reviewed and informed CRCS policies and documents, amended employees onboarding questions to be more inclusive.



The group celebrated Canberra's SpringOUT pride festival, shared tips for supporting LGBTIQ+ people during the holiday period, and answered individual questions to help people feel better equipped to have conversations and offer support, both at work and at home.

The group also raised funds and started conversations with employees by selling rainbow lanyards for International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia & Transphobia (IDAHOBIT). The lanyards are a highly visible reminder of CRCS's commitment to supporting diversity and have received many compliments from participants and staff alike.

The Sustainability Working Group ensures that CRCS is employing and promoting sustainable, responsible practices at all times.



In 2020/21 the group started the process of creating a Sustainability Policy for CRCS, supported teams participating in community events to ensure branded merchandise and activities were as sustainable as possible, arranged for all printers to automatically print double-sided and black and white, supported the installation of LED lighting across sites, implemented strategies to make it easier for unwanted items and office furniture to be repurposed between programs and supported the implementation of a new electronic HR and Payroll system which is estimated to have reduced the printing of close to 100 reams of paper over 6 months!

The group has also supported some sites to implement sustainable practices to achieve ACTSmart accreditation and measure the amount of waste recycled and sent to landfill. This information will be audited to increase sustainable practices over time and help every CRCS site achieve accreditation.

Capital Region Community Services

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Committee (formally the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group) underwent a name change this year to truly reflect the group's purpose.



Whilst the RAP will remain a guiding document, the group's purpose extends further into embedding cultural competency within the organisation and the wider Capital Region. The group participated in many meaningful conversations, both internally and externally, to reflect and gain a genuine understanding of the ways CRCS can proactively contribute to reconciliation.



The group also developed a CRCS Self-Assessment Tool, which will be distributed to the organisation in early 2022.

This tool will provide CRCS with valuable information on our current cultural competency strengths and ensure we progress our areas of opportunity.

CRCS Stories

From our Centres, Programs, and Community

Bruce Ridge ECC's First Year



Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre (BRECC) settled into its second year of operation under Capital Region Community Service in April 2021. Reflecting on our first year brings back many memories of delightful moments of children exploring, learning, interacting and having fun. Important as these moments are, especially given our provision of quality education and care, it reminds me greatly about how resilient our children, families and community have been through an uncertain and tumultuous pandemic. Our parent community at BRECC represents many facets of the Canberra workforce including high percentage of frontline workplaces; hospital, medical support professions and emergency services to name a few, this is impactful context that guides our pedagogy and practices.

Providing a safe and secure environment for children to flourish, learn and enjoy is paramount, and our introductions to our learning spaces have come after reflections about our philosophy and pedagogies alongside family, children and the community context. We have spent time painting the internal walls, purchasing resources and implementing routines and rituals to the learning spaces to provide a more natural, open ended and aesthetically inviting environment that aligns to our beliefs and vision of quality education and care. A successful ACT Government grant application has enabled us to introduce a community garden. This garden provides opportunities for the development of knowledge of gardening and the perspectives of our local Aboriginal culture through hands on experience and intergenerational connections and learning.



Our orientation process, pedagogical documentation and our strong communication provides the basis for partnerships with our families and children. Providing families with the reassurance that their child is thriving and enjoying their day of exploration and learning with educators to support, nuture and facilitate their needs. This in turn supports families to fully engage in their workday assured that their child is nurtured, learning and having fun. BRECC Educators are acutely aware and genuinely emotive about the achievements, celebrations, challenges and hardships families face (whether personal, child, work or pandemic related) in a respectful and responsive manner. Having these partnerships with families provides the opportunity to be there for their community with individualised interactions, support, encouragement, resilience building strategies and appreciation.

With this in mind, we have had COVID-19 safe initiatives to show our appreciation and keep connected, including introducing yoga and meditation, chalk messages out the front of our centre, thank you cards and artwork, muffins and coffee, activity packs, zoom meetings, videos of experiences to do at home, and educator introductions.

Timmy The Turtle

Well! I don't know about you, but it has been a big year for my friends and I at Bruce Early Childhood Centre! Not only have I done my usual hard work as our official tour guide and customer service professional, I've launched my career as a social media superstar, and had the opportunity to meet lots of wonderful new faces, as new families and educators have joined us here. I've seen lots of new babies, which is very exciting, as you know I love getting out and meeting people! As an Eastern Long-Necked Turtle, we have the reputation for not being very social, and to that I say, HELLOOOOOO, have you met me?

Being as social as I am, I've enjoyed the changes we've made at Bruce: lots of Storypark posts means more opportunities to get my face out there, as well as to let families know about all that their children are learning in our classrooms, and have the chance to get some incredible feedback that the educators can use to enrich their curriculums. We've added some incredible new resources, although the toy turtles will always be my favourites. You definitely need somebody else in your social posts, but I don't want to cause FOMO for any actual turtles out there – and the children and educators have had some really great ideas about keeping our rooms fresh and interesting to look at, as well as warm and welcoming to spend time in.

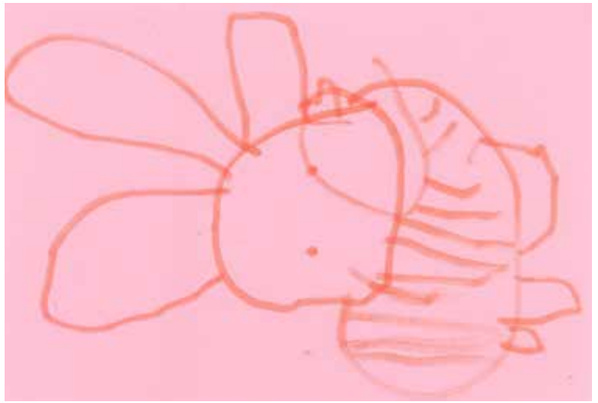


Lockdown meant I couldn't see the grown-ups every morning and afternoon, but the children didn't let me down, visiting me during the day to make sure I get my turtle veggies and other food, keeping my tank topped up so I stay warm and comfortable, and of course, filling all of our needs to get a little social now and then! The children also helped each other during our online storytime sessions each afternoon, greeting their friends at home through the computer screen and sharing their favourite stories. We know that it has been a really difficult time for everybody, but by staying together as a community we have worked to keep everybody's social needs met and to make sure that we stay in touch with the people (and turtles!) who mean so much to us.

We really look forward to seeing what 2022 brings our little community, and to see what new changes improve and enrich our lives and learning at Bruce!

Timmy the Turtle xx





Eilidh from Bruce ECC who is 3 years old, provided a professional portrait of Timmy for the Annual Report

Goulburn Playgroup and Tiny Tumblers

2021 saw the commencement of CRCS's First playgroup and Tiny Tumblers sessions commence outside of the ACT into the Capital Region.



Whilst the playgroups were a little slow with enrolments and attendance they grew to support around 32 families and children.

Playgroups were held at Seiffert Oval a beautiful space allowing children and families to have access to parks and open spaces.

Tiny Tumblers were held at the Veolia Arena with an indoor sports facility providing opportunities for children to develop their gross motor and social skills. We have made a strong partnership with Mulwaree Council in Goulburn, who have provided us with these facilities and have been amazing to work with.

These programs offered families and caregivers the opportunity to meet new people and share ideas and experiences and fosters a sense of community spirit. For children these programs allow them develop skills and play and learn in a stimulating environment.

One of the parents commented: "Fantastic position for the Playgroup, back off the road and ease of access parking".

Connect & Grow Playgroup Returns

CRCS have been delivering a Playgroup under the Connect and Grow model since March 2020. COVID-19 placed the Playgroup in hiatus until March 2021. BECC's Director Ruth Connor played an instrumental part in the setting up of the Playgroup in 2021, engaging with our partners at Westfield Belconnen during this time.

Our partners at Westfield Belconnen have been truly amazing in assisting us in set up and loan of equipment and allowing us a designated space to store our resources for ease of access. Ruth met with our partners at the University of Canberra to develop a program that would provide the children and families opportunities to engage in activities and information around: Hygiene, Nutrition, Physical Skills, Identity and emotions, self-protection, Multiple Languages, Preschool Readiness and Play skills.

The curriculum developed embraced opportunities for children from 0-5 to explore the themes by intentionally interacting with educators and resources, involving children and families in conversations around the themes.

The Playgroup has grown and developed over time with a regular attendance of over 30 families per week. It is so rewarding to see this program provide families from all backgrounds the opportunity to connect with children and families that are quite often in isolation.



One of the participant dads said: "This playgroup is amazing, I just discovered this as I was walking past."

Yass Youth Program Pilot

As part our commitment to engage and connect with communities across the Capital Region, CRCS took on the lead agency role of the Yass Youth Working Group.

The group consists of representatives from local council, governmental departments and a range of community focussed organisations who share the common goal of better supporting young people living in Yass.

After gathering feedback from young people in the area, "The Hangout" at Zac's Place was piloted to provide a designated space for the town's young people to hangout and access youth work supports one afternoon a month. There were no other supports like this in Yass and young people eagerly took up the opportunity and enjoyed free food, music and activities. The Hangout also had a number of special guests, including the local police, eager to create positive relationships with the town's youth.

With the pilot deemed a huge success, CRCS and the Yass Youth Working Group are now looking to secure funding to grow the project and further support young people in the Yass community.





Bit Bent - LGTBIQ+ social group

In August of 2020 the Bit Bent program celebrated its 18th year. The program has this year adapted to moving online, offline and then back again. It has split from one program to two. As this has occurred the people have remained resilient, enthusiastic and creative throughout this change.



The Bit Bent team were excited to launch a new calendar concept in 2021 which included a new skills-share component. To our delight, with leadership and courage a number of young people volunteered excellent ideas and dove in to give it a go. With support from the youth team, they successfully prepared for, and delivered, small workshops which included skills such as the art of crochet and flower crown-making, and the delivery of a live vocal performance.



Through collaborative event and excursion offerings participants also had the opportunity to engage creatively with LGBTQIA+ friendly services. Here they played games, created costumes, and spoke with Meridian, ACT Health, A Gender Agenda, Guy Alias (Drag King), and Lifeline.

Bit Bent lent their skills and knowledge in makeup design, Dungeons and Dragons, earring production and new crochet skills, to Belconnen Youth Centre's Young Person Feature, a monthly video celebrating and promoting Belconnen Youth Centre's participants on Facebook.

Mingle - Community Development

This year, CRCS continued to work with the Suburban Land Agency's 'Mingle' program, which supports residents of new Canberra suburbs to shape and build their local community. As part of this partnership, a CRCS employee works directly within the Mingle North program to offer community development support and outreach in the suburbs of Throsby and Taylor.

"The Suburban Land Agency's Mingle program engages a Community Development Officer to work with residents in Mingle communities and assist them in establishing activities and initiatives, as well as maintaining relationships with key stakeholders." –Zoe, Mingle Suburban Land Agency.

This year the program has delivered resident catch ups, coffee pop ups in the park, sustainability presentations, free morning fitness classes, gardening videos, park naming celebrations, children's activities, summer safety sessions, creative Halloween activities, suburb newsletters, community picnics, festive celebrations and countless opportunities for residents to come together and connect.

"Collaboration between community services and government agencies are a crucial relationship for providing the community with opportunities to access the social sector's resources; both through allowing community services to produce high quality, engaging programs, as well as providing additional resident engagement opportunities through the community development officer." Ryan, CRCS Mingle Community Development Officer.









Involve- Social Groups for Seniors

The Involve group started early in February this year from a small foundation of previous year's participants. Since then it has grown to over one hundred participants that stretch from Kingston to Woden. When asked why seniors want to travel to Belconnen to join the day trips, the answer was that Involve has such a wide variety of activities. This year we started our fortnightly day trips with a wonderful cruise on Lake Burleigh Griffen where 28 participants enjoyed a historical commentary of the features by the lake and were able to meet new people. The group have been for picnics to Tidbinbilla, Nara Peace Park, and a long adventurous day by train to Goulburn and returned by Coach.

Our walking group on a Monday are very popular. Transport is available for our participants to the various walking tracks around Canberra and the walk finishes with a luncheon. The feedback we have had from our participants acknowledges the thoughtful planning we put into our programs. We continually hear that the participants enjoy meeting such nice people in the group and do not feel so lonely since they have joined the group. Our ukulele, mahjong and crochet and knit groups are also popular and draw a diverse multicultural section of our community.

We have now been providing online activities, including games, trivia, ukulele, arts and crochet and cuppa and Chat sessions in the afternoons.

"I just wanted to say that I think you are all doing an amazing job, under the current difficult circumstances. While my mum isn't tech savvy and she is unable to join you for these online events, I was so impressed how quickly you started rolling these out to your community to help keep them connected to each other as well as yourselves. It's these interesting and varied events that give people something to look forward to each week, especially those feeling isolated and lonely. Well done! Your hard work has not gone unnoticed. Regards Trish."

"Just to say big thank you for the lovely trip yesterday with the Involve Group. It is a team like yours that brings so much joy to older group like ours, again thank you and have good weekend. Best regards Juan."





Canberra Relief Network

The Canberra Relief Network (CRN) started as a result of COVID-19 which left many organisations struggling to find food on already bare shelves to support their vulnerable people. It was made up of many community services that banded together to support the communities in the ACT. CRCS was one of the participant partners of this initiative and Masia, our Aged Care and NDIS Program Manager, was assigned to set up and run the connect centre for the CRN - A call centre that connected people in need with the different distribution centres across Canberra.

Masia had previous experience working in a call centre which came in handy, so she and a group of CRCS employees who were also redeployed to support this project, set up the call centre, created the scripts to communicate with participants and operated the program for several months. They were the first point of contact for so many families and individuals experiencing financial distress and food insecurity who desperately needed help. The objective was to address people's basic needs and provide wrap around support - not only with pantry staples, but also connecting people with different services available in the region.

For Masia, the Canberra Relief Network was more than just about food. It was about assisting the community in the way that they needed, whatever that meant in each case. The Connect Centre had supporting conversations with the people who reached out, and many times provided emotional support to the people who needed it.





Masia says the CRN was an unique experience and it was ver inspiring to see the community coming together to support each other. She thinks it also helped CRCS to strengthen relationships with the community.

Her main takeaway from being part of the CRN is that "there is always a way".

The CRN was as beneficial for participants as it was for the employees and volunteers who were part of this program. Benji, one of the CRCS employees assigned said: "I believe it has been a drastic change for all of us and I wish to help see people through this difficult time. This situation is one that must bring us as a community together, not pull us apart."

Know Your Neighbour Campaign

Last year CRCS began our Know Your Neighbour Facebook campaign, where we showcased small local businesses working hard to serve the Canberra community in the aftermath of our first COVID-19 lockdown. Our campaign then focused on individual Belconnen residents who shared all the reasons they love living in their local area. We finished the year by highlighting the numerous not-for-profit organisations, community services and charities that never fail to support the Canberra community when times are tough.

In 2021, we continued our campaign by focusing on the many different sports and hobby clubs and associations that Canberra has to offer. We learned all about the ways Blind Cricket ACT celebrates diversity, how Tennis Canberra turned a club into a genuine community, the exciting things that Brindabella Bushwalking Club find on their walks, how Scouts Australia (ACT Branch) has evolved over the decades and how our very own CRCS English Conversation Group has helped participants to grow their confidence and make new connections.

In celebration of Volunteer Week, CRCS highlighted some everyday heroes who volunteer their time, energy, effort and skills while asking for nothing in return. The volunteers we spoke to dedicated their time to help with things like gardening, bike-mending, tutoring, cooking, exercising and even maintaining the history of Australia's heritage transport!





Members of Blind Cricket ACT, enjoying the team camaraderie



Graeme volunteers at The Recyclery Canberra, the Early Morning Centre in Action and the Learning Centre Bungarra in Jindabyne



Chrissie, Volunteer at the Acton Community Garden

Goulburn Show

CRCS had the opportunity to be represented at the Goulburn Show on March 2021. Our attendance was an initiative that forms part of our Strategic Goal of "Engaging and Connecting with Communities within the Capital Region".

Several CRCS employees volunteered their time and time to prepare for and attend our site at the exhibition. An enormous amount of effort went into the preparations and CRCS was beautifully presented.

We had the opportunity to promote the great work we do here including Tiny Tumblers, playgroups, NDIS Support Coordination and Home Care Packages. Our time at the Goulburn Show was incredibly productive in building awareness of our presence in the community and we engaged with over 200 people. Some of the discussions with the community highlighted that our presence is both needed and welcome. A few people who engaged with us at the show contacted us to participate on our Play Groups and Tiny Tumblers at Goulburn.

Thanks team for going above and beyond for CRCS!





Polished Man

In October 2020, CRCS joined the Polished Man movement as part of our continued commitment to promoting family connections and children's safety. The Polished Man campaign aims to end violence against children and raises funds to support trauma prevention and trauma recovery programs for children who are at risk of, or who have suffered violence.

To show our support, CRCS employees painted one fingernail on each hand blue to start a conversation about the campaign and direct people to the dedicated CRCS fundraising page.



Harmony Week







This year, Harmony Week was celebrated across CRCS in very creative ways! Different teams organised lunches to celebrate our diversity and discussed what belonging means to them.

"As a person that has travelled the world, I embrace people of different cultures and backgrounds and gladly ask them to share their traditions with me. It is definitely what makes a community so diverse and interesting. Everyone is treated as an equal, treated with respect, and acknowledged for their diverse differences. That is what creates a community, that sense of belonging to something more than just ourselves!", said one of our team members.

Young toddlers at Bruce Ridge Early Childhood walked together using paint on paper to celebrate and recognise that we are a united community full of many different cultures. Children at Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre spent Harmony week building on their knowledge and acceptance of themselves and others. The Bungee after school class also collaborated to create a beautiful artwork with an important message for Harmony Day.

At CRCS we are very proud of our cultural diversity and loved being able to celebrate it together with the theme 'Everyone Belongs'.

Wear It Purple Day

National Wear It purple day is a very important celebration at CRCS as we deeply believe in the importance of recognising and cherishing the LGBTIQA+ youth, and showing them that they have the right to be proud of who they are.

On Wear It Purple Day 2020, our CRCS family once again came together in solidarity of the rainbow youth. With the theme "We Are The Change" focussing on the role of encouragement and emphasis on creating effective change, shades of purple filled the CRCS corridors, making a statement.

The group picture proved we make a good-looking team!



CRCS Goulburn Office Opens

As CRCS moves on the strategic direction of developing services across the Capital Region, it was clear that Goulburn would be a perfect place to open our first office outside of the ACT.

Goulburn is a city well placed to provide a hub for CRCS services and has a wealth of opportunity for CRCS to provide services or to collaborate with existing providers to offer new and complimentary services. In December the hunt began for an affordable yet high profile location ideally in the main commercial precinct of the city.

The space at 110 Auburn Street was identified but needed much modernising and some additional love. CRCS commenced occupancy in mid-January this year. Nothing is too much trouble for the team at CRCS so a few working bees were held to revamp the space. After much hard work and comraderie - Voila!! A great transformation! The space is now perfect and some services and employees are now operating from there. Tiny Tumblers and Playgroup operate sessions weekly and have a great following already.

A key part of the new connection to Goulburn was to contact and meet with other key stakeholders so a series of meetings were held with Goulburn Mulwaree Council, the local members and many of the existing providers. CRCS now has solid representation on the local interagency networks, and the local Chamber of Commerce.

In March CRCS operated a stall at the local Goulburn Show and made a positive impact. The first half of 2021 saw CRCS take a clear and present place in the community of Goulburn and is already seen and respected as a quality service provider. It is already clear that CRCS will hold a key role in keeping Goulburn an inclusive and connected community into the future.









THANK YOU!

To all our Community, Government and Business Partners that have supported CRCS throughout the year.



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