



community
firststep
Creating Opportunities

community
firststep
Creating Opportunities

50
YEARS

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Community First Step acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as the Traditional Owners of the land we work and live on and promote the continuation of their cultural and spiritual practices. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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VISION AND PURPOSE

Our vision is Communities in South Western Sydney have equal opportunities to thrive in their lives and livelihoods.

Our purpose is to empower the community in South West Sydney to overcome social and economic disadvantage by identifying community need and supporting sustainable capacity building.



VALUES

We foster...



OUR STRATEGY



PERSON CENTRED CARE

Aim: High quality integrated, individualised services and supports that improve possibilities.

Outcome: Individual needs and wishes of our clients are met now and anticipated into the future.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Aim: Enabling and engaging our people to make a positive impact.

Outcome: A skilled, informed and engaged workforce meeting the needs of our consumers underpinned by contemporary best practice.



MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY IMPACT AND ENGAGEMENT

Aim: Community First Step is a central player in South West Sydney's connected and thriving ecosystem.

Outcome: We are created by our community for our community, we are supported and embedded in South West Sydney, known as a leader in our field.



QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE

Aim: A lean, fit, robust and well governed organisation.

Outcome: Programs that are financially sustainable and high quality underpinned by a culture of continuous improvement.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In the first half of this year, I had the privilege of working closely with the Community First Step management team while the board undertook a search for a new CEO. It is a testimony to the dedication and professionalism of this group, that the transition occurred smoothly without interruption to services. I would particularly like to acknowledge the tremendous work of Usha Rao who stepped up as acting CEO to lead the team, Mark Webb who stepped in as Chair to enable me to take on additional duties, and the CFS Board for their insightful guidance through this period.

The compassion, talent and collaborative spirit of our people was recognised through various external awards in 2022: South Western Sydney Local Health District recognised CFS as a key partner in addressing needs arising during the pandemic; and one of our own, Heath Harris, was selected as the NSW Emerging Youth Worker of the Year as part of the NSW Youth Work Awards.



In January 2023, CFS was thrilled to appoint Professor Pandora Patterson to the position of CEO. Pandora has an impressive track record of service in the charitable sector as well as a strong research background making her the perfect candidate to progress the next stage of our strategy.

As the COVID-19 crisis de-escalates, CFS will continue working to keep the contribution and needs of the Fairfield and South West Sydney communities uppermost in the minds of policy makers, funders and business groups.

The Board has commissioned a study into the Social Impact of CFS' community services and will be using the results in the coming year to develop a new strategic plan to ensure our services remain responsive to the changing needs of our community. To this end the team are focusing on stakeholder consultation, further environmental analysis, and careful stewardship of valuable resources, both financial and physical.

As the COVID-19 crisis de-escalates, CFS will continue working to keep the contribution and needs of the Fairfield and South West Sydney communities uppermost in the minds of policy makers, funders and business groups. We welcome collaboration and involvement of like-minded individuals and groups.

Helen Wilson

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I am delighted to have commenced in my role as CEO during Community First Step's 50th Anniversary and to celebrate our remarkable history of positively impacting outcomes for the people of Fairfield and South West Sydney. The Creating Opportunities for 50 years section in this report speaks of our innovative beginnings that we have continued to build on and strengthen.

During this past financial year, we have continued to not only positively impact the lives of the community members we work with, but also the broader systems. The role of place-based organisations has never been so important in driving equitable change and I am proud of the way CFS has advocated for our community. We contributed to initiatives such as the inquiry into the cost of living pressures; providing input into the NDIS review outlining client and systemic challenges we have encountered with the program; and partnering in the development of the South Western Sydney Local Health District's Multicultural Partnership Strategy.

This annual report outlines our many wonderful service achievements throughout the year. Much of this work is done in partnership with government, business, and our for-purpose colleagues which we strongly value as we understand that it is together, as a committed and collaborative community, we will deliver the best outcomes to the South West Sydney communities we serve. This year also saw us undertake the important work of measuring our social impact to drive greater community wellbeing and we will be using these insights as we develop our new strategic plan.

We were a successful recipient of the NSW Department of Education Student Wellbeing Innovation Fund, allowing us to expand our Big School, Big Minds school readiness program.



The role of place-based organisations has never been so important in driving equitable change and I am proud of the way Community First Step has advocated for our community.

Initiatives like this are critical in our community where many of our families are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and experience socio-economic disadvantage which are factors in education engagement and wellbeing. The provision of our program throughout South West Sydney provides a much-needed protective factor.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and outstanding work our staff and volunteers do for our community. I am thankful to our Chair Helen Wilson and Board Directors for their guidance and support, and giving their time and expertise on a voluntary basis which has allowed CFS to thrive.

We look forward to continuing to celebrate 5 wonderful decades of CFS' achievements with you throughout the year.

Professor Pandora Patterson

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR 50 YEARS

2023 marks the 50th anniversary of CFS.

We originated with a group of volunteers possessing the foresight and heart to identify the social impact potential of an organisation such as ours in its early form as Fairfield Neighbourhood Centre. This laid the foundations of an organisation that could harness a dynamic scope of community development, reaching far beyond the confines of our first premises at the School of Arts Building in Harris Street (and subsequently Barbara Street) in Fairfield.

Fairfield Neighbourhood Centre emerged from a group of volunteers that formed the Fairfield Community Council for Social Development in 1973. These members set up various standing committees to do crucial groundwork and research to determine areas of need in the community, such as support for youth and migrants.

From the outset we embodied the common operating principles of neighbourhood centres, specifically social inclusion, local participation and control, and community development.

The Committee worked with local community media and council to produce an ultimately successful submission to the Department of Youth and Community Services for a Neighbourhood Centre in Fairfield. In existence in NSW since 1961, neighbourhood centres reflected a shift away from dependence on traditional welfare towards enabling disadvantaged people and communities to participate in the decisions which affect their lives (Local Community Services Association 2009).

From the outset we embodied the common operating principles of neighbourhood centres, specifically social inclusion, local participation and control, and community development.



By the time we set up at Harris Street, we had already established various activities and programs such as the Home Tutor Scheme sponsored by the Adult Migrant Education Service, the Community Resources Directory, and the Family Day Care Scheme. These concepts were pillars in our work and remain integral to our response to changing community needs.

Whilst being of benefit to the whole community, we have always sought to direct our resources to the most disadvantaged and least powerful groups in the community to enable them to overcome social isolation through the development of community networks as well as collective action.

Fairfield Neighbourhood Centre rapidly became a key community resource for residents... We provided resources, referrals, information, and support around areas such as social services, disability services, alcoholism and drug addiction, homelessness, migrant assistance, education, sports, and recreation.

In our first annual report, Fairfield Neighborhood Centre is described as the “nucleus” of our organisation. It prescribes a “neighbour meets neighbour” approach to build community identity and address community needs. This signifies the beginnings of our enduring philosophy of local community participation and our objective to strengthen cohesion amongst all Fairfield residents. Our goals extended even further – assisting in the establishment of additional neighbourhood centres, supporting other community organisations, and undertaking community research.

Fairfield Neighbourhood Centre rapidly became a key community resource for residents in both the local community and neighbouring areas. A group of our volunteers visited community information centres in other areas and collected hundreds of pamphlets in preparation for the creation of our own Community Information Service.

It was located in our informal lounge area, with child and other facilities available, and received many in person and phone enquiries daily. We provided resources, referrals, information, and support around areas such as social services, disability services, alcoholism and drug addiction, homelessness, migrant assistance, education, sports, and recreation.

The pairing of local capacity building and an agenda of social inclusion are strengths evident in CFS' evolution...

The notion that neighbourhood centres belong to their local communities and that all people have equal right to the benefits and opportunities of our society (Local Community Services Association, 2009) are cemented in the history, and indeed current daily operations, of CFS. The pairing of local capacity building and an agenda of social inclusion are strengths evident in CFS' evolution, underpinning our flexible responses to addressing community needs and ensuring the communities of South West Sydney have equal opportunities to thrive in their lives and livelihoods.



CREATING IMPACT, CHANGING LIVES



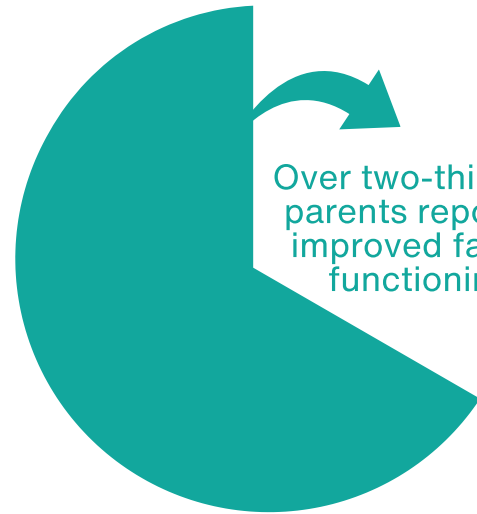
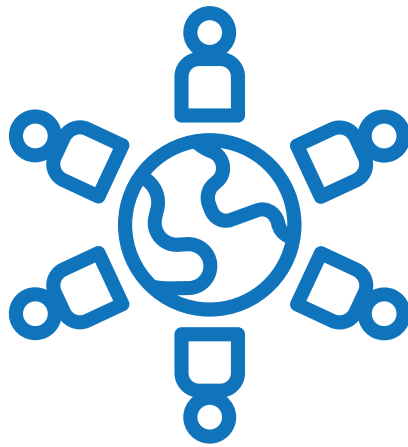
Years of Service

Over
22,000
families supported by CFS



75%

At least 75% of clients come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds



Over two-thirds of parents reported improved family functioning

216

Parents supported through parenting programs



39%

Increase in families supported by food relief hampers



99.5%

Community services clients found us helpful for their needs

Over **50** families trusted us to provide services for their family member with a disability



Children participated in our Multicultural and Supported Playgroups



Children participated in our School Readiness Program

627

Children supported in our Out of School Hours, Vacation, and Occasional Care Services – Over 100% increase

85%

of young people reported improved knowledge of services available to them after attending our workshops



84%

of young people gained new skills through our range of education, employment, wellbeing and life skills workshops

We supported more than **3800** young people across all our youth programs

97%

increase in attendance at Youth Drop-in Centre



CREATING STRONG MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Fairfield is one of Australia's most disadvantaged Local Government Areas and has one of the highest culturally and linguistically diverse populations with over half born overseas, including many humanitarian migrants. Significant language barriers make accessing much-needed services very difficult. CFS supports these individuals and families to access the help they need and participate in their community to build a sense of belonging.

Through our Community Hub, we offer the following services to support our local community:

- Assistance with form filling
- Advice and Referrals
- Emergency Relief/ Food Hampers
- JP Services
- Direct Support

We have continued to work in partnership with Oz Harvest and Wesley Mission to assist with Emergency Relief and Food Hampers. Many families have felt the impact of the rising costs of living and the demand for our services continues to grow. In the last year we have seen a 39% increase in the distribution of our food hampers alone.

Our Community Hub provides for our diverse range of clients, taking into consideration their culture and language. We have created purposeful activities that foster individual capacity building and encourage members of the Fairfield LGA to connect with each other. Examples include, Sewing and Knitting Classes, Gardening Program, English Conversation Classes, Vietnamese Men's Group, Women's Social Group.

One of our most recognised supports within the Hub is with Work Development Orders. This service allows CFS to assist clients free of charge with fines and build a trusting relationship that opens opportunities for them discuss other areas of needed support.



Anh's Story

Anh participated in our Work Development Orders program to seek assistance in reducing a driving fine. During his involvement in the program, he confided in our Community Development Officer about his struggles with social isolation, despite having lived in Australia for 8 years. Anh was extended an invitation to join the Men's Support Group and he went along. This group allowed Anh to develop meaningful connections with the other men in the group. Within this supportive environment, Anh was invited by another participant to join a local hiking group. Anh is now actively engaged in the hiking group and enjoys the friendships he has made in both groups.

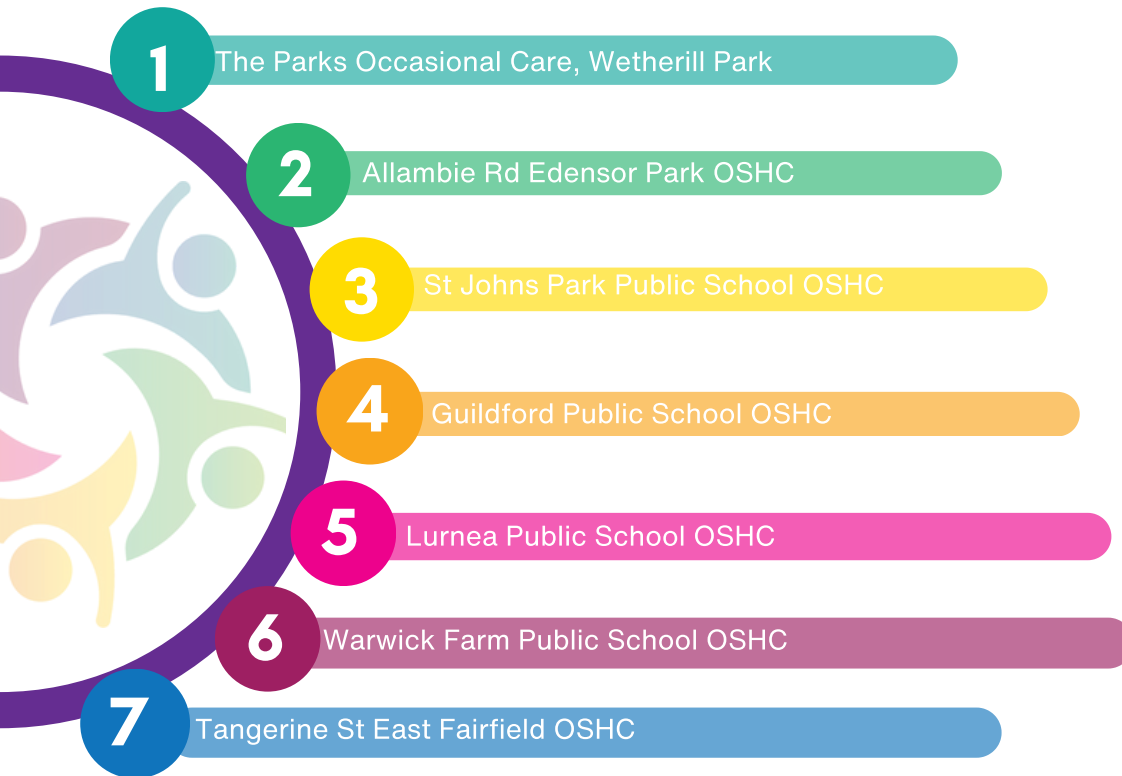


CREATING RESILIENT FUTURES

Our Children's Services are dedicated to supporting our families throughout South West Sydney and building strong foundations for children to flourish.

Outside School Hours and Occasional Care Services Meeting National Quality Standards

We have 7 OSCH and Occasional Care Services, with 3 of these servicing our local communities for over 25 years.



We are committed to continuous improvement and in the last 12 months, 4 of our services were assessed and rated as Meeting the National Quality Standards in all 7 quality areas by the Early Childhood Education Directorate, NSW Department of Education. Three of the assessed services had undergone this assessment and rating process for the first time. Following are highlights from the regulatory officers who performed the visits:

"Educators work collaboratively with the educational leader to make curriculum decisions that maximise learning and development outcomes for every child."
Warwick Farm OSHC

"The service is also acknowledged for its ongoing commitment to developing engagement strategies with the local community with the support of Community First Step, as the approved provider" – The Parks Occasional Care



To achieve this excellent outcome, our Children's Services management team continue to create strong collaborative partnerships with our families and other stakeholders such as schools and KU, working together to provide a more holistic and inclusive approach to the learning and wellbeing of the children in our care.

Empowering Families through the Role of our Children's Services Development & Educational Leader – Shareen's Story*

It is vital children feel connected, with research showing that it can protect them against mental health issues and improve their learning and development. Creating equal opportunities for children and their families to thrive is at the heart of what CFS does.

During this last year we introduced the role of Children's Services Development and Educational Leader who helps CFS' educators support parents to overcome personal, social and economic barriers by connecting early childhood education and care (ECEC) services with community services, so that our early learners are empowered with the skills they need to be active community members. Shareen Nair has enthusiastically taken up this role and notes that there is nothing too little or too big we can't support our families with.

Shareen spent 14 years in the ECEC sector before beginning her career at CFS. In her transition, she discovered there was a gap in families connecting to local services and a lack of available information. She encouraged the leadership team to introduce a role that could help implement these connections into our services. This then allowed CFS the opportunity to introduce the Children's Services Development and Educational Leader which Shareen does in conjunction with her role as a CFS Family Coach; helping families access supports they need, preparing both parents and children in transitioning to school, and helping them socially connect to their community.

Many of our parents and families come from refugee or migrant backgrounds, needing more focused support and assistance. Shareen works with families, connecting them to CFS' parenting workshops and evidence-based programs such as 1-2-3 Magic and Emotion Coaching, Abecedarian Approach, Tuning into Kids/Teens and the Big School, Big Minds school readiness program.



The ECEC industry is time poor and has a shortage of educators, so having additional support for families, someone who can offer advice or suggestions to navigate what support is required and how CFS can help, is critical.

Many of our parents and families come from refugee or migrant backgrounds, needing more focused support and assistance



Families in need can also be referred to other CFS support programs, such as emergency relief and food hampers, form filling, service referrals, English classes, the Parent Hub Support and Mum's Club.



Shareen's goal for the children and families at The Parks Occasional Care along with our other OSHC services is to help them feel secure, confident, and included by sharing her professional knowledge and experience with parents when attending our services.

Families in need can also be referred to other CFS support programs, such as emergency relief and food hampers, form filling, service referrals, English classes, the Parent Hub Support and Mum's Club.

Shareen explains "when I've worked with children, it has always been about building that safe environment using a holistic approach...it's not just about children that you want to help strengthen in that holistic space, but it's also their parents."

"I've been with some of the families since they first came to this country and enrolled their children into our care – children who were often shy, they wouldn't know the language or even put a sentence together. But now they are confident, in a safe space and they're excited to see each other, the kids have built a connection. It's beautiful seeing them build that connection with the community and one another."

*A version of this story also featured in an issue of the NSW Department of Education's newsletter.



Mum's Club is Building a Sense of Belonging

The Parks Early Learning and Occasional Care Centre had their first Mum's Club meeting this year and now meets monthly.

We have many families that are newly arrived and have left their community and family behind, with no family in Australia. The formation of this group occurred following discussions between parents and CFS staff where a need was identified to create a safe space for parents to come together and build strong and meaningful connections with one another.

"I have met very nice mum's who I have been able to connect with as well as discuss and learn more about different cultures here in Australia... I very grateful that the Mum's Club has allowed me to make new friends within my community." Klara

"Within the Mum's Club I've been able to make my own community by building friendships with other mothers and break away from the day-to-day mum routine, I've also gained knowledge about all the other programs, events and assistance you can receive at Community First Step." Alya

"Being new to the country and then going straight into lockdown was hard for me and my family, at times it was quite lonely. Mum's Club has allowed me to build new friendships and even improve my English, making me feel more comfortable when I am out and about in the community." Martha



Multicultural and Supported Playgroups Supporting and Connecting Families

As a soft entry point for families, our Multicultural and Supported Playgroups play a vital role within our community, providing play-based environments for children to thrive, promoting the importance of early childhood education to parents, and linking with other families for social and community support systems. This year we supported 504 children through this important service.

Our educators advocate for children and their families and provide support to enhance family functioning, and access practical information about health, wellbeing, and child development.



"Since joining the CFS community and using many of their services, I have been able to support my daughter by helping her to be more resilient in different environments as well as supporting her speech. I am so grateful for all the educators at both The Parks Occasional Care and Playgroups for creating warm safe environments for us both." – Cristina (pictured with her daughter Naomi).

CREATING EMPOWERED YOUTH

In a rapidly changing world, nurturing the potential of young people is more crucial than ever. Through targeted interventions, educational workshops, holistic support, and restorative justice programs, CFS is actively shaping resilient, capable, and empowered youth.

Along with our many local youth events throughout the year, we provided the following services for young people in Fairfield and throughout South West Sydney:

Youth and Family Early Intervention Case Management

Our Youth Team provided 159 young people and their families with case management support in areas including: family conflict, mental health, Work and Development Orders, anger management, peer relationships, Juvenile Justice, employment, education, housing, and food assistance.

CFS Youth Workshops

The Youth Team ran multiple workshops for young people: RAGE (Anger Management/ Emotional Control), Girls Group, Employability, Mental Wellness, and Physical Health. Our youth workshops were typically run in schools that included Fairfield High School, Canley Vale High School, and Fairfield High Intensive English Centre.

Our regular delivery of workshops highlights the fantastic relationship we have with schools, and the different groups of young people who participate in them. Many local schools and their Community Liaison Officers have great confidence in our Youth Team and the transforming work they do with young people in the Fairfield and broader South West Sydney community.



Youth Drop-In Centre

CFS' Youth Drop-In Centre is open to any young person aged 12-24 and offers a wide selection of sports and recreational activities, as well as being a critical soft entry point for young people who need extra support and struggle to seek help. Over the last year there was a 100% increase in attendance at the Youth Centre.



"The Youth Centre is a very positive environment with great staff working. It is a very safe environment to do physical activity and learn some great social skills."
- Youth Participant, Jenson.

Youth Justice Conferences

CFS has a long history of delivering Youth Justice Conferences in collaboration with Youth Justice NSW. A Youth Justice Conference is a meeting between a young offender, their victim and other people who know about the offence. It focuses on repairing the harm caused by the offending behaviour and on restoring relationships within the family and the community. Over the last year we have supported 27 young people and their families through this program.

One of the young people we supported came to us from another organisation who could no longer support him. Our Youth Team was urgently contacted by Youth Justice NSW to help with a Conference. The young person had attended a Youth Justice Conference at another service where they had completed one of their 3 sessions but then support ceased due to staffing issues. CFS' youth team promptly aided the young person, completing the remaining 2 sessions and assisting him with gaining employment. He completed the Outcome Plan with CFS and is now enjoying working full-time for the first time.

Following is feedback to CFS from a Manager at NSW Youth Justice:

"Firstly, I wanted to thank you to you and your agency for stepping in at such short notice for this young person, and for your service... I am fully aware that the situation that occurred was outside of the client's control and am greatly impressed with how the client was so flexible and agreeable to allow us to make changes to help him through this. I believe this is testament to the great rapport your service has built with him and his comfort in accepting support from you, as well as the strengths of the client genuinely wanting to make positive changes in his life. We also look forward to continuing accessing your service for our clients and collaborating. Your service and the youth workers we have dealt with including yourself are held in high esteem."



CREATING THRIVING FAMILIES

Our suite of parenting services provide parents with the support and tools they need to create a nurturing and thriving family environment. We supported 216 parents through our parenting services over the year.

Parenting Programs

1-2-3 Magic & Emotion Coaching

1-2-3 Magic & Emotion Coaching for Special Needs

Tuning into Kids

Tuning into Teens

Abecedarian Approach

Our parenting programs help parents better manage behaviour and enhance their abilities to provide a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment for their children. During the last year we supported 124 parents across our in-person and online evidence-based parenting programs: 1-2-3 Magic & Emotion Coaching, 1-2-3 Magic & Emotion Coaching for Special Needs, Tuning into Kids, Tuning Into Teens, and the Abecedarian Approach. The variety of programs offered means that we are able to provide parents with tailored support that addresses their individual needs.

Through attending our programs, parents become more aware of their child's unique developmental and emotional needs, and become more confident and knowledgeable about how to manage their children's behaviours and improve communication within their families, taking cultural differences into consideration.

I really enjoyed participating in the group. The program was really helpful offering practical strategies to try with my daughter. The facilitator was great and knew the content really well and delivered it confidently making sure that all participants understood and were able to relate it to their situation. The online delivery worked well too as I was able to participate from the comfort of my own home which made life with a young baby easier. – Parent attending Tuning Into Kids



I feel confident in the strategies I have learnt from the program and will continue to work on these strategies with myself and my kids. Thank you so much for the program. – Parent attending 1-2-3 Magic and Emotion Coaching

Parent Support Hub

The Parent Support Hub provides a way for parents to get short-term, individualised support for their parenting needs in a flexible and tailored manner. Over the past 12 months we supported 15 families through the Parent Support Hub for needs such as support around behaviour strategies, providing information on therapy services for children with additional needs, connecting to childcare services and connecting to after-school activities for children.

“You are the first person I feel close to and easy to communicate with and every question I ask, you were willing to help me and address the question.” – Parent receiving support through the Parent Support Hub

Child and Family Early Intervention Case Management

Our early intervention case-management service offers support to clients who are facing various challenges such as parenting needs, housing, financial difficulties, substance use and mental health concerns. We assist clients to set goals, understand their rights and what supports are available, as well as guide them to link with relevant supports for their circumstances while providing practical and emotional support. Through the information, assistance and encouragement provided by caseworkers, clients become more confident and knowledgeable to navigate services and are empowered to advocate for themselves. Over the last year, we supported 77 families with this important service.



The caseworker provided immediate relief from the financial crisis by referring and gaining access to the Rent Choice Start Safely Program, and until the client could access the program, was provided support to apply for temporary accommodation through Link2Home to avoid homelessness. The caseworker also helped to empower the client by providing her information about her rights in relation to real estate and also making sure the client was linked to Legal Aid who would provide her with assistance for appearing at court tribunals regarding her bond release. As a result of this, half of the bond was returned, which the client was very happy to receive given her financial difficulties.

After the client's accommodation concerns were addressed, the caseworker was then able to support with other issues, such as making sure the client's son was enrolled in high school and helping the client to engage in parenting programs to improve her knowledge. Through the caseworker's guidance the client also became more confident in completing her own applications and applying for online services independently, such as opening her bank account and managing her Centrelink documents online.



Amani's Story

Amani is a single mother of 3 young children who reached out to our case management service to seek information about local services. As part of the initial assessment, the mother revealed a history of past domestic abuse involving her former partner. Furthermore, due to her ex-partner's gambling habits, her financial resources had been depleted by him, putting her and her children at risk of homelessness.

"I am so happy to receive case-management from the caseworker. She was empowering me to understand my situation and how to manage my finances and how to increase my knowledge to work with online services. I am looking forward to working with her to increase my knowledge about parenting."

CREATING ABILITY

Our Disability Services include day program, community access, support coordination, and supported independent living. The primary focus in each area is to provide exceptional quality and person-centred care, ensuring that participants achieve their goals through various activities and programs. Some key achievements in our disability services for 2022-23 were:

Day Program Centre Renovation: The Day Program Centre located on Tangerine Street underwent significant refurbishment to provide purpose-built services and create a more welcoming experience for participants. This included new flooring, building upgrades, as well as the addition of new furniture and resources.

Fleet Rebranding: All service vehicles now feature new signage, giving them a fresh and inviting appearance.



Enriching Activities: Day program participants engaged in activities such as bowling, going to the library, walks along the beach, and Zumba as part of their leisure and community involvement. These activities provided fun and therapeutic benefits. Exceptional outcomes included increased enthusiasm among participants, even those who were less inclined to engage, and the development of a sense of bonding during their participation.



They also contributed to positive changes in areas such as reducing challenging behaviours and increasing physical activity. We are eager to continue offering these activities alongside new innovative activities in the coming year.

Staff Development and Meeting Accreditation: Throughout the year we ensured all disability staff received up-to-date training. We also underwent an NDIS mid-term audit with results showing our strong performance in meeting the requirements of the NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators.

As we reflect on the past year, we also turn our attention to the next 12 months in our disability services where we will focus on piloting innovative programs developed in consultation with participants, ensuring their voices are amplified and experiences enhanced.



Imad's Story

Imad was referred to our Day Program in 2017 following his transition from Holroyd High School. Upon his arrival, he soon began to display challenging behaviours, making it difficult to interact with other participants and support staff. Imad resisted entering the centre and leaving the vehicle, often choosing to sit alone in a corner of the room rather than participating in indoor or outdoor activities.

In addition to his severe intellectual disability and being non-verbal, Imad faced various health challenges that further hindered his participation in our programs. The Day Program team closely observed his behaviours, considered his goals and interests, and embarked on a journey to develop effective strategies to engage Imad and help him achieve his goals.

Community participation and improved living skills were two prominent goals outlined in his plan. The team committed themselves to a step-by-step process aimed at assisting Imad in attaining these objectives. They began by establishing a consistent routine and assigned the same staff to work with him to build trust and confidence. They utilised visual aids and images to facilitate communication, introducing each strategy gradually rather than overwhelming Imad all at once. Sensory drives were also employed to help him relax.

Furthermore, the team provided crucial support to his family, assisting with medical visits, which Imad initially resisted. With the combined efforts of medical attention and engagement strategies in our Day Program, Imad has experienced a remarkable transformation. He now exudes happiness and actively participates in community activities.



Imad eagerly anticipates activities such as bowling and Zumba sessions, demonstrating tremendous progress. Most impressively, he has taken to making his own coffee every morning when he arrives at the centre. His consistency, high motivation, and the strong, trustful relationships he's developed with the support team at CFS have played pivotal roles in helping Imad achieve his goals. We are exceptionally proud of his accomplishments.

CREATING WORKPLACE EXCELLENCE

Over 90% of our staff live in South West Sydney and collectively speak over 20 languages, including Arabic, Vietnamese, and Assyrian. In line with our strategic plan, CFS is committed to enabling and engaging our staff so they thrive and make a positive impact.

We provide excellent professional development opportunities and ensure that our employees have opportunities to speak into staff wellbeing and improvement initiatives through our staff engagement surveys, open and inclusive communication channels, and regular staff meetings. We also provide an Employee Assistance Program that provides confidential counselling and support services to our employees.

Supporting our Future Community Service Professionals

During the last year we supported 22 student placements. Students are a defining part of how we assist the community of Fairfield. Through sharing our knowledge and skills with others we hope to mentor a new generation of passionate community services employees.



Akash's Story

Akash Kamboj came to our service from Stott's College where he was studying a Diploma in Community Services to undertake work placement. Akash undertook various tasks from data entry, assisting our CALD clients with form filling, to working with CFS staff at our Youth Drop-In Centre, events, workshops, and attending interagency meetings.

It didn't take long for Akash to become one of the team! He was respected for his good work ethic, can-do attitude and professionally working towards a better community for the people of Fairfield.

Once Akash's placement had finished we had an opportunity to provide him with paid employment in our hub and youth program which he accepted. This was Akash's first step into paid employment and he excelled in his role.

"During the whole journey at CFS, I was fully supported and welcomed by CFS Staff. I enjoyed my work placement hours, and the staff became part of my family not just friends, it was one of the best experiences of my life and I am very thankful to everyone at CFS for the opportunities".



Building Understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures

During this year we launched our staff cultural awareness training. The rollout of the SBS Inclusion training module 'First Nations' was both an appropriate acknowledgment of Australia's Indigenous peoples and an invaluable platform for what will be an ongoing, informative learning journey for CFS staff.

The First Nations module introduced one of the oldest cultures in the world to our team members; that of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our staff gained important knowledge about the significance of Family and Kinship to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, the impact of the 'Stolen Generations', and the hope that is enshrined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, released in 2017.

From this invaluable starting point, the People and Culture team aims to pursue further opportunities for cultural awareness training, particularly where these align with the culturally and linguistically diverse communities CFS serves here in South West Sydney.



Good Governance, Quality and Safety

We are committed to being a lean, fit, and well governed organisation. CFS has a robust governance framework underpinning the delivery of our quality evidence-based support in a safe and multiculturally sensitive environment.

Through our ongoing focus on monitoring our quality, safety, and client experience we ensure positive outcomes for our clients, staff, and the community we serve.

The last year has also seen us continue to receive excellent results in our external audits, performing with high levels of compliance across children's and disability services.

Our Culture of Safety

A positive safety culture can result in improved workplace health and safety and organisational performance. Safety culture is an organisational culture that places a high level of importance on safety beliefs, values and attitudes—and these are shared by the majority of people within the organisation. It can be characterised as 'the way we do things around here'.

This year icare Insurance and Care NSW assessed our employees regarding CFS's safety culture and we exceeded industry benchmarks on 6 of the 7 dimensions of safety culture. This is an incredible result and demonstrates our team's commitment to ensuring a safe and quality driven environment.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Our Youth Worker, Heath Harris, received the Emerging Youth Worker NSW Award from Youth Action who are the peak body representing young people and the services that support them in NSW. This is a highly prestigious award and we are so proud to see our staff receiving the recognition they deserve. Previously, Heath was a work placement student at Community First Step working across our Disability and Community Services before becoming a staff member.



Community Partnership Awards

During 2022, we received the Community Partner Award from South Western Sydney Local Health District and the ZEST Award for Exceptional Community Partnership. Both these awards recognised CFS' strong support to our local community during COVID. We collaborated with NSW Health to assist our community members with getting their digital certificates, worked together to support the outreach vaccination hub, and provided bilingual assistance. We also collaborated with Fairfield City Council and our other local place-based colleagues in providing meals to the Fairfield LGA during COVID and supporting isolated families.

Student Wellbeing Innovation Grant Success!

During the first half of 2023 we were successful in applying for a \$200,000 grant through the NSW Department of Education's Student Wellbeing Innovation Fund to renew, deliver, and evaluate our school readiness program Big School, Big Minds.

This newly established fund supports capacity building funding for providers of mental health and wellbeing programs who are wanting to scale or deliver their programs in new areas or to priority cohorts which included students transitioning to kindergarten, CALD students, and those from a migrant or refugee background. The Department received over 330 applications and with less than a 5% chance, our proposal was one of the few chosen.

Many of our families in South West Sydney are from CALD backgrounds and experience socio-economic disadvantage which are factors in education engagement and social and emotional well-being. The provision of our Big School, Big Minds school readiness program throughout South West Sydney provides a much-needed protective factor for these children as they embark on a life of loving to learn. We are also partnering with Western Sydney University in the evaluation of the program to ensure the acceptability and effectiveness of our program.



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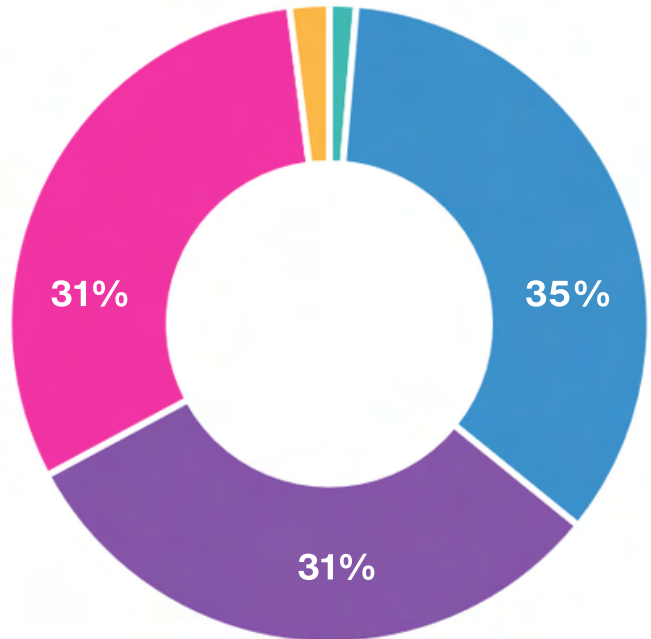
FINANCES

Our financial results for 2022/2023 demonstrate CFS' resilience in adapting to continually changing circumstances while sustaining financial viability.

For more detailed financial information please visit the ACNC website to access financial documents for Fairfield Community Resource Centre (trading name Community First Step).

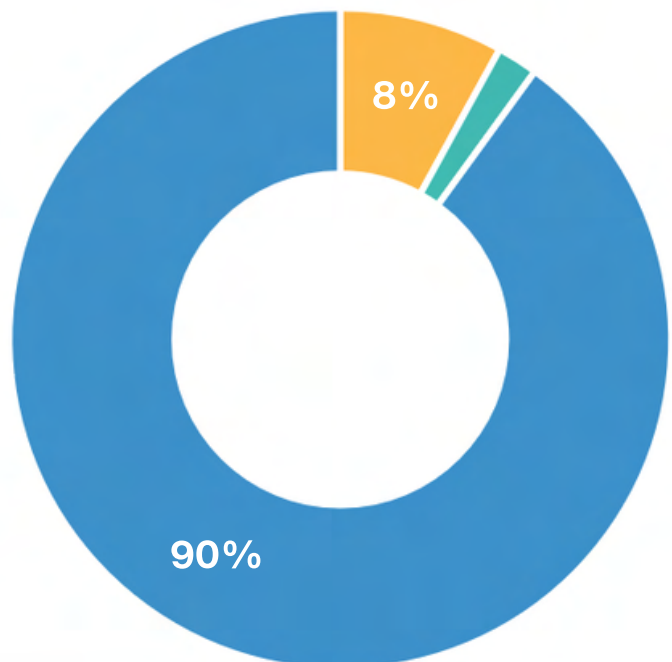
Revenue 2022/2023

- 1% Donations \$76,489.64
 - 35% Grants \$1,947,060.12
 - 31% NDIS Fees \$1,766,624.51
 - 31% Children's Service Fees \$1,725,969.15
 - 2% Other Income \$101,302.07
- Total \$5,617,445.49



Expenses 2022/2023

- 8% Administration \$456,505.43
 - 2% Property \$128,124.83
 - 90% Employee and Service Delivery \$4,961,409.90
- Total \$5,546,040.16



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to our following collaborators and partners:

Anglicare
Ashcroft Public School
Assyrian Resource Centre
Asuria
Benevolent Society
Bonnie's Support Services
Bossley Park Public School
Brolga Dance Academy
Bunnings, Villawood
Cabramatta High School
Campbelltown Youth Centre
Carramar Public School
Centrelink
Community Connect Macarthur
Community She Shed
Core Community Services
Department of Communities and Justice
EACH
Fairfield City Council
Fairfield Heights Public School
Fairfield High School
Fairfield Hospital
Fairfield Library
Fairfield Public School
Fairfield West Public School
Family Planning
Governor Philip King Public School
Guildford Public School
Head2Health
Hespe Liverpool
Housing
Hume Housing
Juvenile Justice (Youth Justice)
Lead College
LCSA
Legal Aid
Life Squad
Liverpool City Council
Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre
Local Community Services Association
Lurnea Public School
Macarthur Family and Youth services
Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School
Meraki Foundation
Minto Cobras
Mission Australia
MRC Liverpool

Navitas
New South Wales Rugby League
NSW Council of Social Service
NSW Department of Communities and Justice
NSW Department of Education
NSW Health
NSW Police (Fairfield and Liverpool Police Area Command)
Old Guildford Public School
Oz Harvest
Passfield Park School
Patrician Brothers High School
Prairievale Public School
Safe Haven
Salvation Army
Sarah Redfern High School
Sarah Redfern Public School
Sector Connect
Service NSW
Silent Seeker Smith Family
Smithfield Public School
South Western Multicultural and Community Centre
South Western Sydney Local Health District
SSI
STARTTS
St. Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School
St. Johns Park Public School
St. Patricks Catholic Primary School Guildford
Staying Home Leaving Violence
Stockland Mall - Wetherill Park
Stotts College
TAFE
The Grange Public School
The Inclusion Support Program (KU)
The Parks Community Network
The Silver Coin Project
Uniting
University of Wollongong
Villawood North Public School
Warwick Farm Public School
Wesley Mission
Western Sydney University
Wise Employment
Woodville Alliance
Young Spirit Mentoring Program
Youth Action
Youth off the Streets




We would also like to acknowledge the **Fairfield City District Netball Association** (FCDNA) who generously donated \$76,000 to CFS which has provided us with the opportunity to beautify our Disability Day Program for our participants and also conduct important work in developing our social impact for Fairfield and the communities of South West Sydney. FCDNA was an enduring organization within the City of Fairfield that was granted affiliation by the NSW Netball Association in 1973, the same year that our organisation was formed. In their decades-spanning history, the FCDNA raised the standard of netball in Fairfield and the wider regional community. In 2021 the Association closed. We are so grateful to FCDNA for their contribution to the Fairfield community over all these years and for supporting the work of CFS.



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