



Woden Community Service



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Woden Community Service (WCS) recognises the Ngunnawal people as Traditional Custodians of the ACT and surrounding region and acknowledges that other people and families also have a traditional connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We pay our respects to their cultures, ancestors and Elders past, present and future.



“Ngunnawal Mindjagari” by Ngunnawal and Wiradjuri artist Megan Daley

This commissioned painting represents Ngunnawal country, relationships and WCS in Canberra. Purple is reflected strongly in the native flora of the Ngunnawal region and in WCS identity. The upper centre features the beauty and longevity of Ngunnawal country in ancient mountain ranges and dark starry night skies.

The lower centre features the Kangaroo Apple flower, surrounded by symbols of community gathering and sitting together. The painting's base reflects the community and work of WCS. Hands at the base of the mountain represent WCS reaching across Canberra to connect and support communities and people coming together.

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REFLECTIONS FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

After six years on the WCS Board as Treasurer, it was my time to take the Board Chair role last November 2022 — and it has been an enormous year. I want to extend my gratitude to the tremendous work of the staff and volunteers of WCS who deliver such wonderful services to our community.

I also want to thank all our service users for their support over the last few years, in particular. I have big shoes to fill, with the selfless contribution and dedication of our previous Chair Jennifer Bennett. On behalf of Woden Community Service, I want to thank Jennifer on the incredible and positive impact her efforts and contributions have made to WCS.

I sincerely hope I can live up to these expectations and the high standards of my predecessor. Following COVID restrictions and the ongoing challenges within the sector and the community, this continues to increase significant pressure on our operations and our finances. Indeed, it is a time of significant pressure on the community sector.

Sustainability is an ever-present issue that the WCS Board and Executive must continually monitor. This is not a responsibility we take lightly. Emerging from the pandemic, we know, more than ever, how our community relies on the services we provide, and we are confident that the work within WCS is ensuring a stable and high performing service well into the future.

We finalised our new company structure in January this year, maturing from an association to a company limited by guarantee. This is an important step in our path to ensure that WCS is fit to serve the community. As Chair, I am especially proud of the dedicated work of the WCS Executive and staff — their willingness to take on new challenges and deliver an extraordinary array of services. I am particularly proud of our foray into social enterprise activities in the suburb of Whitlam, including our own Heartbeat Café. This has been a huge success and provided a platform for an expansion in our social enterprise ambitions.

Whilst we work through these incredibly challenging times, our services are more important than ever to our community and service users. This responsibility is one that motivates us to continue to provide the best service we can. The ongoing support of the community and government organisations that entrust us to deliver services on their behalf is most appreciated.



Brett Streatfeild
Board Chair

Board Chair appointed Oct 2022
Audit and Risk Committee Chair appointed 2017
Director and Treasurer appointed Oct 2016

THE BOARD AND GOVERNANCE

In 2022–23 our Board also included:



Glenn Powell

Deputy Board Chair appointed Oct 2022
Public Officer appointed Oct 2021
Audit and Risk Committee member appointed 2017
Director appointed Oct 2016



Michael Miller

Governance Committee Chair from 2020
Director appointed Oct 2016



Rangarajan Parimala

Audit and Risk Committee member appointed 2021
Director appointed Oct 2021



Jennifer Bennett

Member to Oct 2022
Governance Committee Member to Oct 2022



Catherine Campbell

Director appointed Oct 2021



Alison Oakleigh

Director appointed Oct 2017



Sasha Posthuma-Grbic

Director appointed Oct 2021



Lora Shaw

Member to Oct 2022
Governance Committee Member to Oct 2022

It was a big year coming out of the COVID restrictions, giving a new lease of life to many WCS face-to-face activities. Workforce shortages remained a real issue for us. In particular, our children's services experienced large gaps leading to reductions in the number of children attending services. This is national problem due to the impact of COVID, low salary levels across the sector, and Canberra's high rental costs preventing young people from regional areas coming to work here.

Like many community organisations, increased regulation required greater infrastructure investment in systems and staff. We welcomed the ACTCOSS report, conducted with the sector, on "Counting The Cost!". This evidenced community sector costs and the need for increased government funding to cover these. Increasing cost of living and the lack of affordable housing contributed to increasing demand for our services in all WCS programs. We continued to advocate through the media and to government about the needs of vulnerable people. We actively engaged with the ACT government on the commissioning process with its potential to deliver new service models. Many WCS staff attended workshops to discuss community needs, service gaps and demographic growth.

Our new Service User Advisory Committee met bi-monthly, whilst giving us welcome feedback on some of our internal processes. We are excited about this work as we continue to find ways to gather and use service user input. A significant development was establishing a social enterprise in winning the contract for the Whitlam suburb's new Heartbeat Café. This café provided employment for vulnerable young people and is the forerunner to growing our social enterprise work.

We continued to hope for a new purpose-built community centre for Woden, however, that has not been forthcoming. There is a great need for this facility to bring together all we do across many sites, and to provide our local community with a central place to meet and participate in local activities.

Finally, I want to thank the staff, the Executive and the Board for their ongoing hard work and commitment to WCS. It is a privilege to work with all of you.



Jenny Kitchin
Chief Executive Officer

Jenny joined WCS as CEO in February 2019. She came to WCS from Anglicare where she served as Executive Manager of Child, Youth and Family Services overseeing out-of-home care, youth, family housing and homelessness services in NSW and ACT.

Jenny is a community services leader with significant experience both in the government and community sectors. Prior to Anglicare, Jenny was a senior executive in the ACT Community Services Directorate and the Regional Director of Barnardos Australia (ACT).

[1] "Counting the Costs: Sustainable funding for the ACT community services sector" is a December 2021 report commissioned by ACTCOSS on behalf of the ACT's Community Services Industry Strategy Steering Group (ISSG), and the ACT Government. Authored by Natasha Cortis, Megan Blaxland and Elizabeth Adamson, this report informs development of more sustainable models of resourcing for the ACT community services sector.



Joe Colbert

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Joe joined WCS in March 2022 bringing knowledge and experience following a career in senior executive management across a variety of public sector and private enterprise agencies.



Vivienne Gould

Executive Manager of Children, Youth and Family Services

Vivienne joined WCS in August 2020 and the Executive Team in July 2021. She has thirty years of experience in children's services and the community sector. She has worked in service management, compliance and delivering Early Childhood Education and Care qualifications through a registered training organisation.



Blessy Pascual

Chief Financial Officer

Blessy joined WCS in October 2016. She has over twenty-three years of experience in financial management, business advice, taxation, audit, systems application and integration, and financial governance.



Kerry Pearce

Executive Manager of Aged Care and Disability Services

Kerry is a registered Occupational Therapist, joining WCS in June 2023. She has worked in senior leadership, business development and clinical management roles over twenty years across the public health, community and corporate sectors.



Lynton Sheehan

Executive Manager of Housing and Homelessness Services

Lynton joined WCS in August 2021 bringing government and human services experience in housing, mental health, arts, policy/programmatic reform, program and project management.



Tony Bill

Senior Manager of Corporate Governance

Tony joined WCS in October 2021 and joined the Executive Team in May 2023. Tony is responsible for strategic oversight of policy, enterprise risk, internal audit, organisational compliance and accreditation, learning and development, and human resources.



Leanne Heald

Senior Manager of Mental Health Services

Leanne joined WCS in February 2016 and the Executive Team in March 2023. Leanne has worked within the community sector for nearly twenty years in the areas of mental health, disability and community outreach.

OUR PURPOSE

Woden Community Service's vision, purpose and values frame why we exist and guide us in how we focus and behave as a service provider and employer.

Our Vision **A caring community where everyone belongs.**

Our Purpose **Building connected communities and enriching people's lives.**



HOW WE WORK

Woden Community Service's effectiveness is built on how we work within our community. We are committed to acting consistently across our services and programs with these guiding principles and practices:

- We put **service and participants at the centre of service delivery**, responding to each person's unique circumstances and recognising the strengths and support they have to draw on.
- We listen to the **people and communities** who need our support, valuing their stories and lived experience and respecting their decisions.
- We offer **trauma-informed support** across our services because we understand the profound impacts trauma can have on individuals and families.
- We act to ensure a **child-safe and child-friendly** organisation.
- We stand with individuals and community groups to **advocate for changes in society and service systems that improve their life chances and circumstances**.
- We care about and invest in the **safety, well-being and development of our staff and volunteers**, knowing this is fundamental to our effectiveness in the community.



WCS volunteers gather to celebrate National Volunteers Week

OUR STRATEGIC CONTEXT TO 2025

The environment in which we operate continued to be challenging, with both anticipated and new trends creating uncertainty and opportunity.

Canberra's population continues to grow in size and diversity. WCS continues to support this growth, especially in the Woden, Weston Creek and Molonglo communities with a range of wrap-around services covering every stage of life, including:

- children
- young people and families
- disability support services
- mental health
- aged care.

As we look to the future, we need to ensure we have the capability to continue to deliver services to meet the evolving needs of our community. As an integral part of this evolution, WCS commenced creating a range of social enterprises. This ensures we are able to assist young and vulnerable people to move beyond being service users to being job ready, with the necessary skills and confidence to engage positively in the wider economy.

As we continue to evolve our services and service delivery models, we remain committed to a culture where service user and community engagement is at the heart of everything we do. We recognise and value the rich diversity of cultures within our community and actively engage with all people and cultures.

Our Goals to 2025

- Goal 1.** Strive for excellence in service delivery and use evidence in program planning and design.
- Goal 2.** Increase service access and impact by expanding what we do well and developing new services to address community needs.
- Goal 3.** Intensify our community engagement footprint to foster community connection, participation and development.
- Goal 4.** Grow as a sustainable, well-governed and effective organisation that embraces a culture of staff care, continuous improvement and accountability.

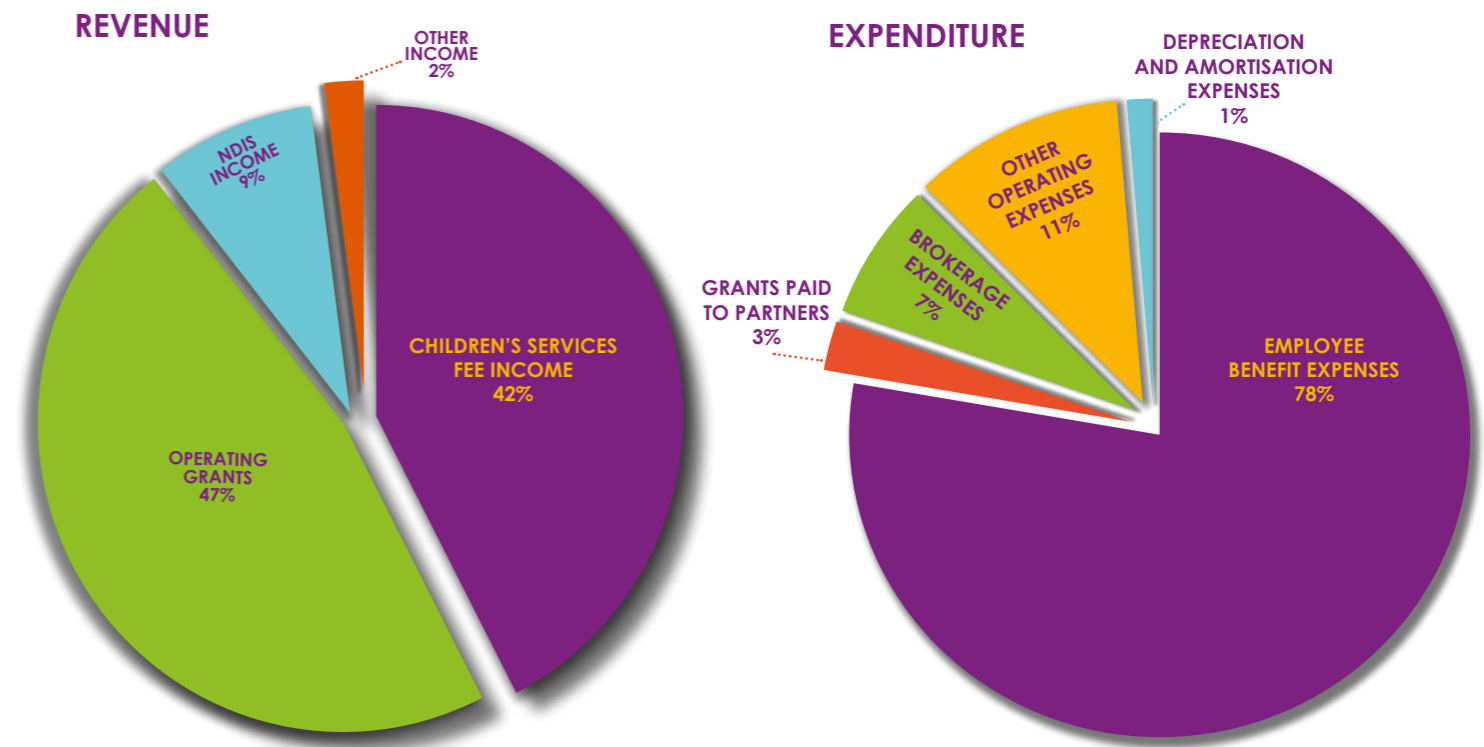
For more detail on priorities and actions, see WCS Strategic Plan 2021–2025 on the WCS website.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2022–2023

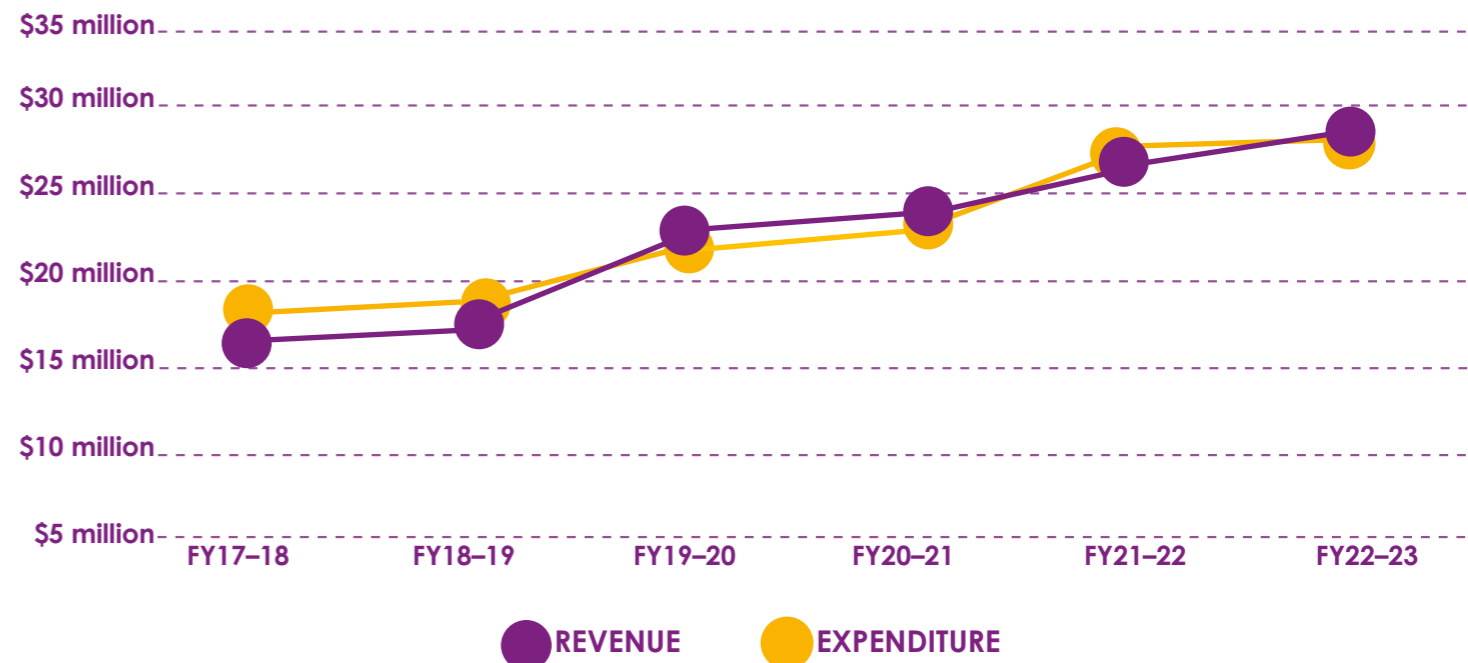
WCS recorded a net surplus of \$126,000 for the year ended 30 June 2023.

WCS experienced a 10% boost in revenue, attributed to the additional government grants and increase in fee-based services.

As a community service organisation, employee expenses remain a dominant driver of cost growth.



REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE TREND FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023



CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- Successful assessment and rating at six of our program sites. This process rates services against seven quality standards and WCS is proud to consistently meet and exceed standards across multiple programs.
- The inclusion support team worked with 262 children with additional needs. This provided behavioural support plans with strategies and resources to ensure children could fully participate in all program areas.



CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

- The Family Case Management team delivered 'Circle of Security' small group training to various groups over the year. The program helps parents and carers to become attuned and responsive to their children's emotional needs and is one of the most successful group programs.
- The youth team partnered with Access Training to deliver hospitality training courses to 36 young people, helping build pathways for them into employment.



AGED CARE SERVICES

- The Care Finder program was launched in January 2023. This specialised service has supported over 100 vulnerable older people to connect with aged care and community services.
- Aged Care commenced a limited brokerage service, partnering with home care package providers to offer transport and in-home support.



NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) SERVICES

- WCS partnered with Carers ACT to deliver the 'Your Space' drop-in respite pilot program which has been renewed for 12 months. This weekend program provides respite for carers and meaningful activities for participants.
- WCS successfully completed the mid-term NDIS registration audit, embedding a number of service improvements.



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- The Hoarding Advocacy Support Service (HASS) was funded for a further 12 months to continue supporting those who struggle with the most extreme cases of hoarding.
- HASS successfully delivered 'Buried in Treasures', a 16-week program for participants who accumulate excessive items or find it difficult to part with them.
- The Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program team introduced the Access Enabling stream into the program, which supports participants to apply for the NDIS when they required intensive and long-term support.



- Secured funding from the ACT Government to continue operating The Big Issue (TBI) in Canberra for the next three years. This supports vendors to sell the magazine and provide access to additional social and health support.
- The Snow Foundation grant allows WCS to increase vendor support activities and to encourage new vendors to come on board.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

- The establishment of a social enterprise Heartbeat Café in Whitlam offered employment to a number of vulnerable young people.
- The release of the Community Development Network's 'Stories of Connection and Resilience' booklet celebrated the initiatives of our community champions throughout COVID.



HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

- OneLink has worked with other services to support over 2000 Canberrans and their families who were experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness.
- OneLink provided in excess of \$1.5M in brokerage to Canberrans to prevent homelessness.
- The Supportive Tenancy Service supported 292 Canberrans and their families to remain in their home or find a new home.
- WCS and partner organisations provided evidence to the Senate Inquiry into the National Rental Crisis and continues to contribute to development of innovative models for the future of early identification and support for Canberrans at risk of homelessness.



CORPORATE SERVICES

- Corporate Services implemented a new Governance, Risk and Compliance system called Folio, which houses WCS's corporate documents and improves the ability to track and report on key deliverables.
- A centralised online learning platform, called Sentries, was implemented, which allows us to deliver, track, monitor and report on a range of staff training courses and other learning materials.
- ISPT Property Group, representing several superannuation companies including AustralianSuper, Cbus, and HESTA, donated office furniture and fixtures valued at over \$100,000. The Facilities and ICT team coordinated the logistics and re-fit project.
- A comprehensive cybersecurity audit was conducted to evaluate our cybersecurity controls and the integrity of our information technology infrastructure. Subsequently, WCS has initiated a cybersecurity action plan.



FAST FACTS



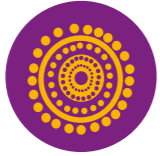
285 educators including casuals



2,836 children enrolled



262 children with additional needs



85 children identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



692 children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds



2,002 families accessed children's services

Children's Services enjoyed a year that was not impacted by restrictions or lockdowns. It has been rewarding to be able to return to offering excursions, incursions and activities that have provided opportunities for children to be out and connecting within the local community.

WCS is proud to be offering programs that promote and allow children to develop their interests, make new friends and have fun. We strive to have environments that are safe, comfortable and invite children to relax, explore and enjoy.



Representatives from the Children's Services team



Children's artworks from the Lollipop ELC art show



WCS's Early Learning Centre (ELC) programs have continued to uphold our commitment to providing quality care to children and families in our community. We have continued to strengthen connections with the school community at Lyons through attending events such as the student colour run, the market day and partnering with the community coordinator to help facilitate paint and play.

The annual art show at Lollipop ELC has become a hallmark event where children create meaningful artworks around social themes, inviting the community to donate to The Little Pantry, our emergency food relief service.

WCS's commitment to community has led us to include regular breakfasts and family/educator meetings to our programs. These initiative not only reinforces our dedication to holistic care but also strengthens the bond between families and our ELC community.

As part of our ongoing commitment to WCS's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and reconciliation, the children at Lollipop ELC participated in an all-staff morning tea, where they showcased a captivating dance performance of the traditional children's song "Taba Naba." Children and staff worked together to create an artwork called 'Drops of Feeling', that conveyed staff reflections on reconciliation. This artwork will be the first to hang at the new Woden Community Hub.

WCS employees embarked on a professional development journey by engaging in a 12-month program with the Australian Education Research Organisation. This program has focused on the implementation of evidence-based practices, equipping team members with an understanding of the unique needs and perspectives of the children and families we serve. Through mentorship provided by the program, staff have improved the way in which children's learning is captured and documented, ensuring the well-being of children and families remains a top priority.

A new play group was started at the Evelyn Scott Primary School called STEM explorers. This play group explores themes of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics through educational play experiences utilising loose parts.



Lollipop ELC children perform at the WCS all-staff National Reconciliation Week morning tea

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE (OSHC)

WCS's OSHC programs have continued to provide care across eleven sites. The WCS employees have spent time focusing on the quality of WCS's educational programs by implementing new reflective practice tools.

Children's Services underwent a structure review — the departure of some key team members led to a review of how best support our operations. The restructure saw the large number of services being divided between two managers: one overseeing OSHC and enrolments, and the other overseeing OSHC and inclusion support. This created a stronger team approach to overseeing all service areas.

The inclusion support team worked with 262 children with additional needs. This included providing behavioural support plans with strategies and resources to ensure children can fully participate in all areas of the programs.

To acknowledge the commitment and achievements of WCS educators, the OSHC team introduced an annual staff awards night. Awards were based on WCS's values and how staff displayed these throughout the year.

Over the past year, children's services have successfully undergone assessment and rating at five of WCS's OSHC sites:

- Wanniasa
- Garran
- Griffith
- Evelyn Scott
- Lyons.

This has reinforced the capacity to consistently meet and exceed standards across multiple programs.



Representatives from the Out of School Hours Care team



Children's dance performance at Evelyn Scott OSHC



OSHC inclusion support

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE (OSHC)

Future plans

Looking ahead, the OSHC team have identified two key priorities for the upcoming year:

1. Enhanced curriculum

The team will continue to enhance our curriculum to provide a wider range of engaging and educational activities. This will include incorporating sports programs, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) activities, environmental education, and cultural diversity programs.

2. Continued professional development

The team will remain committed to investing in the professional development of our staff. WCS will provide ongoing training opportunities to ensure that our educators stay abreast of the latest research and best practices.

The achievements of WCS's OSHC programs over the past year are a testament to our ongoing commitment to providing exceptional care, elevating the quality of our educators, and nurturing meaningful growth in the children we support. As WCS continue to evolve, we remain dedicated to the core values that guide us and the belief that every child deserves the best possible care and opportunities for growth.

The CYFS program hosts a Family Case Management team, Youth Engagement team, Raw Potential youth homelessness program, and Network Coordination. The team consists of experienced and passionate professionals who provide a person-centred and strength-based approach in supporting service users to identify their individual and family goals.

WCS partnered with Anglicare NSW, South NSW West and ACT, as well as Raw Potential Canberra to deliver services to children, young people and their families. We thank them for their ongoing work with WCS.

FAST FACTS



Family Case Management (FCM)

FCM provides short to medium term case management to vulnerable families. They focus on increasing the family's capacity to be able to identify and address their needs and challenges. The team helps build their confidence and independence through one-on-one case management or small group programs.

The Circle of Security parenting program is one of the most successful small group programs run by FCM. This program runs for 6 weeks and is designed to help parents/carers become attuned and responsive to their children's emotional needs.

"Look Who's Talking - Arabic program" is based on a training program the team attended in March 2023. The program aims to give parents and caregivers the skills and strategies to encourage their children's language development from birth.

The FCM team identified the existing 'Coffee Conversation' group as benefitting from this content. Staff adapted the 'Look Who's Talking' program by speaking in Arabic and including Arabic songs. This is the first time the group has been run in a language other than English.

Feedback from a participant

"My son was having big emotions. I remembered the 'Look Who's Talking' strategies and started singing to him in my native language. I was amazed as he calmed down much quicker than usual."

Network Coordination (NC)

Network Coordination works with services and organisations to identify gaps in service delivery and connects assets within the community to improve the wellbeing, community participation and social inclusion of vulnerable children and families. NC has implemented a number of initiatives that have been designed to meet the needs in the community.

The Southside Initiative is a joint collaboration between WCS, YWCA Canberra, Community Services #1, and Communities at Work. The Initiative aims to develop community-driven solutions for vulnerable children aged birth to eight years, and their families. The Southside Initiative has held two forums, increased access to the early literacy program for parents, and developed web pages with free parenting courses and family support services in the ACT.

PERKS Seminars and Parenting Peers Group pilot is another initiative through NC. This program brings together organisations such as the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service, Relationships Australia and Conflict Resolution Service to facilitate seminars and peer groups for families on topics such as anger management, family conflict, health and wellbeing.

Youth Engagement team (YET)

YET provides youth engagement and outreach support to young people aged 12 – 25 years. Services offered incorporate an after school drop-in service at the Woden Youth Centre, community outreach in schools, support groups and topic talks in schools, employment preparation and ACT pre-learner licence training.

Individual support provided for young people included help accessing Centrelink, assistance applying for housing and accessing mental health programs.

Over the year YET operated the "Got Your Back" support group that was attended weekly by a number of young people impacted by domestic violence.

YET has been delivering the ACT Pre-Learner Licence Course (formally Road Ready) to vulnerable young people for almost ten years, running four times a year from the Woden Youth Centre.

After changes to the ACT Learner and Provisional Licencing system, and the recent over-representation of young people involved in serious car crashes, the team were determined to increase young driver education and to address the challenge in access to driving lessons. YET was successful in receiving a grant from Hands Across Canberra and the Snow Foundation to provide free, professional driving lessons and road user courses.

YET plans to increase the courses they are able to deliver and are applying to become accredited to deliver the ACT Safer Driver Course and ACT Vulnerable Road User Course. If successful, they will be the first and only youth team in Canberra to achieve this.



Representatives from the Child, Youth and Family Services team

Raw Potential

Raw Potential provides support to young people aged 12 to 25 who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness. This is an outreach model and youth workers provide support all over Canberra by meeting young people where they are.

Support includes help with access to housing, healthcare, dental care and building self-esteem through social outings. 'Raw Connection' is the name of the social outings organised and are delivered in collaboration between Synergy Group and WCS's Raw Potential program.

Social outings included a high ropes adventure park and go-karting. These outings are centred around a fun day-long activity where the young people are required to use problem solving skills and trust in each other to complete the activity. Participants begin to build:

Connection to self

- Resilience (to recover from setbacks and adapt to change)
- Confidence (to believe in one's self and team members)

Connection to others

- Compassion (to care about others, treat people with kindness)
- Social competence (to respect and express appreciation for others, present ideas and listen to others)

These opportunities would not be possible without the collaboration and support of Synergy Group.

As the COVID pandemic restrictions begin to relax, the Aged Care team was able to resume many previous activities and programs. Transport trips increased by over 16% compared to 2021–22, and attendance at social groups grew by 11%. The team remained adaptable throughout this period as health requirements changed, ensuring clients remained connected and supported.

FAST FACTS



10,358
hours of social groups



9,162
transport trips



5,407
hours of in-home support



71
individuals received intensive support

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

The CHSP grant includes funding for the domestic and shopping assistance, personal care, individual social support and social groups, as well as transport. The CHSP program takes a “Wellness and Reablement” approach. This means that support workers assist and empower clients to improve their physical, social and emotional wellbeing, and to live as independently and safely as possible in their own homes and communities. Individualised care plans help clients and support workers to focus on a clients’ goals, strengths and desired outcomes, rather than “doing for” clients.

Brokerage services

WCS’s brokerage services have extended their offering to provide a limited amount of services to home care package providers. Transport, domestic assistance and personal care can be purchased from WCS by home care package (HCP) recipients through their HCP providers. This has been well received by the organisations we have partnered with, and has enabled some CHSP clients to remain with WCS services when they move to a HCP.

Volunteers

A team of volunteers with their wealth of experience, talents and skills continues to work alongside our staff to support and enhance programs. Volunteers assist with driving buses for social outings, leading activities such as art and music, and bringing people together with shared experience. A great example of a peer-led group is the Snowy Group, whose members worked on the Snowy Hydro project. We extend our gratitude to the team of Aged Care volunteers who made it possible.



Representatives from the Aged Care team

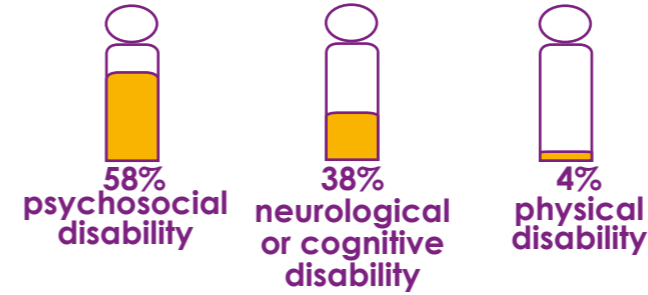
Aged Care Consumer Advisory Group

WCS’s Aged Care Consumer Advisory Group meets every two months. This important partnership engages service users and managers in gathering feedback, making service improvements, increasing access to aged care services, and providing input into WCS policies and procedures. There are currently six consumer representatives on this group, including the Chair.

In January 2023, WCS implemented the new Commonwealth care finder program along with four other organisations in the ACT. Care finders support vulnerable older people who have difficulty arranging or engaging with services without intensive support, and do not have family or friends who can help. Assistance to date has included linking service users to health services, social supports, housing and homelessness services, My Aged Care and other community services.

FAST FACTS

We support over 200 participants who identified as having:



We have provided ongoing support to many of our participants for over 8 years.



WCS’s National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services offer support to community members living with significant and permanent disabilities.

WCS’s support coordination and recovery coaching services focus on supporting participants to strengthen and maintain their independence through the implementation of their NDIS plans. Staff work closely with participants and their significant others, to help them address complex barriers, establish strong support systems and design strategies to achieve their individual goals.

WCS’s direct service program offers one-on-one and group-based support focused on assistance with daily life, assistance with social and community participation, and individual skill development. Participants are supported to co-design activities that enhance their quality of life and support them to work towards their NDIS goals. These are implemented by our dedicated team of support workers.

WCS has continued to offer two unique social groups — the Friday Social Lunch and Thursday ‘Your Space’ drop-in. These groups provide a safe and supportive environment for participants to access the community and connect with others.

In 2023 social work services was launched, offering time-limited case management designed to assist participants to build their capacity to self-advocate and navigate complex health and welfare systems.

The NDIS Service User Engagement (SUE) group was formed, consisting of four service users. The focus of this group is co-designing service offerings and resources, and providing feedback on opportunities for improvement.



Representatives from the NDIS team

The WCS Board approved an exciting initiative to expand WCS’s NDIS offerings to allied health. Plans have commenced to develop occupational therapy and speech pathology, with commencement of services planned for late 2023.

WCS's suite of programs has exemplified the unwavering dedication to mental health and community wellbeing. From facilitating therapeutic group sessions and providing crucial post-crisis support to addressing specialised needs such as hoarding, we have consistently bridged gaps and forged paths to recovery. Our holistic approach, rooted in empathy, expertise, and evidence-based practices, has empowered countless individuals on their journey towards mental wellness, self-reliance, and enriched community integration.

FAST FACTS



531 participants supported



1,159 participant attendances



5 successful NDIS applications



14 groups facilitated



300 participants connected to ACT services



8,033 contact hours with participants

Mental Health Groups

WCS successfully facilitated 14 distinct therapeutic groups, recording 1,159 total attendances from 72 individuals. It's heartening to see these sessions resonate with so many people in the ACT community, highlighting the significance of group interventions in our approach to mental health.

The Way Back Support Service (TWBSS)

TWBSS, funded by the Capital Health Network (CHN) and supported by the ACT government, offers vital psychosocial assistance in the crucial months following a suicide attempt. Accessible through referrals from hospitals, emergency departments, and the Home Assessment and Acute Response Team (HAART), the service ensures that those in recovery receive consistent support tailored to their needs. From helping individuals adhere to discharge protocols to connecting them with their GP and other essential services, TWBSS is dedicated to walking alongside each person, emphasising that they are not alone on their recovery journey. TWBSS team supported 139 individuals during their recovery after a suicide attempt.



Representatives from the Mental Health team

Transition to Recovery (TRec)

The TRec program continues to be an anchor of support for the ACT community. With a dedicated approach spanning more than a decade, TRec offers intensive community outreach for 12 weeks. This assists individuals as they transition back to their community after an acute mental health episode, and diligently working to prevent relapses. The TRec team supported 179 individuals after an acute mental health episode.

Southside Community Step-Up, Step-Down Program (SC-SUSD)

SC-SUSD, located in a community setting, collaborates seamlessly with Canberra Health Services to offer holistic mental health support. The two-week residential stay, complemented by the Stride-WCS partnership, delivers mental health prevention and recovery support in a secure residential framework. This is followed by a four-week intensive outreach program provided by WCS, aiming to fortify participants' resilience and promote social inclusion. SC-SUSD team supported 56 participants during the outreach phase of this program.

Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program (CPSP)

CPSP continues its dedication to addressing gaps in mental health support, serving those grappling with severe mental health conditions. The program assists the 'missing middle' - individuals who are not adequately catered for by the NDIS and where psychological therapies alone are not sufficient. To address these needs, WCS offers three tailored programs: New Path, Continuity of Support (CoS), and Access Enabling.

The CPSP team supported 144 individuals, with 5 participants successfully transitioning onto the NDIS.

Hoarding Advocacy Support Service (HASS)

The HASS, under the guidance of the ACT government's Hoarding Case Management Group (HCMG), continues its focused commitment to aid individuals facing the complexities of hoarding.

The team delivered a 'Buried in Treasures' 16-week program to members of the community, which received positive feedback. This program guides individuals on a journey to understand and counteract their hoarding behaviours. Beyond individual assistance, HASS promotes broader community understanding through specialised training sessions for organisations. The HASS team worked intensively with 13 individuals who struggle with hoarding disorder.

The Big Issue

The WCS Big Issue team was privileged to continue supporting vendors to build their businesses after the previous year of COVID lockdowns and restrictions.

FAST FACTS



16,973 magazines sold



1,646 calendars sold



45 vendors



\$96,126 profit for vendors



\$617 average income for top three vendors per edition sold



\$264 average income per vendor, per edition earned

Partnering with The Big Issue (TBI) Australia, ACT Government and the Snow Foundation, WCS was able to create opportunities for Vendors to build new skills, develop relationships and connect to valuable services.

Our vendors often face barriers to general employment due to a variety of reasons, including mental illness, addiction, homelessness, and disability. Selling TBI magazine provides low-barrier opportunities for people to earn a meaningful income, build their confidence and connect with their community and support networks.

It also provides vendors with other benefits including connection to community, reduced social isolation, improved health and wellbeing and increased employability skills.

WCS was successful in continuing our partnership with ACT Government to deliver TBI in Canberra. This will enable WCS to assist vendors with additional supports in addition to selling the magazine.

WCS also received a grant from the Snow Foundation. This will continue to assist the TBI team to raise awareness about the magazine in Canberra.



A Big Issue Vendor selling a magazine using pay wave

FAST FACTS

-  **120** community volunteers
-  **397** people accessed emergency food relief
-  **40** individuals supported by CASP
-  **15,736** items sold at Heartbeat Café
-  **9** people supported into employment
-  **63** community engagement programs and events

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Community Engagement team facilitates opportunities for connection to others, place and services through our various programs including: Community Development, Volunteering, Community Assistance Support Program (CASP), Intake Services, The Little Pantry, Skills for Life and Heartbeat Café. Our programs are often the first place of contact for individuals to access information and support, and to develop a sense of purpose and belonging. This past year has seen growth and expansion, with the team establishing a number of new programs beyond Woden and Weston Creek strengthening WCS's footprint in the Molonglo Valley.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In partnership with the Suburban Land Agency (SLA), WCS delivered a creative and cultural program consisting of 27 activities in Whitlam, which saw the community enliven and become a destination for the broader Canberra region. Activities included; summer tunes, creative workshops with local artists, seed raising and propagation, and Care, Share, Repair — a sustainable fashion swap and repurposing event.

Alongside SLA we also fostered community connections with local Whitlam residents through the Mingle South program. A particular joy was seeing the community's enthusiasm to socialise and bond through the various activities; playgroup, mums n bubs fitness, outdoor bootcamp, crafts and Music on the Green – an event initiated by community.

In Woden, the Community Development team built momentum with Lyon's local residents and businesses supporting them to create a vibrant and unified neighbourhood through the placemaking fund project; which saw a community mural be painted within a bus shelter. Lyon's community started a working group to plan further activations including a community picnic, planting day and mosaic project.



Representatives from the Community Development and Engagement team

Skills For Life:

Adult Community Education Program

The Skills For Life: Adult Community Education (ACE) program is a new WCS initiative that supports people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities to become job ready.

Through the ACE, sixteen participants have been supported by an Educator to learn language, literacy, and numeracy (LLN) skills specific to the work place. The ACE program removes barriers to participation by offering transport and onsite child minding.

A particular highlight of the program can be seen with participant Sonu, who, through participation of the first 15-week class block secured part time employment with Heartbeat Café.

Feedback from a participant

"This is my first job, it was a bit challenging for me but with the help of WCS I am learning new skills. I am developing new knowledge about food handling and food habits of different people. It's an enjoyable and friendly environment to work in the café and to deal with multicultural people."



The Little Pantry provides emergency food relief to those in need

The Little Pantry

The Little Pantry provides emergency food relief to individuals experiencing financial hardship. It also acts as a gateway to other service supports. Following the rise in costs of living, we saw individuals who had previously broken the cycle of poverty, return for assistance.

In the past year we also created multicultural packs to ensure we are meeting the varying nutritional needs and tastes of our community. We would like to thank our donors and volunteers without whom, we would not be able to provide this valuable service to our community.



ACE program participant in an English conversation group

Fresh pastries at Heartbeat Café, WCS's newly opened social enterprise cafe



HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Like all Australians this year, Canberrans have faced numerous challenges related to the cost of rent, mortgages and broader costs of living. These national crises have impacted clients and staff alike and have seen increasing demand for support and for crisis accommodation. Responding to this increase, the homelessness teams have provided compassionate and quality support for Canberrans at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

FAST FACTS



\$1.5+ million
in brokerage
support



2,000+
Canberrans
supported
by OneLink



174
individuals/families
and 146 children
supported with hotel
brokerage



292
clients supported
by STS



43
households accessed
Client Support Fund



54
clients supported
through Rough
Sleepers Working
Group

ONELINK

The OneLink team and its partner organisations have been committed to ensuring as many people as possible can be supported to find safe, stable and secure accommodation in times of crisis.

The program has noted some emerging challenges including:

- Increasing numbers of individuals and families presenting with accompanying animals. This is difficult as many accommodation options are not equipped to support accompanying animals.
- Increasing numbers of families presenting without accommodation, often involving young children and/or pregnancy. This is challenging due to the cost and availability of multi-beds/room accommodation for families in the current climate of reduced rental options and higher rent costs.
- Wider rental and cost of living crisis, which has continued to create a lack of exit pathways for individuals and families into longer term housing.

There has been a steady increase in demand for crisis support and emergency hotel accommodation. Hotel accommodation can help to prevent people from becoming homeless or provide interim accommodation whilst people are waiting to enter emergency or transitional accommodation. However, it brings other challenges such as isolation and increased food and living costs.

OneLink also continued the Client Support Fund (CSF) and the Rough Sleepers Working Group (RSWG).

CSF provides assistance for clients needing to develop skills to independently maintain their tenancies. RSWG accommodates people who are sleeping rough to reduce the mental health and physical health impacts by providing support in a housing first model.

OneLink facilitates brokerage to partnering services to assist in meeting some costs associated with support for individuals and families engaged in these respective programs.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES



Representatives from the OneLink team

SUPPORTIVE TENANCY SERVICE (STS)

WCS's STS program aims to prevent evictions and subsequent experience of homelessness for Canberrans. The program supports existing tenancies and assists people to find and access appropriate and affordable housing.

STS continues to see challenges in the rental market with increasing rental costs and fewer financially achievable or sustainable private market properties. During 2023, STS clients have waited longer to find new accommodation and continued to compete with high numbers of other applicants looking for rental properties.



Representatives from the Supportive Tenancy Service team

FAST FACTS



472 total employees



45 employees were born in different countries



255 employees came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds



6 employees identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



PEOPLE AND CULTURE (P&C)

The P&C team provides advice and support to all employees and managers within WCS.

In 2023 the team expanded its recruitment advisory capabilities with the employment of a Human Resources (HR) administration officer. This position bolsters a dedicated team of HR professionals who advise the organisation on issues such as contract management, staff performance, licensing requirements, worker's compensation and staff retention.

The team has focused much of the year on consolidating and streamlining a range of internal processes. This work has included improvements to induction programs, the management of casual staff and the organisation's delegation instruments. P&C is also leading the negotiations on a new Enterprise Agreement. This significant work is scheduled to be concluded by mid-2024.

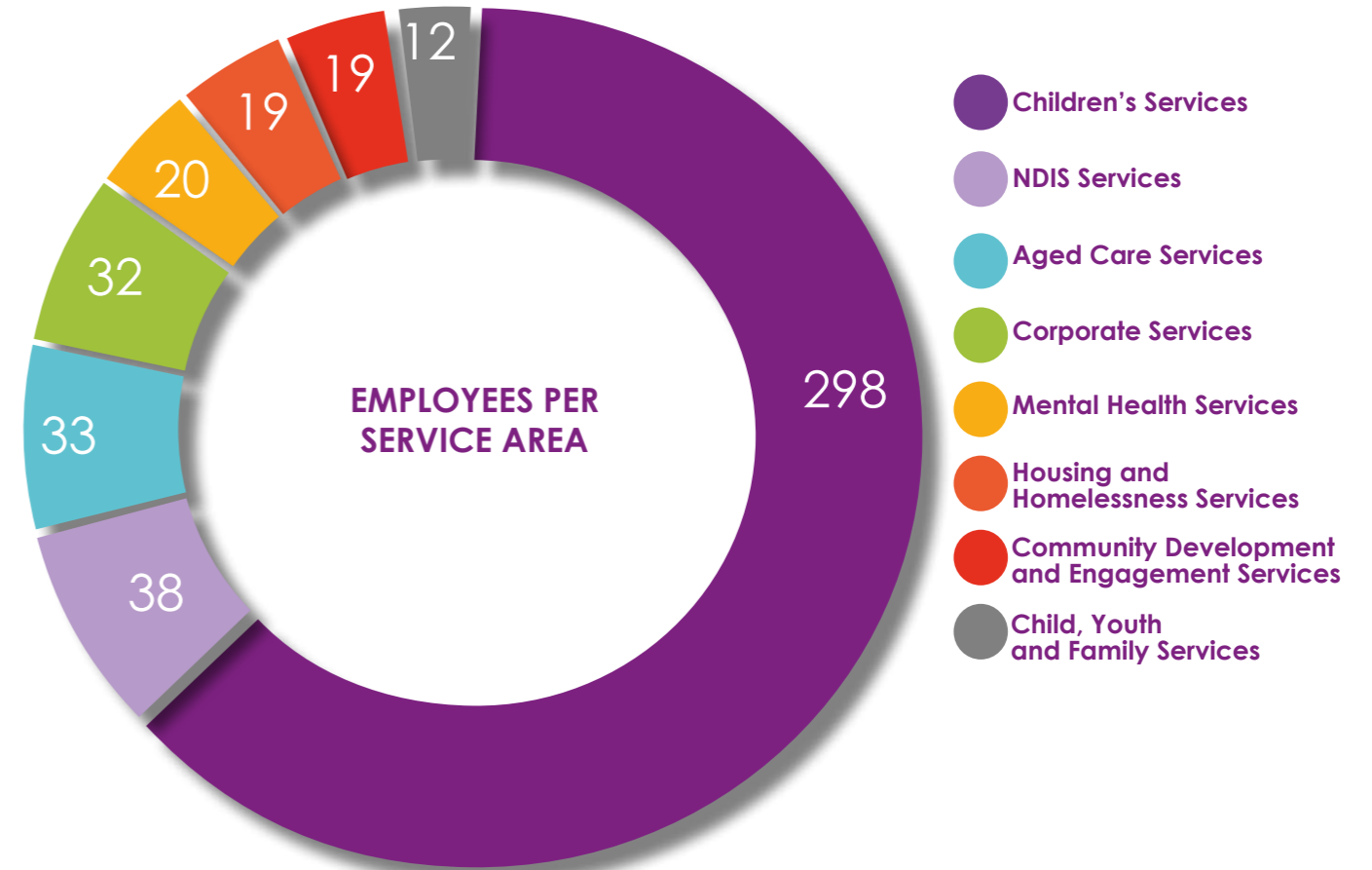
In 2024 P&C will continue to help the organisation recruit and develop a highly skilled workforce, support managers to drive the business and ensure WCS is accountable and transparent in the delivery of its services.



Representatives from the People and Culture team



Representatives from the Quality and Risk team



QUALITY AND RISK

The Quality and Risk team is responsible for policy, enterprise risk, internal audit, organisational accreditation and overall quality assurance.

These functions are central to everything WCS does. Whether it is the development of a policy or the conduct of an internal audit, Quality and Risk serves to ensure WCS meets its regulatory obligations and is delivering services according to the needs and expectations of our service users.

During the reporting period, WCS implemented a range of business and continuous improvement initiatives including the introduction of a Governance, Risk and Compliance platform. This platform brings together information on risk, corporate planning, accreditation, incident reporting and compliance.

This platform, which also holds all of WCS's corporate documents, ensures accountability and improves the retention of corporate knowledge.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (L&D)

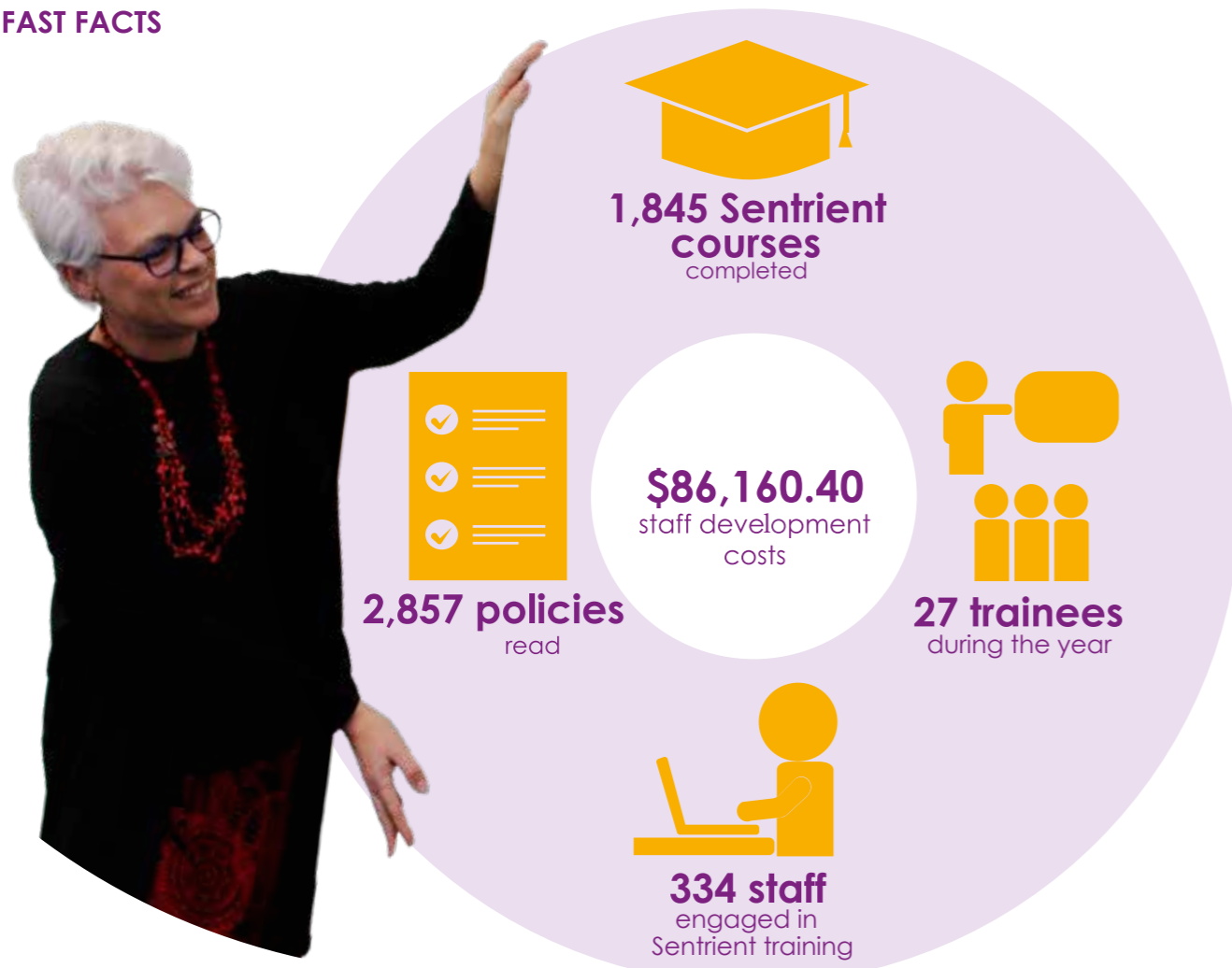
The L&D team is responsible for identifying the learning and development requirements of WCS staff across all of our service areas. The team coordinate and support WCS-wide training events, provide advice on training options, manage our trainees, review professional performance and development plans, and develop and deliver in-house training as required. L&D also maintain the WCS L&D internal intranet that includes information on external training that is available to our staff and mandatory and recommended training for each service area.

During the year the L&D team coordinated a wide range of training activities including: service user engagement workshops, acknowledgement of country in Ngunnawal language training, supervision workshops, vicarious trauma training and new leader workshops.

The L&D team implemented a more centralised and automated learning management model. Mandatory training is now coordinated centrally, as is the WCS's training budget. The team commenced work on a whole of WCS training matrix which maps mandatory and recommended training against positions. This new approach to the management of learning in WCS has dramatically improved the ability to report on training completion rates, training expenditure, training gaps and provide assurance WCS is meeting its regulatory obligations.

In March 2023 WCS launched Sentrient, the new compliance portal. Sentrient is a compliance system that has a variety of online courses on topics such as safety, discrimination, harassment and diversity. These courses are reviewed, approved and updated by legal experts to ensure they are informative and contemporary. Sentrient is also used to ensure key WCS policies are shared, read and understood by our staff.

FAST FACTS



Representative of the Learning and Development team

FINANCE

The Finance team was pivotal in bolstering the WCS Sustainability Project. They spearheaded the identification of cost-saving initiatives and supported business segments in revenue-generation efforts.

The team also successfully implemented Bizview, a tool that standardised the budgeting process. The team's involvement extended beyond traditional financial functions, assuming an advisory role as strategic business partners that align financial strategies with organisational goals. The team led the successful transfer of WCS's banking facilities to NAB, streamlining corporate card management and further enhancing financial efficiency and transparency.



Representatives from the Finance team

ICT, FACILITIES AND SECURITY

The ICT team has achieved several critical milestones contributing to WCS's operational effectiveness. ICT has successfully migrated WCS's customer relationship management from Visicase to Lumary, which has improved the management of NDIS clients and provided a more user-friendly interface, enhancing overall service delivery and user experience.

Cybersecurity has been a significant focus for the ICT team. They conducted a comprehensive assessment of the organisation's cybersecurity posture, identifying vulnerabilities and areas for improvement. The audit led to the development and implementation of a robust cybersecurity action plan that will address the gaps and improve WCS's cybersecurity stance.


In addition, the team proactively engaged an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) specialist to optimise the organisation's systems and applications. This specialist conducts a thorough environmental scan of all of WCS's systems and applications to articulate business requirements precisely.


This initiative will seamlessly integrate and consolidate WCS's diverse business systems, fostering improved data flow, process efficiency, and overall business performance.





Representatives from the ICT, Facilities and Security team


FAST FACTS


- 

5,301
total followers
on social media
- 

291,119
total
impressions
- 

4,214
post link clicks
- 

17,763
total
engagements
- 

54
total media hits
across print, digital,
TV and radio
- 

1.1 million
impressions
from advertising
banners

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Marketing and Communications team bolstered WCS's external communication, public relations, stakeholder engagement and brand recognition within the community.

As part of the marketing strategy to boost WCS's brand awareness and digital presence, the team reinforced all of our social media channels, including LinkedIn and Instagram, to effectively reach more audience and further amplify important messages and announcements to the community.

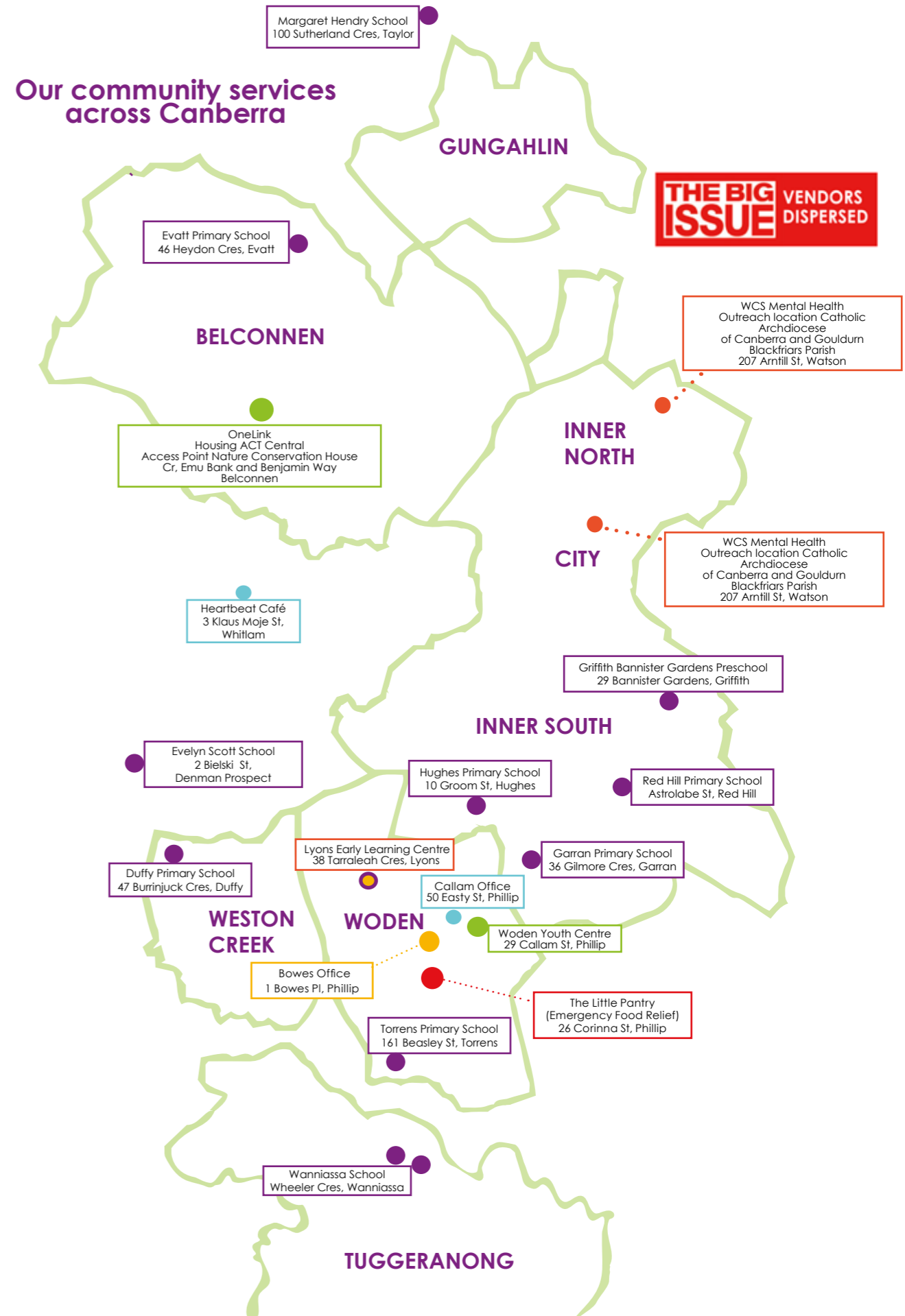
WCS also strengthened our advertising and media relations by partnering with Region Media, as well as reaching out to traditional media outlets to elevate our profile and credibility.

Additional communications were also managed through WCS's internal newsletter, Inside Story, which is sent monthly to all employees and volunteers to keep them in the loop with key organisational updates and developments.



Representatives from the Marketing and Communications team

Our community services across Canberra



CHILD SAFE WORKING GROUP

WCS's commitment to upholding the child safe organisation principles is ongoing as WCS continues to embed these principles into all aspects of WCS's work. As a child safe organisation, WCS promotes the safety and wellbeing of children through establishing policies and procedures that offer a consistent approach for all employees, volunteers and service users. This has included updating our Code of Conduct, position descriptions, child protection and reporting policy, and working on our complaints and feedback procedures.

Children and young people have the right to be heard on matters that involve them and to contribute to decision making about their lives.



Representatives from the Child Safe Working Group

WCS is developing child-friendly complaints and feedback processes that empower children and young people to speak up and provide feedback. We are committed to listening to their feedback and improving our programs accordingly.

Children and young people deserve to feel safe, nurtured and protected, and WCS is proud to continue working with the principles to ensure the best outcomes for all our children and young people.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN WORKING GROUP

WCS's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group implements the actions set out in RAP 2021–2023, within each of the pillars of reconciliation: Respect, Relationships and Opportunities.

Activities this year include:

- Hosting an annual Reconciliation Week morning tea with our guest speaker, Ngunnawal man Cheyne Halloran. Cheyne shared some of his personal journey and how important the work is which is being done on language revival, connection to country and culture on Ngunnawal country. These insights reflect the 2023 National Reconciliation Week theme, 'Be a Voice to Generations'.
- WCS employees celebrated National Reconciliation Week and shared what reconciliation meant to them. This was turned into an artwork by the children at Lollipop ELC and was named "Drops of Feeling." The painting represents our journey of: Connection, Belonging, Healing, Listening and Understanding.
- Seeking advice from Ngunnawal elders and their families to support the changing of our Acknowledgement of Country, respecting the connection to this land that Ngunnawal people have, and acknowledging connection to this land from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who call Ngunnawal country home.
- Conducting an internal an audit on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

We thank WCS employees for continuing to support and progress our reconciliation journey, through the work of our RAP. This group will continue to build our cultural knowledge, understanding within WCS and strengthen partnerships with the Ngunnawal community.

DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP

WCS's Diversity Working Group has achieved significant milestones, including successfully acquiring the Capital of Equality Grant. Our primary focus has been on enhancing the capacity to embrace individuals from the LGBTIQ+ community. This effort has enabled us to conduct seven LGBTIQ+ foundation training sessions in collaboration with Meridian, benefiting approximately 175 employees. We are halfway through these sessions, and the feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. The grant's second phase selects employees from various service lines to partake in a train-the-trainer program. These individuals will facilitate internal employee training over the next 24 months.

The group presented a session at the leadership forum titled "Supporting people with disabilities in the workplace," marking the initiation of ongoing work.

Throughout the year, WCS has commemorated events such as International Women's Day, the Multicultural Festival, and Wear It Purple Day. These occasions have provided excellent opportunities for teams across WCS to unite, celebrate, and raise awareness of causes that resonate with many of our employees.

SERVICE USER ENGAGEMENT (SUE) WORKING GROUP

WCS is proud to have evolved its Service User Engagement (SUE) commitment across WCS over the last twelve months. Our commitment has focused on giving service users and their support persons a powerful voice in their service provision, as well as providing opportunities for service users to advise our executive team on organisational quality improvement.

Over the past year, WCS welcomed a new SUE Officer who brings her own experience of mental illness, as well as experience working with vulnerable people across multiple sectors.

Each WCS service area has continued to be supported by the SUE project to promote and implement and evaluate SUE, working towards a WCS culture of co-design, co-production, and partnering. There is great interest in the project and this is reflected in the growing number of service users and their support persons engaging in reference groups and registers of people prepared to be consulted on one-off issues.

Various tools are being used to measure how service users and their support persons are having their voice heard. These methods include reference groups (being used as focus groups), interviews, surveys and case studies. SUE support continues to provide service areas with tool kits of SUE supplies and training and professional development opportunities.



Representatives from the SUE Working Group

ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP

WCS is committed to the future sustainability of our community. We are committed to becoming a more environmentally friendly and responsible organisation through investigating, considering and implementing financially, environmentally, and socially sustainable changes to our business that will have a positive environmental impact.

This year's achievements include:

- Establishing collection points for cans and bottles across our offices to increase recycling options and to create a (modest) income stream that has been reinvested into WCS Youth Engagement activities
- Creating information for teams on how to reduce waste through reducing our paper usage
- Hosting activities such as creating reusable wrapping paper and reusable holiday decorations
- Promoting and establishing sustainable practices through the Heartbeat Café in Whitlam.

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support we received from our valued funding partners and supporters. Together, we make positive and tangible differences to the lives of members in our community, especially those who are vulnerable or experiencing disadvantage.

WCS operated with support from funding partners:

ACT Government	Hands Across Canberra
ArtsACT (Chief Ministers Office)	Health Directorate
Australian Federal Government	National Disability Insurance Agency
Canberra Southern Cross Club	Raw Potential Canberra
Capital Health Network	Skills Canberra
Chilliebeanmedia	Snow Foundation
Community Services Directorate	Stride Mental Health Limited
Department of Health	Suburban Land Agency
Department of Education, Skills and Employment	Thirrili
Department of Social Services	Transport Canberra and City Services
Education Directorate	Westfield Woden
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	



WCS partners with Thirrili to deliver culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention service.

WCS has worked with and received support from:

AccessPay	Alfred Deakin High School
ACT Shelter	Anglicare NSW South, NSW West, ACT
Aged and Community Care Providers Association	Australian Institute of Food Safety
AIM	Barnardos
Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT	Baringa Early Learning Centre
Alfred Deakin High School	Beyond Blue
Anglicare NSW South, NSW West, ACT	Big W – Woden
Australian Institute of Food Safety	Bunnings Tuggeranong

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Canberra College	Marsh Pty Ltd
Canberra Health Services – Clinical Partners	Melrose High School
Canberra Institute of Technology	Mental Health Consumer Network
Canberra Relief Network	Mental Health Community Coalition
Canberra Weekly	MIEACT
Cancer Council	Molonglo Valley Community Forum
Capital Region Community Service	Molonglo Valley Mingle
Care Financial	Mount Stromlo High School
Carers ACT	Multicultural Hub Canberra
Charles Wright School	Namadgi School
Coles – Woden	National Disability Services
Communities at Work	Northside Community Service
Community Services #1	Office for Disability – ACT Government
Companion House	OzHarvest
Council of the Ageing	PCYC
Curtin Primary School	Reconciliation Australia
Domestic Violence Crisis Service	Red Hill Primary School
Duffy Primary School	Region Media
Early Childhood Australia	Roundabout ACT
Erindale College	Royal Life Saving
Evelyn Scott School	Salvation Army
Families ACT	St Albans Anglican Church
Feros Care	St Vincent De Paul Society
Garran Primary School	Synergy
GIVIT	The Big Issue Australia
Goodwin Village – Farrer	The Body Shop
Griffith Bannister Gardens Preschool	The Butcher Shop – Woden
Grill'd – Woden	The Mawson Club
Harmonie German Club	Toora Women's Inc
Headspace – Canberra & Tuggeranong	Torrens Primary School
Hellenic Club	Tuggeranong Arts Centre/Woden Arts
Helping ACT	Volunteering ACT
Hesta	Weston Creek Community WCouncil
Hughes Baptist Church	Woden Hospital School
Hughes Primary School	Woden Library
Immanuel Lutheran Church	Woden Valley Community Council
ISPT Property Group	Woolworths – Woden
Junction Youth Health Services	Wotso Woden
Lawyerbank	Yedding Mura
Libraries ACT	Youth Coalition of the ACT
Lyons Early Childhood School	YWCA Canberra
Margaret Hendry School	
Marymead Catholic Care	

*Building connected communities
and enriching people's lives*



**Woden
Community
Service**

Discover more



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