



 Woden Community Service

Annual Report 2023-2024

Building connected communities
and enriching people's lives

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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.

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.



"Ngunnawal Mindjagari" by Ngunnawal and Wiradjuri artist Megan Daley
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BOARD CHAIR REPORT



We entered this last year with the hope of consolidating our operations and progressing beyond the shadows of the pandemic. But the challenges keep confronting the sector, and we have been working to place WCS in a position to continue to meet community needs, but in a sustainable manner. This requires the Board to make difficult decisions, none of which rest lightly on us. We continue to make the best decisions we can to meet community expectations in a continually difficult environment.

That said though, we are thrilled to see the expansion of our social enterprise offerings including the move into gardening and catering. The catering has built on the back of the work of the Whitlam Café and the

newly opened Pulse Café at Symonston. These services, while establishing as businesses, are also drawing on workers with vulnerabilities to be part of the staffing group. This work has already started to shape our capacity to provide services to our community and at the same time support vulnerable workers. The connections that these services are already creating with our existing work is exciting and will bring significant ongoing benefits to the community.

There have also been some very difficult decisions for the Board. The closure of Lollipop Early Learning Centre to merge with our Lyons site heralded the end of an era. Due to the commercial development alongside the building causing decreasing enrolments and challenges to continue to meet our commitment to our children and their carers and no viable alternatives to move our service, we had to wind up the service. We had some lovely feedback from people who had attended the centre decades ago, noting its longstanding presence in the Woden community. We were also able to find places for all children that required it at our nearby Lyons location.

Another difficult decision was withdrawing from providing NDIS Direct Support Services. Supporting NDIS has been a continued loss-making service since its inception, and the losses became too much for our service to support. This led to the loss of staff and the transfer of 180 participants to other services, with many participants with WCS for a long time. We transitioned all our clients successfully to alternate services. The lack of adequate funding from the NDIS to operate these services effectively has been a challenge we could no longer sustain. This had led to WCS heavily subsidising the program. We, alongside other disability providers continue to lobby and advocate for adequate NDIS funding.

Despite all these challenges, and with the wonderful support of the CEO and her dedicated team, we have stabilised the business operations and found new ways to support our community. As our business shifts to meet ongoing challenges, we are comforted that we can continue to serve our community as best we can, and in keeping with our closely held values.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to extend heartfelt thanks to the CEO, her executive, all the WCS staff and volunteers, and of course the community for your continuing support.

Brett Streatfield
Board Chair

Board Chair appointed Oct 2022
Director and Treasurer appointed Oct 2016

MEET THE WCS BOARD



Glenn Powell
Deputy Board Chair appointed October 2022
Director appointed October 2016



Alison Oakleigh
Deputy Board Chair appointed October 2022
Director appointed October 2016



Catherine Campbell
Director appointed October 2021



Sasha Posthuma-Grbic
Director appointed October 2021



Rangarajan Parimala
Director appointed October 2021



Michael Miller
Director appointed October 2016

It has been a year of contrasts with some highs and lows, during which our wonderful staff have continued to show innovation and resilience.

The launch of our Culture Statement was a significant event for the organisation. This was a culmination of many discussions with our Leadership Forum to identify key behaviours expected of staff at all levels right across WCS. We will continue to work on embedding this into WCS.

The ACT government's program of rolling out the commissioning of services continues to have a significant impact on WCS. As a large provider of many different government funded community services, we have been involved in the commissioning cycles of various ACT government areas. At every available point we have shared our views about the service gaps and needs and how these could be met more effectively. We continue to advocate to the government for opportunities to do genuine co-design work to create innovative and responsive services.

With the cost-of-living pressures increasing we have continued to see a rise in demand for our services. Among these are people seeking food from our Little Pantry with a growing number of families and low-income earners. In addition, more people are seeking help from our mental health services. Our OneLink Centralised Intake Service for people seeking emergency housing continues to see more and more people unable to afford the rents in the ACT or access public housing. This is often exacerbated by the need to escape domestic and family violence. We continue to work with ACTCOSS and ACT Shelter to advocate for social and affordable housing across the ACT.

Our overarching Service User Engagement Committee met through the year, and we have reviewed how we have been using their skills and insights. To this end we are looking at many more ways in which we can have their input into policies and programs. There has been some excellent input by service users in some of our service areas on the development of frameworks and refinement of policies.

We learned of the closure of Callam Offices which ends many years of it being the home for our head office and various services. We are working closely with ACT Government to rehouse us. This reinforces the need for Woden to have its own community centre where we can bring together all our services and provide the broader community with activity and meeting spaces.

It was exciting to formally launch our new community space at the Woden Westfield Hub. This was the culmination of a productive and valuable partnership with Westfield management who have supported the establishment of the hub. Many WCS and external groups are now running programs at the hub. Having our Little Pantry emergency food outlet located there has proved to be a much better option for people to come and access food.

I want to thank the Board for the ongoing excellent support and direction they provide WCS. In addition, many thanks to the Executive, Leadership Forum and all other staff and volunteers for the wonderful work they continue to do every day.



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).



Blessy Pascual
Chief Operating Officer

Blessy, a Chartered Accountant, joined WCS in October 2016. She has over 25 years of experience in financial management, business advice, taxation, audit, risk management, systems application and integration, and financial governance. She has held leadership roles across public accounting, for-profit, and for-purpose organisations in Australia and New Zealand.



Vivienne Gould
Executive Manager of Children's Services

Vivienne joined WCS in August 2020 and the Executive Team in July 2021. She has 35 years of experience in children's services and the community sector. She has worked in service management, quality and compliance as well as delivering Early Childhood Education and Care qualifications.



Kerry Pearce
Executive Manager of Aged Care & Disability Services

Kerry is a registered Occupational Therapist, joining WCS in June 2023. She has over 40 years of experience in allied health service provision, senior management and business transformation across the public health, community and corporate sectors.



Tony Bill
Executive Manager of Corporate Governance

Tony joined WCS in October 2021 and the Executive Team in May 2023. He has worked with Defence and the AFP in various intelligence and corporate roles and has over 30 years of experience in the private, public and community sectors.



Leanne Heald
Executive Manager of Mental Health & Community Access

Leanne joined WCS in February 2016 and the Executive Team in March 2023. She has worked within the community sector for nearly 20 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

Our Values



Inclusion

We believe all people have a right to full inclusion as valued community members and we respect and encourage diversity in communities and our organisation.



Compassion

We offer kindness and understanding to people who need our support and work with others to build caring communities.



Hope

We are optimistic about the possibility of change and seek to inspire confidence for a better future with the people and communities we support.



Responsiveness

We adjust to meet changing community needs and are courageous in how we grow and develop as an organisation.



Integrity

We are committed to being honest, professional and accountable in our relationships and in everything we do.



Social Justice

We work to increase access and opportunity for all, particularly those who face disadvantage and discrimination.

WHAT WE DO

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 experiences 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 we are 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.



YEAR IN REVIEW



Culture Statement

Our Culture Statement reinforces our commitment to continuous improvement, accountability and transparent, timely communication across our organisation.



Speech Pathology

Our new service aims to provide high-quality, accessible speech pathology support to meet the needs of our community.



Veterans Home Care Program

Launched to support veterans with essential home maintenance, our new program is dedicated to helping those who served remain comfortable and safe at home.



Educator of the Year

We proudly celebrated WCS employee Rebecca Green, who was honoured as Educator of the Year at the Early Childhood Australia Awards.



Early Learning

We united our Lollipop and Lyon Early Learning Centres to strengthen our services and provide an enriched experience for children and families.



Community Hub

The Woden Community Hub was officially opened in Westfield Woden, marking an exciting new space for connection and support within our community.



Youth Services

We coordinated 3 Dental Rescue Days, providing essential care for 32 young people.



Mental Health Programs

We received additional funding from the Capital Health Network to expand our group-based mental health support services, enhancing our commitment to community wellbeing.



Social Enterprise

We opened our second Social Enterprise Pulse Cafe in Symonston and expanded our operations into catering.



Volunteering

Thank you to our incredible team of over 100 active volunteers! We positively impacted 307 people across 30 programs and activities.

OUR WORKFORCE

422
Total Employees

364
Employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

9
Employees identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

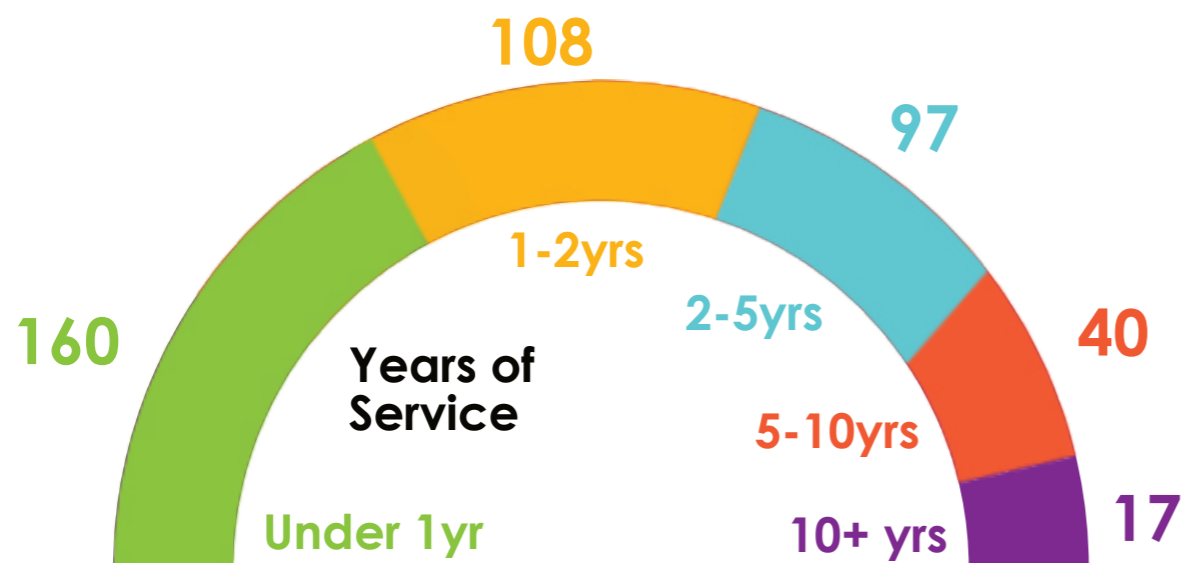
Number of employees by service area

- 272** Children's Services
- 36** Aged Care & Disability Services
- 32** Mental Health Services
- 19** Housing and Homelessness Services
- 18** Corporate Governance
- 16** Child, Youth and Family Services
- 15** Corporate Services
- 14** Social Enterprise



Our workforce is diverse, representing over 50 different countries of birth

Employee numbers by length of service



FINANCIAL REPORT

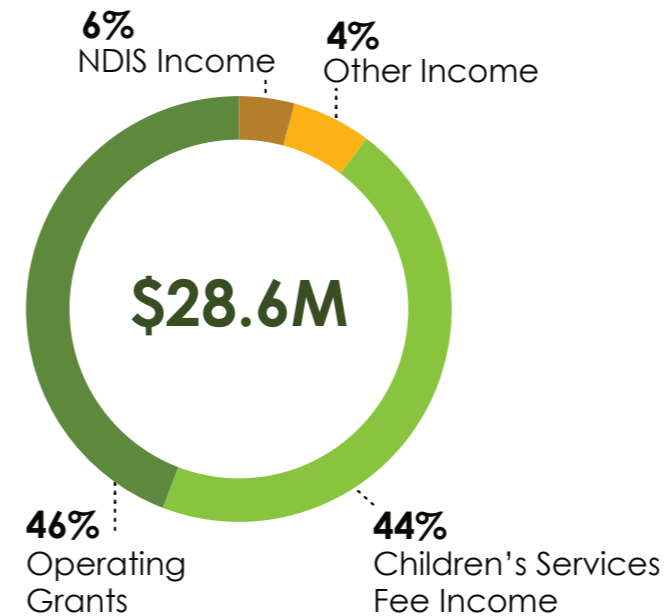
FY2023-24 has been a challenging year for WCS, resulting in a recorded deficit of \$624,479 for the year ended 30 June 2024.

Faced with rising cost pressures and the absence of much-needed pricing adjustments, WCS made the difficult decision to exit NDIS's direct support service during the year. Additionally, the declining enrolments and the increasing construction work at Corinna Street led to the closure of the Lollipop Early Learning Centre during the year.

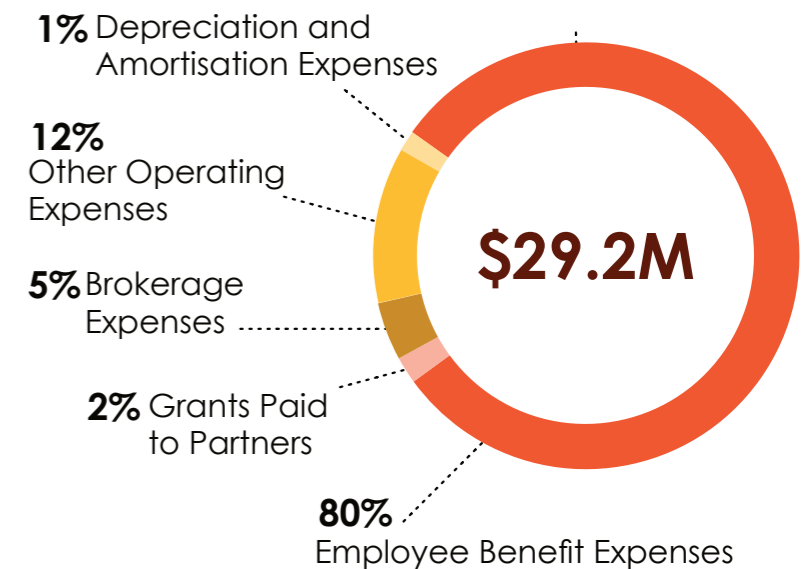
The closure of these services while paving the way for future savings, generated financial losses at the time.

As a community service organisation, employee expenses have been the dominant driver of cost growth. To safeguard future financial sustainability, WCS has strategically launched social enterprises that provide cleaning, gardening, catering, and café services. These ventures represent a key step in diversifying our revenue streams and enhancing long-term viability.

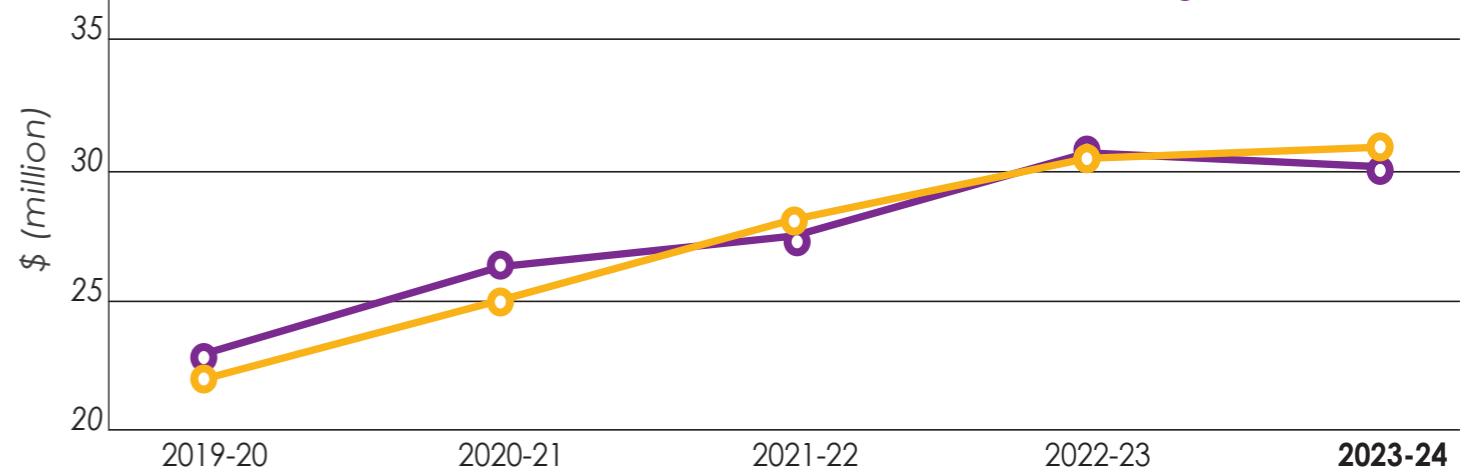
Revenue



Expenditure



Revenue and Expenditure Trend for Year ending 30 June 2024





WCS was proud to be able to recognise the performance of some of our many committed and talented staff at our annual awards presentation on 2 November 2023.

This year's major award winners were Rachel Ashton and Nishi Chatley.

Rachel was the recipient of the Betsy Gallagher Award, which recognised a front-line worker displaying excellence in their work.

Nishi received the Jennifer Bennett Award, which recognised an emerging leader from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

WCS congratulates and celebrates all the nominees and our two deserving award recipients.



Our Workplace Culture

We are committed to a culture where staff and service users feel **safe** and **valued**.

We are:

Diverse and **Inclusive**

Adaptive and **Responsive**

Accountable and **Transparent**

Committed to **continuous improvement**



CORPORATE SERVICES



Human Resources

This year was a time of significant change in WCS. Some of our services ceased, while others such as Social Enterprise and Allied Health Services commenced operations. Helping managers and staff navigate these changes was a key area of focus for HR. This support ranged from advising on process to interpreting employment conditions.

Change was also at the forefront of the industrial landscape during the year. WCS updated several key HR policies and procedures in line with the Closing the Loopholes Act and the Fair Work Act. Bargaining for a new Enterprise Agreement also got underway this year. The completion of this process is anticipated in the third quarter of 2024.

Marketing and Communications

The Marketing and Communications team focussed much of the year on growing WCS's social media profile and refreshing the organisation's visual presence. This work included the design of WCS's new Culture Statement.

The team is passionate about capturing the commitment, skill and diversity of our workforce. Visitors to WCS locations will notice an array of posters, flyers and other promotional material celebrating the values and culture of the organisation and our people. The Marketing and Communications Team can also be regularly seen at community events and open days capturing the engagement between our staff and the community we serve.

In the coming year, the team looks forward to developing a new Marketing Strategy, revitalising the organisation's website and helping WCS promote its growing number of new service offerings and business initiatives.

ICT, Facilities and Security

This year marked the achievement of several key initiatives in our ICT and Facilities Management Teams. Our ICT capabilities were outsourced, and our on-premises servers transitioned to the Cloud. We also upgraded our telephone systems and networked our printers. All these upgrades were critical steps in our plan to harden security settings, increase productivity and lower ongoing costs. The outsourcing of our ICT capabilities in particular provided improved access to specialist expertise and advice.

WCS was fortunate during the year to receive some complimentary office furniture. This generous donation helped transform WCS' office space into a more appealing and productive working environment. This visual transformation was especially timely as WCS works with the ACT Property Group to plan our move to a new and more contemporary premises in 2024.

Finance

During the year WCS made the transition to cashless transactions. This initiative helped streamline financial processes, increase security, and provide greater convenience for staff. We also made several improvements to our payroll system and processes. These enhancements bolstered security and simplified the employee experience, ensuring timely and accurate payroll management.

WCS was also pleased to announce, following a rigorous tender process, we were continuing our relationship with insurance broker, Marsh Pty. Ltd. Their expertise and reliable service have been critical in helping us assess and manage our financial risk environment.



Learning and Development

WCS's Learning and Development (L&D) Team coordinates and supports WCS training events, provides advice on training options, manages trainees, maintains centralised training records and develops and delivers in-house training.

During the year, the team coordinated a variety of training activities. Included among these were DoNOHarm safe storytelling, media training, vicarious trauma training and first aid courses. A highlight was the LGBTIQ+ workshops conducted in partnership with Meridian. This program, which included a train the trainer session, will be delivered internally next year.

Next year promises to be a year of growth for the team. We plan to develop and deliver more training in-house, beginning with first aid training in July 2024. As our capacity and capability grows, WCS will be well positioned to ensure the training we provide our staff is tailored, flexible and cost effective.

Quality and Risk

The Quality and Risk Team at WCS is responsible for policy, enterprise risk, internal audit, tender management, organisational accreditation and overall quality assurance. These functions are essential to WCS's operations, ensuring the organisation maximises revenue opportunities, meets regulatory obligations and aligns with the needs and expectations of its stakeholders.

This year the Quality and Risk Team coordinated WCS's reaccreditation against the QIC Health and Community Service Standards and the National Standards for Mental Health Services. This reaccreditation process occurs every three years and covers all aspects of WCS's operations. WCS recorded no non-conformances and was formally reaccredited in August 2024.

During the year the team also welcomed a new capability designed to centralise and strengthen WCS's tender and grant submissions. To date the Tender Management Team has implemented new processes, rolled out staff training and improved the integration of tender management principles into WCS's business practices.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES



"The boys love it; they don't want to leave at the end of the day."

"The kids have a great time; they love going to the movies and bounce. The staff are great, the kids love them too."

- SHP Families

Children Enrolment Statistics

69

Children identified as ATSI

288

Children with additional needs

655

Children from CALD backgrounds

2805

Total Children Enrolled

288 
Educators

2971 
Families accessed Children's Services

1400 
Children on average are in care each day

Educator of The Year

WCS Children's Services is proud to celebrate Rebecca Green (pictured right), the Evatt OSHC coordinator, who received the Educator of the Year award at the Early Childhood Australia Gala Awards in late 2023. This well-deserved recognition reflected Rebecca's commitment, leadership and professionalism.



School Holiday Programs

WCS operates nine school holiday programs across the ACT, all with individual programs designed to meet the interests of all children who attend. Children are welcome at any program, regardless of the school they attend.

Our programs are designed to provide children with relaxing, enjoyable and engaging experiences while they take time to wind down from the hustle and bustle of the school term. Consistent with our intent to ensure quality and diverse experiences, WCS implemented a new pricing structure this year. As a result, we were able to offer children an expanded range of excursion and in-centre activities. Highlights included visits to the National Zoo and Aquarium, Arboretum, tenpin bowling, local adventure playgrounds, Questacon, movies, Aboriginal art workshops, Lego robotics, orienteering and other sports clinics based on the children's interests

Lyons Early Learning Centre (ELC)

WCS made the difficult decision this year to merge our Lollipop ELC with our Lyons ELC. The number of children attending Lollipop ELC had decreased steadily over time due to competition with new centres in the area, as well the large construction taking place next door.

The merger took place over a six-month period so we could ensure the transition for children and educators was conducted as smoothly as possible. We were happy and relieved to be able to accommodate all our Lollipop children at the Lyons ELC.

WCS operated Lollipop for 50 years and although it was heartbreaking to close the program, we were extremely grateful to the families and the community who came to help us celebrate at the farewell afternoon tea. This was attended by former and current educators, families and local community members who shared memories and lovely anecdotes of their time with Lollipop.

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)

WCS's OSHC programs recognise the importance of play and leisure in the lives of children. Our Out of School Hours programs create opportunities for children to develop life skills while emphasising enjoyment and fun. Our educators are experienced, passionate and committed to developing high quality experiences that foster active citizenship, well-being and love of lifelong learning.

This year we partnered with GeckoSport to develop a range of extracurricular activities for our programs. Each fortnight GeckoSport introduced a different sport to the children at our services. Whether it was soccer, athletics, cricket or ultimate frisbee, these experiences were not only fun; they also helped the children improve their gross and fine motor skills, self management, social awareness and overall health.

Next year will see our leadership team working hard to further expand our paint and play programs. We look forward to introducing this popular program beyond our current offerings at Lyons ELC, Evelyn Scott, Margaret Hendry and Red Hill.

"I like afters, because there's lots of people so I can always make new friends."

- Azaylia, 10 yrs

CHILD, YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

Family Case Management

This year the WCS Family Case Management (FCM) Team provided support to 89 families who were dealing with issues such as domestic and family violence, housing support and referrals to specialist services. The year also marked an increase in the number of families reaching out for material support. In response to this increased demand, the FCM team packaged up over 100 food hampers and delivered around 20 orders from emergency relief providers.

The highlight of the year was the Family Fun Day. Those in attendance were able to connect with other families, participate in a range of social activities and access a range of materials on issues such as self-care, all while enjoying a convivial morning tea.

"I am very happy. Thank you very much for the help you gave me in such a difficult situation. I would like to thank everyone who contributed."

"Family Fun Day helped me to be motivated to get up in the morning and get the children out of home."

"I feel like I am part of a big family"

- Quotes from FCM service users

100+ 

Food hampers provided to families

89 

Families supported by FCM

Raw Potential

This year Raw Potential celebrated a growth in the number of opportunities we were able to offer young people. We were pleased to be able to coordinate three in-kind dental rescue days for 32 young people as well as deliver a hospitality compliance skills package which helped 13 young people obtain a variety of certificates designed to improve their prospects of long-term employment.

The team also conducted two Raw Connection days which gave 36 young people, some of whom were experiencing social isolation, an opportunity to build resilience, self-confidence, teamwork and problem-solving skills.

36



Young people attended Raw Connection days

32



Young people provided with free dental care

"Getting checked up has given me the opportunity to get on top of my dental concerns early and prevented me from having serious dental issues in the future."

- Dental Rescue Day participant



Youth Engagement Team

During the year, the Youth Engagement Team (YET) saw an increase in the numbers of young people accessing our services. Whether it was casework, groups and programs, drop-ins, scheduled events or outreach, the YET supported more than 1000 young people achieve better outcomes. This increased demand for services included many new young people who have not previously accessed our services.

1000+ 
Young people supported by YET

200 
Families attended the Loose Parts Playgroup

162 
Parents attended NC parenting workshops

62 
Children in childcare support while parents attended workshops

“I was totally lost and ready to give up. That’s when I was lucky enough to get referred to YET and meet the team and my youth worker. Instantly I knew I could trust them and felt like for the first time I was liked for just being me.”

They were able to support me to achieve all my goals and more. I really don’t know where I’d be today without their support.”

- YET Service User

Network Coordination

Network Coordination (NC) celebrated some great successes during the year. The Loose Parts Playgroup, which began in 2023, saw the number of attending families increase from 75 to 200. We were also pleased to be able to run several cost-of-living-themed events at Westfield Woden, Wanniasa and Richardson Primary Schools. These well-attended events helped families access much needed community support.

NC also worked closely with a range of partners to deliver 12 parenting workshops on topics such as adolescent development and mental wellbeing, neurodiversity, eating disorders, family conflict, child development and managing big feelings.

“I’m walking away with \$200 off my electricity!”

“We might be eligible for \$2500 in rent assistance!”

“This has helped me with blankets, pillows, financial support and information.”

- Quotes from NC service users

Muataza

Muataza has worked in many roles with WCS. She started her journey as a volunteer, eventually working her way up to Family Case Manager; a role she has held for the past six years.

“I enjoy many aspects of the job, including the collaborative environment in which we work, the ability to learn new things every day, and assist others in reaching their goals.”

Muataza helps people access resources for education, health, recreation, housing, employment and other community services. Along the way she has helped people improve their overall quality of life.

“I am inspired by the smiles on the faces of children and their caregivers as well as the satisfaction of making someone feel special.”



Jeremy

Jeremy has worked in the Youth Engagement Team for over 10 years, supporting young people from all walks of life through their personal challenges.

Jeremy finds the passion for the role from his own experiences as a young person.

“From my own experience receiving support from youth & community workers, I love having the opportunity to be in this exact position giving back to my community and making a positive impact in young people’s lives.”

“Being able to witness their growth, overcoming their challenges to be confident, capable individuals is incredibly rewarding.”

“I believe that empathy, flexibility, and adaptability are crucial skills for a youth worker. With these skills, I can provide support and validation that is tailored to the specific needs of each young person, helping them to feel seen, heard, and empowered to overcome challenges.”

AGED CARE SERVICES

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

WCS delivered a core group of support services across 2023-24, enabling older people to stay in their own home and maintain their independence and social connections.

Our Social Groups continue to be very popular with something available for everyone. We have a full and varied monthly calendar of events for our participants. Some of the most enthusiastically attended activities were coffee catchups, music events, local trips, health and wellbeing sessions and shopping trips.



Key Statistics

9,591
Community
Transport Trips

400+
People assisted
with transport

1000+
Support group
sessions

55
People
supported in
group sessions

5,842
Support group
sessions

60+
People provided
with in home
services

Care Finder

Our Care Finder service supports vulnerable older people who lack the support of family, friends and other resources to assist them in connecting with the services they need.

The team continues to assist our older service users overcome common barriers to accessing services such as housing and homelessness issues, chronic illness, financial hardship and family conflict.

More than 90%
of clients report they remain
connected to the services
they need during their
post-service check-in.

92 **65**
New Cases Active Cases

Veterans Home Care (VHC)

Our Aged Care team is excited to be providing this new service, with our first VHC clients having started with us in February 2024. Referrals have increased steadily over the latter half of the financial year. As the service moves into the new year, we continue to ensure our staff have the skills and knowledge required to meet the needs and unique experiences of our veterans.

Most recently, we have added gardening to our VHC services which will be delivered by our Social Enterprise team.

“Good morning wonderful Care Finders. I just wanted to thank you all so much for your time and coming to present to us last week.

Your presentation was very well received by the team and there has been some good discussion about Care Finders and the role you have. You are all awesome and you do incredibly valuable work.”

- Care Finder Service User

“I think I get more out of my interactions with our clients than they get from me. I really enjoy coming to work and making a difference in someone’s day!”

- Aged Care Volunteer

18 
DVA Clients

30 
Hours of support
(on average)

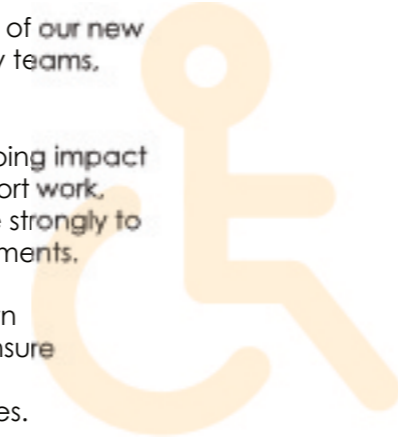
DISABILITY SERVICES

Disability Services

WCS has experienced a year of change in our NDIS services including the launch of our new Therapy Services, the integration and co-location of the Aged Care and Disability teams, and the closure of our NDIS Direct Support service.

WCS, like more than 69% of NDIS providers across Australia, experienced the ongoing impact of inadequate and unsustainable government funding for this vital disability support work, coupled with ongoing national workforce shortages. WCS continues to advocate strongly to the government for improvement in the NDIS funding model and pricing arrangements.

The difficult decision to cease provision of Direct Support saw the team wind down services incrementally from February to April 2024. Our primary concern was to ensure over 100 participants were supported to transition safely and seamlessly to local providers of their choice, and that impacted staff were supported to find new roles.



150+

Clients accesses Support Coordination & Psychosocial Recovery Coaching

107

Direct Support participants assisted to find new providers

NDIS Support Coordination

WCS maintains a skilled and experienced team of five Support Coordinators, who were pivotal in the transition of our Direct Support Service participants to new providers, in addition to providing Support Coordination to NDIS participants across the Canberra community.



On average, over 150 hours of support are delivered by our Support Coordinators every week

Reflections from our NDIS support coordinators

"I have worked with a 45-year-old psychosocial participant for the past two years, who was extremely isolated, rarely leaving her home for anything other than medical appointments.

I supported her through NDIS review and worked closely with her and her providers to encourage and set up supports. She is now going out to the markets weekly and goes on daily walks in her community."

"I have a participant with intellectual disability, leading to impairment in communication and mobility.

Since I started supporting him in 2022, he has been approved for a new hospital bed, mattress, modified wheelchair, a cutting edge shower commode and a recliner.

These assistive technology devices increased the quality of his life."

Speech Pathology

This year we were proud to launch our new Speech Pathology service with our very first clients commencing services in February. Children from 2 to 12 years access WCS Speech Pathology in schools, their homes and at our WCS Hub. NDIS participants and self-funded clients benefit from our family-centered, outcomes-focused services. We also offer education for school and education centre staff. In the future we will offer group and school holiday programs.

The service currently has one part-time Senior Speech Pathologist. We are looking forward to welcoming a Senior Occupational Therapist, Occupational Therapist and another Speech Pathologist to our team soon. This will allow us to expand services to the wider community.

The addition of Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy to WCS's service offering addresses a large gap in accessible paediatric therapy services in the ACT which has led to long waiting times for therapy. WCS therapy is working hard to minimise the wait time for our services, ensuring families seeking speech pathology for their children are not disadvantaged.

The average age of our therapy participants is

5 years old



Therapies

We have been privileged to partner with an Early Childhood School to help support several families to access speech therapy services on the school campus.

Six children that had been on long waitlists, or unable to access services for other reasons, are now accessing regular speech pathology and love seeing our therapist arrive with her box of treasures ready to play and learn.

Parents stay engaged through regular communication with the speech pathologist after each session, attending regular meetings and supporting teacher-therapist collaboration.

Teaching staff have welcomed our therapist to their classrooms and many therapy goals directly link with classroom outcomes as well as daily life.

69% Engaged in therapy

18% Ready for service (waitlist)

34 Total Referrals

5% Out of scope referrals



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



Over the past year, WCS has continued to deliver high-quality psychosocial support services across multiple programs. Our comprehensive approach includes early intervention, intensive support, and innovative models designed to meet the diverse needs of our participants.

597 
People Supported

79 
Participants attended psychoeducation and social groups

7 
Participants supported to access NDIS

Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program (CPSP)

The CPSP team delivered early intervention psychosocial support to 90 adults across Canberra over the last 12-months. The program assists participants aged 18 to 35 years and up to 65 years who have experienced their first episode of mental ill-health.

Using psychoeducation and therapeutic interventions, the team helped participants secure employment, obtain their driver's licence, access volunteering opportunities and combat social isolation through connection to community supports.

In March, the Capital Health Network (CHN) awarded WCS additional funding to extend our current group-based supports. This enabled WCS to provide additional pathways into the program and more service options for a greater number of participants.

Hoarding Advocacy Support Service (HASS)

Over the last 12 months the HASS team successfully supported 12 participants with advocacy and practical assistance, helping them navigate abatement orders, forensic cleans, and notices to remedy. The team also developed an early intervention model, introduced a peer support model and co-designed a support group pilot for all program participants.

Participant support is also at the heart of WCS's 16-week Buried in Treasures Program. This course, which is based on a cognitive behavioural therapy model, provides psychoeducation on the causes of hoarding disorder and offers tips on decluttering and reducing the acquisition of items. During the reporting period, the HASS team offered two rounds of this program for its participants as well as providing the training to other community sector organisations across Canberra.

Transition to Recovery Program (TRec)

In partnership with Canberra Health Services (CHS), TRec specialises in supporting participants at risk of hospitalisation or needing additional help after discharge.

This year, TRec celebrated 13 years of providing intensive, psychosocial outreach support to the Canberra community. Operating 365 days a year from 9am to 9pm, the TRec team assisted 180 participants through its 12-week outreach program.

Over the past year, the TRec team focused on participant education and strengthening our stakeholder relationships. The team also continued to deliver the Hearing Voices group. This group, which is led by a peer worker, has grown into a tight-knit community and is a prime example of the positive work being done by the TRec team.

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

SC-SUSD is a six-week intensive psychosocial support program delivered in partnership with CHS and Stride. Over the past year, WCS provided psychosocial outreach support to 103 participants, focusing on connecting them to services such as ADACAS, Legal Aid, Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) services, and Care Financial. This year marked SC-SUSD's 3rd anniversary. Staff from Stride, WCS, and CHS, along with past and current participants, celebrated with testimonies of recovery, hope and resilience. Ms Emma Davidson, MLA also joined the celebration, highlighting the dedication of WCS staff and the resilience of the program's participants.

The Way Back Support Service (TWBSS)

Funded by CHN and ACT Health, TWBSS continues to provide outreach support with a focus on psychoeducation and therapeutic interventions in the critical months following a suicide attempt or for those with suicidal ideation.

A new liaison role was introduced this year which has helped expand referral streams into the program from 139 participants in 2022/2023 to 178 participants in 2023/2024.

"It helped me through a really difficult time in my life. I would've been hospitalised many times without the support. The support made me feel not so alone."

"All the staff are fantastic, every single one. I enjoyed talking to each member of the team. Everyone had something to offer."



Case Study

Sarah, a 38-year-old woman, was referred to WCS following an interrupted suicide attempt and ongoing suicidal crisis.

Sarah faced many stressors, including a high-pressure work environment, concerns about alcohol use and difficulty seeking help. Choosing TWBSS support, Sarah used weekly sessions to discuss past challenges and plan for the upcoming week. With this support, Sarah returned to work, resolved key concerns, and began attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. She chose not to access an outpatient unit at this time, feeling well-supported by AA.

Safety planning was frequently reviewed, focusing on recognising warning signs and actions needed to manage them. Sarah noted improvements in recognising warning signs and an overall reduction in distress, which led to reduced alcohol intake and better connections with her family and pets.

Sarah's journey highlights the positive impact of tailored support and the importance of community and self-awareness in recovery.

COMMUNITY ACCESS

During the 2023/2024 reporting period, WCS combined several smaller programs into the new Community Access service line.

This new function includes WCS's Reception and Intake Service, the Adult Community Education (ACE) Skills for Life Training Program, Big Issue (TBI), Little Pantry and the recently opened Community Hub in Westfield Woden.

The Woden Community Hub

The Woden Community Hub was officially opened on 1 March 2024 by Ms. Emma Davidson, MLA. Located in Westfield Woden, the Hub houses our Community Engagement, Reception and Intake, Little Pantry, Speech Therapy and Big Issue teams.

Since its opening, the Hub has hosted a variety of community-oriented programs and activities, as well as staff training. With bookings continuing to increase, this year saw the Hub host the Buried in Treasures course, Reconciliation Day Event, The Big Issue vendor launches and Santa on a Budget events.

Recently the Hub's stairwell entrance was enhanced by a stunning mural. This vibrant artwork was developed in partnership with Westfield Woden and designed by a local artist. The striking colours add to the Hub's visual presence as well as its welcoming environment.

The Big Issue (TBI)

TBI a fortnightly, independent magazine sold on the streets of Canberra by people experiencing homelessness, marginalisation and disadvantage. During this period, TBI moved to our Community Hub, providing more access and connectedness for our vendors.

Over the past 12 months, the TBI team signed up four new vendors. Once registered, vendors gain access to support workers, skill-building activities, and a fortnightly breakfast.



Adult Community Education (ACE) Skills for Life program

For the second consecutive year, WCS successfully delivered the ACE Skills for Life program. The primary goal of this program is to equip culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) with job readiness skills.

Over the past 12 months, WCS conducted two training blocks, supporting a total of seventeen students. This training featured guest speakers and presentations on topics including volunteering, driver readiness courses, and community connections, provided by Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services and Helping ACT.

The Little Pantry

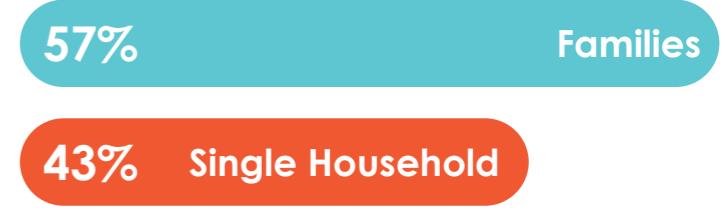
WCS's Little Pantry provides emergency relief to Canberrans in need. It offers non-perishable food, household products, sanitary items and nappies. The service also caters to culturally specific dietary needs.

This year, the Little Pantry received numerous donations from service providers, local churches and individuals.

Service user profiles by cultural background



Service user profiles by household



Asher and Ellie



In June, twin sisters Asher and Ellie (pictured right) requested friends and family donate to the Little Pantry instead of giving birthday presents.

In an article published in the Canberra Weekly, Asher explained her selfless gesture in her own words - **"We wanted to donate to somewhere that gives food to other people like Taylor Swift does... She donates to the food bank."**

Thanks to Ellie and Asher's efforts, the Little Pantry was able to purchase hundreds of dollars' worth of additional food and household essentials.

14,434 
Magazines sold by vendors

1,646 
Calendars sold by vendors

\$84,705 
Profit in vendors' pockets

51 
Pitches for vendors to sell magazines in Canberra

\$13,957 
Received in donations

80-90 
People accessed Little Pantry every month



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & ENGAGEMENT

The Community Development and Engagement team have celebrated the expansion of our program delivery over the past 12 months.

Whitlam Laughing Club

During the year a local Whitlam resident approached the WCS Community Development (CD) worker to discuss her feelings of social isolation and disconnection. During this conversation the resident expressed a desire to join a "Laughing Yoga" group like she had in India. Laughter Yoga was introduced in Mumbai, India in 1995 by family physician Madan Kataria and his wife Madhuri.

Although there was no such group in Whitlam or surrounds, our CD worker offered to support the resident to create a local group. After some discussion and planning a resident-led laughing club was up and running within a week. Between six and ten other residents now meet each week to engage in a range of outdoor exercises, laughter and social connection.

Woden and Weston Community Development

We delivered 15 one-off activities from January to June 2024 for the Woden and Weston communities. Activities included tree planting, the design of a mural and a Floriade community planting.

Regular weekly volunteer-run activities include games groups, a women's group and English conversation groups.

Volunteering

This year WCS peaked at 100 active volunteers. In the second half of 2023, WCS volunteers assisted 307 individuals across 30 different programs or activities.

This year saw several new volunteers engaged programs commence including English conversation classes, digital literacy, walking groups and the Westfield food donation stall.

Our Volunteer Coordinator also facilitated placements across the organisation for students from various schools, universities and other educational programs.

Whitlam Community Development

Whitlam has seven weekly and ongoing activities including a playgroup, exercise class, a laughing club and a conversational English class. In one month alone, Whitlam residents had the opportunity to attend an astrology night and a family movie night which engaged over 30 children, young people and their families.



HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

As the cost-of-living crisis deepens, Housing and Homelessness Services are seeing firsthand the impact on those struggling to make ends meet. Demand for support and accommodation programs exceeds the homelessness sector's capacity to respond.

WCS Housing and Homelessness Services continue to respond to this crisis by providing a dynamic and compassionate service for Canberrans in need.

OneLink

OneLink is the central intake service for the ACT. We provide information and referrals for individuals and families. In addition to our core function, OneLink, through its Child and Youth Protection Services Liaison Officers, provide case management for families to help them avoid statutory intervention.

During the year, OneLink administered three brokerage programs: the Hotel Brokerage Program, the Client Support Fund (CSF) and the Rough Sleepers Working Group (RSWG). The Hotel Brokerage Program provides temporary emergency hotel placements for individuals and families who can be connected to accommodation through Onelink. CSF and RSWG provide funding for intensive support for clients, enabling them to live independently in the community and at Housing ACT properties.

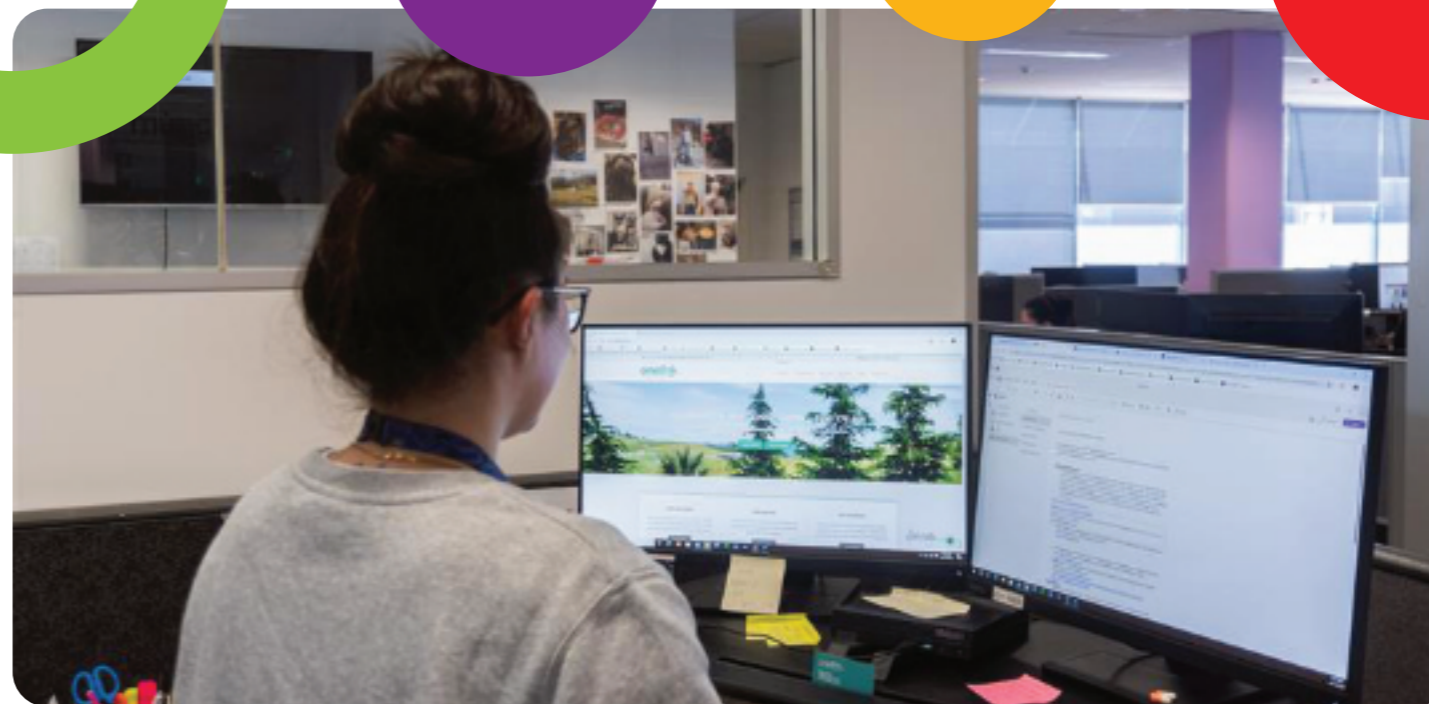
Case Study

Wanda and James lived together for 20 years. Over that time, James' behaviour became incrementally more controlling. He changed the password to their joint bank account and made her feel guilty about seeing her friends. When they first moved in together, they used to go out to restaurants and clubs. Now, their social life revolves around James going out drinking while Wanda stays at home with their six-year-old son, Steve. James' verbal abuse turned physical soon after Steve was born. Over time, Wanda began to hate Saturdays as James would come home under the influence of drugs and alcohol and things would usually escalate.

As the violence got worse, she began taking Steve to a hotel on Saturday nights. After a recent violent episode, Wanda was taken to hospital, where she disclosed the abuse to a social worker.

The hospital social worker contacted the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and placed Wanda and Steve in a hotel. While she was in emergency accommodation, OneLink conducted a comprehensive assessment of Wanda's situation, contacted several crisis accommodation services and found a suitable placement for Wanda and her son.

Wanda completed an intake with the accommodation provider and moved into the property within two days of entering the hotel. Wanda and her son are now living safely and free from violence.



Supportive Tenancy Service (STS)

The Supportive Tenancy Service (STS) assists people maintain their tenancy by providing strengths-based case management and brokerage. STS is a WCS-led partnership between the YWCA and Capital Region Community Service that has supported the community for the last 14 years.

STS Case Study

Aisha came to Australia as a refugee with her three babies. Aisha's English was limited, and she had difficulty navigating government systems like Centrelink. When she was introduced to the STS team, Aisha had accumulated rental debt and struggled to put food on the table.

STS helped Aisha navigate Housing ACT Centrelink and connected her to the WCS Little Pantry. Aisha now has an interview for a job and has taken control of her finances, reducing her debt every fortnight. Aisha says, "she is a work in progress, but the progress counts."

Reflections from our service users

"I came into Housing under extreme duress going through extreme DV. I was unsure how to navigate the process of securing stable housing for me and my children.

Chrissie made this process so easy for me, giving advice the entire way. The timeliness and ongoing review of my circumstances meant I was housed safely in a short amount of time and supported throughout the entire process."

"I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for the support and assistance you extended to me during a challenging time.

Your kindness and guidance made a significant difference, and I am truly appreciative."

"The two tenants you have worked with from Housing have had the loveliest things to say about you. Keep up the great work!"

"I wanted to let you know how grateful Grace is for your support. She told me everything she had been through and how much you had listened and understood her.

You are having an impact and making people's lives even better."

12,676 
Phone calls received

2,136 
Service users supported

179 
Service users supported by STS

6 
Service users supported through RSWG

29 
Service users supported by CSF

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

WCS's Social Enterprise program's primary purpose is to make a lasting positive social impact on both individuals and the wider community. The broader social impact objective of these businesses is to provide employment, skills training, and on-the-job work experience to young vulnerable individuals who often face barriers in obtaining employment.

Cleaning Services

Social Enterprise commenced cleaning services in September 2023. During the year, the team secured both internal and external service contracts, with more on the horizon.

1,786 
Hours of service work completed by the Cleaning Services team

Gardening Services

Social Enterprise commenced gardening services in December 2023. During the year, the program secured and executed various public gardening service contracts. WCS is also, as of June 2024, supporting veterans with home maintenance through the Veterans Home Care Program.

144 
Hours of service work completed by the Gardening Services team

Catering & Cafe Services

Social Enterprise commenced catering and café services in late 2022 with the opening of Heartbeat Café in Whitlam. The Café was created in partnership with the Suburban Land Agency to provide café and catering services to the community and people visiting the display home village and their associated special events.

In May 2024, WCS Social Enterprise opened our second café - Pulse Café - in Symonston. The café has built-in commercial kitchen infrastructure to augment our catering services' capabilities. The Social Enterprise team is now providing catering services to community and commercial clients from this location.

Case Study

Sonu is working as Café Assistant at WCS Social Enterprise's Heartbeat Café. Sonu entered Social Enterprise through the WCS Skills for Life Program. Her goal was to seek employment opportunities in Australia, so she was internally referred to the Social Enterprise program from WCS's ACE program.

"This is my first job; it was a bit challenging for me but with the help of Catherine (Café Manager) 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 with multicultural people."

- Sonu



WORKING GROUPS

Child Safe Working Group

A child safe organisation puts the best interests of children and young people first. WCS is committed to promoting a culture that ensures the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is prioritised.

During the year the group acted upon this commitment by developing a wellbeing policy that outlines our commitment to enabling children to thrive, learn and grow. The group also explored new ways to ensure children and young people are heard; reinforcing the value we place on their contributions.

Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group

The WCS Reconciliation Action plan Working Group (RAPWG) commits to and has a strong focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture being celebrated at every opportunity throughout the year.

We welcome Ngunnawal people and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be a part of our reconciliation journey. During the year the RAPWG rolled many of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) recommendations into our core business. We also hosted, in close collaboration with the Children, Youth and Family Services Team, the Reconciliation Community Day. We were pleased to see so many staff and community members take the opportunity to come together to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's culture and traditions.

Last, but certainly not least, the RAPWG also hosted local Ngunnawal man Bradley Bell at our annual National Reconciliation Week morning tea at our new Community Hub.

Reflections from our service users

“Lived experience means something of value now; this is a new concept because I haven't had this before Woden. I am learning to value my lived experience.”

“Advocacy re-empowers me – it takes away my powerlessness. I can't sit by and not be part of the solution.”

Service User Engagement Group

At its core, service User Engagement (SUE) is about using the knowledge and experiences of our service users to inform and shape the delivery of WCS's services. In WCS, SUE is expressed through collaborative partnerships where the value of lived experience is applied to activities such as program co-design and service improvement.

Over the past 12 months, WCS has continued to integrate SUE into all our business practices. We currently have 40 registered service users engaged in SUE projects across all areas. Highlights included input into our Complaints Policy, the co-design of our holiday programs with Children's Services users, and the development of our Peer Work Framework.

Diversity Working Group

WCS marked the International Day of People with Disability with a special art exhibition at the Woden Community Hub. The exhibition, organised by the Diversity Working Group, showcased the visual artwork of staff and program users. The exhibition provided WCS with an opportunity to celebrate and raise awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability.

Harmony Day was another highlight this year. WCS staff took a leisurely walk around Eddison Park, all wearing orange to symbolise unity. The event reflected our commitment to celebrating our diverse and multicultural workplace.

Our greatest accomplishment this year was the successful rollout of the Capital of Equality Grant. This initiative strengthened LGBTIQ+ awareness across our community through eight training sessions delivered by Meridian.

Additionally, twelve employees completed the train-the-trainer component, and with a 24-month intellectual property licence from Meridian, we are equipped to provide ongoing in-house training for those who missed the original sessions.

“It [SUE] gives me a sense of fulfilment and purpose.”

“Woden SUE is restoring my faith in humanity.”





PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

WCS gratefully acknowledges the generous support 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.

Funding Partners

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

Supporters

AccessPay
 ACT Shelter
 Aged and Community Care Providers Association
 Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT
 Alfred Deakin High School
 Allens Training Pty Ltd.
 Anglicare NSW South, NSW West, ACT
 Australian Institute of Food Safety
 Barnardos
 Baringa Early Learning Centre
 Big W Woden
 Bunnings Tuggeranong
 Canberra College
 Canberra First Aid
 Canberra Health Services – Clinical Partners
 Canberra Institute of Technology
 Canberra Relief Network
 Canberra Weekly
 Cancer Council
 Capital Region Community Service
 Care Financial
 Carers ACT

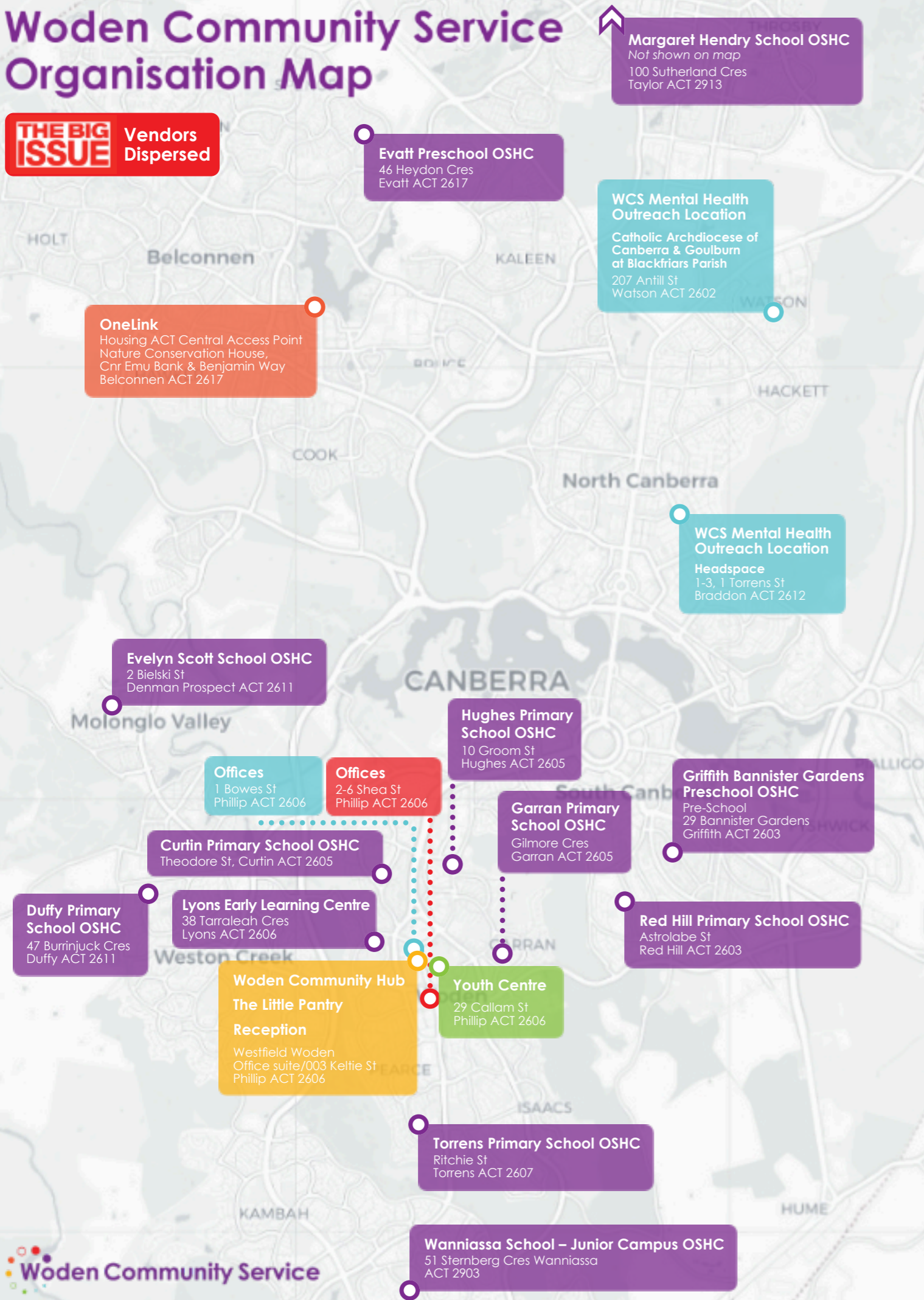


Supporters (continued)

Catholic Care Marymead
 Charles Wright School
 Coles Woden
 Communities at Work
 Community Services #1
 Companion House
 Conflict Resolution Service
 Council of the Ageing
 Curtin Primary School
 Domestic Violence Crisis Service
 Dominos – Denman Prospect & Mawson
 Duffy Primary School
 EACH
 Early Childhood Australia
 Erindale College
 Evatt Primary and Preschool
 Evelyn Scott School
 Families ACT
 Floriade in the Community
 Garran Primary School
 Gerald Slaven Community First program
 Ginninderry
 GIVIT
 Good2Give
 Goodwin Village – Farrer
 Grill'd Woden
 Hands Across Canberra
 Harmonie German Club
 Headspace – Canberra & Tuggeranong
 Helping ACT
 Hesta
 Hughes Baptist Church
 Hughes Primary School
 Immanuel Lutheran Church
 ISPT Property Group
 Johnny H
 Junction Youth Health Services
 Libraries ACT
 Lions Canberra
 Lyons Early Childhood School
 Mama Connect
 Margaret Hendry School
 Marsh Pty Ltd
 MEGA (Mums Exercise Group Together)
 Melrose High School
 Men's Kitchen
 Mental Health Community Coalition
 Mental Health Consumer Network
 MIEACT
 Mingle - Whittam
 Molonglo Valley Community Forum
 Mount Stromlo High School
 Multicultural Hub Canberra
 Namadgi School
 National Disability Services
 Northside Community Service
 Office for Disability – ACT Government
 OPC
 OzHarvest
 Pam's Pantry
 PCYC
 Reconciliation Australia
 Red Hill Primary School
 Region Media
 Roundabout ACT
 Royal Life Saving
 Salvation Army
 St Albans Anglican Church
 St Vincent De Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
 Synergy Group
 The Big Issue Australia
 The Body Shop
 The Butcher Shop Woden
 The Mawson Club
 Torrens Primary School
 Tuggeranong Arts Centre/Woden Arts
 Volunteering ACT
 Weston Creek Community Council
 Woden Hospital School
 Woolworths – Woden
 Yedding Mura Aboriginal Corporation
 Youth Coalition of the ACT
 YWCA Canberra

Woden Community Service Organisation Map

THE BIG ISSUE Vendors Dispersed



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Front cover image:

Minister Chris Steel and CEO Jenny Kitchin visit the site of the future Community Service Hub