

Woden Community Service

2024-2025 Annual Report



 Woden Community Service





Acknowledgement of country

Woden Community Service (WCS) recognises the Ngunnawal people as the 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 and present.

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Explore our services across Canberra

General services

Woden Community Hub (Reception and The Little Pantry)

Office Suite 003 (Above Commonwealth Bank)
Westfield Woden, Phillip ACT 2606

Woden Youth Centre

29 Callam Street, Phillip ACT 2606

Main office

Level 1, 2-6 Shea Street, Phillip ACT 2606

Mental health and wellbeing office

Ground Floor, 2-6 Shea Street, Phillip ACT 2606

Other locations

Canteen 4 Kids

Various canteens across Canberra

Aged Care social groups

Activities held at various locations across Canberra

Children's Services and Out of School Hours Care (OSHC)

Curtin OSHC

Theodore Street, Curtin ACT 2605

Hughes OSHC

10 Groom Street, Hughes ACT 2605

Duffy OSHC

47 Burrinjuck Crescent, Duffy ACT 2611

Lyons OSHC and Early Learning Centre

38 Tarraleah Crescent, Lyons ACT 2606

Evatt Preschool and OSHC

40 Heydon Crescent, Evatt ACT 2617

Margaret Hendry OSHC

100 Sutherland Crescent, Taylor ACT 2913

Evelyn Scott OSHC

2 Bielski Street, Denman Prospect ACT 2611

Red Hill OSHC

Astrolabe Street, Red Hill ACT 2603

Garran OSHC

Gilmore Crescent, Garran ACT 2605

Torrens OSHC

Ritchie Street, Torrens ACT 2607

Griffith Bannister Gardens Preschool and OSHC

29 Bannister Gardens, Griffith ACT 2603

Wanniassa OSHC

51 Sternberg Crescent, Wanniassa ACT 2903

Our Board



Brett Streatfeild
Board Chair



Sasha Posthuma-Grbic
Board Director



Glenn Powell
Deputy Board Chair



Ranga Parimala
Board Director



Dr Alison Oakleigh
Board Director



Catherine Campbell
Board Director

Our Executive



Dan English
Chief Executive Officer



Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez
Chief Operating Officer



Leanne Heald
Executive Manager,
Community Programs



Ashleigh Bellingham
Acting Executive Manager,
Children's Services

Board Chair's message



After nearly a decade on the board, including the last three years as Chair, I will step down this November 2025, ensuring board renewal in accordance with good governance practice. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve WCS and our community.

During this time, we have seen our services expand to support more of the community than ever before. Our turnover has almost doubled over the last decade, enabling us to deliver many more services. I am especially proud of our more recent foray into social enterprise services, now officially recognised with our Social Traders certification. This is still early days, but the signs are incredibly positive, already supporting many participants, taking over the Canteens 4 Kids initiative (and now serving over 16% of the ACT student market, and growing) and supporting an ever-expanding range of community service providers through our food service operations.

These achievements sit alongside the difficult, but necessary, decisions we have had to make to ensure WCS's long-term viability. It was with great sadness that the falling support for Family Day Care saw an end to a foundation service for WCS, and more recently, the closure of Lollipop Early

Learning Centre, as we could no longer provide a safe physical environment. We tried, and failed, to find a suitable alternative.

We also had to step away from providing National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services, which was a sad loss for our dedicated staff and loyal service users. This was the toughest decision we had to make as a board during my time, as we were no longer able to support an unsustainable NDIS funding model. I am proud that we managed all these situations with dignity and support for our staff and service users, and worked tirelessly to ensure smooth transitions.

My tenure has also spanned turbulent times, including navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. We were deeply grateful for the ACT and Federal Governments' support, which enabled WCS to continue delivering essential community services.

We are in safe hands for the future as we move into the next chapter. I have had the pleasure of welcoming our new CEO, Dan English, who is settling into the role whilst still maintaining his chief role with NCS. This appointment brought an opportunity to work even more closely with NCS, an organisation that shares a similar vision and purpose in serving the community.



I acknowledge and thank Jenny Kitchin, who retired as CEO in January 2025. Jenny's vision and tireless leadership have left a legacy, evident in the passion and professionalism of the WCS teams. Her focus on inclusion and client wellbeing helped shape WCS into an organisation deeply rooted in the community it serves. Alongside her predecessor, Chris Redmond, I have had the honour of working with now three outstanding and dedicated CEOs.

To my fellow board members, I extend my thanks for your commitment to WCS and the community. Your integrity and insight have been instrumental in helping WCS remain a strong and responsive presence in our community.

As I hand over the role of Chair, I am confident that WCS is in a strong position to meet the challenges ahead. While uncertainty remains, the board continues to plan for a stable future, and our services remain robust. WCS is well placed to continue supporting local people for years to come.

I express my thanks also to our stakeholders, clients, funding partners and the broader Canberra community for your trust and support. Thank you for advocating for those in need and supporting the delivery of services that improve lives.

To all WCS staff and volunteers, thank you. Your skills, compassion and commitment are the heart of this organisation. I have every confidence that your continued efforts will lead WCS into its next chapter with strength and purpose.

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve as your Board Chair. I look forward to seeing WCS continue to grow and thrive.

Brett Streatfeild
Board Chair



CEO's message

Having joined WCS in January 2025, it has been a privilege to join an organisation with such a strong legacy of care and connection.

Our teams are dedicated, mission-driven, and guided by a strong set of values. I want to thank them all for their commitment, and for the warm and generous welcome I've received in my first six months.

In my role as CEO of WCS, I have also been asked to fill the role of CEO of Northside Community Service (NCS), creating an opportunity to support greater collaboration between these two foundational community services across Canberra. While the sector is small and at times stretched, we are united by a common goal: to help others while building strong, inclusive communities.

As you'll see throughout this report, our reach and impact across Canberra continues to be significant, however, we know that true connection happens when communities come together. None of this would be possible without the support of our broader communities, our staff, volunteers, partners, local businesses, community groups, schools, and individuals like you.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the contributions of the Board of Directors, whose foresight and courage continue to situate WCS well for the future.

In particular, I extend my thanks to Brett Streatfeild, who will be stepping down as Board Chair and as a Director after nine years of dedicated service to the organisation. We wish Brett well for the future and I am sure he will continue to look on in interest as WCS continues to forge a bright future.

Thank you for your continued support. I am excited for what lies ahead and look forward to building on our shared successes in the years to come.

Dan English
Chief Executive Officer

Financial overview



Despite the financial challenges, WCS remains a resilient organisation committed to delivering essential services to the community

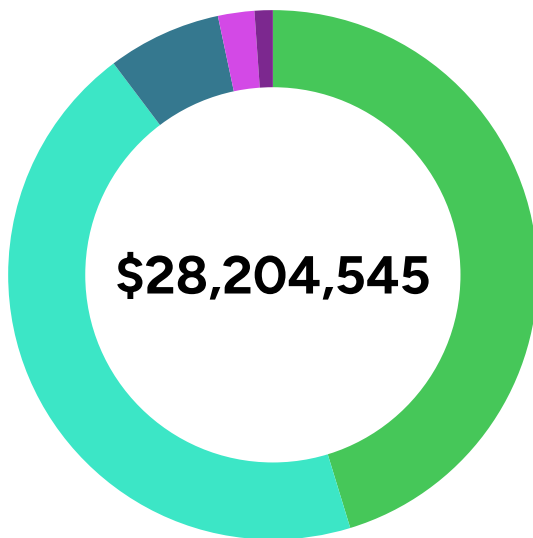
For the financial year ended 30 June 2025, WCS recorded a deficit of \$933,980.

Like many community organisations, WCS faced a challenging economic environment marked by rising costs, inflationary pressures, and changes in consumer behaviour.

In response, WCS made the difficult decision to exit the NDIS, concluding its Support Coordination and Allied Health services.

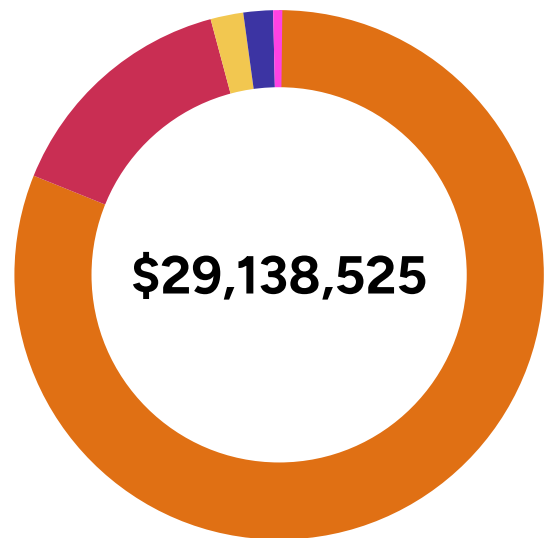
At the same time, WCS continued to invest in its future by expanding its Social Enterprise, including acquiring Canteen 4 Kids, an ACT school canteen services operation.

Revenue



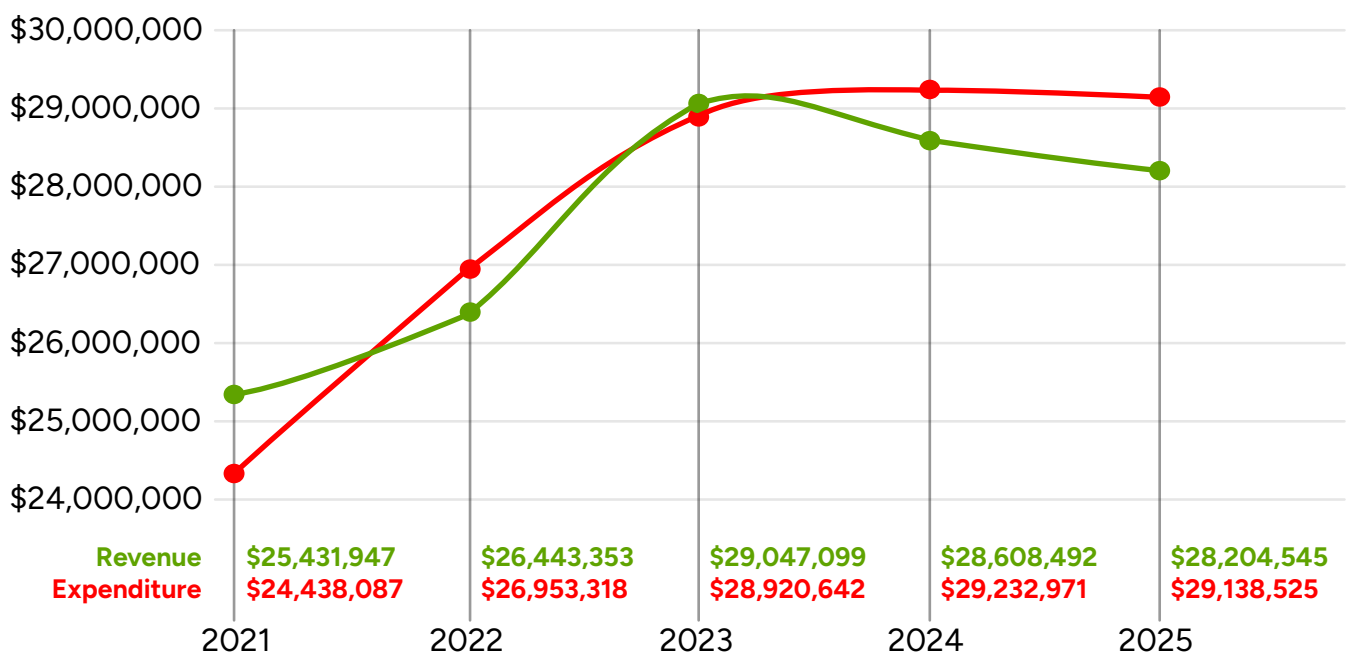
- **Children's Services fee income**
\$12,806,652 (45.4%)
- **Operating grants**
\$12,568,007 (44.6%)
- **Social Enterprise income**
\$1,951,113 (6.9%)
- **Other income**
\$611,499 (2.2%)
- **NDIS income**
\$267,274 (0.9%)

Expenditure



- **Employee benefit expenses**
\$23,641,782 (81.1%)
- **Other operating expenses**
\$4,303,359 (14.8%)
- **Brokerage expenses**
\$573,304 (2.0%)
- **Depreciation and amortisation**
\$511,726 (1.8%)
- **Grants paid to partners**
\$108,354 (0.4%)

Five-year financial summary



Our people





WCS is powered by more than 400 staff members who make a difference every day.

Over 80% of our staff work directly with the community across all of our programs, including Children's Services, Canteens 4 Kids, Mental Health outreach, and our Child Youth and Family teams and other community programs.

Alongside them are corporate services who keep everything running smoothly through facilities, payroll, learning and development, and other vital support services.

93%

of staff believe in the overall purpose and values of WCS

80%

of staff would recommend WCS as a great place to work

30+

countries of birth across our workforce

88%

of staff believe WCS is ethical



Staff engagement

In July 2024, our staff engagement survey provided valuable insight into what we do well and where we can improve.

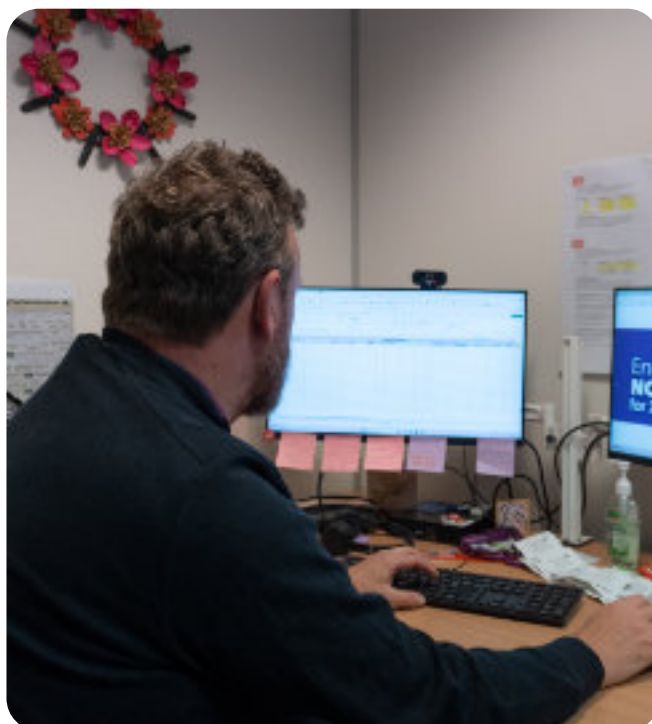
Staff told us that their strongest sense of connection lies in their belief in our vision, purpose, and values, as well as in the positivity they find in the work itself.

Areas that scored lower included recognition, performance feedback, and technology. To respond, we formed focus groups and created targeted action plans to drive improvement.

Stronger working conditions

A major highlight this year was the approval of our new Enterprise Agreement (EA) in October 2024. Shaped by input from across the organisation, the EA delivered changes that matter most to our teams, including:

- 10% above award wage for Children's Services staff
- 2% increase for all other staff under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) Industry Award
- Greater access to flexible working arrangements, from nine-day fortnights and remote work options to adaptable hours that support both emotional and physical wellbeing
- Additional forms of leave, including five extra days of personal leave, cultural leave, study leave, and a new wellbeing day



These changes recognise that flexibility is not just about balancing work and home life, but also about fostering long-term health and resilience.



Investing in growth

In January 2025, we launched ELMO, our new human resources system. ELMO brings together payroll, learning, and development in one central platform, making it easier to manage employee information and track progress while providing staff with a simple “one-stop shop” experience.

In addition to maintaining compliance, WCS staff are provided with many professional development opportunities throughout the year. We partnered with training partners including Meridian, Recovre and HESTA to deliver targeted training programs that enhance staff capability and professional expertise across our teams.

Our internal Learning and Development team have also grown. Our Team Leader ‘Twisty’, a certified first aid provider and SES volunteer, brought CPR and First Aid training in-house to provide cost-effective, practical training tailored to our services.

193

**staff members trained
in CPR and First Aid**

700+

**training modules
completed monthly**

14+

trainees supported

Our impact



Our commitment to providing diverse, high-quality services remains strong.

WCS continues to deliver a wide range of services tailored to meet the evolving needs of our community. Our teams work collaboratively across sites and sectors to ensure every individual receives compassionate, reliable and impactful support.



16+
Service locations

150,000+
People reached
through social media

**Over 10,000 people in the
Community accessed WCS services**

**New programs
across multiple
service areas**

**Partnerships
expanded with
local businesses**

**Expansion of
Social Enterprise
and Canteen 4 Kids**



Aged Care

We support older Canberrans to live well, stay connected, and maintain their independence, with services designed to promote positive ageing and wellbeing.

Services are available to people aged 65 years or older, or 50 years or older for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

301+

**transport trips to
essential
appointments**

738+

**clients supported
across our Aged
Care programs**

1,476+

**clients attended our
social groups**



Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

Through the CHSP, we offer entry-level aged care services that help people remain at home and engaged with their community.

Our home support includes domestic assistance, personal care, shopping, transport, and various social groups. The transport team provides reliable door-to-door services for medical appointments, shopping trips, and social activities.

Social groups offer opportunities to stay active and connected, with activities like walking groups, coffee catch-ups, day trips, and more.



Care Finder

Our Care Finder service provides intensive support for older people who need help navigating My Aged Care or connecting with other community services.

The program is targeted at people facing barriers such as limited literacy, lack of informal support, or complex circumstances. We work closely with each person to ensure they receive the care and services they need.



Children's Services

Our Children's Services team continued to support the growth and wellbeing of hundreds of children, empowering families and strengthening our community.

1,977+

children enrolled
in OSHC

101+

children enrolled
in early learning

231

educators delivering
quality care

1,826

children enjoyed
our school
holiday programs

12

Out of School
Hours Care
(OSHC) sites



Nurturing artistic talent

In October 2024, our Children's Services staff coordinated with Lyons Early Childhood School to hold a Children's Art Exhibition.

The exhibition showcased the inspiring creativity of children and allowed them to show off their learning journey at the early learning centre.

Artworks were available for purchase at the event, with all proceeds going towards The Little Pantry, our emergency food relief service.

Through community connection and collaboration, we've highlighted the value of our services that we offer for children whilst supporting our other initiatives and building connection.

Other programs and initiatives

Additional government funding

The federal government's funding for inclusion support is helping us and our peers build capacity to welcome children with additional needs into our programs. Our team has worked to ensure every child feels a sense of belonging, regardless of their background or ability.

The extension of Children's Services Program funding means we can continue to offer emergency care places, providing vital support for vulnerable families during times of need.

Upgrading our technology infrastructure

To continue delivering the highest quality service, we have started a transitional period of migration to a new booking management platform, Kangarootime.

The migration reflects our commitment to provide service users with the best user experience, accessibility and ease of use.

Shaping policy and collaboration

We continue to work with government and sector partners to shape policy and funding decisions that impact children and families across Canberra.

Through our involvement in the Child First Alliance, we have advocated for changes that put children first and enable service providers to deliver quality programs such as:

- Expanding preschool hours from 300 to 600 per year
- Extending OSHC into 4-year-old preschool settings
- Streamlining licence renewals and reducing regulatory burdens
- Securing affordable, long-term leases for early learning programs.



Community Access

Community Access connects people with the right support at the right time, providing essential services, resources, and programs that strengthen wellbeing and build a more inclusive, resilient community.

1,000+

enquiries received
and supported

60+

volunteers
supporting our work

60+

regular participants
in social groups

1,885+

individuals supported
by The Little Pantry

800

referrals made to
community programs

9,987+

magazines sold by
The Big Issue vendors



Intake and Reception

Our Intake and Reception team is the first point of contact for anyone seeking support.

They listen, assess each situation, and connect people with the appropriate services, whether that involves making a referral to a WCS program, linking someone with crisis support, or simply providing reliable information about available community resources.

Our intake team also coordinates The Little Pantry, ensuring that anyone in need can access essential food and household items with dignity.

The Little Pantry

Based in our Woden Community Hub at Westfield, The Little Pantry provided crucial food relief to people in need.

We saw growing demand this year and introduced a new Thursday walk-in service, offered at the same time as our Tenancy Assistance Program walk-ins. This change gave people more choice and autonomy in selecting what they need.

The Little Pantry runs on generosity, and this year we were deeply moved by the support of our community. For the third year in a row, twins Asher and Ellie have chosen generosity over gifts by asking for donations to support The Little Pantry in place of birthday presents. Over Christmas, Randstad, the Lyons Club, and many other organisations as well as our own staff came together to donate items during what is always a critical time.

The Little Pantry is made possible through donations, contributions from other program areas, and the commitment of our volunteers. Our volunteers keep The Little Pantry running by counting, organising, and quality-checking items, and by encouraging donations through regular drives in the Westfield Woden fresh food plaza.



1,100+
Little Pantry visitors

11,000+
food relief items provided

360+
community donors



Volunteers

Volunteering is at the heart of WCS. It strengthens our culture, supports essential services, and creates meaningful connections across our community.

Over the past year, more than 60 volunteers contributed regularly, with another 20 assisting at one-off events such as the Children's Fair and résumé writing workshops. While engagement remains strong, we acknowledge a gradual decline in numbers as the cost of living continues to rise.

Our core volunteers contribute an average of four hours each week across a wide range of roles, including:

- English language classes
- Aged Care driving
- Social group support
- Little Pantry helpers
- Office and administration support
- Playgroups
- Community events
- Mental health activities such as arts and crafts, breakfast and dinner groups

- Men's Conversation and Latte Ladies groups
- The Big Issue support

Volunteers play a vital role in supporting people who may otherwise face isolation. Their presence creates connection, dignity and belonging.

WCS deeply values the contribution of every volunteer. Their time, care and commitment make it possible to reach further and serve in ways that would otherwise not be possible. We thank each and every volunteer for being an essential part of the WCS team.

"Volunteers don't just support our work - they are the work."

- Staff member

"I started volunteering to help others, but it's helped me connect with my community and feel part of something bigger."

- Volunteer

"Volunteering gave me confidence and opportunities to learn new skills."

- Volunteer



The Big Issue (TBI)

This year, The Big Issue continues to provide stable income and purpose for people experiencing homelessness, disadvantage, or marginalisation.

Our vendors sold 9,987 magazines across Canberra this year, reflecting both growing community engagement and the continued success of the program.

WCS manages the ACT operations of The Big Issue, distributing magazines and providing vendors with training, materials, and support. Every fortnight, vendors gather at the Hub in Westfield Woden for the magazine launch. These launches are more than stock pick-ups; they are a chance to share a cuppa, catch up with peers, and celebrate each other's achievements.

Several vendors were featured in national profiles this year, a moment of pride for the entire community.

The Big Issue annual calendar also played a vital role, offering vendors a much-needed boost during the holiday season. During the festive period, Canberra vendors sold 1,800 calendars, with Canberra vendor Daniel featured in this year's edition.

Through their dedication, our vendors continue to show the strength of community enterprise, proving that with opportunity and support, people can change their own lives.



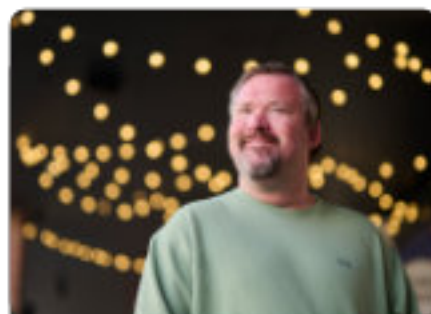
"I like talking to people... I'd like my customers to know that they're really supporting me."

**Shane, TBI Vendor at
Dickson Shops**



"Some people will give me a hug or a tip. I enjoy these positive exchanges."

**Wen, TBI Vendor at
Westfield Woden**



"Say 'hello' as they walk past, be yourself and be nice to people."

Even if you don't sell a magazine, it costs nothing to be nice."

**Grant, TBI Vendor in
Gungahlin and Woden**



Community

Creative writing

What began as a small gathering of three people has grown into a thriving group of 12 diverse participants. Together, they not only developed valuable writing skills and creative expression but also gained confidence and friendship.

Social groups

The Woden Community Hub remained a cornerstone for local connection, hosting seven regular community and volunteer-led groups. These groups supported over 65 participants, including older adults, migrants, people with disabilities, and those facing mental health challenges, and were driven by 16 dedicated volunteers.

Among the highlights were the Women Supporting Women group and a popular games group, both of which help foster positive routines for participants. Volunteer leadership was a defining strength this year, with one of our creative writing group leaders receiving an award nomination for their outstanding contribution.

English conversations

We also responded to a growing local demand for English language support. In addition to ongoing groups in Hughes and previously in Whitlam, we launched a new English conversation group in Woden, led by a passionate retired teacher.

Participants reported improved language skills, stronger social connections, and a renewed sense of belonging. Meanwhile, our English Conversation Playgroup saw steady growth thanks to a boost in social media promotion and new community partnerships.

Partnerships

We continued to nurture strong partnerships with Westfield Woden, ACT Playgroups, the Woden Valley Community Council, and local arts practitioners, enabling us to amplify our community reach and create shared value. We remained active in sector networks such as CDnet and the ABCD Practitioner Network, keeping community-led approaches at the centre of our work.



Child, Youth and Family Services

Our Child, Youth and Family team empowers young people and families across Canberra through programs that build confidence, skills, and strong connections.

2,942+

young people engaged

1,499+

drop-in attendees

150+

Children attended school holiday programs

150+

people attended the 2025 Sunset Festival

50+

young people trained in RSA and RCG certifications

70+

young people completed the ACT Pre-Learner Licence Course

Community programs and events

Events and programs run by our Youth Engagement Team consistently shows high demand and engagement from the community.

Throughout the year, our team engaged in many different programs and events to reach out to the community and expand their outreach to more young people.

We continued to host annual events where young people could gather in a safe and supportive environment. We had great numbers attending our Christmas celebration and 2025 Sunset Festival, with various local organisations supporting and partaking in our mission.

The team also provided many opportunities for young people to socialise and provide pathways towards leading successful lives. Notably, our free ACT Pre-Learner Licence Course was popular during school holiday programs. In partnership with Access Training Canberra, we also trained and certified young people in Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) and Responsible Conduct of Gambling (RCG) certifications, opening doors to employment opportunities.

Woden Youth Centre

Through the Woden Youth Centre, we are able to support thousands of young people across Canberra.

Despite the development of the new Woden Bus Station and CIT Woden campus temporarily creating barriers to access, we have continued to engage more young people and families into our vibrant, safe, and accessible space at the Woden Youth Centre.

The centre continues to provide a means of central access for youth engagement services for young people, including people who access weekly drop-in sessions, case work and many other services on-site.



Celebrating Excellence

We are proud to celebrate our team's excellence at the 2024 Annual YOGIE Awards

Stacey Bright: Winner, Outstanding Youth Worker

Jeremy Leala: Youth Work Champion, recognised for over 10 years of dedicated service

Joel Artup: Youth Coalition Staff Acknowledgement Award

Their dedication and achievements continue to inspire and make an incredible impact in our community.

Family Case Management

The Family Case Management team worked tirelessly to support families from the south Canberra region; this included initiatives such as a Muslim Mothers playgroup, supporting the Gymbaroo and Lyons Early Childhood playgroups, supporting vital research conducted by ANU, and the provision of two school holiday programs for children from vulnerable families.

Other supports included the Woden Children's Fair and attendance of the inaugural Child First Forum.

50+

families supported

25+

Christmas hampers delivered

Other programs and initiatives

Network Coordination

Network Coordination works with services and organisations to identify gaps in service delivery.

It connects assets within the community to improve the wellbeing, community participation and social inclusion of vulnerable children and families.

The small team of one, Penny, coordinates several initiatives designed to meet the community's needs.

Southside Initiative

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.

Raw Potential

The Raw Potential team continued to deliver its exceptionally high quality and bespoke outreach case management model to Canberra's most vulnerable young people. The program is a unique model that brings together the community and private sector to support young people in need.

80+

Young people engaged with Raw Connection Program

20+

Outreach Case Management provided to young people

PERKS parenting workshops

We run a number of PERKS parenting workshops throughout the year.

The PERKS program brings together organisations such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Relationships Australia, and the Conflict Resolution Service to facilitate seminars and peer groups for families on issues such as anger management, family conflict, health, and wellbeing.





Housing Support

Our Housing Support programs provide people with the tools and guidance to achieve safe, secure, and sustainable living.

We offer support services to help individuals maintain stable housing and build stronger connections within their community.



Tenancy Assistance Program

The Tenancy Assistance Program provides early, holistic support to help people stay housed.

Launched in October 2024, the program offers tailored interventions for individuals and families at immediate risk of losing their homes due to financial hardship, mental health challenges, family violence, or other complex issues.

The program has been well received by the community, with the service expanding to directly offer services at the Woden Community Hub. With consistent community engagement and demand, the team now operates a walk-in service every Thursday afternoon to provide advice and support to people facing tenancy risks.

200+

unique clients supported

42%

accessed services through walk-in

79

clients supported to stabilise their tenancies

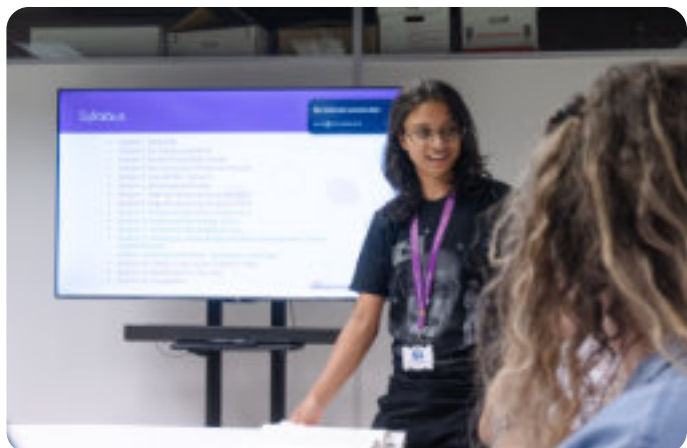
Hoarding Advocacy Support Service (HASS)

HASS assists people affected by hoarding disorder through outreach, therapy, and education.

The program aims to reduce hoarding symptoms and impacts, improve individuals' quality of life, and ease the burden on families and the wider community. WCS has been delivering elements of HASS since 2021 and continues to expand the service based on community needs.

This year, we introduced the Family as Motivators (FAM) program, a free 10-week course designed to equip friends and family with knowledge, communication strategies, and self-care tools, while encouraging their loved ones to seek support.

We also strengthened the program by adding more clinical expertise, enhancing early intervention, expanding psychoeducation, and improving referral pathways to external services.



699+

hours of intensive outreach delivered

81

participants

OneLink

As Canberra's central intake service, OneLink provides information, assessment, and referrals for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In addition to its intake role, OneLink case managers support families through Child and Youth Protection Services Liaison Officers, helping prevent statutory intervention and keeping families safely together.

OneLink operates three brokerage programs:

- The Hotel Brokerage Program provides short-term accommodation until longer-term housing is secured.
- The Client Support Fund offers targeted support for independence and stability.
- The Rough Sleepers Working Group offers intensive outreach to connect people with safe accommodation.

The ACT Government extended OneLink funding into 2025, but funding is scheduled to end in November 2025, creating uncertainty for the future of this essential service. Work continues with government and sector partners to advocate for programs in this service area.

7,176+

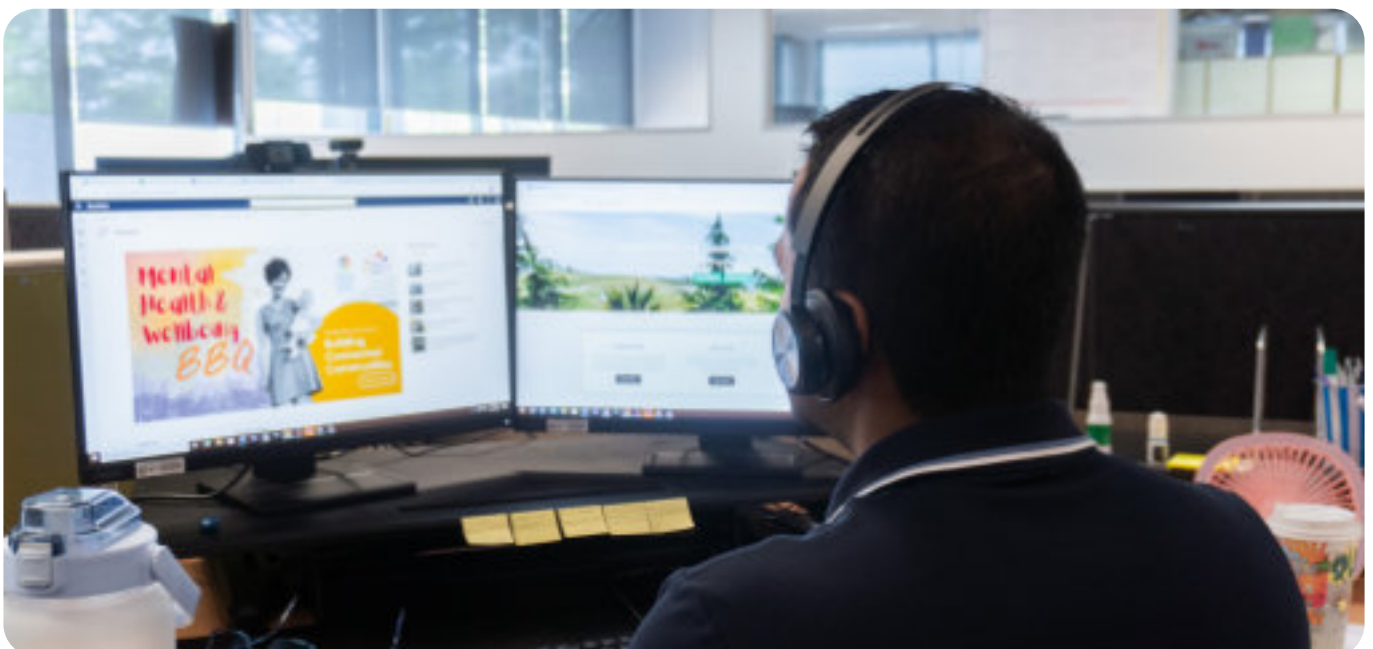
individuals and families supported

53%

required one-off assistance

11,812

phone calls received





Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing programs empower people to find hope, strength, and connection.

Through both intensive recovery supports and early intervention, the focus is on helping people live well in their community.

812+

**total clients
supported**

234

**mental health and
wellbeing groups run**

5,786

**hours of service
delivery**



The Way Back Support Service (TWBSS)

TWBSS offers up to 12 weeks of personalised support after a suicide attempt or crisis.

Over the year, referral pathways expanded to include community health professionals and nurses, reducing barriers for people in crisis.

This year, we welcomed new referrals from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, which strengthened support for young people. A new clinical lead role has also enhanced referral pathway.

“TWBSS gave me the space and tools I needed to feel safe and hopeful again.”

- TWBSS service user

241

unique clients supported

90%

Participants rated their initial contact as easy and timely

Transition to Recovery (TRec)

TRec provides intensive community outreach to help people move safely from hospital to community or manage early signs of relapse.

Support is tailored to people experiencing acute or sub-acute challenges, often with complex care needs, co-occurring alcohol or drug issues, physical health concerns, or forensic involvement. People experiencing homelessness also benefit from flexible community-based support.





T25 Clinic

Established as a support hub for 12–25-year-olds, T25 operates from central, youth-friendly spaces like our Woden Youth Centre. The clinic provides free, confidential, nurse-led, walk-in health and wellbeing services, removing common barriers such as cost, stigma, or the need for an appointment.

T25 offers a safe, non-judgmental space where young people can seek help for a wide range of concerns, including mental health and wellbeing, social challenges, sexual health, alcohol and other drug support and education, and general health needs.

Directions Health ACT clinicians work alongside the team to ensure young people have immediate access to mental health support and relate to services such as housing, case management, and ongoing medical care.

Our contribution to T25 focuses on mental health and wellbeing. Through goal-oriented and cognitive behavioural therapy strategies, our mental health clinician supports young people to build coping skills and stay connected to essential services.

650

**one-on-one sessions
conducted**

90

**participants
supported**



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

SC-SUSD program provides short-term residential and outreach support to help people avoid hospitalisation or return safely home after acute mental health care.

Delivered in partnership with Stride and Canberra Health Services, the program combines prevention and recovery strategies within a structured residential setting, followed by a supported outreach phase. A dedicated outreach recovery worker leads the outreach component with brief, recovery-focused interventions.

This year, more than 109 clients received tailored assistance that built on progress from acute care and encouraged a safe return to community living. By offering an alternative to hospital admission where appropriate, the program supports clients to maintain stability, build confidence and develop skills for ongoing recovery.



Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program (CPSP)

CPSP provides individual and group support to improve wellbeing and manage mental health challenges through practical, recovery-oriented assistance.

185

clients engaged

550+

**hours of group
activities delivered**

17.4%

**average reduction in
stress levels**

Other highlights

Expansion of new services

This year, hundreds of individuals accessed services grounded in the stepped model of care. Suicide aftercare, psychosocial support, tenancy advocacy, and community-based recovery all expanded to meet increasingly complex needs.

Leading in sector development

Leadership across the sector included chairing the Suicide Prevention Community Collaborative and co-developing a Mental Health Outcomes Framework for the ACT.

Mental health contracts extended

ACT Health extended all mental health contracts through to December 2025, allowing time for commissioning to begin.

Showcasing new delivery models

A sector-leading symposium at The Mental Health Service Conference showcased how community connection and innovation drive recovery beyond traditional models.



Social Enterprise

The Social Enterprise program creates positive, sustainable change in Canberra by providing employment opportunities for people who face barriers to work.

Income generated through catering and canteen operations sustains the program while delivering long-term community benefit.

13,429

**Children served daily across
Canteen 4 Kids sites**

500+

**Total meals delivered weekly
through catering**



A year of change and focus

The year brought both growth and difficult decisions. We realigned our strategic focus on our Pulse Catering and Canteens 4 Kids businesses, where the greatest impact and potential for growth exist.

We closed down our café operations in Whitlam and Symonston, along with smaller cleaning and gardening services that were no longer viable. While these closures were difficult, they allowed resources to be directed into building sustainable enterprises with more training, employment, and community impact.



Pulse Catering

Pulse Catering provides high-quality, chef-designed catering services across Canberra and the surrounding region. The former Heartbeat Café site was transformed into a dedicated catering hub, now supplying commercial catering to the public and nutritious meals for more than four local community groups.

By repurposing existing underutilised facilities, Pulse Catering turned challenges into long-term community benefits and created a sustainable income stream.

Canteens 4 Kids

In partnership with the ACT Education Directorate, Canteens 4 Kids operates 26 school canteens across Canberra, with more schools joining each year. The canteens offer daily access to healthy, affordable meals while creating valuable employment opportunities.

Expertise from Pulse Catering guarantees a consistent supply of nutritious food across school communities. All meals adhere to the ACT Government's traffic light system, based on the National Healthy School Canteens guidelines.

By providing students with nutritious meals, the program helps improve their focus, wellbeing, and learning outcomes.



Service User Engagement

Service User Engagement (SUE) ensures that people accessing our programs are not just participants but partners in shaping services that matter to them.

By placing lived experience at the centre of design, delivery, and improvement, SUE helps us create services that are both respectful and impactful.

SUE grew both in size and influence, with subcommittees forming across program areas to strengthen representation and bring targeted perspectives to service design.

SUE is now part of everyday practice at WCS. This year, service users and their support persons:

- co-designed documents, policies, strategies, evaluations, resources, web pages, and programme reviews
- contributed to the development of the WCS Service User Engagement Commitment Statement
- participated in staff recruitment and selection processes
- partnered with staff through the Service User Advisory Committee to shape programmes directly.

Together, these initiatives strengthened the voice of people with lived experience at every level of WCS, ensuring our services are designed with, not just for, the community.



Representing SUE across community

Our SUE Project Officer, Rachael, took on an expanded role within the broader community.

She joined the ACT Government's Lived Experience Leadership Working Group and other communities of practice, while also presenting at the MS Conference on WCS's approach to engaging service users in service design and delivery.



New SUE resources

To support consistent and meaningful engagement, we developed new SUE resources grounded in evidence and co-design principles. These include:

- Introductory SUE training and induction for staff and service users
- Practical co-design tools and evaluation methods
- Resources to guide collaboration between service users, support persons, and staff.

Partners and Supporters

**Thank you to our community
partners for another amazing year!**

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
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 and 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
Hearspace – Canberra and 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
 Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT)
 Mingle - Whitlam
 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
 Police Community Youth Club (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
 Yeddung Mura Aboriginal Corporation
 Youth Coalition of the ACT
 YWCA Canberra

