

# SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER



ANNUAL  
REPORT  
**2019-20**

Communities@Work

# OUR IMPACT

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES



**970 CHILDREN**

from 600 families accessed Family Day Care.



**4,124 CHILDREN**

attended Out of School Hours Care.



**1,802 CHILDREN**

attended Early Education and Care centres.



**596 EDUCATORS**

provided education and care



**8 FAMILIES** accessed In Home Care.



**6,896 CHILDREN** in total attended Children's Services.

## PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS



**126 STUDENTS**

enrolled in the Certificate III and Diploma Childhood Education and Care qualifications.



**105 PARTICIPANTS**

booked into professional development workshops.



**344 EDUCATORS**

completed Mandatory Training



**47 ASCEND TRAINEES**

**96 STUDENTS** completed their courses.



## CRISIS SUPPORT



**828** individuals or groups helped 1,609 times.

## COMMUNITY PANTRIES



**14,967** vulnerable people supported to access essential food items.



**1,302** Canberra Relief Network food hampers given to people in need.



**1,400 GIFTS** donated through our Christmas Appeal.



**332 CHRISTMAS HAMPERS**



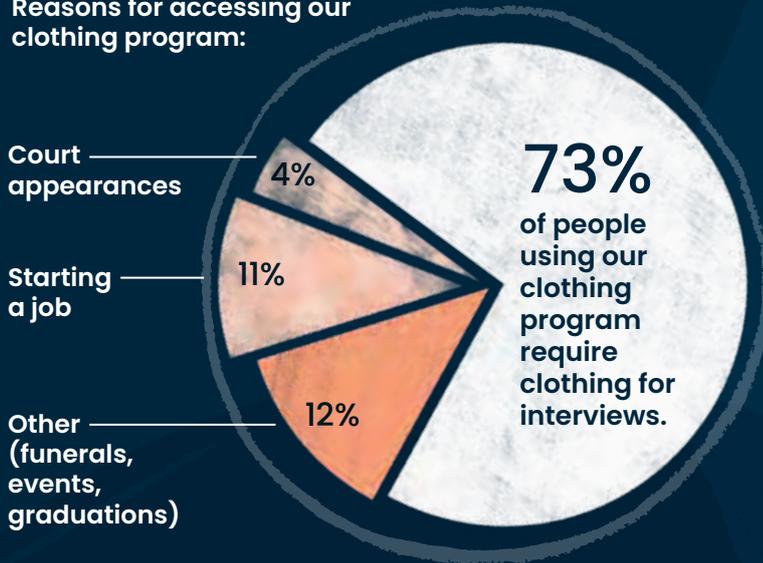
**291 VISITORS**

Christmas Hampers given to visitors through our Christmas Cave.

# 2019-2020

## CLOTHING PROGRAM

Reasons for accessing our clothing program:



## ACCOMMODATION



**11,680 NIGHTS** accommodation provided to people facing homelessness.



**SUBSIDISED RENT WAIVED** for 6 months to support clients in transitional accommodation.

## BEST DRESSED STORE



## DISABILITY AND SENIOR SERVICES



**15,081 TRIPS** so 750 clients could get to medical appointments.



**2,464** shopping trips with 145 clients to help them buy essential items.

## GALILEE SCHOOL



**PARENTS** agreed or strongly agreed that teachers at Galilee School expect their child to do his or her best.



**STUDENTS** supported several local charities and community organisations by participating in active volunteering activities.



Through targeted social and emotional learning programs, the school built resilience, capacity and awareness of community expectations within students.



**12,987 TRIPS** to social events to keep clients connected.



**600 HOURS** on the phone to 132 seniors to check on their wellbeing.



## Purpose

To be responsive to the needs of the community by delivering high quality services that support positive educational outcomes, assist in alleviating hardship, enhance the quality of life and lead to positive social change.



## Mission

To enrich the lives of people in our community in life changing ways.



## Values

Integrity  
Respect for All  
Progressive  
Quality and Innovation  
Sustainability



As the ACT's largest community organisation, Communities@Work responded to this year's challenges by utilising our resources to the full and playing a leading role in responding to the needs of Canberrans and the region during these difficult times.

*Alan Greenslade,  
Board Chair*

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# 01

# OUR ORGANISATION



**There have been some very, very difficult times over the last year, some really challenging times. And I could not be any prouder of all of you for the work that you've been doing. You've been selfless in giving everything you have to be able to support our community. I'm just so proud of you all.**

*Lee Maiden, CEO, thanking all staff for their work during the bushfires and COVID-19*





## FROM BOARD CHAIR ALAN GREENSLADE

**What an extraordinary year. The start was focussed on our plans for continuing and expanding our services and was followed by the need for rapid response and flexibility as the bushfires, then COVID-19, created some of the biggest challenges faced by the community for a long time.**

As the ACT's largest community organisation, Communities@Work responded by utilising our resources to the full and played a leading role in responding to the needs of Canberrans and the region during these difficult times. It was also a time for strengthening our working with others, and I would like to acknowledge the cooperative efforts of all Canberra community organisations in responding to these unique circumstances, as well as the support of the ACT Government and Directorates and of the Commonwealth Government.

Our support to the community has included partnering with others in the bushfire emergency evacuation centres to provide crisis support to people affected by the bushfires and smoke; providing clothing and food to those evacuated; keeping all our children's services open to support families who needed to work during the COVID-19 crisis; providing essential supervision in ACT Government's Safe and Supervised Schools during Term 2 remote learning; working with the Canberra Relief Network to provide hampers of food; and much more.

Looking forward, there will be continuing hardship for some of the Canberra community in the months ahead. We will continue to support those in need in as many ways as possible. For example, we have frozen our fees for children's services for the time being, reflecting the uncertain incomes of some parents. We are investing in redesigning our food pantry, seniors and other services to better meet anticipated needs in the changed circumstances. Further, notwithstanding the many difficulties of recent times, we are on track to open the Galilee Senior Secondary College in a few months' time (subject to all necessary legislative requirements being

satisfied), which will provide opportunities for students struggling in mainstream schools to attain their Year 12 certificate.

Our commitment to quality is a bedrock of much that we do. I am therefore delighted that our delivery of high quality services to the region and attention to training and developing skills continues to be recognised at the ACT Training Awards. Once again, Communities@Work has been announced as the ACT Large Employer of the Year.

All that has been achieved this year would not be possible without the many people who contribute to our work, not the least of all Communities@Work's amazing employees, led by our CEO Lee Maiden. And we have some wonderful volunteers, without whom we wouldn't be able to do all that we do.

I would also like to thank my Board colleagues for their professionalism, skills and passion in guiding our contributions to the Canberra community. We welcomed Joanne Garrisson to the Board this year, bringing a wealth of experience in education reforms, reinforcing our commitment to quality education and to the growth of Galilee School.

Whatever further surprises the future holds, I can assure you that Communities@Work will continue to respond to the changing needs of the community now and into 2021.

**ALAN GREENSDALE  
CHAIR**



# MEET OUR BOARD

**Communities@Work is a public company limited by guarantee and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.**

**ALAN GREENSLADE**  
Chair

Alan has extensive experience in leading financial management and governance roles in the public and private sector, including the Department of Finance.

**DR BRIAN BABINGTON**  
Deputy Chair

Brian is a community development advocate, CEO of Families Australia and leads the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing.

**ANDREW SNAIDERO**  
Treasurer

Andrew has been partner of Hardwicks, an independent accounting firm based in Canberra, since 2013 with vast experience in finance, auditing, reporting and governance.

**BERNICE ELLIS**

Bernice leads the commercial disputes and insolvency team in the Canberra office of national law firm, Mills Oakley. She has a background in tax and commerce.

**JAMES SELKIRK**

James is a qualified Chartered Accountant with over 20 years' experience and is currently the Chief Financial Officer at CDC Data Centres.

**KAREN CURTIS**

Karen has strong governance, change management, service delivery, regulatory policy, representational and media advocacy skills.

**JOHN RUNKO**

John is CEO of Independent and has been involved in most facets of the property industry in Canberra over the past 30 years.

**JOANNE GARRISON**

Joanne has led and influenced significant education reforms in her many and various roles within the ACT Education Directorate. Currently, Joanne works for the ACT Association of Independent Schools as a senior manager Strategic Programs.



## FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER **LEE MAIDEN**

**As a not for profit organisation, Communities@Work knows what it means to face challenges, however this year we faced challenges we could never have imagined.**

When the bushfires, storms and pandemic were thrust upon us one after the other, Communities@Work stepped up to the mark and played a significant role in providing essential services to the broader community. I could not be any prouder of this organisation and our incredible employees. They have been a shining light in what has been and continues to be very challenging times.

There were many events that I can look back on over the last year with great pride such as the launch the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) in February 2019. This is an exciting initiative that provides the executive with insights on youth issues, both within Communities@Work and the community, while adding diversity to our governance.

Communities@Work's Galilee School has been reaching milestones year after year and this year is no exception. We were very excited to have made the first steps in establishing a Senior Secondary College at Galilee School, to enable students who struggle in mainstream school environments to achieve their ACT Senior Secondary Certificate.

It was a difficult time for many of our volunteers who had to suspend their volunteering roles due to social distancing requirements, health reasons or because of their age. We are pleased to have many of them slowly returning to volunteering roles across the organisation assisting us in providing services to the community.

We were also very proud to start an exciting strategic partnership with the ACT Brumbies as their Major Charity Partner in 2020. While

this program was disrupted significantly by COVID-19, we were able to work together on some great events prior to the pandemic.

There were also many other collaborative partnerships supporting the Canberra community such as the Canberra Recovery Network, Canberra Relief Network, the Safe Supervised School Sites and our Community Development team working with the ACT Government in distributing community activities to keep people connected.

To top it all off winning the ACT Training Awards Large Employer of the Year for a second year in a row was a very proud moment for the whole organisation.

As I reflect on the past twelve months, I know we have managed to navigate our way through these difficult times because of the extraordinary people I have around me. I would like to thank the Board who have given an incredible amount of support and commitment during these unprecedented times, my Executive team who have managed their programs in probably the toughest times of their careers and to all of Communities@Work staff and volunteers for being there for the Canberra community. We all look forward to returning to some sort of normal in 2021.

**LEE MAIDEN**  
**CEO**





# AWARDS



**2020 and 2019 ACT Training Awards**

Won ACT Larger Employer of the Year



**2020 Volunteering Awards**

Volunteers nominated for Volunteer Team of the Year



**2020 Excellence in Family Day Care Awards**

40 of our educators nominated, 4 of our coordination team members nominated, our whole Family Day Care and In Home Care service nominated. Won by Ayesha Durrani (for North Canberra) and Deborah Blomeley (for South Canberra).



**2019 ACT Pedagogical Leadership Network's Education and Care Awards**

Won "Director of the Year" Award (Melita Pendergast, Manager of Abacus Child Care and Education Centre and Capital Hill Early Childhood Centre)



**2020 Career Advisors Association NSW and ACT Award for Excellence in Student Engagement**

Won by Melissa Smith, Senior Secondary College Coordinator / Transition Teacher, Galilee School



Carla Scalia, RTO Manager, and Lee Maiden, CEO, receive the 2020 ACT Training Award for Large Employer of the Year

## WHAT WE DO

Communities@Work is the largest provider of children's services in the ACT and the largest not-for-profit organisation in the region, with a proud 43 year history. We provide a range of complementary community services and pride ourselves on the positive contribution we make to the lives of members of our community.

We employ 658 employees across six program areas, engage 90 self-employed Family Day Care and In Home Educators and harness the passionate commitment of more than 100 volunteers to help us carry out our mission of enriching the lives of people in our community in life changing ways.

### CHILDREN'S SERVICES

We are recognised as a leader within the early education and care sector, committed to providing quality education for children. We do this through 12 Early Education and Care centres, 17 Out of School Hours Care services, 13 School Holiday programs and 90 Family Day Care and In-Home Care educators.

### PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

Our registered training organisation specialises in delivering a nationally recognised Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, a Certificate III in Business Administration and ongoing professional development for the education and care sector.



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We partner with communities, individuals, agencies, local government and business to implement a range of community-inspired initiatives to develop more connected communities.

## DISABILITY AND SENIOR SERVICES

We provide community transport, support coordination, in home services for seniors and recreational and skills development programs for seniors and people living with disability. This allows them to stay socially engaged and enables them to access health services and participate in community activities so they maintain their independence and wellbeing.

## GALILEE SCHOOL

We run a registered, independent high school designed specifically for disengaged and vulnerable young people in Years 7-10 who have yet to succeed in mainstream schooling. We support students to re-engage with their education, transition into the workforce or further study, find a sense of purpose and re-engage with their families and community.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

We provide essential community support such as food, clothing and accommodation to vulnerable and disadvantaged people. We have two community pantries, a clothing program, a pre-loved clothing store and seven transitional housing sites.



# RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE BUSHFIRES

## ADAPTING TO BUSHFIRES

During the bushfires and hazardous air quality levels of January 2020 we remained focused on the health and wellbeing of our clients, children and staff, limiting the time they spent outdoors and providing masks as needed.

Our January school holiday program was drastically impacted through the cancellation of all our excursions and incursions and led to our educators developing innovative and fun ways to keep children engaged and whilst remaining indoors.

## How We Met the Bushfire Challenge

- Staffed the bushfire emergency and recovery centres in Dickson and Erindale.
- Provided free food and clothing to people fleeing to the ACT from the bushfires on the NSW South Coast.
- Partnered with government agencies to co-ordinate bushfire donations.
- Set up evacuation plans for high risk NDIS clients and Reach Home clients.
- Arranged firefighter visits to teach children about fire safety.
- Organised bushfire appeal fundraisers.
- Delivered letters to firefighters written by children at our OSHC services.
- Allowed staff time to protect their homes or volunteer to fight bushfires.
- Provided personal protection equipment to our transport drivers for smoke pollution.



## SUPPORTING FAMILIES AFFECTED BY BUSHFIRE

We are beyond happy with the fantastic service our family day care educator provides. Yuan has whole heartedly supported Edward and the rest of our family through what has been the toughest year yet -from us losing my dad and brother in the New Year's Eve bushfires in Cobargo and then two grandmothers days later. Despite this, the growth Edward has had over the past year is immeasurable. We as a family are eternally gratefully for all the love she has shown us.

*Family Day Care parent*

# RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

## ADAPTING TO COVID-19

COVID-19 represents the greatest economic and public health challenge that Canberra has ever faced. It has been a huge challenge for our organisation, as for all organisations, and dramatically changed the way in which many of our services operated.

Our organisation responded by ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our clients and staff at all times, and by developing innovative ways to allow the continuation of services to clients. We kept our children's services open throughout the pandemic to provide crucial access to early childhood education and care services for children so families that were essential workers or vulnerable were supported.

Government support in the form of JobKeeper 1.0 and the Childcare Relief package enabled us to continue all frontline services during the latter part of the financial year. A majority of Communities@Work staff were eligible for JobKeeper benefits during this time.



## How We Met the COVID Challenge

- Provided essential supervision support to teachers at the Safe and Supervised School sites during remote learning.
- Put all our RTO classroom learning online so trainees could continue studying.
- Re-designed programs to keep our seniors socially connected through Zoom, newsletters, phone calls and home visits.
- Delivered food hampers to people in need through the Canberra Relief Network.
- Waived our subsidised rent for six months to help our transitional housing clients.
- Kept our self-isolating volunteers connected through videos and emails.
- Supported Galilee School students with a customised education model for remote learning.
- Partnered with local government to develop online activities to keep Canberrans connected during isolation.
- Transported seniors and disability clients to the shops to buy essentials.
- Helped children make care packages for essential workers.
- Staff cut their work hours to help reduce our wage bill so we could continue operating.
- Gave birthday parties for children who had missed out due to lockdown restrictions.
- Implemented weekly online music therapy with a qualified music therapist for family day care playgroups.

## CREATING JOYFUL EXPERIENCES

The children at our Neville Bonner OSHC were so disappointed that their annual school camp was cancelled due to COVID-19 – yet another event cancelled. Wanting to bring joy back into their lives, we decided to create our own school camp. We set up a camp area with a tent, sleeping bags, candles and of course a 'campfire' – and then spent the afternoon making homemade pizzas and roasting marshmallows to campfire songs. Later in the afternoon we grabbed flashlights and shared campfire stories with one another. The children had an amazing time and families were deeply grateful for our efforts.

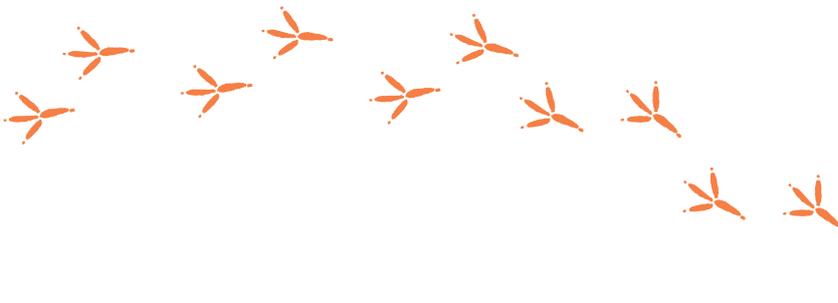
*Ashley, Coordinator, Neville Bonner OSHC*

# OUR RECONCILIATION JOURNEY

During this year we worked on our fourth Reconciliation Action Plan (launched in late 2020) and continued to promote and support reconciliation through a wide range of activities across our organisation and community. Children connected to the land and the community through building an appreciation for our native flora and fauna and through caring for each other.

## CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF RECONCILIATION

- Created our own children's Acknowledgement of Country to perform daily.
- Went on Bridge Walks.
- Established bush tucker gardens to give back to the land.
- Ran bushfood workshops for educators.
- Created Indigenous inspired outdoor play spaces to symbolise our respect for the Ngunnawal land.
- Invited Indigenous music groups to visit our centres to share their culture, music and stories.
- Read Dreamtime stories with the children.
- Held weekly yarning circles at our OSHC services.
- Took seniors to the First Nations Gallery at the National Museum.
- Developed strong relationships with our local Aboriginal community.
- Created and distributed community Reconciliation Resource Packs in partnership with the ACT Government.
- Supplied Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources for our education centres.



### DEVELOPING BUSHFOOD GARDENS

Our bushfoods tour to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands was a very successful workshop for educators across Canberra. Facilitator and Wiradjuri man Adam Shipp discussed Indigenous connection to country, and offered participants an authentic, cultural, hands on experience of tasting, touching and smelling a range of bush tucker found from around the region and the traditional Aboriginal use of them for making food and medicine.

Educators incorporated their newly acquired skills and knowledge into their planning and curriculum, including the setup of bushfood gardens at their own centres. In collaboration with the children and their families, educators designed a garden, grew Indigenous plants, and harvested the produce for their own meals at the centre – a wonderfully sustainable way to learn about caring for and giving back to the Ngunnawal land on which they live.

**Yaama Land, Yaama Sky, Yaama Me,  
Yaama Everyone**

**We would like to acknowledge and say  
thank you to the Ngunnawal people.**

**We promise to look after the land, the  
animals and the people too.**

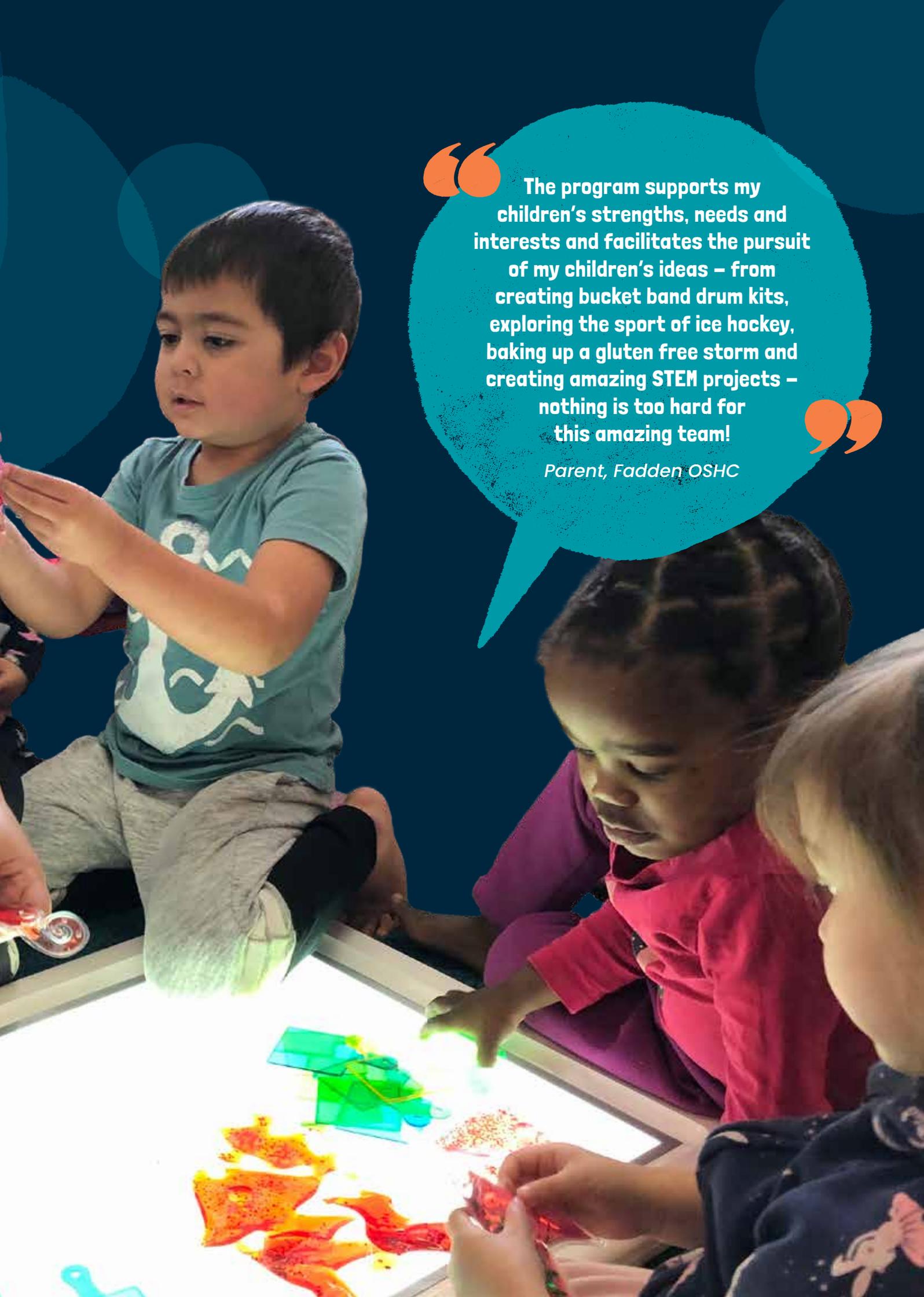
*(Developed by Appletree and Illoura  
Child Care and Education Centres  
and performed daily by the  
children and educators)*



02

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES





**“ The program supports my children’s strengths, needs and interests and facilitates the pursuit of my children’s ideas – from creating bucket band drum kits, exploring the sport of ice hockey, baking up a gluten free storm and creating amazing STEM projects – nothing is too hard for this amazing team! ”**

*Parent, Fadden OSHC*

## NEW INITIATIVES

### UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE

During the year we worked alongside the ACT Education Directorate and partnered schools to provide 15 hours a week of free access to early education and care for three-year-old children at five locations. Our commitment to provide ongoing support for vulnerable families led us to extend the reach of the program by providing additional placements at other services and extending the care hours and weeks of care.

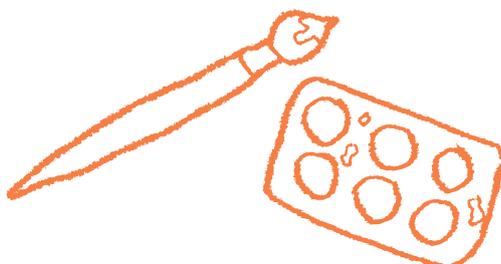
### OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE (OSHC) PRESCHOOL PILOT PROGRAM

We were involved in an OSHC Preschool Pilot Program at two of four trialled public-school locations. Operating our OSHC program within existing preschool learning environments allows for shared resourcing, information and curriculum planning, a reduction in transitions for young children and creation of a sense of belonging. Due to the success of the program, we will continue the program post-pilot and are currently expanding this initiative to other school sites.

## PLAY-BASED LEARNING

**Our activities and environments provided children with a range of structured and unstructured indoor and outdoor play opportunities, allowing them to develop complex narratives and scenes, bursting with creativity and critical thinking.**

- Creative expression and teamwork skills.
- Regulating emotions and fears.
- Scientific and analytical skills.
- A love of reading.
- Physical wellbeing.
- Mathematics and engineering.
- Learning and socialisation networks.



### PROVIDING A SENSE OF BELONGING

The support your educators offered my family when we were unexpectedly faced with a health crisis last year with our son was phenomenal to say the least. It is something I will forever be grateful for.

From monitoring the emotional wellbeing of our other children while their brother was interstate for surgery, to keeping a vigilant eye on my son during his long recovery when he returned to the program, and even providing a supportive ear and 'a shoulder to cry on' for me as a mum whilst in the thick of the unknown.

The educators have been able to provide a culture and sense of belonging for our children where they feel OSHC is a 'home away from home' and the educators are like an 'extended family'.

*Parent, Fadden OSHC*

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**Our wide range of environmental sustainability practices across our services empowered children to develop an appreciation of the environment and laid the foundations for becoming environmentally responsible citizens. Some examples:**

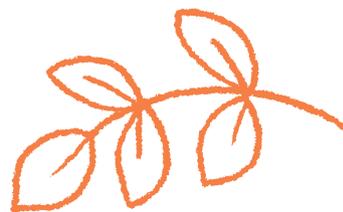
- Grew food for use in our own meals.
- Cleaned up our local areas.
- Composted food scraps.
- Set up our own worm farms.
- Recycled, reused and refurbished products.
- Partnered with Canberra Seed Savers to grow food for people in need.
- Installed water tanks to irrigate gardens.
- Collected cans and bottles to help fund other sustainability projects.
- Engaged in recycling learning at Playgroup.
- Received ACT Smart Accreditation.

## COLLECTING LIDS FOR KIDS

Children, families and educators at our Isabella Plains Child Care and Education Centre collected milk, juice and soft drink bottles for Lids4Kids. With a little extra help from Independent Tuggeranong staff, they exceeded their initial goal of 1,000 lids, with the final count being an impressive 4,499 lids.

Inspired by this success, many of our other Children's Services followed suit, also collecting lids. At our Ngunnawal Child Care and Education Centre for instance, families and educators collected a staggering 13,173 lids!

This simple sustainability initiative diverted waste from landfill and resulted in something much more meaningful – prosthetic hands for child amputees, Buddy Benches, bricks for community gardens and equipment for schools and children's groups.



# INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Learning about and respecting the diverse backgrounds we come from, is an important step in positively embracing and developing embedded inclusion and cultural safety for children.

- Educators and children shared words, flags and celebrations from their individual cultures.
- At Abacus there are 20 different languages spoken among the 38 staff.
- On multicultural Harmony Day our services embraced the theme 'we all belong'.
- On Chinese New Year children learnt about Chinese writing and the Zodiac.
- On Japan's Sea Day children explored cultural diversity and biodiversity.
- Each week children shared cooking experiences from around the world.
- All our services celebrated NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week.
- Educators introduced children to Auslan and Braille communication.



## HELPING WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

Our 7 year old son Lachlan is a boy who has complex needs: gross and fine motor delay, autism and anxiety. He has many allied health professionals involved in his life. They all provide many reports, strategies and interventions for Lachlan. The staff at Wanniasa Hills OSHC take the time to read and implement them so that Lachlan has consistency across his life. Consistency is most important to Lachlan. Sonja, the coordinator, has even met with Lachlan's clinical psychologist and school teacher to ensure the best possible outcomes for him. We feel that this commitment to our son can only come from a not for profit organisation, like Communities@Work, who uphold a philosophy of inclusion.

The educators have included him in every aspect of the service and allowed him to be himself. Lachlan is very attached to his mother, and for him to leave her every morning and willingly stay with the educators is bigger than anyone can imagine. We cannot thank them enough. They are an important part of his life, a huge part of his support system and part of our extended "family".

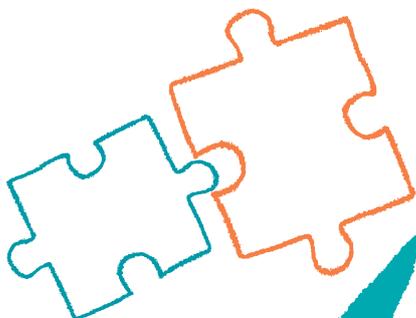
*Robert and Kim, parents at Wanniasa Hills OSHC*

# COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

**At Communities@Work, we don't enrol children, we enrol families. By involving families and communities we ensure the education and care of young children is holistic and results in the best outcomes for children and the family unit as a whole.**

We involve families in activities such as:

- Christmas concerts.
- Mothers and Fathers Day and Grandparents Day morning tea and gift making.
- Care baskets for frontline working families.
- Art exhibitions.
- Collaborating on ideas and special projects.
- Working with educators and families to support children's individual needs.
- Celebrating significant family dates and events.



## CARING THROUGH ILLNESS

When my wife was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer during pregnancy, and I was working full-time, we knew we were going to need assistance with Rory. Nicole came to our home as an educator and she's been absolutely wonderful and a real blessing to us.

She has formed a close bond with Rory and become a part of the family. She is continuously looking for opportunities and activities to further Rory's learning and development and goes above and beyond her duties, remaining flexible to our ever-changing circumstances. I'm confident she would do anything for Rory and Rory loves and trusts her wholeheartedly. It puts us at ease and gives us a sense of security knowing we have Nicole taking care of our children. She embodies the spirit of Communities@Work.

*Joel, In-Home Care Parent*

## COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

Richardson Childcare and Education Centre used a Woolworths Junior Landcare Grant to set up a Bush Tucker Garden to teach the children about local Aboriginal culture and the importance of being socially responsible and caring for their environment. The children learnt how to care for plants and the habitats of insects and birds, and how to divert waste to recycling and composting.

The project was also a golden opportunity for community collaboration. "We involved the children and their families in the research and design of the garden. We visited the nearby preschool to see what plants they had in their own bush foods garden. We took the children on two Woolworths Fresh Food Kids Discovery Tours at our local store to help get them excited about fruit and vegetables and the importance to their health.

We also worked with a local Community Indigenous Officer to gain advice, ideas and recipes, and to learn how the Indigenous people used the plants we would be growing".

*Cherie, Manager, Richard Early Childhood and Care Centre*

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Being actively engaged in the local community builds collaborative partnerships and supports children to feel a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility as global citizens and valuable community members.

- Held numerous community fundraisers.
- Strengthened our connection with Erindale Community Garden.
- Baked cookies and muffins for gifts to local community organisations.
- Made Christmas cards for children at the Canberra Hospital.
- Created and delivered artwork gifts to aged care centres.
- Explored local areas through field trips and excursions.
- Built close relationships with the local primary schools.
- Developed an Intergenerational Program between children and our seniors.
- Celebrated Families Week, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, National Simultaneous Story Time.
- Invited Indigenous families at our centres to share their culture.



## SPREADING KINDNESS

The children at our Neville Bonner OSHC service who, after hearing about the challenges faced by children with serious illnesses, decided to create special care packages for sick children at Calvary Hospital.

With the help of their educators, the children researched prices, set goals, developed an action plan for raising money to create the care packages and assembled the packages. They filled the boxes with play dough, Uno cards, puzzles, colouring book and pencils, bubbles, stamps, and more.

The packages brought much happiness to the children and their families and the Calvary Hospital Foundation team were deeply touched by this act of kindness. The children also raised over \$310 for the Paediatric Ward.



# LIFE SKILLS

As well as learning and having fun through play, many of our activities were also designed to support important life skills.

- Road safety.
- Personal safety.
- Healthy eating habits.
- What to do in an emergency.
- Basic First Aid course.
- Emotional wellbeing.
- Leadership skills.
- Understanding the value of kindness.
- Mental health and wellbeing.
- Cooking.



## BUZZING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH WELLBEING

Our OSHC educators were so impressed with the mental health and wellbeing concepts and training tools they learnt on the BeYou website that they were keen to implement those concepts with the children in their OSHC services. So, Beatrice the BeYou Bee was born: a soft toy mascot and a safe haven for the children to talk to about their mental health and emotions, and a tool that allowed educators to effectively speak with families.

Beatrice was given an 'itinerary' and toured 14 of our OSHC services, spending a week at each site being involved in all their activities – whether that was a spot of yoga together, reading a book, playing hide and seek, cooking, or riding a bike. Beatrice became a much-loved member of each OSHC service. The children loved writing in her journaling book, documenting their weekly experiences with her and taking photos. Some children even made beehive post boxes and wrote letters to put into the hives so when Beatrice was away they could still ask her questions.

# SERVICE QUALITY

A very important part of our work is ensuring that all our services are engaged in continuous quality improvement with the aim to ultimately exceed the industry standards for quality in all areas of the National Quality Standards.

- 40 of our 85 Family Day Care Educators received nominations for excellent service.
- Abacus Child Care and Education Centre achieved an 'Exceeding' National Quality Standard rating.
- We carried out 144 internal audits for all our Long Day Care and Out of School Hours Care services to ensure they were complying with our own Quality Management System and with the National Quality Framework.
- After just one year of implementing our internal audit process, five out of six services that were reassessed by Children's Education and Care Assurance have improved their quality rating result.

## LEADING IN EDUCATION PRACTICES

We were very proud of Melita Pendergast who took the top honours at the 2019 ACT Pedagogical Leadership Network's Education and Care Awards. Melita was awarded "Director of the Year", recognising her outstanding achievement in Early Childhood Education and Care. Melita's words summed it up: "I thrive when I am learning new things, reflecting on practices and thinking about ways to provide better outcomes for children."

Melita leads two of Communities@Work's services: Abacus Child Care and Education Centre and Capital Hill Early Childhood Centre.



Each visit from the compliance team allowed us to reflect on our practices within the service and find new ways of improving even the most common, everyday things. These visits also helped me as a manager to be prepared and confident in my service and organisation.

*Cherie,  
Richardson Early Child Care  
and Education Centre*

# REMOTE LEARNING

During Term 2, 2020 our Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) and Life Skills Educators worked closely with the ACT Government at 6 of its 9 Safe and Supervised School (SSS) sites to provide vital supervision and assistance to teaching staff. These sites catered for those children whose families were essential workers and could not stay home to look after their children. Principals, site managers and teachers at these sites shared their deep appreciation for the outstanding support provided by our educators and staff.

"We've had students from all over Belconnen with us as we've tried to manage their learning in the remote environment. And without the help of the Communities@Work staff, we wouldn't have been able to run the hub as we have. We've appreciated their ability to communicate with us, their ability to get to know the children who are on site, and their ability to just work cohesively with everybody on the site."

*Andrew Buesnel, Principal, and Anna Thorpe, Deputy Principal at Maribyrnong SSS*

"Our students felt calmer, safer, experienced more success, and were supported because of your educators' tireless efforts. We were so lucky to have them."

*Marijana, Deputy Principal at Palmerston*

"The communication is always very open. There's a lot of conversations, looking at the wellbeing of our students, which is what we're all here for. And I think it has helped our students feel safe in our school as well."

*Gail Taylor, Acting Principal at Gordon SSS*

"The flexibility, the care and the fun that your educators have with the kids and the kids have with them is just a pleasure to watch. I've had a lot of positive feedback from the teachers on the site about just how valuable and supportive your educators are of students in what is a very difficult time for everyone."

*Peter Kent, Site Manager at Charles Weston SSS*

"Their professionalism, compassion, kindness, dedication and work ethic is beyond question."

*Teacher at Caroline Chisholm SSS*

"It's just been fabulous to have the Communities@Work educators here at our site. We had very little notice to set this up and we hit the ground running. To have the educator here from Day One has just been brilliant."

*Gai Beecher, Principal at Amaroo SSS*

"Your educators have embraced a very challenging time with openness, flexibility and courage. The education directorate staff couldn't do without them."

*Katie, teacher at Gordon SSS*

**03**

# **PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS**





“ Being a part of the Communities@Work training is like being part of a family. The trainers are very helpful and understanding and I couldn't have asked for a better support system. ”

# OUR REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATION

The Centre of Professional Learning and Education (CPLÉ) is our registered training provider (RTO: 88148), specialising in delivering vocational education and training qualifications.

## WHAT WE OFFER

- Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
- Certificate III in Business Administration (a new course in 2020)

We use high quality and flexible teaching and learning strategies to meet the needs of our learners including face to face classes, virtual support, workplace mentoring and hands-on experience in the work environment.



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Provided 47 Ascend Program trainees with a unique pathway to a rewarding career in early childhood education and care, blending theoretical knowledge with practical paid experience.
- Introduced Professional Development calendars for both early education and family day care educators with a wide range of topics.
- Partnered with other training providers to further support the learning and development of our employees: St John Ambulance, Canberra First Aid, Australian Institute of Food Safety, Karralika Reversed Program, Jerrabomberra Wetlands and JCE Positive Outcomes.
- Provided a Mandatory Reporting training to 344 early learning educators across Canberra.
- Won Large Employer of the Year at the 2020 ACT Training Awards for the second year in a row.

## DEVELOPING CAREER PATHWAYS

*Kaylee completed a Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care through traineeship arrangements with CPLÉ.*

**Communities@Work not only provided me with the opportunity to study through their RTO, but also enabled me to access on the job training and get a permanent full time position when I finished my traineeship.**

**In addition, Communities@Work strongly advocates for and supports ongoing professional development training which is offered through their RTO. The trainers are all so supportive, friendly and professional.**

**I found that the delivery of content catered to the varying needs of each student, with face to face, online learning and on the job training options available, and I appreciated the flexibility between work and study arrangements. I would definitely recommend CPLÉ as a training provider to anyone considering a career in Early Childhood Education and Care.**

*Kaylee, former student at the Centre of Professional Learning and Education*



# 04

# SUPPORT SERVICES





“ My husband just lost his job this morning. I don't know what we are going to do. The rent is due next week and I'm only on the pension. But I found some really good presents here and some groceries. You've really helped us out and made me happy again.

*Christmas Cave client* ”

# COMMUNITY PANTRIES

Our Tuggeranong and Gungahlin community pantries provide food, household and personal care items to individuals and families who are experiencing hardship.

## WHERE FOOD COMES FROM

- Food collections from licensed food businesses and retail outlets (our Food Rescue program).
- Donations from individuals, groups and valued charity partners.
- Purchases of food pallets from Foodbank ACT/NSW.

## WHO WE SUPPORT

- People with fixed incomes who struggle to get by long term.
- People who use us for short periods when they're unable to pay their bills.
- People affected by COVID-19 who have never asked for assistance before.

## BENEFITS OF OUR PANTRIES

- Access to food, household and hygiene items.
- No judgement - just friendly faces and assistance.
- Opens the door to other supports through our crisis support program.

- Clients can shop for food in a safe, secure, predictable and dignified environment.
- Access to pop up information stalls from community agencies such as Council of the Ageing, Marymead and Legal Aid.

## HOW WE MET THE COVID CHALLENGE

- We temporarily suspended our normal pantry operations from April 2020 and became a collection point for the ACT Government's Canberra Relief Network (CRN) food hampers.
- We handed out teddy bears to our community pantry clients so they could join in the boredom-busting global bear hunt and feel connected to community events.
- We handed out handwashing 'care packages' to assist pantry clients who were struggling financially to access hygiene products.



## SPREADING CHRISTMAS JOY

Through our annual Christmas Appeal schools, individuals, shopping centres, businesses and community groups donate non-perishable food, gifts and toys so people experiencing hardship don't miss out on Christmas. Last year we gave out 1,400 donated gifts.

Gungahlin Village Shopping Centre, a strong supporter of our community pantry for some time, partnered with Canberra Metro and Transport Canberra & City Services and Minister Suzanne Orr to bring Santa and his helpers to the shopping centre to deliver gifts for the Centre's Giving Tree. The gifts were kindly donated by employees and contractors and complemented the gifts donated by Gungahlin Village's shops, offices and customers.

# CLOTHING PROGRAM AND BEST DRESSED STORE

## CLOTHING PROGRAM

For many who are unemployed, on low incomes or who have experienced a life-changing event, it can be a real struggle to meet the cost of suitable clothing for the next job interview, new job, funeral, court appearance or other event.

Our clothing program provides men and women in need with free clothing, shoes and accessories for these events.

During the pandemic, we adapted the program to minimise physical interaction. All donated items were put in quarantine for seven days before being handled and sorted. One-on-one client appointments were suspended, and items were handed out pre-packed instead.

## BEST DRESSED STORE

Our op shop, located in South.Point Tuggeranong, sells clothing and accessories that are surplus to the clothing program. South.Point is one of our essential community partnerships, and its long, ongoing support is crucial to the operation of the store.

The store specialises in women's and men's high quality, pre-loved, special occasion and work-ready clothes and accessories. Income generated is used to help vulnerable clients through the purchase of food for our community pantries.

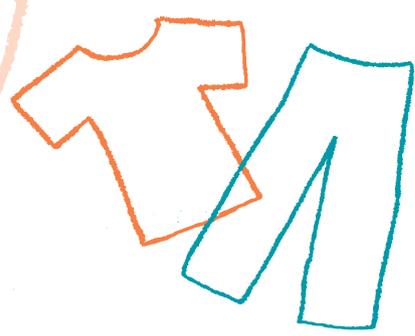
During the height of COVID-19 the store was closed due to government restrictions and our commitment to keeping the community, volunteers and staff safe. On reopening, we introduced many safety procedures to make sure our customers and shop volunteers felt safe.



“ I was living in my car, knowing that once I got a job, things would change. I got a job and but none of my work clothes fit anymore because stress took a toll on my body.

I went into the Tuggeranong Community Centre, had a shower, they heated up a meal and they gave me clothes that fit so that I could be comfortable in my new job. I was so relieved. I didn't want to be judged at my new job. I wanted to fit in.

Community Pantry client

”

# CRISIS SUPPORT

**Our inclusive and non-discriminatory crisis support service offers a reassuring place to come to for addressing immediate basic needs, as well as for information, advice and help with accessing further support services in the community.**

## WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Food.
- Bedding.
- Access to showers and shower packs.
- Hygiene items.
- Payment of medical scripts.
- Transport support.
- Access to communication devices.



## HOW WE MET THE BUSHFIRE CHALLENGE

During the 2019 / 2020 bushfires we supported several south coast families for several months while they relocated to Canberra.

As a community partner of the Social Recovery Network we proudly worked alongside community organisations such as Vinnies, Red Cross, Salvos, Anglicare and the ACT Government. Together we provided vital community services at the Canberra Bushfire Recovery Centres in Dickson and Erindale to people fleeing the fires and smoke. The group had been working together for over 18 months in preparation to support the community if and when needed.



## HOW WE MET THE COVID CHALLENGE

To help people better understand how and where to get help through COVID-19 hardship we released a series of *Helping Through Hardship* videos and pamphlets. Topics included:

- Accessing Centrelink and financial support.
- Getting essential food through the community pantries and food hampers.
- Accessing crisis support.
- Guides to free meals and emergency relief.
- Accessing bushfire relief funds.



“All the people I talk to really want to listen and help. It’s hard asking for help, but I always walk away feeling I’ve been heard and that help is there.”

*Crisis Support Client*

“Communities@Work can always be relied upon in times of need. They were always the first to arrive at the evacuation centres and nothing was ever too much trouble.”

*Social Recovery Network partner*

# HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT

**Our Reach Home program provides medium-term housing for individuals and families who are, or are at risk of being, homeless and need safe, stable, rent-subsidised transitional accommodation for 6-18 months until a long-term housing solution is available.**

## IMPROVING CLIENTS' FUTURES

Our transitional housing provides clients with an environment that is safe and allows them to recover from the stressful and challenging issues associated with their homelessness. We work closely with them to build their skills and confidence and provide them with pathways to eventually move into their permanent home. This may be with ACT Housing, CHC Affordable Housing, the private rental market, or the purchasing of a property.

We visit them regularly, support them to access resources in the community, show them how to navigate services and systems and discuss how to address the issues that led to their homelessness. Once a client has found their permanent home, we continue offering support for the first three months to help them establish lives in their new community.

## HOW WE SUPPORTED HOUSING CLIENTS THROUGH BUSHFIRES AND COVID-19

- Provided support and information.
- Gave out home emergency kits.
- Helped set up bushfire emergency plans.
- Regularly checked in to see how they were coping.
- Ensured they had a secure source of food.
- Provided disposable masks.
- Explained government safety instructions – particularly to those families with limited English.



## REBUILDING LIVES

Following a marriage breakdown, a single mother with four children was evicted from her home due to her inability to pay the rent. The family had come to Australia as refugees, had very limited English and no family and community support. The mother was referred to our Reach Home Program by Onelink.

We placed them in a large home, assisted them to get regular food hampers and hygiene items, guided them through the Centrelink system, and organised financial counselling, schooling and other services. We showed the mother how to set up direct debits and manage ongoing bills and provided support to keep the family car on the road so the children could continue attending school. We worked collaboratively with their family support worker, visited the family weekly, and assisted them to deal with the threat of bushfires and COVID-19.

By educating them on how to meet their goals, this allowed them to advance to ACT Housing's priority waitlist – a step away from permanent accommodation.

# 05

# GALILEE SCHOOL



**The dedicated and sustained focus on each student's individual progress - and the celebration of every single milestone along the way - is what makes the school, the staff and the students so special.**

*Mel, Senior Secondary College Coordinator/Transition Teacher*



# GALILEE SCHOOL

**Galilee School is a registered, independent high school designed specifically for disengaged and vulnerable young people in Years 7–10 who have yet to succeed in mainstream schooling. We support them to re-engage with their education, families and community, transition into the workforce or further study and find a sense of purpose.**

## OVERVIEW

Despite the challenges of 2020, this year has been a year of momentum for Galilee School:

- highest ever student enrolment (56)
- introduction of new programs, activities and curriculum subjects
- celebration of our 20th anniversary
- opening of a new and dedicated STEM building for our Design Tech unit
- design of a purpose-built school management system
- introduction of a new compliance and assurance system
- plans for capital works programs on both campuses
- plans for a Senior Secondary College for Years 11 and 12

## CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

Connecting our students to their community helped them gain an understanding of society, access positive role models and form positive relationships outside the school setting.

Some activities included:

- Participating in Clean up Australia Day
- Making dog toys for Rainbow Paws charity
- Planning and designing a community street library
- Volunteering at ACT Government's Domestic Animal Services
- Packing gift bags of essential items for women in need
- Supporting women experiencing homelessness through the charity Share the Dignity.

## PREPARING FOR YEAR 11 AND 12

During the year we made the first steps in establishing a Senior Secondary College in 2021-22, offering a boutique range of accredited subjects to enable students who struggle in mainstream school environments to achieve their ACT Senior Secondary Certificate. Year 11 will start in 2021 and Year 12 in 2022 (subject to all necessary legislative requirements being satisfied). During 2020 capital works began on the Year 11 classroom in Holder.



## YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

**ACT Brumbies:** players shared their personal stories and provided a series of videos on leadership and respect.

**Alan Tongue Aspire Program:** students learnt how to eradicate family violence and build healthy and respectful relationships.



**Bike Program:** students planned a track, went on weekly rides and learnt bike maintenance.

**Road Ready:** students learnt literacy, numeracy, risk-taking, maturity, safety, finances, driver safety and transitioning to adulthood – all while getting their L plates!

**Chief Minister's Reading Challenge & Jack Heath Workshops:** students expanded their love of reading through the Challenge initiative and workshops with popular local teen author Jack Heath.

**Remote Learning:** rolled out a flexible, responsive and individualised Remote Learning and Support Model to enable teaching, learning and youth worker support to occur from anywhere to anywhere during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Work Experience Week:** engaged Year 10 students in structured work placements, which led to regular paid work in some instances.

**Film-Making:** students created several short films on homelessness, bullying and expressing yourself, which allowed them to build self-confidence and teamwork skills.

**Year End Celebrations:** Celebrated the end of the school year and graduation of our Year 10 students.



## INSTILLING BELIEF IN STUDENTS

There were times when I wouldn't attend school or do my work even a little bit. But then last term of Year 10, I really put in the effort to come to school and complete my schoolwork. It's paid off and it makes me feel proud and happy about myself, as I thought I would never get my Year 10 certificate. Thank you to all the staff from Galilee who gave me a chance and never gave up on me when times were difficult. I wouldn't have received my Year 10 Certificate if it wasn't for all of the amazing staff here.

*Sibel, 2019 student*

**06**

# **DISABILITY AND SENIOR SERVICES**





**Our Disability and Senior Services aim to maintain or improve people's lifestyles through activities and services across four programs: Disability, Seniors, Transport and Coordination Services. These programs enable clients to improve their life skills, learn new skills, maintain their independence, and stay connected to their family, friends and community.**

# DISABILITY PROGRAM

**Our disability programs at Greenway, Gungahlin and Malkara support people from school age to adult to develop life skills that will enable them to live the life they choose. We do this by building capacity and developing skills through workshops, social and recreational activities, and community participation.**

Our program activities were restructured in early 2020 to have a daily focus, create a greater sense of belonging and camaraderie, enhance clients' sense of pride and accomplishment, and renew their confidence to explore new things and experiences.

## OUR CLIENTS ENJOYED LEARNING TO:

- Plan together.
- Compromise.
- Budget.
- Use technology.
- Connect with their community.
- Become more independent.

## ACTIVITIES

- Built a garden bed from donated tyres.
- Ran zoom skill building workshops.
- Assisted a client to gain his learner's licence.
- Participated in the Scarecrow Challenge with Erindale Community Garden.
- Decorated large Christmas stars to hang in shopping centres.
- Ran zoom chats with our art volunteer.
- Assisted Malkara School teachers with supervision support during remote learning.

## ENCOURAGING BELIEF IN OTHERS

With the help of his Life Skill Educator, Esmee and the team, along with his Communities@Work Support Coordinator Laura, Jarrad was persistent and worked hard for 12 months on learning the ACT road rules so that he could get his driver's license and gain more independence. While he didn't pass his first test (as many teenagers don't) he was determined not to give up. With Esmee's encouragement and with the Mitchell Road Ready trainer's creative thinking and support, Jarrad re-sat his exam using a paper copy and passed with flying colours, absolutely delighted by his achievement.

Jarrad shared his story with his peers in the program and his success and enthusiasm encouraged others to begin the same journey. "It doesn't matter if you have a disability or not", said Jarrad. "As long as you never give up and keep going and don't let anything stop you, you can reach your goals. One step at a time. Anyone can do it".



# SENIORS PROGRAM

**Our seniors program supports seniors at our centres in Holder and Gungahlin and in their own homes. Our focus is on providing opportunities for socialisation, developing new skills and knowledge, and maintaining independence.**

## IN-CENTRE PROGRAM

Our in-centre program mainly focuses on socialisation and wellbeing by providing clients with the opportunity to build relationships, learn new skills and connect with their community in a safe and welcoming environment. We design our monthly calendar of activities based on seniors' interests. Activities this year included:

- Intergenerational programs
- Excursions around Canberra
- Indoor sports
- Art and craft projects
- Gardening activities
- Informative guest speakers and performers
- International holiday celebrations

## IN-HOME PROGRAM

Our in-home program, funded through the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), mainly focuses on maintaining seniors' independence through arranging for service providers to assist with domestic tasks and personal care, and on helping seniors with decision making and access to social support.

## HOW WE MET THE COVID CHALLENGE

We successfully re-designed and developed our programs to ensure our clients stayed socially connected with each other and our team through:

- 600 hours of weekly social support calls to 132 seniors.
- Monthly newsletters.
- Virtual social catch ups and various group activities via Zoom.
- Home visits to deliver garden produce the seniors had been growing.
- Home visits to deliver DVDs, books and activity packs.

These initiatives had an important positive impact on our clients as the activities made them feel less isolated, taught them new skills through the Zoom workshops, enhanced their self-esteem, and allowed them to meet new people.



I like Zoom because I can see people I don't contact by telephone and see they are doing well and looking well. With the newsletter, I like that there is something for everybody. I have also enjoyed the weekly calls. I like everything that is being done as it makes you still feel part of a group and you get that lovely feeling of companionship and just being ourselves. I think it has been a saving grace because we are all in our separate homes.

*Georgie, Seniors Program Client*

# TRANSPORT SERVICES

**Our Community Transport service is an essential part of transport within the ACT region and gives individuals access to transport where they may otherwise not have it. We transport people living with a disability, those impacted by a medical condition, seniors, community groups and more.**

## OUR SERVICE PROVIDED:

- Basic medical transport.
- Access to crucial rehabilitation for people recovering from surgery.
- Dialysis and radiation treatment transport.
- Community group excursions.
- Transport to visit family or loved ones in hospital or residential aged care.
- Supported shopping trips so clients affected by COVID-19 could buy essential items.
- Delivery of essential food hampers to vulnerable clients.

## OUR SERVICE HELPED CLIENTS WITH:

- Reduce social isolation.
- Stay connected with family, friends and loved ones.
- Maintain independence.
- Participate in community and events.
- Maintain or improve their mental health and wellbeing.



## WIDENING PATHS TO FRIENDS

When Noel's wife passed away in 2015, he relied on his daily coffee catchups with friends to stay socially active. However, when his health declined, he was no longer able to drive and became socially isolated.

Noel turned to Communities@Work to help him get to his local shopping centre three times a week and resume his regular activities. However, his declining mobility meant he had difficulty walking along his narrow driveway to get to the transport cars, so we worked with Noel and his family to access the relevant services needed to have the driveway access widened.

Noel can now easily reach our cars and uses our service every weekday to enjoy his daily coffee catchups once more with friends. He no longer feels socially isolated and has built a wonderful rapport with all his drivers, with whom he enjoys sharing his stories of the past.

# COORDINATION SERVICES

We offer clients flexible and innovative coordination services to help them navigate and understand more about the services and supports that are available to them.

## OUR COORDINATION TEAM:

- Helps clients work towards realising their short-term health-related goals.
- Helps clients to apply for the NDIS.
- Helps clients navigate and implement their NDIS plan and make the most of their NDIS funding.
- Links clients to services that will support them to remain independent in their own home.
- Works towards resolving challenges with clients' services .
- Strengthens clients' informal support networks.
- Explores community and alternative support options.

### PROVIDING A SAFE HAVEN

Following a breakdown in her family relationship and a subsequent mental health crisis, Sally\* approached Communities@Work for support. We successfully helped Sally move out of her home into a Housing ACT property, providing extra staff support to manage this transition. We organised additional mental health support for her as well as access to the Disability Support Pension. As Sally's NDIS funding had run out due to needing additional support during her mental health crisis, we guided her through an early NDIS plan review to adjust her plan.

Sally has now successfully moved house into a home environment where she feels comfortable again, has a revised NDIS plan that suits her new needs, and is reassured knowing we will assist her through any future crisis. Her mother was extremely grateful for our support, saying "Thank you so much for everything you have done. You are amazing and we couldn't have done it without you".

*\*not real name*



07

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT





**Play Street helped foster a greater connection with the residents in our street. It helped forge a small micro community within a greater community. What is great now, is that most people in the street actually know each other and our kids take over the footpaths most afternoons after school and play like we used to when I was a kid.**

*Neil, resident of Wright  
in the Molonglo Valley*

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**Our community development program draws people together and encourages them to make longer-term meaningful connections within their communities. We utilise an asset based community development approach in our work with community groups, meaning we identify the assets and skills that already exist within a community and empower people to draw on these to help build the community they want to live in.**

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Power to the People conference

We jointly hosted a national conference with Bank of I.D.E.A.S to connect community sector workers in the ACT with other practitioners across Australia.

### SouthFest 2019

We partnered with the local Tuggeranong community to organise a festival to celebrate the region, local business, services, groups and local talent.

### Community Morning Teas

We held popular weekly morning teas so community members could socialise and discuss issues such as nutrition, decluttering, security and finance with guest speakers.

### Homelessness Art Exhibition

We collaborated with a local artist and the community housing sector to run an art exhibition to raise awareness of the need to address homelessness in the ACT.

### Southside Homelessness Project

We created a (now independent) working group to consider and develop ideas for supporting women in the ACT who may be experiencing homelessness.

### Healthy Cooking Classes

We teamed up with OzHarvest Canberra to teach people how to plan, shop and cook healthy meals on a budget through a six-week NEST program.

### Supporting Aged Persons Units

We connected residents of Housing ACT Aged Person Units through gardening projects to improve the look and feel of their communities.

## NEW AND EMERGING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

### Denman Prospect

We began working closely with Denman Prospect land developers Capital Estate Developments and residents to help residents forge a shared sense of identity and empower them to develop their voice as an active and self-determined community. Activities included development of playgroups, virtual trivia nights, and establishment of the Residents Advisory Group.

### Molonglo Valley

We continued to work with residents in the Molonglo Valley suburbs of Wright and Coombs to develop and deliver community building activities. This included the running of our first Play Street in Wright, where we brought families out of their houses to meet their neighbours, build a stronger, safer, more connected community and encourage active outdoor play.

## HOW WE MET THE COVID CHALLENGE

### CSD Activity Packs

We worked closely with the ACT Government's Community Services Directorate to develop activity packs to help Canberrans participate in days of importance while isolating.

### Creative Craft Challenge

We encouraged people to publically share their creative projects online with the broader community to inspire others during social restrictions.

### Community Morning Tea

We moved our weekly morning teas outdoor to enable participants to still connect to each other while adhering to social distancing requirements.



## PARTNERING WITH GOVERNMENT

I've worked with Communities@Work on a range of different projects and it's been really fantastic how the Government and community has come together and collaborated. I think for us as Government to be able to talk to people who are really engaging with people in the community and know what's happening on the ground is a huge benefit for us.

And all the assistance – whether it's stuffing string into community activity packs, or connecting us with people at the aged care housing complexes for Floriade Reimagined – it's just so fantastic to work together and share ideas and really get that insight around what people on the ground really need.

*Freya, Senior Director of the Community Resilience and Crisis Response Team at Community Services Directorate, ACT Government*

08

# OUR PEOPLE



At the heart of Communities@Work lies a large group of committed employees, volunteers and community partners and supporters who together help bring important and essential community services to people within and around Canberra to enrich their lives. They are, literally, Canberra's communities at work.



# OUR VOLUNTEERS

We are so proud of our enthusiastic and committed team of 114 volunteers, and their dedication to our organisation and the Canberra community.

They generously donate their time and energy to help us deliver important services to the community such as our community pantries, food rescue program, Best Dressed Store, clothing program, seniors program, disability program and community development activities. Without them we wouldn't be able to do what we do.

We can't thank them enough, but we tried... including:

- participating in Volunteering Australia's Smile Campaign to show appreciation for their work
- holding a thank you breakfast on National Volunteer Day
- remotely celebrating National Volunteer Week and sending them small gifts of appreciation
- nominating them for the Volunteer Team of the Year award with Volunteering ACT.

## ADAPTING TO COVID-19

During the height of the pandemic in Canberra our volunteer numbers were severely restricted. Many volunteers had to make the difficult decision to suspend volunteering. Those who continued to assist through the pandemic, followed COVID safe guidelines and adapted to the change in the way our programs were delivered.



## REBUILDING SELF-WORTH

*Volunteering provides an opportunity for people to meaningfully participate in society, make new friends and connect with their community. It's good for them and for our community. Linda, one of our wonderful volunteers at our Best Dressed Store, agrees.*

It's nice to feel you're giving something back. And it makes you feel valued as well. When you give up work, you measure yourself a lot by what you were at work. So volunteering enables you to rebuild that sense of self-worth. And it's nice to meet all the other volunteers - they're all so lovely! Some of us have made new friends through volunteering at the shop and we go shopping, walking and for coffee together. It's widened our friendship circle.

*Linda, volunteer at Best Dressed Store*

# OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support we have received from our valued community supporters. Together, we are making a genuine difference in the lives of so many vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the Canberra community.

## HOW OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS HELP US

Food donations  
Clothing drives  
Working bees  
Fundraisers

Grants  
Subsidised advertising  
Workplace giving scheme  
Free professional services

Subsidised rent  
Hosting giving trees  
Christmas Appeal gifts  
Clinics for clients

## THANKS TO YOU WE ARE HELPING MORE PEOPLE IN NEED!

- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment
- Department of Finance
- Department of Health
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Social Services
- Services Australia
- The Treasury
- ACT Block Grant Authority Inc
- ACT Brumbies
- ACT Government - Health
- Aldi
- All Homes
- Australian National University
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Australian Defence Force Academy
- Australian Institute of Sport
- Bradley Allen Love Lawyers
- Bunnings Warehouse
- Calwell Shopping Centre
- Canberra Baptist Church
- Canberra Weekly
- Casey Market Town
- Canberra Toyota
- CCS Group Canberra
- CDC Data Centres
- Commonwealth Bank
- Cooleman Court
- Coles
- Country Women's Association of Gungahlin
- Daana - Indian Restaurant
- Ernst & Young
- Embroiders' Guild ACT
- Face2Face Recruitment
- Families Australia
- FoodBank
- The Green Shed
- Gungahlin Marketplace
- Gungahlin Village
- Hands Across Canberra
- Hardwickes
- Hip Pocket Workwear
- Icon Water
- Independent Tuggeranong
- JB Hi-Fi
- Koomarri
- KPMG
- Lakespeare & Co
- Lifeline Canberra
- Lions Foundation
- Mills Oakley
- Modern Teaching Aids
- Morgans Group
- Murrumbidgee Country Club
- National Disability Services
- Office of Senator Katy Gallagher
- Officeworks
- Optus
- OzHarvest
- Qirx
- Rainbow Paws
- RBD Home Maintenance
- Second Bite
- Share the Dignity
- The Snow Foundation
- South.Point
- St Andrews Canberra
- Tuggeranong Arts Centre
- Westpac
- Woolworths



# OUR EMPLOYEES

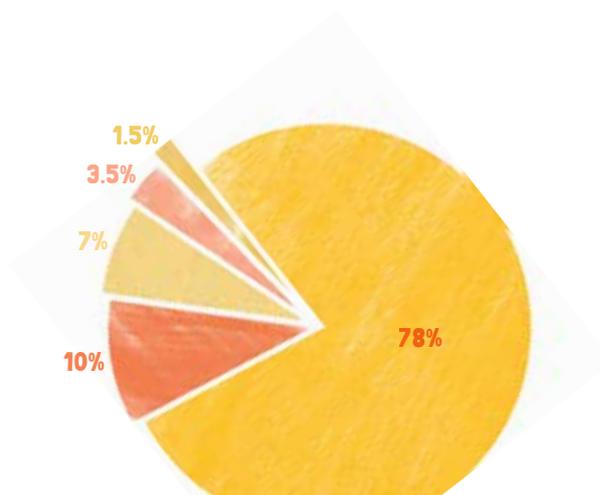
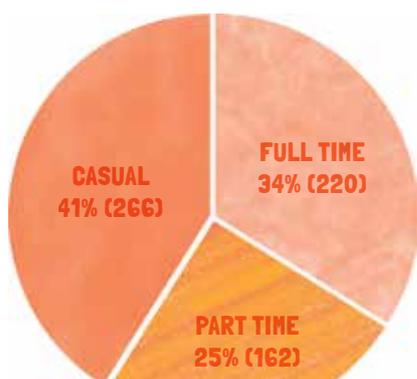
Our employees are the core of the Communities@Work community. We are dedicated to ensuring our community is happy, healthy and resilient, so we continually seek to implement new and innovative ways to support our staff and improve the workplace.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Upgraded our employee access program with a new supplier and enhanced supports.
- Listened to our employees' concerns through a staff survey and enhanced promotion and employment variation processes for greater accountability and transparency.
- Expanded our Employee Wellbeing program to identify extra benefits for employees.

## ADAPTING THROUGH COVID-19

2020 has been a challenging year for our employees, yet they have risen to the challenges and continued to provide excellent service to our community. During all these challenges we have supported our employees with access to information and training, supported leave, and flexible and adaptive approaches to program delivery.



We have 648 employees:

- 220 full time
- 162 part time
- 266 casual.

We also have 114 volunteers.

- 1.5% Social Programs (not including volunteers)
- 3.5% Galilee
- 7% Organisational Support
- 10% Disability and Senior Services
- 78% Children's Services (283 Long Day Care, 223 OSHC)

## RETAINING COMMITTED EMPLOYEES

Many of our employees have been with us a long time – a testament to our workplace culture and shared commitment to our mission. Take Sylvia for instance, who celebrated 21 years of working with Communities at Work. Sylvia started at our Illoura Childcare and Education Centre in the babies room, with her team leader being none other than Lee Maiden, our CEO! Now at Ngunnawal Childcare and Education Centre, Sylvia continues to bring her bright and bubbly personality to her coworkers and children within the centre each day.

# OUR BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Despite the environmental challenges of the last financial year, many positive initiatives were implemented across our operational areas – some of which are highlighted below. Our business support focus on continuous improvement has driven these initiatives, many of which have seen the creation of project-specific committees in line with established governance protocols.

## COVID-19 TASKFORCE

We established a COVID-19 taskforce involving Board members, executives and senior managers to create a COVID-19 Readiness Plan and later the organisation's formal Response Plan.

## YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

We established a Youth Advisory Board of voluntary, young Communities@Work employees to provide insight to our executives about youth issues, both within the organisation and through the broader Canberra community.

## WHS COMMITTEE

Our WHS committee melded a diverse suite of practices and measures into a uniform and sustainable set of health and safety guidelines and capabilities, that are driving long-term cultural change.

## IT MIGRATION TO MICROSOFT APPLICATIONS

We moved from Google-based applications to Microsoft applications to allow users a more seamless interface between our business-based applications and cloud-based data storage solutions.

## STAFF CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

We established a committee to provide a forum for ongoing communication between Communities@Work and our employees on initiatives, promote the wellbeing of staff and improve organisation culture and employee engagement.

## SOCIAL IMPACT WORKSHOPS & USERS GUIDE

We continued our partnership with the Centre for Social Impact, with program areas conducting workshops to develop their own "theories of change". CSI worked in collaboration with the Executive to create a Communities@Work User's Guide.

## NOT-FOR-PROFIT CFOS WORKING GROUP

Our Chief Financial Officer established a network with colleagues from other ACT not-for-profit entities to provide an informal platform to correlate responses to COVID-19 and implement new accounting standards and other local issues.

## CYBER SECURITY

In response to the increasing number of corporate cyber attacks, we established a taskforce to review policies, procedures and staff communications around this issue and conducted an external audit of corporate user access rights.

## RENEWAL OF OSHC SERVICES

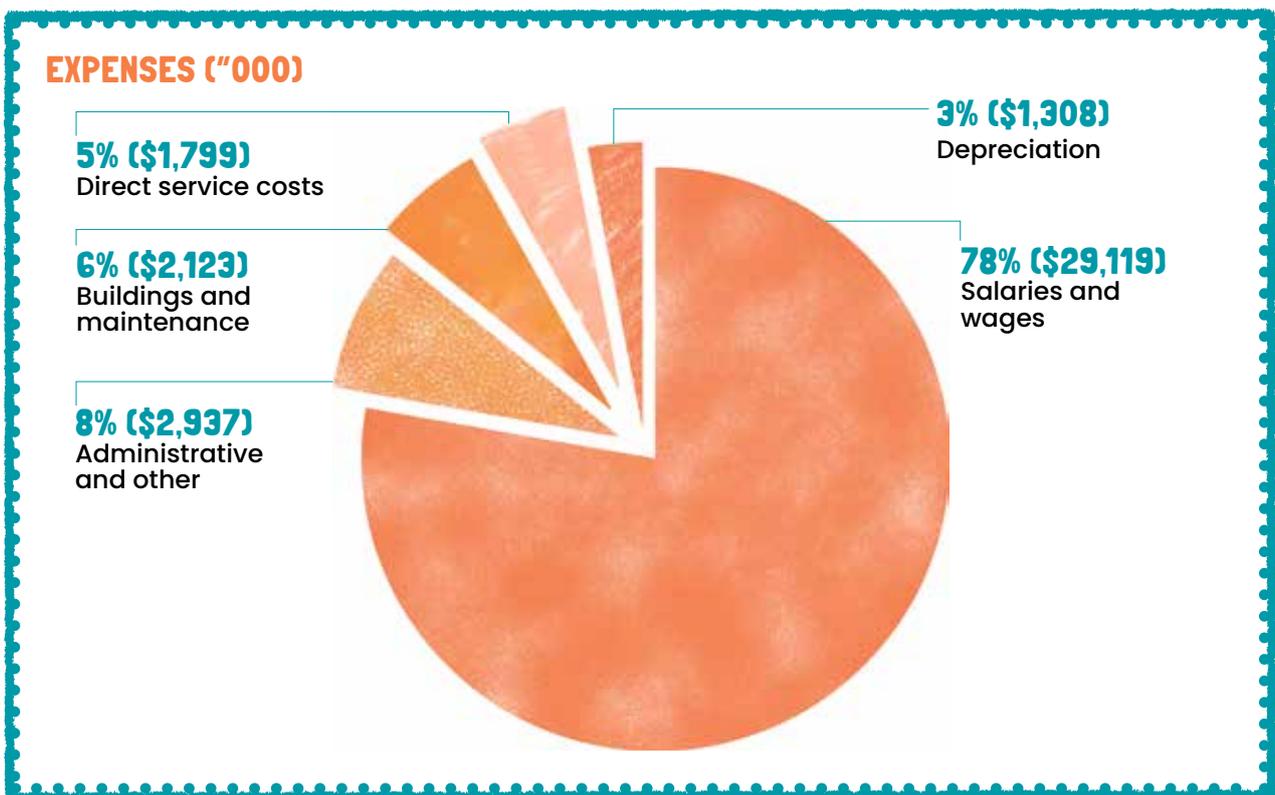
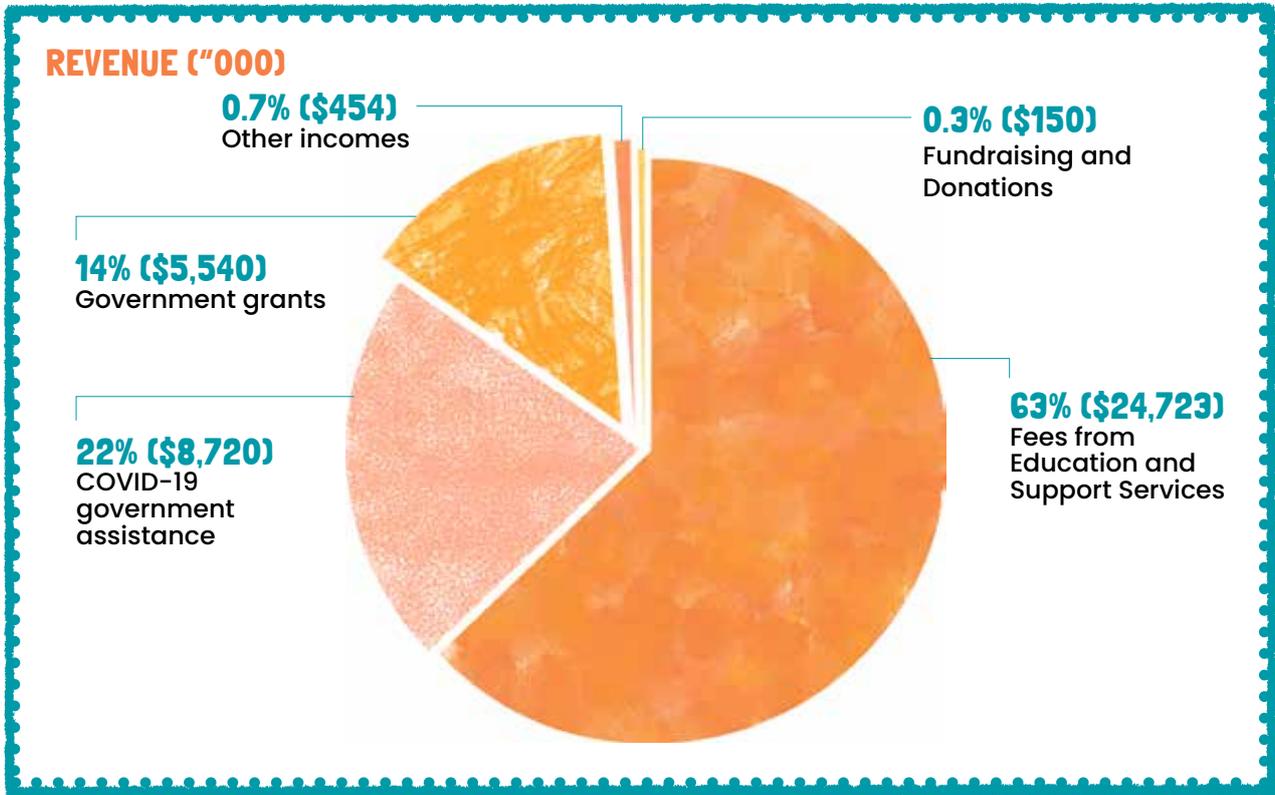
We were successful in retaining our existing primary school Before and After School Care services as part of the ACT Education Directorate's pre-qualification and tender process.

## BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

We developed business unit plans, goals and KPIs to align with the Board's 'Strategic Plan 2019-2022'.

# OUR FINANCIALS

The major change to our revenue streams came in the form of government assistance during the onset of COVID-19 and the “free childcare” period in place at that time. On a percentage basis, expenses were broadly in line with previous years.



# GET INVOLVED!

## FUNDRAISE

Fundraise by organising an activity through your business, work or school.



## PARTNER

Partner with us and enhance your reputation, build stakeholder loyalty and closely connect with the community.



## DONATE

Donate with a tax deductible donation and help us make a difference.



Communities@Work supports over 20,000 people in the Canberra community each year.

Together, we can make an even bigger impact on the lives of the vulnerable and disadvantaged, low income families, those experiencing homelessness, women and children fleeing domestic violence, at-risk youth, the frail aged and people with disabilities.

Every little bit helps.



## VOLUNTEER

Volunteer and share your skills and experience, while doing and feeling good.



## CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Donate food or gifts or host a Giving Tree to ensure families won't miss out on Christmas.

## SPONSOR

Sponsor us financially or through in-kind support with goods and services.



### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

**Visit** [commsatwork.org/get-involved](http://commsatwork.org/get-involved)

**Email** [admin@commsatwork.org](mailto:admin@commsatwork.org)

**Phone** (02) 6293 6500





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