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Creating Opportunities

# COMMUNITY FIRST STEP

ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021



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We would like to Acknowledge the Cabrogal of the Darug Nation who are the Traditional Custodians of this Land we are on. We also pay our respect to the Elders both past and present and future of the Darug Nation.

We acknowledge your rich culture and your unique role here in the Fairfield region. Your heritage and traditions are important to us all, and part and parcel of the great history of Australia.

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# Chair and Directors Overview

It is with great pride that I reflect on our achievements for the 2020 to 2021 Financial Year. Our management, under the wonderful leadership of CEO, John Gilmore, and staff went over and beyond to support the Southwest Sydney community through difficult times. During the strictest COVID1-19 lockdowns our services continued when many others did not. Staff delivered thousands of meals to families in need, provided support to families with young children, continued individualised disability support for our clients and made hundreds of welfare calls to assist Youth with their needs.

*The events of 2020-21 have highlighted the fundamental need for organisations like CFS, who can support the community at the grass roots level in the face of such potentially overwhelming circumstances. I'm proud of the staff of CFS, who have worked so hard to help the people of Southwest Sydney make it through the COVID-19 crisis. - Mark Webb, Vice Chair*

The economic shock of COVID 19 has been tougher on Southwest Sydney than most other communities. We believe that we are positioned to make a significant impact to help the communities we serve thrive in their lives and livelihoods. CFS also played its role as an organisational citizen in the wider community and is grateful for the connection and involvement in our peak organisations like NCOSS, LCSA and NDS. This, together with John's interviews with Radio National and The Guardian, have help raise our profile and improve the understanding of the challenges faced by the people of South Western Sydney.

*CFS has existed for more than 40 years to care for the community of Southwest Sydney by helping to overcome social and economic disadvantage. Add the demands and threats of COVID-19 to the already adverse circumstances many in the community suffer with and often the potential outcome becomes dire. The team at CFS have been inspiring in the way they successfully stayed the course in providing a myriad of community support services in these intensely difficult times. The CFS team personify "front line care". - Ian Ross, Director*

We successfully re-entered Support Independent Living (SIL) and are further expanding our offering in this space despite the challenge of extremely slow and inefficient NDIS processes with SIL plans taking far too long to be approved. It has been extremely satisfying to watch our management grow and mature. One great example is Usha Rao, who we promoted to Chief Operating Officer in March 2021 after 15 years of service having originally started as a CFS volunteer. Usha has supported John Gilmore to ensure our services are better connected and together they are growing the great talent next levels of management.

The 'One CFS' approach continues to provide the benefits of cross fertilization of services for community benefit. The close connection this helps give us with the community we serve gave us, and other local based organisations, the ability to respond quickly when bigger organisations struggled to even know what to do.

Along with management, our Board has learnt to operate virtually, mastering Microsoft Teams. As NSW hits double vaccination targets, we are looking forward to more in-person engagement with the diverse Fairfield community and CFS staff in 2022. I hope you enjoy reading this report as much as I did!

**Matthew Day, Chair**

# A Word From Our CEO

And I thought last year was massive!

A whole year of COVID – continually throwing up new situations and changing requirements that demanded immediate responses from CFS!

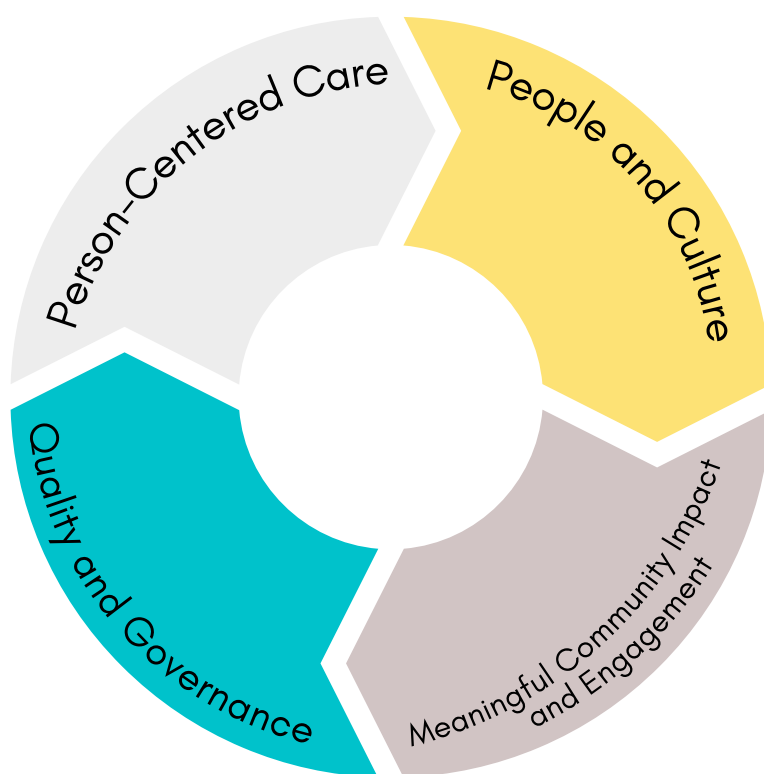
Public Health Orders sometimes changing daily, new advice from Federal or State government agencies seemed to come weekly and all the time the fabulous dedicated CFS team was up to the challenge and able to change how we do business to protect and help our clients, their families and the community of South Western Sydney.

Despite all these re-active demands and pressures, CFS demonstrated significant innovation and proactivity.

I could not be prouder of my team.

Support has been vital this year. Our organisation could not have survived without a great deal of external support. The Federal government's Jobsaver, NSW's Jobkeeper, and additional funding from the Department of Communities and Justice have been vital in stabilising our financial position. I am pleased to say we made a small surplus this year, replenishing reserves and safeguarding our future operations. I am grateful for the flexibility of our funders which allowed us to try new, innovative ways of delivering our services. The Social Sector Transformation Fund allowed us to update our IT technology, improving our on-line capacity was timely.

We were also the grateful recipients of support from the B2B office supply company COS through their charitable foundation, the “Lyone Foundation” for the innovative Homework Club program.



We started the 2020/2021 financial year with the reset of our strategic platforms via consultation with staff and Board. The escalation of person-centred care helped emphasise the holistic care objectives of the ‘one CFS’ approach and added momentum to our quality assurance and continuous improvement processes.

This and the hard work of Jennifer Mollett, Joe Cashman, our Quality Assurance committee members and disability team, paid off in the successful re-accreditation of CFS against the NDIS practice standard.

The ‘One CFS’ approach was also strengthened with the management restructure that saw Usha Rao move into the new Chief Operating Officer position with operational responsibility for all service delivery streams of CFS.

Yomna Touni joined CFS as Leader - People Quality and Safeguards consolidating risk management, incident reporting with quality assurance and continuous improvement into the People and Culture space.



Collaboration - working together, has been the real key to successfully responding to the pandemic. In Fairfield the CEO's of the four large place based charities, Core Community Services, Woodville Alliance, the Parks Community Network and Community First Step met with Susan Gibbeson from Fairfield Council, often twice weekly, to coordinate emergency response to community need and how we could work together to achieve the best outcomes for the community.

As you will read in this report CFS distributed almost 60,000 frozen meals and food hampers in collaboration with OZ Harvest, the NSW Parliamentary Kitchens and Neil Perry restaurants.

And in a separate collaboration with The Parks Community Network, a face masks sewing project created over 500 masks for vulnerable community members.

Engagement with our staff continued, with staff driven initiatives like our RU OK Day which also involved some Board members, and the (mostly Teams based) all staff weekly staff meetings. This year has also seen an increase in the level of staff training particularly around mental health. The implementation of a clinical supervision framework for all staff was also a great achievement.

The Phoenix Voices of Youth Choir now part of CFS not only continued on-line rehearsals but also managed to have on-line auditions for new participants. And all through the year, we continued to engage with the community in big ways and small. Every day our staff made welfare calls to our clients, to help counteract the isolation the pandemic created. Even the Children from our OSHC and Occasional Care services got involved - making and delivering RU OK Day cards to the elderly residents of Rosary Village.

CFS staff continually looked to identifying the need in our community and respond, like the Parks Occasional Care Team arranging a Medicare funded dental visit for the children at a time when accessing dentist was difficult.

On a personal note, it was also a challenging year having to undergo a bone marrow transplant as a result of cancer. I would like to express my extreme gratitude to the Board, in particular our Chair Matthew Day, the management team and staff for the unwavering support they have given me and their continued efforts to keep the 'show on the road'. This gave me one less thing to worry about and made certain that, despite the circumstances that the world faced, the year for CFS was a big success.

I hope you enjoy this Annual Report and the snapshot of some of the work CFS has been involved in this year - there was too much to include everything!

I am confident that CFS is poised to make an even bigger contribution in the years to come - creating opportunities for the people of South Western Sydney.

John Gilmore  
CEO



# Our Purpose, Vision and Values

Our **purpose** is to empower the Community in South West Sydney to overcome social and economic disadvantage by identifying community need and supporting sustainable capacity building. Our **vision** is Communities in South West Sydney have equal opportunities to thrive in their lives and livelihoods.

Our **Values** are:

**Respect** - We will listen to you and hear what you say. We will encourage independence and respect your decisions, opinions and views.

**Honesty** - We will be trustworthy, tell the truth and keep our promise to you and always provide the highest quality we can.

**Confidentiality** - We believe privacy and confidentiality is of most importance for you and the organisation.

**Development & Improvement** - We will identify where we can develop projects and always work to improve our services and to maintain our service standards with your feedback.

**Harmonious Environment** - We will make sure we have a positive working environment that provides support, guidance, acceptance and harmony for all.

# Meet Our Board Members



## **Matthew Day, Chair**

Matthew has more than 30 years of international executive and finance management experience predominantly working for global IT and Health companies including CFO of DXC Australia (formally CSC) and President, Asia Pacific of Ventyx. He is Asia Pacific CFO for O&M Halyard Health. Matthew is a director of O&M Halyard Australia Ltd and several related entities across Asia. Previously he has been Director of CSC Australia Pty Ltd, Paxus Pty Ltd and Mynd Asia Pacific Pty Ltd.



## **Mark Webb, Deputy Chair**

Mark's professional background includes work across the private sector, and more than 15 years experience in senior executive roles in the federal and state public sectors. His experience includes work in the technology industry, and public policy areas such as employment, the environment and heritage, planning and central government functions. He is currently the Chief Executive of the NSW Department of Parliamentary Services, a specialist service department working to support the operation of the NSW Parliament.

Mark's skills include policy, government, strategy, change management, business process and improvement, and corporate governance. Mark is also Vice President of the Institute of Public Administration-NSW Division.



### **Edward Parker, Non-Executive Director**

Edward's experience includes 30 years in finance and accounting roles across the spectrum of national and multinational organisations including KPMG and DXC (formally CSC). Edward is currently CFO for Industrie & Co and is responsible for financial strategy & governance, IT services, legal and company secretarial functions.



### **Helen Wilson, Non-Executive Director**

Helen brings over 30 years' experience within the health, aged care and community service sectors, including 20 years located in South West Sydney. Her experience includes senior executive roles within large, mid-sized and small organisations, across the not-for-profit, private and government sectors. She has also worked as a clinician and as a management consultant, guiding organisations through the challenges of changing policy, social, technological and competitive landscapes.



### **Ian Ross, Non-Executive Director**

Ian has over 30 years' experience in commercial operations management with a background in retail, fuel distribution, sports marketing and FMCG industries including petroleum, media and telco. He has widely diversified skills across industries and functions. With 20 years' of directorship experience in non-executive, executive and managing director roles serving on a number of Australian boards across a range of industries, including transport and distribution, convenience retailing and emergency response services.



## **Laura Sampson, Company Secretary**

Laura graduated from Western Sydney University in 2017 with a Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Arts and commenced working as a lawyer in August 2018. Laura has experience in tort claims, and has spent a number of years working as a Paralegal in the Parramatta and Liverpool areas. Laura is presently working in a large Plaintiff-focused personal injury law firm.

Through personal circumstances and her work, Laura has gained experience and is committed to assisting community members in Western Sydney that are living with a disability.



# Meet Our Management Team



## **John Gilmore, Chief Executive Officer**

John was appointed in October 2019. John's diverse career has seen him work in private enterprise, politics, the NSW public sector, philanthropy and the NGO sector. Especially skilled at developing and articulating strategic vision around organisation change, his excellent ability with people results in high levels of stakeholder engagement.



## **Usha Rao, Chief Operating Officer**

Usha was appointed Chief Operating Officer in March 2021. As an integral part of Community First Step for the past 15 years, Usha is passionate about the empowerment of migrant communities and their ability to strengthen their capacity and connections. Usha is always looking for innovative ways to introduce new programs and projects to the service.



## **Jennifer Mollett, Executive Manager of Disability and Children's Services**

Jennifer was appointed in 2020 and has vast experience in Executive roles within the Disability Services Sector. She was CEO for Hartley Life Care in Canberra and more recently was an Executive in New Zealand for an organisation called SILC.



### **Yomna Touni, Leader of People, Quality & Safeguards**

Yomna has been with CFS since June 2021 and was previously a Compliance Officer at a Disability Services organisation and has previously worked as a Business/Data Analyst at multiple government agencies. She is currently studying her Masters in Health Services Management and is passionate about human rights and the safety and livelihood of people in the community.



### **Baber Rasheed, Manager of Community Services**

Baber has been with CFS since 2015 and has held the position of Team Leader before being appointed as Manager of Community Services. He is passionate about building the capacity of community members to achieve their dreams.



### **Ann Munar, Team Leader of Children's Services and OSHC Coordinator**

Ann has been with CFS for over 13 years. She started as an coordinator in our Before and After School Care, and was then promoted to OSHC Area Team Leader. She has now taken on the role of Team Leader in Children Services and has led the team in their accreditation process of our centres.



### **Rachel Tausia, Team Leader of Disability Services**

Joined Community First Step in August 2020, as the Disability Services Team Leader. She has over 18 years' experience in the Disability Sector in various roles.





### **Zehra Hussain, Project Manager**

Zehra has been at CFS since 2017 in the capacity of Administration Assistance and Family Support Worker. She was appointed Project Manager in 2020 to overlook communities for children projects and pursue further grant opportunities. Zehra is passionate about bottom-up community development and empowering families and individuals through asset mapping.



### **Martine Burnette, Hub Coordinator**

Martine has been working with CFS since 2015 and was originally in the role of receptionist. She now leads a team of hub support workers and is often the first person our clients meet when engaging with our service. Martine is also a caseworker for families and individuals experiencing hardship and is passionate about their development through capacity building.



### **Adelle Raad, Parks Occasional Care Coordinator**

Adelle started with CFS in 2018 as an educator at our Parks Occasional Care Centre. She then moved into the role of Assistant Coordinator. Her hard work and commitment to the children was rewarded with a promotion to Centre Coordinator when the position became available.



### **Shazia Rashid, Guildford OSHC Coordinator**

Shazia joined us in 2018 as the Playgroups and Roving Officer. She then moved on to Assistant Coordinator at Parks Occasional Care. She is now the OSCH Coordinator at our Guildford Before and After School Care.

# A Special Thank You

**Community First Step would like to extend our gratitude to the tireless efforts of the following individuals and organisations for their volunteered time, their expertise and generous donations.**

Children's Services has been fortunate enough to continue to work with our previous Executive Manager, **Niki Sullivan**, through a volunteer mentorship role. Niki's experience and knowledge in Early Childhood Education has proven to be a valuable contribution to the team through her guidance and clarification on the complex matters that Children's Services have faced this year, especially during assessment and rating.

As a mentor, Niki has allowed us all to step outside of our comfort zone, to trust her and share our fears and successes with her. Through Niki's continuous support, Children's Services have accomplished several achievements which is evident in the success of the current team.

We are confident that Children's Services will continue to thrive through Niki's formation of a strong foundation for the team that reflects on each educator's professional development in their role in Early Childhood Education.

We would like to acknowledge and thank Niki for the gift of time, knowledge, guidance and understanding as we continue to evolve in our role in providing quality care to our children and the community.

We would also like to take this opportunity now to thank **Joe Cashman** for his consultancy and expertise during our NDIS Assessment and Accreditation. Joe Cashman came on board to guide the newly formed Quality Assurance Committee and guided staff through this accreditation process.

Joe has impacted our policy and procedure within Disability Services greatly, by providing holistic support to our staff to reform and align our values with our programs. This continuous improvement framework has become a great asset within Community First Step and extended to all sectors of Community, Children's Services and Disability. We would like to acknowledge Joe Cashman for his time and experience in mentoring our staff to continue to adhere to quality within our services.

We would like to thank the following organisations for their incredible donations to our organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic. As this pandemic has created unforeseen circumstances, the aid to community and support is incredible.

We would like to thank **COS** for their incredible donation of \$12,000 towards our Homework Help Program at Tangerine Street OSHC. This donation has allowed us to streamline our individualised support to young children and their education, provide much needed resources to the community and foster new relationships with local schools to implement this program. Thank you again to Todd Percy and Belinda Lyone from the **Lyone Foundation** for this incredible gift to our community.

Lastly, we would also like to thank **O&M Halyard Australia** and **Fairfield City Council** for providing much needed PPE and sanitisation equipment that we distributed for staff and community use, and a thank you to **Goods360** for providing the local community with books, cleaning products and PPE.



# Our Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply affected us as individuals, affected our families and our wider community. At CFS, working within a vulnerable community, it was our priority to respond to the need and continuously work alongside our community members to eliminate disadvantage. As many of us found it difficult to provide the same supports before this pandemic, we are proud of the innovation and dedication our staff have shown in continuing to provide programs to the local community.

## Busy Bags

As part of our response to COVID-19, our wonderful staff created BusyBags. BusyBags are designed for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers to engage in hands-on activities with their families and bond during times of isolation and lockdown. Our BusyBags had activities that included cognitive and motor development, physical and outdoor activities, arts and crafts, focus on kindness, wellness and hygiene, and promoted healthy interaction between bubs and their parents.

As the restrictions of COVID-19 were announced, our playgroups were moved online and BusyBags were requested by local schools and individual families. Over **350 BusyBags** were created and hand-delivered to families by our staff.



During the lockdown period our staff dedicated their time in creating resources and ensuring COVID-19 safety measures were in place to reduce community transmission. We would especially like to extend our gratitude to Robin Jafo and Narkis Mirkhaeel for dedicating their time voluntarily to respond to the need of our local community and hand delivery and create these BusyBags.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to Canley Heights Public School, Lansvale Public School, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Smithfield Public School who distributed and organized pick-ups of the BusyBags for their local communities.



Covid has changed all aspects in how we run everyday activities at School. It has been a challenge to modify and adapt how we run our programs. Community First Step has provided us support, in sharing information and supplying PPE to the School and families.

The Busy bags: "Parents love the activities. It's great for their kids fine and gross motor skills as well as their cognitive skills. Parents also appreciate the activities whilst in lockdown. It keeps the little ones busy. We love the activities because we are able to connect with the families. Especially if they don't have access to digital devices, or they have other children doing home learning. Thank you so much for your support. The success we have had with the activities, we are planning on continuing with sending out resources packs for term 4."

Rose Raslan - Community Centre Facilitator, *Lansvale Public School*





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## Frozen Meals and Food Delivery

Community First Step has handed out **58,522 frozen meals and 139 food hampers** in response to the COVID-19 impact. The project initially started in May 2020 with the wonderful help from our Director Mark Webb when the impact heavily affected NSW.

As the pandemic unfortunately is still present within our communities, we are so thankful for the donations and ability for local organisations to still provide essential care to our vulnerable communities.

We would like to extend our gratitude for the amazing work for the following organisations and restaurants that have aided in providing these cooked meals for our community. OzHarvest, NSW Parliament Services and Rockpool Restaurant have been a testament to the generosity and volunteering that people can provide during hardship, and we would like to thank each individual for their support to our local community.

Community First Step would like to thank the following organisations and local schools for their commitment and support to the local community in distributing these meals.



Thank you to Ambarvale Public School, Campbelltown Youth Centre, Communities Connect Macarthur, Core Community, Fairfield High School, Fairfield Public School, Guildford Public School, House of Welcome, Meiraki Foundation, Parks Community Network, Passfield Park School, Sarah Redfern High School, Sarah Redfern Public School, SLASA, South West Multicultural and Community Centre, St John's Park Before and After School Care, Suburban Islamic Association (SIA), The Grange Public School and Woodville Alliance for your support.



We would also like to extend our gratitude to Baber Rasheed and Sang Tran from Community First Step in distributing these meals throughout the pandemic to those in need. Our staff were able to provide meals to the following suburbs: Airds, Bonnyrigg, Bossley Park, Cabramatta, Campbelltown, Canley Vale, Carramar, Chester Hill, Claymore, Edensor Park, Fairfield, Glenfield, Greenfield Park, Guildford, Ingleburn, Liverpool, Macquarie Fields, Merrylands, Miller, Minto, Mount Pritchard, Raby, Smithfield, Villawood, Wakeley and Warwick Farm.

## Individualised Disability Support

During the COVID-19 lockdown, our Disability Day Program was affected due to the restrictions. Our wonderful staff during this time continued to persevere to provide quality care to our participants by providing individualized support. Individualized supports were introduced so that each participant received one-on-one support to aid them with their daily requirements and focused on achieving their goals through activities. As our Day Program was affected due to the pandemic, this individualized support allowed staff the opportunity to focus directly on individualized needs.

Our Day Program was restructured so that our clients could still receive holistic support and keep their families and friends safe from transmission. Our participants were able to engage in the community safely within a secure environment and were provided the necessary PPE to still enjoy their activities with our staff through COVID-19 safety measures.



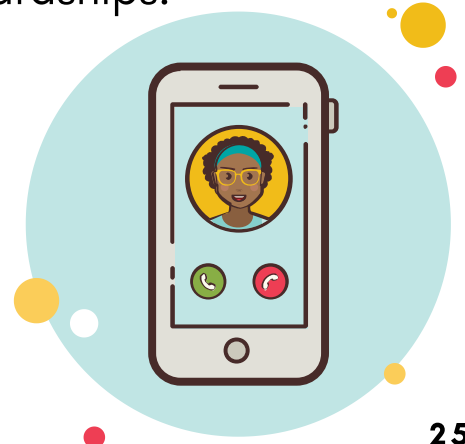


## Welfare Calls

As a response to COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns and restrictions, our goal within Community First Step was to ensure our community members still felt supported during this hardship. As the pandemic made it difficult for face-to-face delivery, we wanted to ensure our clients needs were being addressed and that as an organisation we would still ensure reduction in community transmission. From these concerns, Welfare Calls were implemented for all clients sector wide and community members we could reach out to.

During this year, **1844 welfare calls were made** to community members. Welfare calls were a way for our families, youth, and individuals to feel supported and seek further support through our emergency essential services and online activities. Their needs were assessed through family functioning, social isolation, mental health, physical health, education, career, and financial circumstances. Not all welfare calls were conversations focused on need-based, as many of our Youth participants and families looked forward to a friendly chat and catch up with our staff.

As unfortunate as the pandemic has been, at Community First Step we take pride in knowing how close our relationships are with the community and their ability to trust us with their hardships.





I have received support to understand how to play with my daughter and make fun with household stuff. I feel I understand how to take care of my daughter and take care of myself because we learned how to play with our children. I feel better now because I can talk to other parents when I feel stressed and can organize games at home. I learned how to do activities with my daughter even when I feel busy and have her around when I need to do housework.



The calls have been really appreciated. My son speaks so highly of the Youth Centre, and he really misses it. It's a great place where he can be with his friends, and I know that he's safe and having fun.



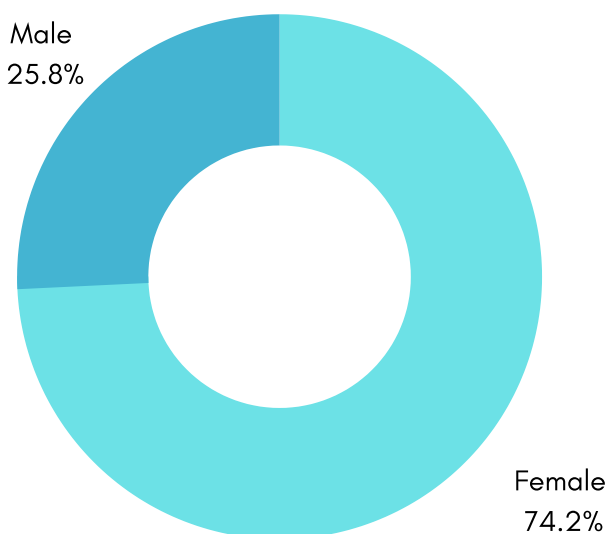
# Snapshot of Our Staff

Our Community First Step team, much like our community, is rich with diversity and knowledge from around the world. We are a diverse workforce with people from various cultural backgrounds, ancestries, religions, creeds and languages all working together in harmony.

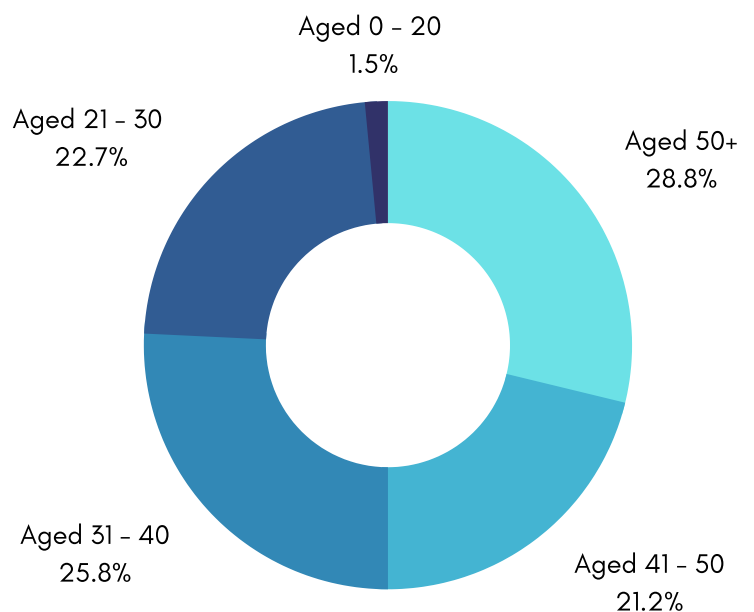
Our ancestry within Community First Step includes Aboriginal, Assyrian, Australian, British, Cambodian, Egyptian, Fijian, Filipino, Ghanaian, Iraqi, Irish, Italian, Indian, Japanese, Lebanese, Nigerian, Pakistani, Polish, Sri Lankan, South African, Samoan, Sudanese, Thai and Vietnamese.

Community First Step speaks Arabic, Assyrian, Cantonese, Chaldean, English, Hindi, Mandarin, Marathi, Malayalam, Polish, Singhalese, Tagalog, Telegu, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese.

### Gender Diversity



### Age Diversity



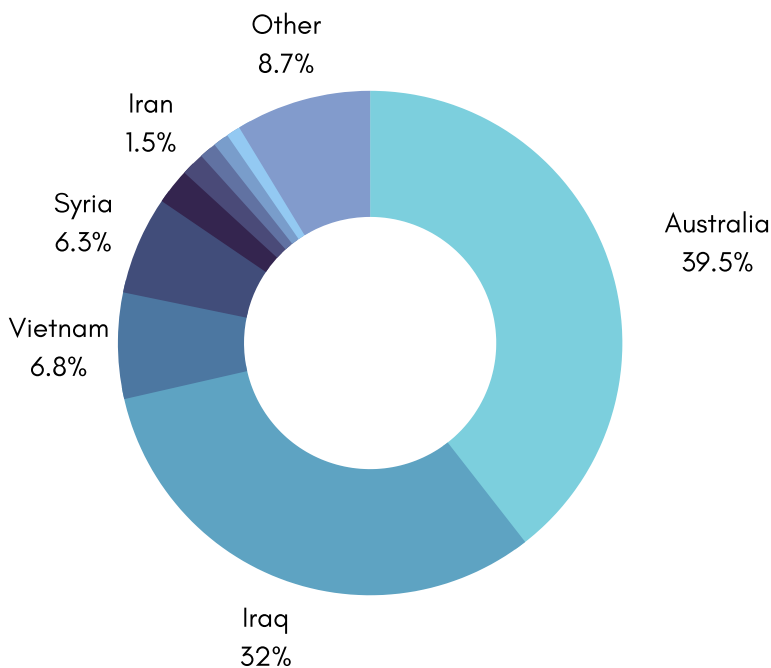


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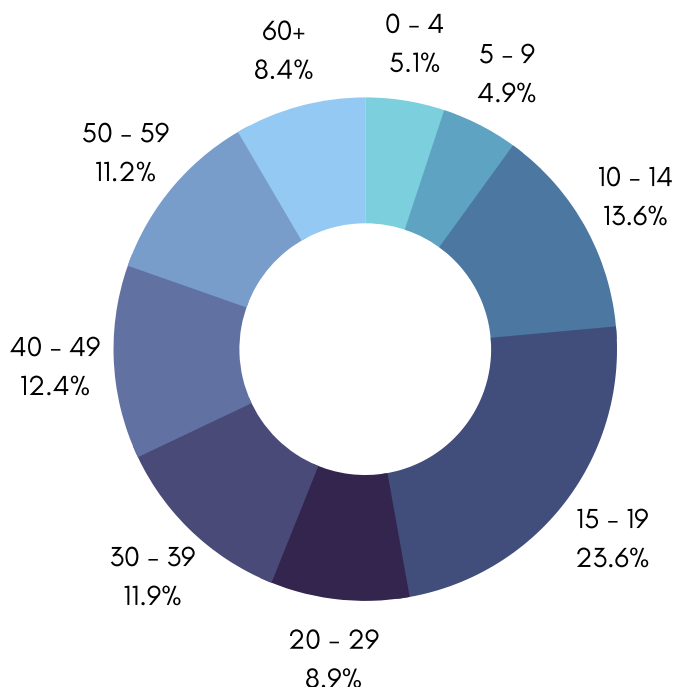
# Snapshot of Our Community

Within Fairfield LGA, our community is a mixture of cultures, diversity, languages, wisdom, knowledge and experiences. We pride ourselves in working with inclusivity and awareness of all the beautiful cultures that make up Australia.

## Our Community Ancestry:



## Our Age Diversity





# Snapshot of Our Volunteers and Students

Community First Step would like to take the opportunity to thank all the amazing volunteers and student placement who have contributed to our organisation in the last year:

Agnes Rodrigues

Angie Bugeja

Anna Nguyen

Cherop Murgor

Elisha Tulay

Emma Rijono

Indra Neapane

Jagroop Kaur

Jared Pope

Kim Mor

Kirsten Kershaw

Lailia Dawoud

Linda Ronie

Margaret Nyambura

Marguerite Assaf

Marlon Generoso

Matea Topalovic

Ngoc Phong Anh Do

Nguyen Bao An Le

Rabina Khatri

Raghda Abshoshe

Raieda Al Fars

Sally Kaniaru

Samuel Poblete

Shaniya Sahid

Simon Mbui

Sitara Kanwal

Surinder Kaur

Suzan Dawoud

Thi My Linh Tran



## Our Volunteer Story:



I am grateful for the professional and supportive staff who in varied times provided me with the needed support during my placement. In the placement, the staff were very supportive in helping me understand the organization's policies and procedures and in creating a good working environment and healthy work relationships. My supervisor was very helpful and supportive in every assignment she provided to me to do. In varied times, she guided me on what needed to be done.

After my placement, I was delighted to be offered an opportunity to work for the disability sector in the same organization. The transition from the placement to working was smooth and easier because of the professional relationships I had developed during my placement and the supportive staff. I have been able to develop good work relations with the staff. The support received from the staff to fit in has been exceptional. During the time I have been working at Community First Step, I have been able to expand and acquire new skills and gain valuable experience in working with people with disability.

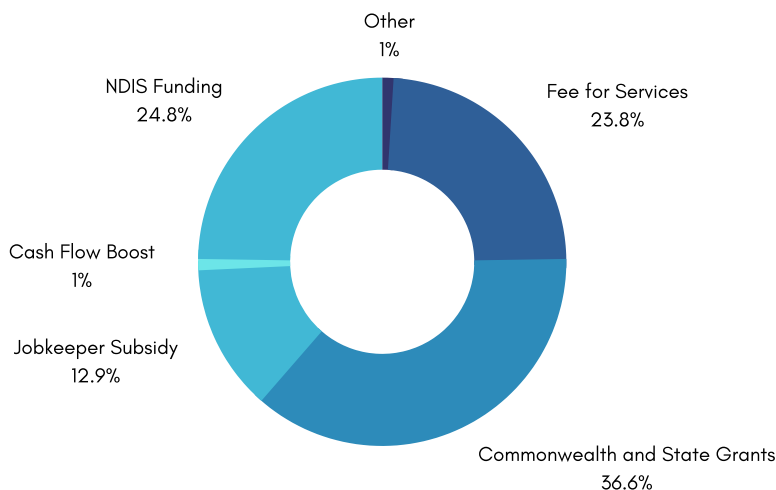
Thank you for the opportunity to be part of you and make contributions towards Community First Step's vision. – **Simon Mbui**



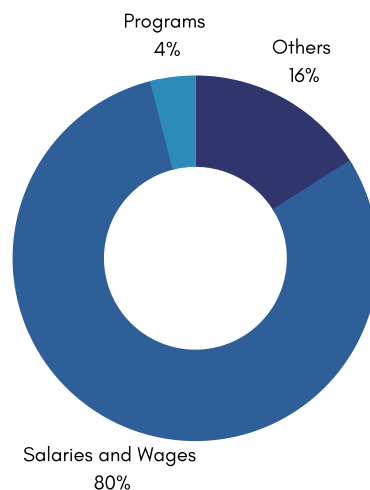


# Snapshot of Our Finances

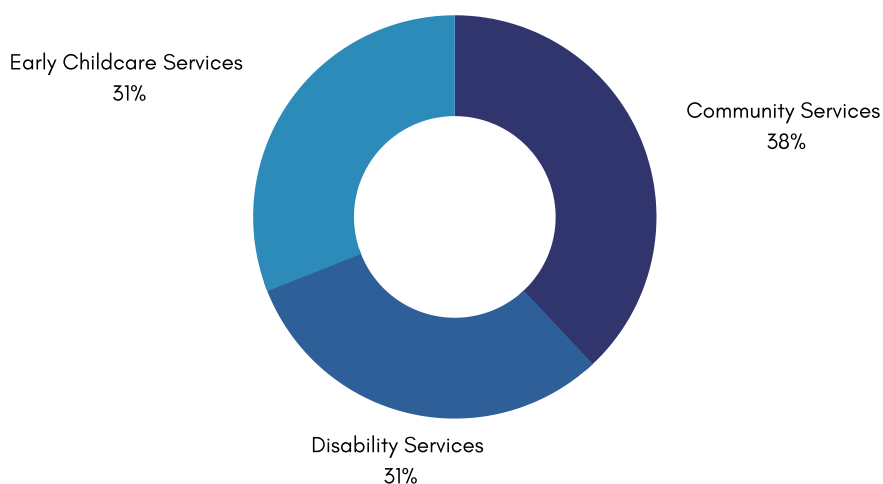
## Sources of Funding



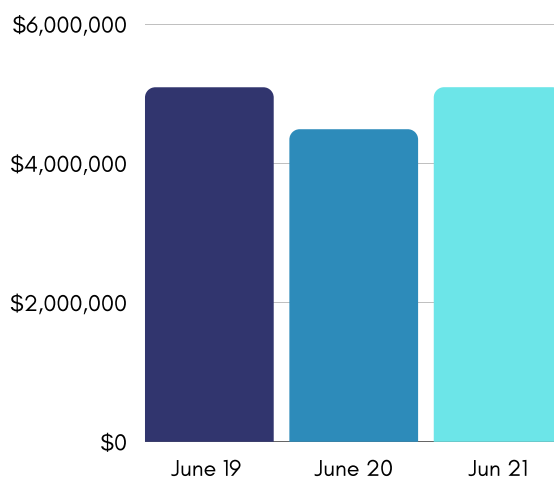
## Expenditure



## Revenue by Services



## Income



# Our Staff Stories

## Celebrating Sang Tran and his years of contribution

Sang Tran, our Community Development Officer, has been working at Community First Step for over 12 years. Sang started with us here at CFS in 2009 in the capacity of a Senior Case Worker for Employment Services before starting his role in Community Services.

Sang has a history of working with complex clients who were unable to access services such as unemployment due to extreme hardship and social barriers. Working alongside the community, and in his capacity as a Community Development Officer and Justice of Peace, Sang has been able to help families and individuals with mental health issues, face language barriers, and uncover the skills and capacity people have.

Sang has always had the ability to make people feel at ease and supported, and through this linked many people in achieving their goals and outcomes. During the COVID-19 impact, Sang has made **960 welfare calls**.

As an individual Sang has always been able to help people. Whether it is to deliver frozen meals to those in needs, volunteer to ease the burden of the elderly by tidying their backyard or by providing opportunities of real connection to services and people, we are so lucky to have Sang as a member of the CFS Team.



Celebrating 12 years of Sang Tran and his contribution to the Fairfield community.

# Our Staff Stories

## **Antonio Mu and his impact on our Youth community**

Antonio Mu, Youth Support Worker has been working at CFS since 2016. He first started working as a Placement Student at the Youth Centre and Community Team. Antonio has had an incredible impact on our Youth participants working through case management, assisted with Children's Services in Playgroups and have supported the Disability Team through the Day Program and Community Access.

During the initial impact of the pandemic, Antonio has designed new and innovative programs for the Youth participants to access physical health workshops. Antonio, with the assistance of the Youth Team, hand delivered physical health resources to the Youth in the community and provided opportunities to access various workshops.

Antonio has had a significant impact on the Youth participants by providing them support, encouraging movement and wellness and participating in games with our Youth. Antonio has had great connections with our Youth participants and we are very appreciate of all his work throughout his years with us at Community First Step.

We would like to thank Antonio with all his hard work in the School Suspension Program, Case Management, participation in Large Events, Youth Week, Bring It On Festival, Food Delivery, Video Editing and much more.



Celebrating Antonio Mu and his dedication and support to our Youth Community



# Our Hub Support

Our Hub Support is the nucleus of our organisation; a welcoming place where people are introduced to Community First Step's services and programs. Our Hub is a place where the local community can comfortably share and express their concerns and have their needs addressed and connected. Our Hub Team is staffed with passionate team members who are bilingual and committed to providing quality service to the local community. This team takes pride in sharing the happiness, tears, concerns, challenges, and opportunities of their local community members.



This year, our Hub Support was provided to over **2900 community members living in Fairfield LGA**. Our community members found support in areas of form filling, translating, interpreting, Justice of Peace Support, advocacy and support, emergency relief and information and referrals.

# Hub Support Snapshot

Information, Advise  
and Referral

1618

Advocacy and  
Support

839

Justice of Peace

121

Frozen Meals and  
Food Hampers

842

Client Attendances

2900

# Hub Activities

During this year, we had **over 110 attendances** from participants in various Hub Activities. Our Hub Activities were initiated in the year to engage the community to develop their social connections and increase their capacity through various skills based on their individualised needs and interest. The following are our Hub Activities that were facilitated throughout the year.

## English Conversation Classes

Within Fairfield LGA is a language barrier that often affects our community members. We found through our conversations with the community that local members were struggling to access services and engage in conversations with English speakers. As an organisation, we are so proud of our community for being multicultural and being able to speak the various languages they do, but we wanted to provide community members an opportunity to learn another, thus English Conversational Classes were created.

Through these classes our participants had an opportunity to learn English in a slow paced and social environment. People from all ages participated in the program from all different backgrounds, creating an energetic, diverse, and committed group.



**The group's motto is "We find a way to communicate", beautifully addressing the diversity of people, we will always find a way to communication with one another, no matter our differences.**



## **Meditation Sessions**

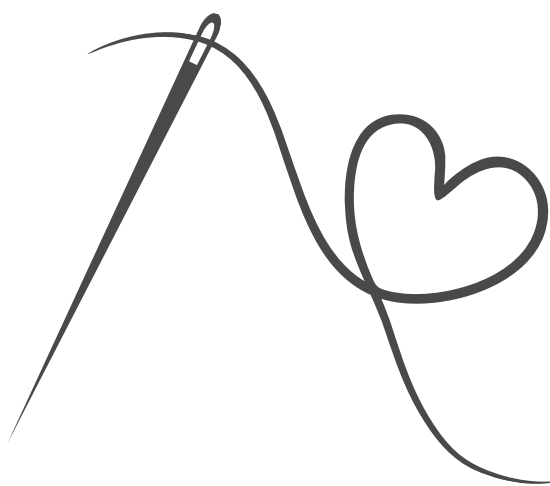
Mental Health and Wellbeing are a focal point within Community First Step as we believe access to mental health support is a privilege all should have access too. As our community has a high influx of refugee and newly arrived migrants who experience a myriad of struggles and hardships, at Community First Step we wanted to design sessions that were accessible for the people in Fairfield. The meditation sessions were introduced through the help of Isabel who volunteered her time.

The sessions allowed for community members to attend meditation sessions, make friends, and explore aspects of mental health in an accessible way. Within our Hub Support, through these sessions participants were then able to access formal ways of mental health support. During the lockdown, unfortunately we could no longer facilitate these sessions in-person, however with the easing of restrictions we are very excited to launch this program again for the local community to access a fun and engaging way to relax and focus on their mental health needs.

## Strong Empowered Women - S.E.W Group

This activity was introduced in Hub with help of a small grant received from Fairfield City Council after many community members in the group addressed the need for a women's group that focused on social inclusion and skills building. Our S.E.W program focused on women living within the community who had creative skills and were looking for opportunities to explore it and improve on their skills. Each week, our Hub Staff Joanne Luu taught women in the local area sewing lessons. The basics of sewing, pattern cutting, and colour theory were taught, and each participant were provided with sewing machines during the lessons.

These incredible women assisted us with sewing face masks to assist the local community members during the pandemic. The face mask project was developed in collaboration with The Parks Community Network and launched by the Honourable Chris Bowen MP.





# The Big Steps Project

The Big Steps Project was launched in 2019 through funding acquired from The Smith Family as part of their Communities for Children model. The Big Steps Project was initiated to address the needs of early childhood education and limited sporting opportunities within the East Fairfield community. As Community First Step was apart of the 2163 conversations and community consultation, this program was designed to address the needs of the community.

As we enter our second year of facilitating The Big Steps Project, we are delighted with the progression of the program and all the participants we have targeted this year. Within Big Steps are three streams of activities: Big Schools Big Minds a 20-week school readiness program, I Can Do This Parenting Program, and Get Stronger Get Smarter a 10-week soccer program for children. Within this year and the constant shifts due to the pandemic, The Big Steps Project was fortunate enough to deliver these activities in-person and have online platforms set up.





## Big Schools Big Minds

The school readiness program was delivered at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Carramar Public School and Yennora Public School. During the beginning of the year, this program was tailored to be facilitated online and in-person with our staff member Cecilia Meli championing the new online platforms. We would like this opportunity now to thank Cecilia for her passion, her commitment to this project and her ability to adapt in unforeseen circumstances to deliver quality programs to the children of East Fairfield. 56 children completed their 20 weeks of the school readiness program, and we are so excited for their future when entering Kindergarten and wish them all the luck!



## Get Stronger Get Smarter

The Get Stronger Get Smarter Recreational Program was facilitated in Old Guildford Public School and Villawood North Public School with 54 participants. Our success within this program is a participant we will call Mia. Mia has a mild intellectual disability and had a little trouble with her motor skills during the first few weeks of the program. Mia is a passionate and excited young girl who was very interested in soccer, however mentioned to our Coach her difficulty in trying.

Working alongside Mia, our facilitator Ganadhar from Soccajoeys was able to provide her the skills and confidence to improve on her soccer skills. After the 10 weeks, we were absolutely delighted to see that Mia has been able to dribble, pass the ball to her peers and even scored a goal in one of her games. This development is a testament to the coach and Mia's determination to learn a new skill. During this program we were able to see Mia's confidence grow which led her to make new friends within her school.





# The Parks Occasional Care

Our Parks Occasional Care were very busy this year incorporating a range of activities for our children and families to participate in. The Parks Occasional Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator and Educators worked closely with The Parks Community Network team in delivering essential food hampers to the elderly and families in need during this pandemic lockdown.

At The Parks Occasional Care, we were fortunate enough to deliver many events and activities for our local families before the subsequent lockdown. Mother's Day was celebrated at the Parks Occasional Care with a special morning tea and brunch organized for the mothers of our local community. The day was filled with love and appreciation, and we would like to extend our warm welcome for next year with our families.



As part of building connections with the community and ensuring our children receive opportunities for early childhood education, The Parks Occasional Care have been busy participating in library visits. These excursions allow the children to explore and interact with their imagination and creativity, and allow them the opportunity to develop their cognitive abilities and self-help skills.

Lastly, our Educators came together with Dance Worx Australia to provide our children an environment with physical enhancement over different areas. Throughout the terms the children participated in dance using musical movement skills, creating a dance show for their education, and focused on elements of gymnastics learning balance, coordination, and fine motor skills.



Just wanted to say a quick thank you regarding the Mother's Day event you held last week. We had the most wonderful time and really appreciated all the effort that went into organising the day, from the lovely decor to the fun craft activity stations and the games that kept the parents entertained. Especially loved the little gifts and the overall consideration made towards all the mums. It was also nice to spend time with my girl at her place of care and have a look at the artwork and activities they've been doing this year as drop offs are usually rushed so it was a very relaxed way to see the things, she gets up to at day care. I look forward to future events and thanks again for the lovely morning tea. - **Sarine Badelian, Parent**



# Disability Day Program

## Bianca's Story

Our Day Program has been home to many NDIS participants who have formed everlasting friendships. Bianca Mitchell is one of our Day Program participants who has been attending the program for over 23 years. Bianca enjoys coming to the program so much that she runs for the bus in the morning with the biggest smile and often feels sad to leave the bus when returning home. Our staff ensure Bianca that she is always going to see our bus the next day as she has become part of our family here at Community First Step.





During this lockdown Bianca attended our program and enjoyed the centre activities. Her friends Lara and Aaron who are also participants at our Day Program have formed lifelong bonds and spent most of the lockdown together. Due to the introduction of individualised support during this lockdown Bianca was able to exercise regularly with her supportive staff member and practiced on her new communication device that requires her to touch pictures on the screen when she needs something.

As the lockdown took a toll on us most, our Disability Staff ensured that our participants continued to have access to their services by using online platforms. Bianca was able to still see her speech pathologist online and loves these sessions as she gets to listen to stories and laugh along. We are so proud of Bianca for all her efforts during this lockdown and for always having a smile on her face. Her energy and humour kept not only the Disability participants happy during this lockdown period, but our staff as well. Our Disability Day Program wouldn't be the same without her! - **Ann Cadden, Disability Support Worker**

# New Steps

Our New Steps program, running since 2015, is focused on providing families with evidence-based practices through the Communities for Children project in Fairfield that is facilitated with The Smith Family. In the last financial year through this program, we were able to assist families with children aged 0-12, through our 3 Parenting Workshops consisting of 1-2-3 Magic & Emotion Coaching as well as 3 Social Inclusion programs and one-to-one support with New Steps Family Coaches.

These workshops and social inclusion programs ran for a course of 4-7 weeks. They assisted in building capacity for parents and caregivers by equipping them with tools for understanding and managing their children's behaviors including emotional coaching, strategies for nurturing their children's development and creative activities to build and strengthen the relationship between parents, caregivers, and their children. The Family Coaches were responsive to the situations that participants explained to them or topics that they wanted to explore and assisted them to apply the evidence-based principles to understand and approach their situations in different ways. New Steps was delivered with a mixture of online and face-to-face components to remain accessible to families through the changing requirements of the Covid-19 pandemic.





A participant began attending Direct Support as she had indicated that she wanted to learn strategies to gain more confidence in her parenting practices, understanding her children’s behaviors and how to respond effectively to them. When the participant’s goals were being explored, the Family Coach also recognised that the participant had little opportunity to look after her own wellbeing with the day-to-day duties of family and work life. Through the one-to-one support with the Family Coach the participant was able to introduce self-care practices for herself and felt more balanced and able to respond to her children’s needs more effectively.



“That was well done. Thank you for a comprehensive course”

“This program was very helpful”

“I absolutely loved my sessions with Imangi this workshop has helped to improve my connections with my children and elevate my parenting skills.”

“ I enjoyed so much with this group”

“ I love the program a lot. I love learn about children”







**community firststep**  
Creating Opportunities

**GRASP**  
Group for Raising Awareness of Suicide & Prevention

Community

This innovative program is designed for young people, targeting those who have a high risk of adolescent suicide. It provides psycho-educational support with interactive activities to increase awareness and reduce the risk of suicide.



Facebook icon, Instagram icon



community  
**firststep**  
Creating Opportunities

# Phoenix Voices of Youth Choir

The Phoenix Voices of Youth Choir relaunch is coming your way! Our Choral Director Natalie Goonaratne and Project Manager Zehra Hussain have redesigned the Youth Choir Project to hold auditions amongst the Fairfield LGA in local schools to find talented and passionate Youth! We extend our gratitude to Fairfield High School for becoming the first school to hold auditions where the Youth Choir has accepted 11 participants from the school.



The Phoenix Voices of Youth Choir has been the passion project of Natalie to provide opportunities for professional and musical development to the Youth of the Fairfield community. Our Youth Choir participants have been featured on ABC National Television, Performed for His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley and performed at the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Centre. As our recent cohorts have graduated and are entering professional streams of Arts, Music and Theatre, at Community First Step we are so excited to reform our Phoenix Voices of Youth choir to showcase local talent that is diverse, passionate and multicultural.

# Quality Assurance Committee and Risk Committee



My name is Yomna Touni and I am a single mother of 2 wonderful children. I recently joined CFS as Leader for People, Quality and Safeguards, where I get to focus on the people of CFS as well as continuous quality improvement, quality assurance and safeguarding such as risk and incident management.

Our Quality Assurance Committee and Risk Committee within CFS is to help maintain a safe environment for our staff and clients. CFS endeavours to ensure that we are adhering to best practice standards. The QA committee therefore focuses on where our areas of concern are and what needs to be strengthened and how. The quality assurance committee meetings are our platform where we can discuss what continuous quality improvements are needed and how they will be done. We also use this time to review processes to help eliminate risks, and to ensure that we are complying with all government regulations as required. Hence, this is the best place for our talented staff on the committee to innovate via research and development around the adoption of best practices to allow for continuous quality improvement.

The QA committee have established online incident reporting and incident investigation tools, to help eliminate paperwork and to ensure that all incidents have been attended to in a timely manner.



We have also adopted a clinical supervision policy whereby all staff are given appointments with our external clinical supervisor and their direct line managers where they can book a time with them to support them as they are undergoing their work duties. Additionally, the disability services participant intake framework is now currently being revamped to allow for new services such as psychosocial recovery coaching, and to help eliminate risks for both staff and participants.

The aim of the QA committee is to establish confidence that performance is at a high standard in advance, therefore we aim to research best practice for all our areas of work to maintain compliance of government regulations and to maintain the safety of all clients and staff within CFS.

I would particularly like to thank all our QA committee members Ann Munar, Baber Rasheed, Cristina Julian, Imangi Kottegoda, Martine Burnette, Ogechi Mbaegbu, Rajitha Varghese, Terry Teirney, Usha Rao and Zehra Hussain for all their hard work and their contribution to both the Quality Assurance and Risk Committees.

# FAIRFIELD YOUTH & COMMUNITY



# Youth Services

The Community First Step Youth Team is made up of passionate and hardworking social workers, youth workers and volunteers. We are committed to ensuring every young person gets to be heard, supported, advocated for and encouraged. Our Youth Team has worked tirelessly this year, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure all Youth participants feel supported during this time.



Our Youth Drop-In Services included: Soccer, Volleyball and Basketball Programs



Our Outreach Services During Youth Drop-In included: Creating Changes Soccer Program, Legal Aid (Legal Advice and Work & Development Orders), Services NSW (Engagement with Refugee Youth) and Fairfield City Council (Physical Health Workshops)



Total of **255 Welfare Calls** made during the lockdown period to assist Youth with their needs and provide social activities



**8181** Youth Participants attended our Youth-Drop In Services



31 Case Management



As a response to COVID-19, our Youth Team worked tirelessly to connect with our Youth participants who were struggling during this lockdown period by providing welfare checks and calls, sending out letters of correspondence and weekly physical health workshops online. Our QUNITE group that focuses on the wellbeing and social participation of LGBTQIA Youth within the local Fairfield community also attended online workshops.



Our hardworking Youth Team have worked very closely over the year to provide holistic support that is tailor made to the needs of the community. The following are our staff reflections for this period.



I supported a young person who has shown a great improvement and commitment to keep up with his physical health habits. He trains 3-4 days in a week with the equipment that was provided by CFS during the Physical Health Workshop!

He has been using it consistently enough that one of the equipment (skipping rope) has worn out and now he has purchased himself a new one. He is truly grateful to CFS and staff for their consistent efforts on checking-in and making sure that he is okay especially throughout the most recent lockdown. He is now looking forward to returning to the Centre as it is scheduled to reopen! - **Antonio Mu, Youth Worker**



Though this pandemic has caused many challenges in service delivery to young people engaged with Community First Step Youth Services, the team worked hard to ensure that this was not going to be an obstacle which will limit us from continuing to provide the best support.

A success story which I would like to share relates back to the monthly Qunite sessions which I facilitated online. This was a challenge having to work around all the participants' school and work schedules, however it was well worth the challenge as this was one of the rarest opportunities to have one-on-one uninterrupted time to get to know the participants (Post workshop catch-ups). Through the Qunite workshops and individualised catchups, participants were able to break down their walls and become more opened to inform me of their thoughts and experiences in hopes for advice and support. - **Brenda Nguyen**



It has been heartening to see clients who have previously been hesitant to engage in services, become more open and willing to engage. An example of this is a client and his grandmother, who have both been tentative to engage with community organisations in the past, due to negative experiences.

Through carefully thought-out sessions with both, together and individually, I have been able to build a rapport and now they both are comfortable coming to me for assistance. This has included with issues with their public housing, which have gone unresolved for over 6 months, being resolved and issues relating to tribunal issues, Centrelink access and support to their mental health concerns. - **Terry Tierney**





# Support Coordination

Support Coordination at Community First Step has been a service that continues to support NDIS participants to access individualised support, even with the subsequent lockdowns.

Our **17 participants** accessing this program were supported through online platforms and teleconferencing to assist them to be connected to providers within the local community.

An innovating cooking program was introduced at our Supported Independent Living accommodation that encouraged our participants to explore new recipes that provided opportunities of engagement, choice, and control. Exercise and Music programs were exciting moments during this lockdown period and were facilitated with our participants.

We would like to take this opportunity now to thank our staff for their tireless efforts in continually getting tested to reduce community transmission and keep our participants safe during this time.



# Children's Services – OSHC

Community First Step OSHC (Out of School Hours Care) operates at four locations: Guildford Public School, St Johns Park Public School, Tangerine Street East Fairfield and Allambie Road, Edensor Park.

Each OSHC service supports school aged children's learning achievement, engagement, and well-being, and provides developmental play opportunities in a safe multi-age environment. Like most services, this year has been the most challenging for us during the lockdown period however we are delighted by our Educator's ability to provide support to our families who continue to work or study.





With the restrictions in place throughout the year our vacation care programs at Allambie Road and Guildford were not able to attend many excursions. However, we did have plenty of new and exciting incursions such as Raptor Reptile, Ultra Gaming, Mission Movement, Sonic Kitchen, and Indoor Ice skating visit our centre during the school holidays to ensure the children are still engaging socially with their peers. We had a quick opportunity to visit Canoelands Orchards for some fruit picking, Mount Annan Botanical Gardens, and a few local parks in April.

Our educators also engaged in professional development training to refresh their early childhood education knowledge and learn new skills. Through these difficult times we were not able to explore our local community with the children as much as we would love to, nevertheless we tried to make the most of this time and encourage the children's learning with the resources that we had at hand.

# Community Services – Our Large Events

Our large events at Community First Step have always been an exciting and engaging way to provide community need-based information and provide an opportunity for our local community to partake in fun, hands-on activities. During this year, we were fortunate enough to have a few large events take place in the community before the COVID-19 lockdown.



CFS World Cup Day was held in celebration of National Language Day with students from Fairfield High School and Intensive English Centre. CFS World Cup Day is an opportunity for students to engage in physical activity and form healthy communication styles with one another. Working with the student we encourage them to speak English on the field and compete as a team through leadership, unity, and inclusivity.

Biggest Morning Tea was held at the local community centre to raise money for cancer council. This year our Biggest Morning Tea focused on the elders of our community who have known or been impacted by cancer. The event held workshops for flower arrangement and light refreshments from the local community in support of cancer council. At Community First Step we are so proud of our community for donating towards this amazing organisation even during the midst of a pandemic.

Family Fun Day was held in the local Adventure Park in Fairfield for families with children aged 5 - 12 years of age. This was an incredible opportunity for our families to enjoy spending time with their loved ones and meet other local members to build connections. This day was filled with wonderful sun, our staff providing lunch and games for children to play with. We are so excited for another Family Fun Day to happy after restrictions are eased!





RUOK?



Disability Open Day was catered to our NDIS Disability Participants to showcase the local Fairfield community and local organisations. This was possible due to a small grant received from Fairfield City Council with a focus on inclusion and promotion of Disability. We held this event at the Youth Centre with engaging activities for our disability participants, and provided them with gift bags including sensory items, exercise material and sporting resources. This day was a great way for our disability clients to visit the local venues in Fairfield and try out new and exciting events with our Youth Team.

Lastly as R U OK? Day event was unfortunately held off due to the restrictions, our management team organized a fun and exciting day for staff to check-in with one another through online means. Our staff were able to engage with one another working from home and dress up in the yellow to show solidarity with one another and support mental health concerns. As this pandemic has taken a toll on us all at Community First Step we believe in access to mental health and wellbeing support for all. This day was a wonderful day for staff to catch up and take some time to focus on their own needs.





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