



Central Coast Family Support Services Inc.  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**





**SUNSET OVER YENGO NATIONAL PARK  
NOONAWEENA RETREAT, KULNURA**



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Central Coast Family Support Services acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Darkinjung people.

We acknowledge the strong kinship, networks and positive parenting practices that Aboriginal people have successfully used for tens of thousands of years before us, and continue to use today.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the past, present and future.





COMMISSIONED ARTWORK BY ARTIST **CHRIS GEORGE**



# OUR VISION

*“We are committed to providing safe and inclusive support to empower families in our local community to thrive”.*

# OUR MISSION

*Through education, advocacy and community connection we provide sustainable, flexible and strengths-based support which values every family’s unique story.*

# OUR VALUES

SAFETY

INTEGRITY

COMPASSION

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING









# BOARD OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Central Coast Family Support Services Inc. Board of Management Committee is responsible for the overall governance, management and strategic direction of Central Coast Family Support Services.

## CHAIRPERSON

Peter Simmonds

## VICE CHAIRPERSON

Teresa Findlay Barnes

## SECRETARY

Linda Dicks

## TREASURER

Greg Groppenbacher

## BOARD MEMBERS

Amber Gunn  
Leeanne Makepeace  
Phoebe Wilby





## OUR CHAIRPERSON PETER SIMMONDS

*The Management Committee wish to acknowledge the Darkinjung leaders, past, present and future. The Darkinjung lands are a wonderful place to live and work. Thank you.*

This has been a year of change. We have a new management structure and several new faces, new skills and new ideas. This has strengthened our ability to assist our client families in improving their skills and opportunities.

Of course, every year has its fair share of challenges and the forth coming year will be no exception. However, we are of the firm belief that the team will be up to the task.

Financially we are in a very sound position. Our assets far exceed our liabilities and our cash flow is healthy. Our governance,

policies and procedures are sound and regularly reviewed.

Not only do our paid employees make a positive difference in the lives of our client families but they are greatly assisted by our volunteers, benefactors and supporters.

Thank you one and all.

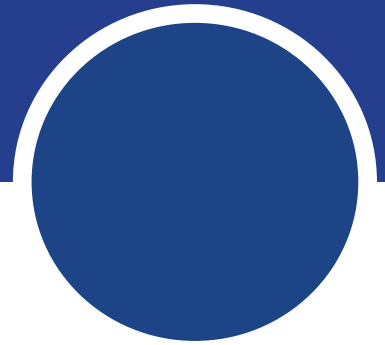


**Peter Simmonds**  
**Chairperson**



## OUR EXECUTIVE OFFICER

### SARAH GREY



I am delighted to present the Central Coast Family Support Services Annual Report for 2023-24. Within these pages, you will find the remarkable dedication and hard work of our staff.

I would like to express my gratitude to our team for their commitment and dedication to supporting children, young people, and families facing challenges. The information and program highlights in this report reflect the outstanding team I am fortunate to work alongside of.

This year has seen us embrace organisational change with a change in leadership and eight new staff members joining the CCFSS ranks. Their diverse skills and fresh perspectives have already made a positive impact on our programs and services.

As we continue to grow and develop, we are committed to fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment that empowers both our staff and the families we serve.

Change provided an opportunity to reset and realign the core values of the team with that of the organisation. With renewed mission, vision and value statements, our organisation continues to provide a life-changing and impactful service to Central Coast.

The mission 'Through education, advocacy and community connection we provide sustainable, flexible and strengths-based support which values every family's unique story' and vision, 'We are committed to providing safe and inclusive support to empower families in our local community to thrive' drives and guides our organisation and the valuable work we do.

The cost of living crisis we are facing continues to put immense pressure on families in our community. Many are struggling to meet basic needs, which has heightened the demand for our services. Our focus is on ensuring that every family has access to the help they need to thrive during these difficult times.



Together, we work towards a more resilient future for our community. The work undertaken across all programs is testimony to the ongoing need of children, young people and families.

I am grateful for the support of our volunteers throughout the year. Their dedication has assisted us in making a meaningful impact in the lives of families. I am also incredibly grateful for the ongoing philanthropic funding and support from individuals and other organisations such as Pandora, Rotary, We Care Connect and the Bikers Hand. This funding together with the support of volunteers, has enabled our service to go above and beyond for our most vulnerable families. This support has a direct effect on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people we work with.

I would like to acknowledge the Board for their ongoing commitment to CCFSS. Their stewardship and unwavering support have been instrumental, ensuring that we can continue to provide vital services to our community. I thank them for their time, leadership and vision.

As we approach our 40th year anniversary, our service is faced with some key

negotiations in the year that lays ahead.

The recommissioning of the Targeted Early Intervention program began in March this year, with recommissioning expected to be a 12 month process.

We have also been patiently awaiting advice on the future of our lease beyond May 2025 for our office space at Phillip House Kariong. Both of these matters will have a significant impact on future operations of the organisation.

As I anticipate the impact of these changes, I am confident that Central Coast Family Support Services Inc. will remain dedicated to delivering professional and dependable services to support the most vulnerable members of our community.



**Sarah Grey**  
**Executive Officer**



# OUR HISTORY

## SUPPORTING LOCAL FAMILIES SINCE 1985

### Central Coast Family Support Services has a long history of supporting local families.

Formed on 6 June 1985 as Gosford City Family Support Services, the organisation was located in Cottages 4 and 1 at Mt Penang Parklands before moving to its current location at Phillip House in 1988.

The founding committee included individuals from across the sector representing the Department of Community Services, CCLHD, Red Cross, Housing, and Mt Penang Boys Training School.

Initially, the Committee received a grant to fund three part time positions to work alongside families with children aged 0-15 years at risk of being removed.

In 2009, Gosford City Family Support Services became Central Coast Family

Support Services, expanding services to cover the then Wyong Shire region along with the existing Gosford City Council region.

Today CCFSS continues to provide family support services to families across the Central Coast region through case management, education, advocacy and peer to peer support.

CCFSS currently has a dedicated team of 18, supported by generous volunteers and by passionate Board of Management Committee members working tirelessly to achieve the organisational vision.

**“We are committed to providing safe and inclusive support to empower families in our local community to thrive”.**







Cottage 1



Cottage 4



Phillip House



# OUR KEY PROGRAMS

## Child and Family Support

### CENTRAL COAST FAMILIES PROGRAM

We provide case management support for families with the primary focus of enhancing a family's capacity to support the growth and development of all members of the family. This program supports families who have children aged 0-12 years living on the Central Coast.

### CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS PROGRAM

We provide case management support for families where there is a child aged 0-8 years with a disability or disability concerns. This program assists families to identify what they need, provides information, advocacy and service referrals. This program also provides the Triple P - Stepping Stones education program in a 1 to1 environment.

### YOUNG PARENT PROGRAM

Our focus is providing safety and wellbeing of young parents through case management, support groups and parenting education. We are committed to supporting young people as they transition to parenthood in an accepting and informed way. This program aims to provide opportunities for peer to peer support, to enhance connection and provide specialist support and education.

### CHIME PROJECT

Our CHIME Project program aims to promote resilience in families, reduce the impact of mental illness on parenting, and increase communication and understanding about mental illness in families. The program provides parent focused programs, child focused programs and family focused interventions.

### COURSE WORK PROGRAM

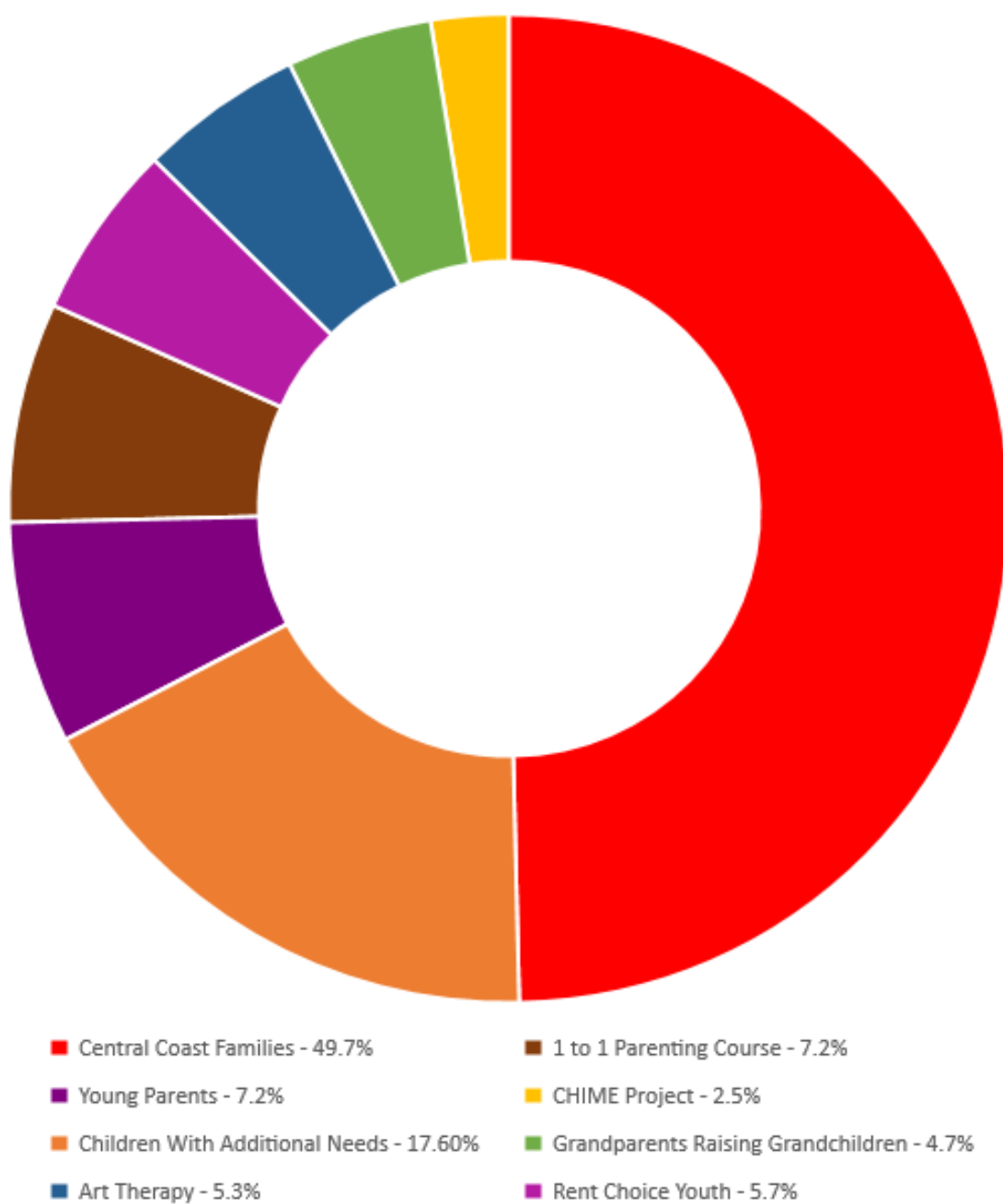
We deliver structured parent education programs to support parents and carers with practical strategies to assist in managing their child's behaviour. These education programs are delivered across the Central Coast in partnership with other community service providers.

### GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN PROGRAM

We provide support to grandparents with the primary care of their grandchildren. Supports include; case management, educational workshops, peer to peer support groups, information, referral and advocacy, activities for grandparents, children and family units.



Casework Support Provided 2023/24





# OUR IMPACT

## PRACTICE MANAGER REVIEW

It has been a bustling year at Central Coast Family Support Services, with new referrals daily from families seeking support and from community partners seeking assistance for families. Over the past 12 months, 45% of referrals into our service were made by families themselves.

We have also remained a support and information point for the Central Coast community. When a family or agency make contact and their support needs are not within scope for CCFSS case work, we provide information, support and connections to other services to ensure the family's need is addressed.

We have had periods of a little longer wait for service due to high demand, but thanks to the continued dedication and hard work of the casework team, we have been able to reduce the wait for support in recent months. On average, our families wait no more than 4 weeks to access our support.

We have seen increasing need for support of families with children with additional needs, families in housing crisis and facing financial stress, and families who require

support after experiencing domestic and family violence.

We collaborate with every family on their individual goals to support them to achieve the best outcomes for their families.

We engage and empower families to achieve sustainable change. We also continue to grow and strengthen networks and partnerships with other services in our community to holistically meet the needs of families.

We have supported families to achieve fantastic outcomes this year, including improved safety and wellbeing for children and young people, increased connection to community and access to specialised long term supports.

Every day, caseworkers utilise their knowledge, flexibility, empathy and creativity to support Central Coast families.

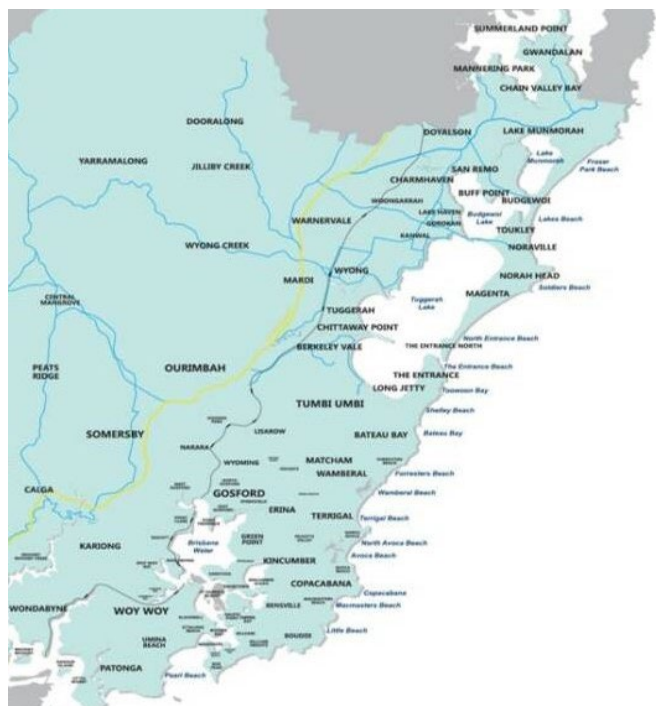
At CCFSS we support and learn from our clients and each other which creates our compassionate and dedicated team culture.

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY WORK

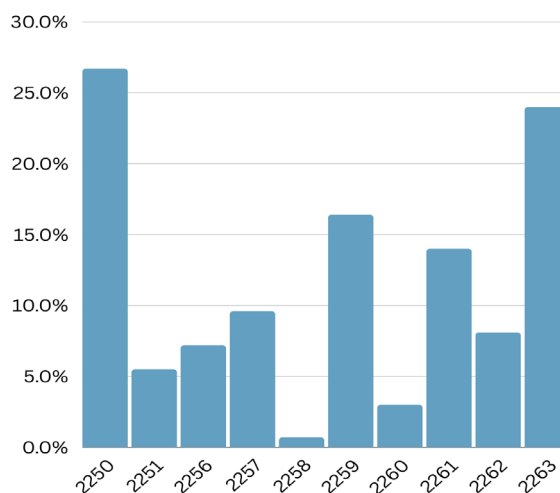
1. The prioritising of child safety and well-being
2. Systemic advocacy for those who are vulnerable
3. Child centred family focused intervention



# REACH & MATERIAL SUPPORT



**Casework % by Central Coast Postcode**



**Top 3 Postcodes for Support**

1 - 2250	26.7%
2 - 2259	16.4%
3 - 2261	14%

## Client Support

Food Hampers  
Delivered

**234**



**\$40,200**

Provided for client needs  
material and financial support

## Christmas Support

Material support to assist  
families at Christmas

**76**

Food  
Hampers



Toy and Gifts

**150**

Gift Vouchers

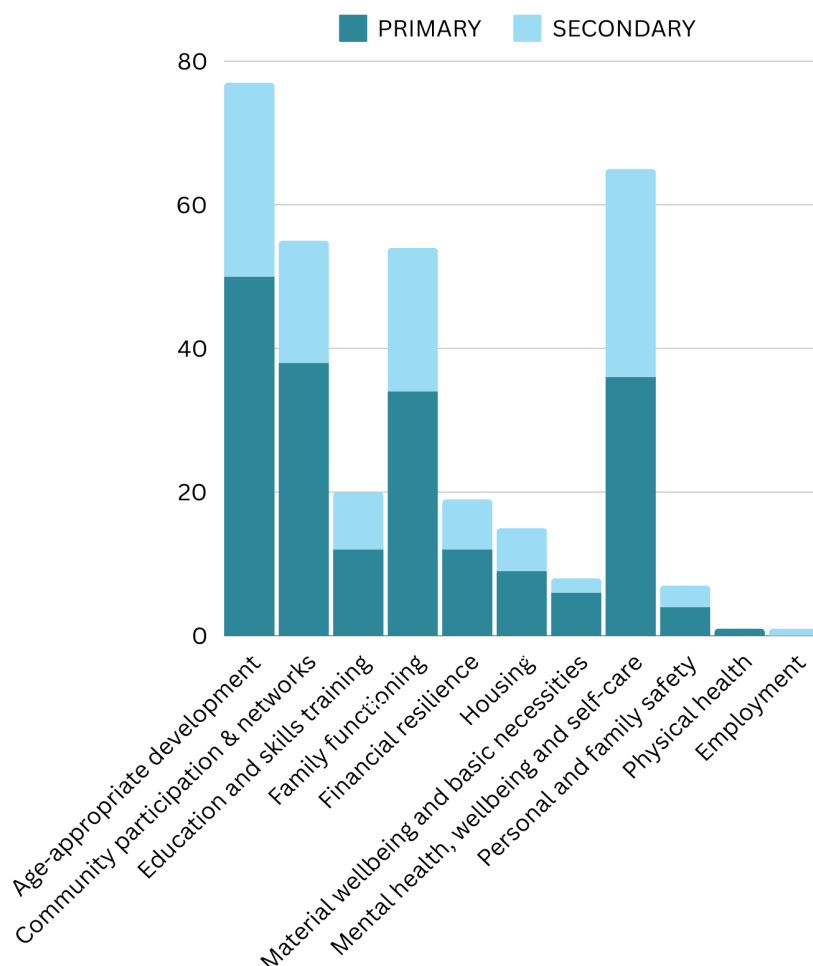
**132**



# CENTRAL COAST FAMILIES CASEWORK

CCFSS is dedicated to providing a child-centred approach to family support. Our core focus revolves around early intervention, child safeguarding, and the promotion of each child's well-being in the families we work with. Our primary objective is to work together with children and their families, keeping the child at the forefront during case management and 1 to 1 parenting education.

The fundamental goal is to address the needs of children at every stage of their physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. This involves prioritising the child's well-being and safety, advocating for their rights to ultimately reach their full potential.



**REASON FOR SEEKING FAMILY SUPPORT**





**519** 'Central Coast Families'  
Received Casework Support

**19%**

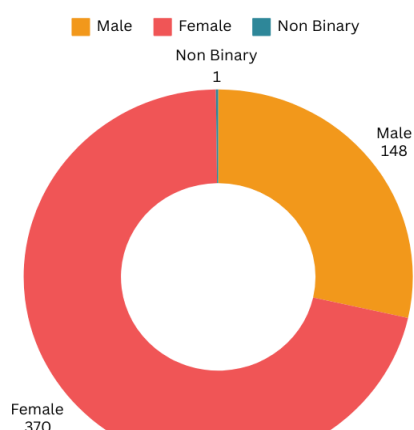
of clients identify as  
**Aboriginal or  
Torres Strait  
Islander**

**35%**

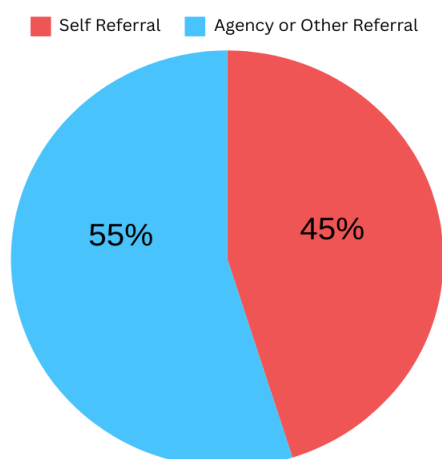
of clients have a  
**Disability or  
Impairment**

**4.8%**

are homeless or are  
at risk of homelessness



**GENDER**



**REFERRAL SOURCE**



# CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

**Our Family Support Program for families with children with additional needs or current concerns aims to strengthen family relationships and increase the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.**

Our Children with Additional Needs program has supported 173 parents and children with a diagnosed disability or developmental delay over the 12 month period.

- 89% Case Management
- 11% 1 to 1 on parenting education

Of the 173 individuals who received support under the Children with Additional Needs Program with CCFSS over the past 12 months,

- 110 female
- 62 male
- 1 non-binary
- 14% of clients identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Case management was provided to 65 families over the past 12 months, working with a specialist caseworker on agreed goals. Families' primary focus area this year was supporting their children with age appropriate development concerns, to access therapy supports.

Families second priority was to gain support with family functioning using evidence based parenting programs, parent education aimed to support a child's emotional self-regulation, developing family routines and building strong connections within the family.

During the year we delivered the Stepping Stones Triple P program, a structured evidence based 1on 1 parenting program for parents of children with a disability. This program provides support in the areas of disruptive behaviours and promoting development of their language and communication.

Working towards better outcomes for families, we continue to work collaboratively with Central Coast Local Health District - Child & Family Health, Lifestart and other government and non government services, and through participation at the bi-monthly Disability Inter-agency, hosted by Social Futures.







# YOUNG PARENTS PROGRAM CASEWORK SUPPORT

**Our Young Parents Program provides tailored casework support to parents aged up to 24 years across the Central Coast.**

Many of our young parents are referred to CCFSS by other community organisations for support.

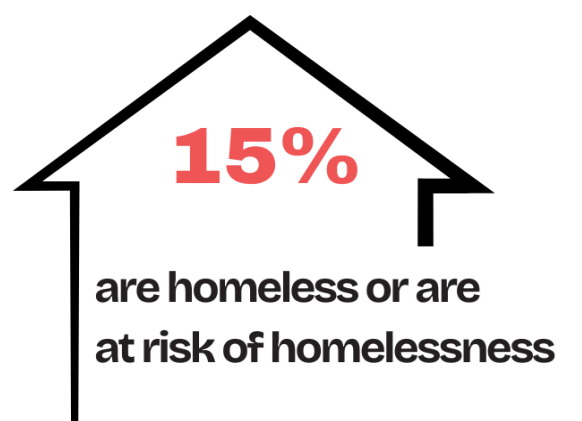
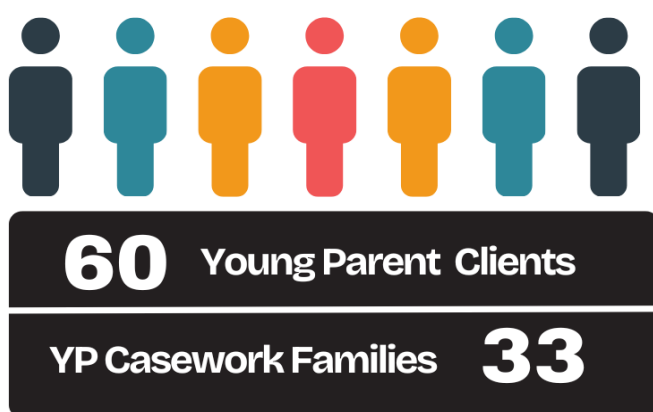
Adjusting to parenting at any age can be challenging and our young parents often face additional hurdles including; accessing stable accommodation, financial hardship and social isolation.

We support young parents through pregnancy and through their adjustment to parenting.

The primary support needs identified during casework with our young parents often include:

- Supporting child development and connecting with appropriate health and disability services
- Accessing childcare and social activities (including our CHAT Young Parents Social Support Group)
- Supporting young parents with their own wellbeing
- Providing evidence-based parenting education
- Support with family functioning

Many of our young parents are also working or studying, and where appropriate, we connect them with the Rent Choice Youth program to seek stable and sustainable long term accommodation.







# YOUNG PARENTS PROGRAM

## CHAT SUPPORT GROUP

The CHAT Young Parents support group meets weekly (during school terms) at The Clam Hall Long Jetty providing specialist supports for this vulnerable group.

The focus of the group is peer support and building connection with other young parents. During this transition in their life, they may be isolated, either by limited contact with friends and friends or limited transport options.

Whilst other mother and parenting groups are available many young parents have expressed a reluctance to join due to fear of stigma.

The CHAT support group is facilitated by a specialist caseworker who is on hand to share knowledge, provide advice and referrals to

services for both the young parent and child.

Young Parents are linked to local Child & Family Health services, discuss any developmental concerns, advocate for community supports and help develop strategies for supporting the development and wellbeing of their children.

**Over the past 12 months, the program has supported 27 adults and 23 children.**

**Many of these clients have built deep friendships, where young parents continue to meet up outside of the group sessions and grow their support network.**

### Christmas Support

For our CHAT  
Support Group Families



**11**

Food  
Hampers



Toy &  
Books

**12**



# YOUNG PARENTS PROGRAM

## PREPARATION FOR BIRTH & PARENTING

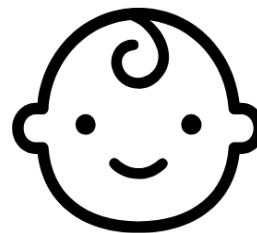
The Young Parent Preparation for Birth and Parenting Program (P4P) supports first time young parents-to-be during their transition from pregnancy to birth and parenthood for persons aged teen to 24 years. The program covers:

- Labour and birth
- Post birth care and support
- What to expect when bringing your baby home.

During 2023/24 24 parenting sessions were provided to expecting young parents with 23 babies born.

These hands on sessions are facilitated by a specialist Young Parent Caseworker and Midwife focus on informing and empowering individuals in a time of change and uncertainty.

At the completion of the P4P program with CCFSS, some clients receive individual casework supports post birth of their child. Others attend the peer to peer young parents support group - CHAT and enjoy the social connections of other young parents in the nurturing environment provided by the Young Parent Caseworker.



**23**

Babies Born

**39** Registered for a YP course

Attended a YP course **31**

**24**

YP Parenting  
Session Provided





# RENT CHOICE YOUTH PROGRAM

We are a local support provider for the Rent Choice Youth (RCY) program, funded by the Department of Communities & Justice. The program helps young people aged 16-24 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, secure a private rental and maintain a tenancy.

During the year CCFSS provided support to 18 families with their applications and ongoing participation in the RCY Program. In line with our service offerings we provide RCY supports to local Young Parents who work with a caseworker to help develop and reach study

and employment goals. Our RCY caseworker provides;

**CASE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT** - Assisting the young person to achieve their goals of safe and stable housing, employment, education, health and wellbeing.

**TRAINING** - Helping the young person understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant through completing the Rent It Keep It course in;

- Budgeting support



- Tenancy assistance and advice
- Working in collaboration with real estates and advocating on the young person's behalf to help secure a property.

All of our current RCY participants are studying or working. For those participants studying they have chosen varied education pathways including;

- Bachelor of Primary Education
- Bachelor of Educational Studies
- Certificate 3 in Financial Services

- Certificate 3 in Early Childhood Education
- Certificate 3 in Individual Support
- Higher School Certificate.

In addition to assistance with education, employment, financial and housing goals, participants were also supported through their parenting journeys with additional case management. Supports have focused on changes in family functioning, second pregnancies and evidence-based parenting education.



# CHIME PROJECT

## COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

**The CHIME Project embeds principles of Connection, Hope, Identity, Meaning and Empowerment into working with families where there is a lived experience of parental mental illness.**

This project targets some of the most vulnerable members of our community, who can often present as challenging to engage in structured and ongoing service delivery.

Referrals come from within the service through case management, from external service providers and self-referral.

The program focuses on both parents and children to promote resilience in families, mitigate the impact of mental illness on parenting, and enhance communication and understanding for mental illness within the family unit.

The CHIME project partners with schools and community centres to deliver program activities in nurturing and empowering environments.

### **PARENTING PROGRAMS**

Three parenting education programs were run over the year, two of which were delivered online. Overall 25 parents attended the parenting programs of Triple P, Bringing Up Great Kids, Fear-Less Triple P.

### **CHILD FOCUSED PROGRAMS**

Run mainly in during the school holidays, children and their parents engage in

activities that support family connection and relationship building as well as making time to have fun as a family. Approximately six families attended each activity, with most families attending only one activity throughout the year.

In November, parents and their children participated in a series of afternoon workshops where different themes were introduced through a storybook. Personal reflection of the families then followed as they were directed through a therapeutic art activity designed to relate directly to the book.

In April, parents and children engaged in an activity to strengthen family and community connections through a mixed media art activity which involved “Building Our Village”. The activity allowed for discussion on the importance of having a support network.

Several important outcomes are achieved:

- A sense of peer connection and safety within the group promoting free expression of thoughts and feelings about experiences of mental illness.

- Families experienced a sense of fun in spite of the sometimes distressing feelings that come with talking about mental health and its impacts.

- Children and parents were able to share experiences of negative emotions with each other, using the activities to process this in positive ways.

## 1:1 FAMILY FOCUSED MENTAL HEALTH SESSIONS

One on one sessions were delivered to families where parents have identified the need for additional supports in talking to their children about the impact of their mental health.

Parents were supported to develop a family plan that has the potential to reduce the impact of mental illness on the family, reduce risk and promote children's development.



**“I really enjoyed the program and am using the strategies.”**

**“I enjoyed having supportive discussions about my parenting struggles.”**



# COURSE WORK PROGRAMS

## PARENTING EDUCATION

### **CCFSS delivers evidence-based parenting education programs at various locations across the Central Coast.**

The programs are designed to support parents and caregivers in their parenting role, providing them with practical strategies to support their child's wellbeing and feel confident in managing challenging behaviour that may arise.

CCFSS works in partnership with many locations across the Central Coast from Gorokan to Umina, The Entrance to Wyoming, to meet the needs of families wanting to attend courses in their local area.

The community organisations we partner with support our parenting education programs by providing a safe and supportive environment for parents to engage in learning and provide child-minding facilities, where available.

We have also run courses after working hours both online and in person to meet the needs of the community including working parents.

We have identified barriers for some parents / carers being able to attend sessions, this includes;

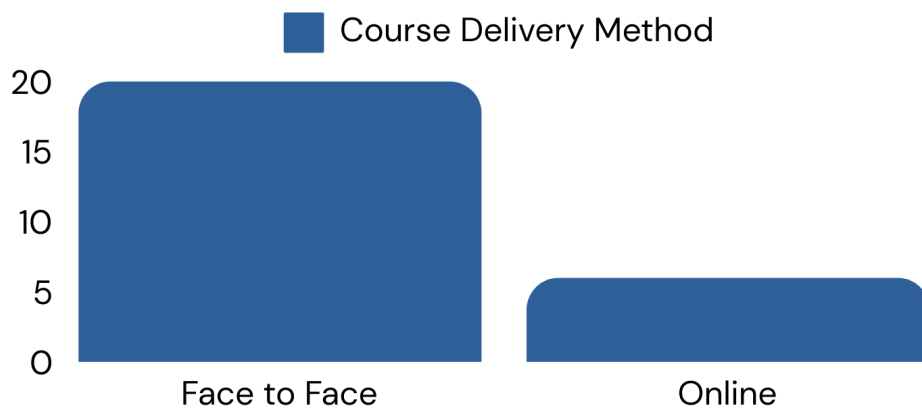
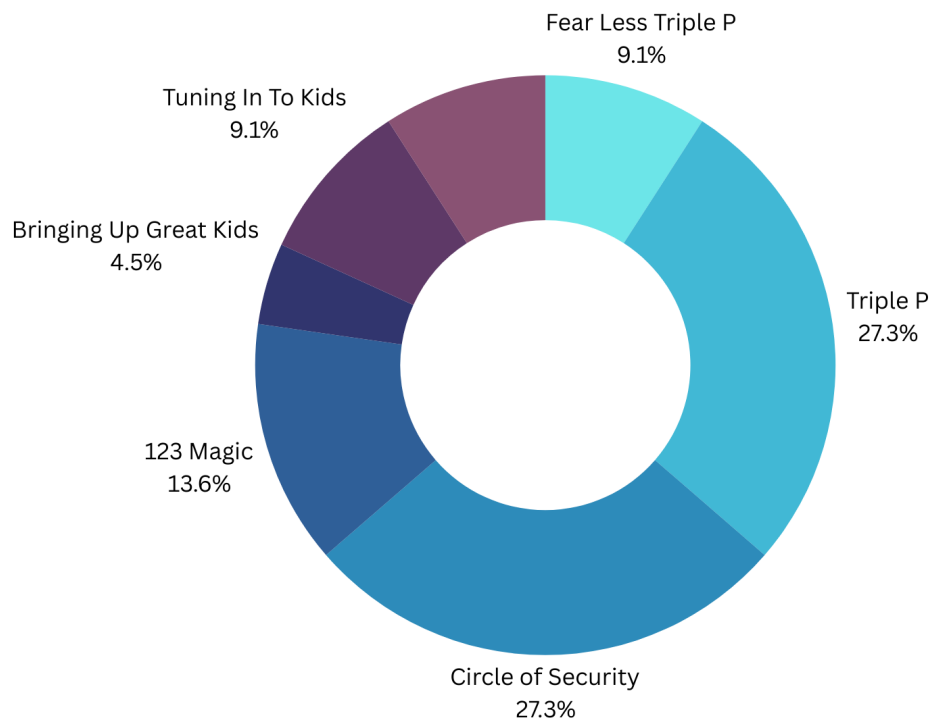
- access to courses via public transport,
- family illness
- need for child-minding
- conflicting schedules.

To address these barriers, CCFSS continues to look for innovative ways to delivering course programs such as continuing to build connections with local community services, accessing locations able to provide child-minding and providing online courses.

Along with building confidence in parenting strategies to support child and family wellbeing, parents have reported the course work group to be a place of ongoing support and connection.

Many groups report making group chats where they can continue to support each other, ask questions and remain connected. Some groups have remained connected months afterward, with participants saying they regularly meet up with others from their group, strengthening their connections to their community and building a network of supports.

## 26 Parenting Courses Delivered





# COURSE WORK PROGRAMS

## PARENTING EDUCATION



*“I’ve loved this course and the help it’s given me to deal with my children’s anxiety. It’s also been great to be able to get assistance with support I can reach out to when needed”*

*“Brilliant. Would highly recommend.”*

*“I found the course amazing and the lady which ran the course so great in listening to us all and engaging with us all. She really created that safe place for reflection and learning.”*

*“The course had loads of useful strategies, even ones that I could implement after the 1st week! So helpful.”*

*“The course was great. Not only do they bring like women together which is important for community, it has given me a sense of belonging which again is important. Child focused learning along the way on the journey of parenthood. Very thankful.”*





**737**

Individual Sessions Provided

**11%**

of participants  
identify as

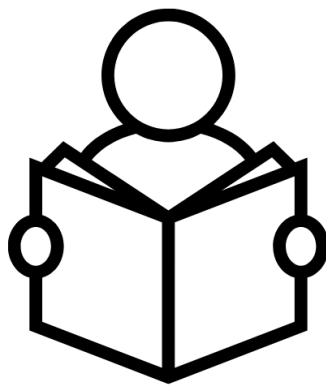
**Aboriginal or  
Torres Strait  
Islander**

**314**

Participants registered for  
a parenting course

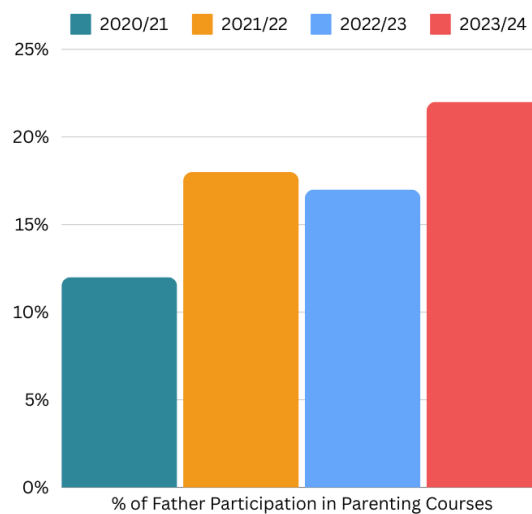
Participants attending a  
parenting course

**220**



**3.6**

**AVERAGE SESSIONS  
ATTENDED PER PARTICIPANT**



**FATHERS PARTICIPATION IN  
PARENTING COURSES**



# LIVING OUR VISION

## SUPPORTING LOCAL FAMILIES

**Mandy was referred to our service following a move to the Central Coast after she and her children had endured on-going and pervasive domestic and family violence.**

She was seeking support for her family's mental health needs, to safeguard their relationships and improve the household dynamics. Mandy was also suddenly rendered homeless.

CCFSS worked with Mandy and a specialised housing service to navigate emergency temporary housing. Through advocacy and high regard for the family's needs, the family were able to link appropriate temporary housing while Mandy searched for an affordable longer term rental property.

The older children were referred to a youth service to support their adolescent developmental needs including; education, employment and mental health, while CCFSS supported Mandy to locate subsidised child care for her toddler.

During the 12 weeks of early intervention, CCFSS supported the family with material aid including; food hampers, clothing for the children and Mandy.

The caseworker attended medical appointments, provided supporting housing documentation, referred to mental health

services and connected the family to local community partners such as the Women's Health Centre and supported playgroups.

Mandy was delighted to call the CCFSS caseworker and celebrate her successful application for a rental property, after close to 100 property inspections and applications.

Mandy was proud that her children had enrolled in school and daycare and that her eldest child had sought employment. Mandy herself become a valued employee with a local business.

The goal to improve family relationships and increase sense of support and partnerships with the family, provided the encouragement and confidence Mandy needed to keep going.

At many intervals, her motivation could have collapsed under the pressure of her urgent needs, but with the support of her caseworker she was able to push through and achieved incredible progress for her family.

*\* names changed to protect client privacy*

*“ We are committed to providing safe and inclusive support to empower families in our local community to thrive”.*





# LIVING OUR VISION

## SUPPORTING LOCAL FAMILIES

**A young mother was referred to our services through a local health program while she was heavily pregnant with her second child.**

Having recently left a domestic violence situation, she relocated with a new partner and was navigating this new and daunting chapter of her life, feeling isolated and overwhelmed.

This mother decided on clear goals to achieve with the support of a family caseworker. She aimed to engage in parenting education and capacity building to better manage her daughter's behaviours.

One of her primary concerns was getting her daughter assessed by a paediatrician, but she felt overwhelmed by the lack of transportation, support, and the impending birth of her second child. Additionally, she was determined to access counselling for her daughter to provide the space and support needed to adapt to their new life and process the traumatic events of the past two years.

Advocacy for an urgent paediatrics assessment was successful, which led to a diagnosis and treatment. This intervention was effective, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving the family's daily functioning.

A grant for counselling was sought and a service willing to work with a child via video sessions until transportation became more accessible was arranged. The first session received a very positive report.

After exploring several options, the client and caseworker decided that a one-on-one parenting course would be the most accessible and effective way to engage in parenting education. The client readily applied the learning strategies in her daily life.

At the end of the casework period, this client reflected on her progress with pride and satisfaction, reporting an improved sense of control, knowledge and empowerment.





## **Supporting an isolated mother and baby after a relationship breakdown.**

The client was from overseas and had very limited English as well as no family in Australia to support her. She was able to find safe and permanent accommodation, however she was left feeling very isolated and confused by what her options were when she began working with her caseworker.

Through her engagement with her caseworker, this mum was able to identify that she needed financial and material support, assistance with her Visa, and legal support as the domestic violence matter went to court.

With the use of a regular interpreter support was provided for this family. The caseworker was able to link this family in with local charity organisations who were able to provide food hampers and vouchers.

Once their basic needs were met, this family was able to engage with other services that could support them in reaching some of their other

goals. They were linked in with an organisation to support them with their Visa status, and the caseworker was able to provide consistent support in this process.

Emotional support was provided to this family during the court process, helping this mum feel less fearful about what to expect. The caseworker also spent some time empowering this mum and helping her identify her strengths and ability to advocate for herself.

The outcome for this parent and her child was that she was able to engage with a range of services that could meet this family's unique needs.

Although still feeling overwhelmed at times, this mum feels more confident and empowered that there is support available when needed.

Importantly, this mother has been able to provide her little girl with a supportive, safe and loving environment where she has learnt many new skills and continues to thrive every day.

*\* names changed to protect client privacy*



# GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN SUPPORT GROUPS

**The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Program supports grandparents on the Central Coast who have full time care of their grandchildren.**

The aim of the GRG program is to strengthen family relationships and increase the safety and wellbeing of this vulnerable group in a supportive capacity.

The burden of parenting all over again in a changing society can be difficult. When required, the GRG program can provide caseworkers to assist with advocacy and support.

Social isolation for grandparents can also be a challenge. We understand this and aim to provide ongoing opportunities for peer connections, both for the Grandparents and their Grandchildren.

We have two peer to peer support groups, one at Phillip House, Kariong and the other at the Wyong Milk Factory. Some grandparents attend both sessions and others one. It's a great way to stay connected during the year.

Grandparents providing care to grandchildren in formal and informal care arrangements are welcomed. It is a safe space to share knowledge and experiences and families have found that the peer to peer knowledge sharing is invaluable.

The Kariong sessions have included art therapy sessions, craft, services visits and of course much needed social catch ups over a cup of tea and coffee.

The Wyong sessions are less formal and

more a social outing with friends. At both sessions our dedicated GRG Caseworker provides information, advice, referrals and support for challenges that families may be facing at the time.

Along with the support groups some grandparents also receive case management support to assist them with navigating challenges, accessing services and parenting support to manage behaviour concerns.

We appreciate the emotional and financial strain many grandparents are experiencing, and where possible, we provide our GRG families with events and activities that they may otherwise not have had the opportunity to experience.

In addition, we have purchased or sourced material supports for many families over the past 12 months, including;

- School Uniforms and Shoes
- Sporting Equipment
- Bedding (including towels, pillows and blankets, mattress protectors)
- Clothing and Shoes
- Food Hampers
- Cleaning Items
- Gardening - lawnmower.

**This support could not be provided without the ongoing philanthropic donations from our many wonderful supporters.**

# GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN SUPPORT PROVIDED



**38** GRG clients attended a  
Support Group Session

**17**

GRG Families  
Received  
Casework Support

**\$39,855**



Spent on clients  
needs, GRG events  
and activities.

- excludes wages

**8**

GRG Events &  
Activities Provided



## TUTORING SERVICES PROVIDED

**217** sessions provided  
Over **\$16,000** in funding



Over the past 12 months, CCFSS has funded 217 individual and group tutoring sessions for grandchildren linked with the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program. These sessions are valued at over \$16,000.

Feedback provided by grandparents stated that their grandchild is now excelling in school, getting into the highest maths group for the class, have the confidence to answer teachers' questions in class and have shown an overall improvement in their engagement in academic activities.

## PEER TO PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

**WYONG  
KARIONG**

Held on first Wednesday of the month at Wyong Milk Factory  
Held on last Wednesday of the month at Phillip House



# GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN SPECIAL EVENTS

As part of our Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program we provide social events to both Grandchildren and Grandparents throughout the year, building connection with peers and other local families.

We have been proud to provide 7 events over the past 12 months, including; 3 grandchildren events, 2 grandparent events, a grandparents retreat and family Christmas party.

## MOVIE DAY - LITTLE MERMAID

In the July school holidays, 34 Grandparents and Grandchildren attended the GRG Movie Day at Avoca Beach Picture Theatre. It was an opportunities for our GRG families to come together, spent time with other families and provide an activity for grandchildren in the holidays.

Little Mermaid was on the big screen and everyone enjoyed a fish and chips lunch afterwards. It was a great event for families and we were fortunate to have sunshine and blue skies, and lots of smiles.



## BBMA - KARATE DAY

The October school holidays, Grandparents and Grandchildren ventured to Black Belt Martial Arts Studio at Tumby Umbi.

While the grandparents relaxed the grandchildren had the opportunity to burn some energy and learned new skills on the mat. The day included karate activities, arts & craft and games to cater for all ages and abilities.



## MOVIE DAY - WONKA

In the April School Holidays, 40 Grandparents and Grandchildren enjoyed a day at the movies to see Wonka. Our lovely hosts from the Avoca Beach Picture Theatre once again made us feel welcome and families enjoyed the delicious movie snacks and lunch.



## SET SAIL

In December, grandparents were treated to Set Sail event to celebrate the upcoming festivities. Meeting at Woy Woy Wharf, we cruised the stunning Brisbane Waters, listening to the Captain share his knowledge of the area and waterways.

After the 1.5 hour cruise from Woy Woy under the RIP bridge, past Killcare, Hardy's Bay and Wagstaffe, back under the St Hubert's Island Bridge past Empire Bay to our next stop at Davistown Wharf. We enjoyed a delicious lunch at Davistown RSL before heading back to Woy Woy.

A wonderful day chatting with friends and enjoying the water and lunch. On arrival at Woy Woy wharf grandparents were greeted by the CCFSS team with gourmet hampers to share with family and friends over the festive season.

The Grandparents definitely felt spoiled by the days activities and gift, a lovely acknowledgement for the ongoing care they provide for their grandchildren.



## HIGH TEA

17 Grandparents attended a High Tea event, at Angel Sussuri in Yarramalong. Aurora and the Angel Sussuri team went above and beyond to make the day special and created a delicious array of sweet and savory treats plus bottomless cups of tea and coffee.

It was the perfect location to relax and share stories of fun, hardships, heartbreaks and achievements for grandchildren and grandparents alike. Time to recharge and connect before the upcoming April school holidays.

There was an abundance of treats and many grandparents were able to take some home to share with their grandchildren afterwards.







# GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN FAMILY CHRISTMAS PARTY

**A special GRG Family Christmas Party hosted by Central Coast Family Support Services proved to be a hit with local families and was a wonderful start to Christmas festivities.**



Our GRG Family Christmas Party (despite some sprinkles of rain) was a success with new friendships being made and fun had by all including our amazing volunteers from Kariong - Somersby Rotary Club and Inner Wheel.

From the inflatable water slide, circus skills workshop, infamous cupcake decorating and BBQ lunch there was something for everyone... including a special visit from the big man himself, Santa.

The Jo-Jo circus performer kept the children and grandparents entertained and was able to draw in even the most shy or anxious children. The water slide was a hit with the young one's, we're sure there was a secret competition to splash our GRG caseworker Ruth on every slide.

Our bellies were full from the BBQ lunch and it was next onto the Inner wheel cupcake decorating. The array of lollies for decorations was a special delight. One cupcake for now and more decorated cupcakes to take home to share.

Much to everyone's delight Santa arrived with a sack full of presents for all the children. One 12 year old couldn't believe that her present was so perfect, she was sure that her grandfather must have planned it. We were blessed to have been provided gifts for all the children thanks to the Taylor Family Wish charity.

The Grandparents agreed this was a wonderful day, filled with laughter and lots of smiling faces. A great way to end the year for the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program.











# GRANDPARENTS RETREAT NOONAWEENA

**In September, Grandparents attended an overnight retreat at Noonaweena, located on the Central Coast at Kulnura.**

Grandparents were warmly greeted by Geoffrey, the resident peacock 'train rattling', it was the perfect display and welcome to the retreat.

The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Retreat provides an opportunity for grandparent carers to be spoilt and enjoy some respite. The event includes an overnight stay at the exclusive Noonaweena resort, wellbeing activities including; day spa massages, relaxation exercises, bush walking, pool and spa time, together with delicious food prepared by the CCFSS team.

For many it was time to catch up with other carers that they have met before, for others it was their first opportunity to share their story and feel connected.

One of the aims of the GRG Program at CCFSS is to create opportunities for GRG families

to gather and build connections and create a support network they can tap into for advice during their caring journey.

One grandparent was heard to say, 'I can't believe I nearly didn't come!'. One of the activities was a 2hr relaxation session with some saying 'they can't remember the last time they relaxed like that!'.

Caseworker Bec, took a group of grandparents for a walk around the beautiful property, while other grandparents enjoyed the infinity pool and spa which overlooked the stunning Yengo National Park.

Grandparents were provided this opportunity through funding by Central Coast Rotary Clubs which recognises the important role grandparent carers play in the lives of their grandchildren.

Central Coast Family Support Services appreciates the ongoing support provided by local Rotary Clubs which enables such opportunities to be provided to grandparent carers.







# GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN GRANDMATTERS FORUM

**In November, Central Coast Family Support Services hosted the GRANDMATTERS Forum with the support of Central Coast Council and venue sponsor Mingara.**

This forum provided grandparents who have the full time care of their grandchildren with accurate information, resources and support to assist them in navigating the complexities of their care giving journey.

On the day we were thrilled to have the support of The Glen delivering the Welcome to Country and sharing a series of cultural performances.

Maree Sykes director from the Department of Communities & Justice provided information on government services and fielded questions from attendees on a wide range of topics including; legal, financial and services available and provided avenues for escalation and additional support.

Our keynote speaker Maggie Dent, is a renowned author, educator, and parenting and resilience specialist with a particular interest in the early years and adolescence. Maggie provided practical

parenting and behavioural initiatives and tools that grandparents could activate and shared parts of her own parenting journey. Maggie's energy was uplifting and empowering.

Gavin Moffit a Central Coast clinical psychologist talked about Trauma Informed Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and how grandparents can implement these strategies on a daily basis with their grandchildren.

Local grandparent Jenny Porter and her granddaughter Chase shared their personal story. There wasn't a dry eye in the house as she shared how she became the primary carer of her grandchildren and the challenges they have encountered as a family.

Throughout the day attendees visited information booths and spoke with service providers on the range of products and services available

The team at Central Coast Family Support Services were also on hand to assist attendees with enquiries and create opportunities for grandparents to meet other local grandparents especially those that are not already engaged with support groups or other local services.









## The Glen for Men



**231** number of individual sessions attended

**13** Group Sessions





# The Glen FOR MEN

Over the past 12 months we have continued our wonderful partnership with The Glen for Men, a Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation service based on the Central Coast, providing our evidence-based and culturally safe parenting courses.

We use a strength-based, holistic and trauma informed approach, sensitive to the needs and background of each participant and which acknowledges their personal journey at The Glen centre.

We have delivered 13 group sessions at The Glen for Men over the past 12 months. During these sessions participants gathered to learn and share their personal experiences, to become more confident, positive and aware of how they are parenting their children.

Our program begins with spiritual

connection through fire in the yarning circle, acknowledging the participants as they embark on their parenting learning journey.

Our facilitators encourage participants to express their concerns and fears about parenting with the focus on positive outcomes and to embrace the information, knowledge and practical strategies to be a more confident and empowered parent.

We provide participants with resources to help support them on their journey and to implement learned positive parenting practices. This has included work books, videos, handouts and practical opportunities for role plays. Our approach incorporates indoor and outdoor learning, with a strong emphasis on laughter, nurturing, connection and play.



Participants have expressed feeling more empowered to be the best possible parent and role model they can be and feel they have the tools to strengthen the parent child relationship.



# The Glen

## FOR WOMEN

CCFSS has had the pleasure of continued partnership with The Glen for Women this year.

The Glen for Woman is a Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Service housing up to 20 women at a time during their time of recovery from addiction.

CCFSS is proud to be a part of the healing journey of the lives of the women at The Glen, providing evidence based parenting programs to residents.

At CCFSS we are aware of the trauma and complexities that face the women and residents at The Glen, we tailor our evidence based

parenting programs to suit their needs and levels of capacity at the time of their stay.

The 2 hour session incorporates key areas from the evidence based parenting programs with emphasis on emotional self-awareness as well as fun activities that model interactive laughter and play that they can then take home to their families.

We embrace nature with the women too, at times lighting the Fire in the Yarning circle or creating natural Mandalas with items supplied by nature. Recent feedback from some participants included; nature was a great learning experience and showed them how to connect to our children in nature, have fun, create something, praise our children and at no cost.

Women without children attending the program report that the sessions helped them interact as “aunties and sisters” as help to make them aware of their own “presence in the community”.

CCFSS look forward to working with the Women of The Glen for another year ahead.

### The Glen for Women



**116** number of individual sessions attended

**12** Group Sessions





# OUR TEAM

## OUR 2023/24 TEAM

**Miriam Andrikidis**

**Karen Biddle**

**Nicholas Bennett**

**Rebecca Chown**

**Ruth Cross**

**Georgia Eades**

**Nicole Fiatarone**

**Sarah Grey**

**Jill Hee**

**Angela Lanser**

**Shannon Marshall**

**Liz Mulvenna**

**Tamara Nercessian**

**Lynette Northey**

**Ruth Phelan**

**Lauren Reid**

**Dayna Ruha**

**Niamh Scanlon**

**Josie Smith**

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Business Administration Trainee

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Community Programs Manager

Executive Officer

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Administration Manager

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Practice Manager

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Young Parent Family Caseworker

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Finance Officer

Early Intervention Family Caseworker

Early Intervention Family Caseworker



# OUR VOLUNTEERS

## THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

Paula Hardwick  
Michael Kemmis  
Marie Leadbitter

Roy Palmer  
Madeline Watson



## TEAM MEMBERS WHO LEFT DURING 2023/24

Madeline Broughton  
Deborah Durrington  
Emily Gunn  
Dale Hopgood

Emma Moore  
Leeann Smallbone  
Lauren Summerhayes  
Gayle Symons

## STUDENT PLACEMENT - Art Therapist

Vhairi Todd





Pandora Committee



Central Coast Council



Taylor Family Wish



Bendigo Bank

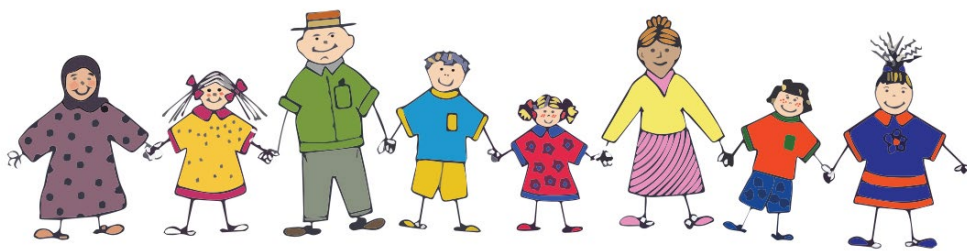
# THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL SUPPORTERS

Alliance Distribution Services  
Angel Sussuri  
Avoca Beach Theatre  
Because We Care Boutique  
Bendigo Bank  
Bikers Hand  
Black Belt Martial Arts - Tumby Umbi  
Blue Haven Public School  
Cake N Plate Narara  
Central Coast Child & Family Health  
Central Coast Council  
Central Coast Women's Health Centre - Woy Woy  
Central Coast Women's Health Centre - Wyoming  
Central Coast Women's Health Centre - Wyong  
Davistown RSL Club  
Dept of Communities & Justice - NSW Government  
Goodstart ELC - Woy Woy  
Green Point / Terrigal Community Centre  
Inner Wheel – North Gosford  
Inspire Allied Health Group  
Kariong Neighbourhood Centre  
Kids Day Out  
Kids On Congas  
MacKillop Catholic College Warnervale  
Maths Words Not Squiggles  
Mingaletta  
Mingara Recreation Club  
Narara Valley Young Parents Program  
Noonaweena Retreat

Our Lady of the Rosary Parish - The Entrance  
Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic School - Wyoming  
Oz Harvest  
Pandora Committee  
Parklands Community Pre-school  
Regional Youth Support Services  
Robson Excavation  
Rotary Club of Erina  
Rotary Club of Kariong / Somersby  
Rotary Club of Kincumber  
Rotary Club of The Entrance  
Rotary Club of Woy Woy  
Rui Ping Yong  
Sanitarium Health Food  
St John the Baptist Catholic School - Woy Woy  
Taylor Family Wish  
The Benevolent Society  
The Clam Hall - Long Jetty  
The Entrance Community Centre  
The Glen for Men  
The Glen for Women  
We Care Connect  
Schools as Community Centre - Blue Haven  
Schools as Community Centre - Gorokan  
Schools as Community Centre - Woy Woy  
Schools as Community Centre - Wyong  
Wyong Town Financial Services  
Yum Nutrition



CENTRAL COAST



**FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES**

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