

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-22



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"Names of service users in the entire report have been de-identified to protect their identity, privacy, and confidentiality."

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Annette Jackson

Chair, UnitingCare Kippax Board
October 2022

The Annual Report gives us a moment to pause after a challenging 12 months and look at the impact that UnitingCare Kippax has made to individuals and the community in West Belconnen and across Canberra. With COVID restrictions, housing shortages and inflation, 2021-2022 has seen unprecedented demand on our services and staff, and I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the donors, funders, staff, volunteers and wider community that have risen to the challenge. Along with the aggregate data on program outcomes, the individual stories

throughout the report demonstrate the key role that UnitingCare Kippax has played in many people's lives.

A key deliverable for the Board this financial year was the recruitment of a new Chief Executive Officer. After a thorough and robust recruitment process, the Board is delighted to have appointed Michael Nurmi. Michael brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role and a passion for creating positive change in the Canberra community.

I would like to sincerely thank Meg Richens for her leadership, in a variety of roles, and commitment to UnitingCare Kippax over many years. In January 2022, Meg stepped down as Chair of the Board. Meg's passion to not only support people at their point of need, but also to advocate for and participate in systemic change, positioned UnitingCare Kippax to be change agents through the Village for Every Child social impact initiative.

I have had the privilege of being Chair of the Board since February 2022 and am grateful for the opportunity to work with others to support vulnerable members of the community. Throughout the year, UnitingCare Kippax has continued to focus on living out our mission to 'foster wellbeing, inclusion and empowerment', as outlined in our 2021-2025 strategic plan

The Board, alongside management, continues to focus on how we can evolve to best fulfil our mission as our context changes. The Board continues to refresh and embed our governance arrangements to ensure relevance whilst mitigating risks; and it has strengthened the relationship between the Church Council and UnitingCare Kippax. Going forward, a key focus for the Board will be considering income generation strategies to enable us to meet the increasing community demands for support.

Thank you to Board members Simon Ash, Clare Camilleri, Penny Burns, Shara Ranasinghe, Andrew Johnson, Trish Hepworth and David Smith for their commitment to UnitingCare Kippax and for contributing their wisdom, skills and knowledge to best position our organisation for the future.

Thanks to all our staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly this year. I acknowledge and thank the Kippax Leadership Team for their management of the Kippax Uniting Community Centre and the UnitingCare Kippax Health and Wellbeing Committee for actively supporting staff wellbeing.

The Annual Report has a list of our supporters. Thanks to you all, and the ACT Government, our major funder, for working with us to support and empower people in the Canberra community.

CEO REPORT



Michael Nurmi

CEO October 2022

A time of change, challenges and healing.

Over the past year COVID has continued to impact the mental health, resilience and capacity of Canberrans. This meant that we faced yet another difficult year, operating our services during lockdown periods and ensuring that our critical supports continued. I am extremely proud of the staff and volunteers at UnitingCare Kippax, who demonstrated innovation, professionalism, and motivation to help our community during these times.

When another lockdown was announced in August, we all readjusted to meetings online.

We also had regular health and wellbeing check-ins. The team followed ACT Health directions and ran a tight ship, keeping the Community Centre safe for staff, volunteers and participants, whilst maintaining service provision. We adapted to provide services online or via phone, ensuring that we could continue supporting those who were unable to visit and connect with us in person.

For our staff, online mediation and yoga classes provided much needed mindfulness and exercise breaks, quiz sessions and Friday afternoon gatherings gave us the opportunity to chat and connect. This contributed to UnitingCare Kippax being resilient during a time of social isolation.

When the time finally came to leave lockdown and return to regular services, it took some time to fully reopen. As activities recommenced, a renewed sense of optimism could be felt in our Community Centre. Throughout it all, the team remained focused and dedicated in serving our community.

Despite the ongoing challenges, this financial year has been productive with new opportunities presenting themselves. We received funding to expand A Village For Every Child, with a focus on improving education, health and development outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Mower Shed has seen an

increase in contract work through the second half of the year, requiring recruitment of new staff. Kippax Kids had a slow start to the year due to COVID, but we now have multiple groups utilising the playground and crèche, which is wonderful to see. Our Emergency Relief and Case Management teams continued an outstanding level of support to service users, and our SPARK education and training team kept delivering results for individuals working towards a new career pathway.

I would like to thank the dedicated UnitingCare Kippax Board for guiding the organization throughout the year, and ensuring that we have the capacity, knowledge, and ability to pivot when required. This has allowed us to progress, despite the many challenges. We have articulated new strategic directions for 2021-2025 and reaffirmed our purpose to foster wellbeing by building a more inclusive community and empowering people to participate. Our vision is to ensure that our community has equitable and robust human, social, economic, spiritual, and cultural capital.

Finally, I would like to finish by saying that I am proud to have an opportunity to make change in our community in collaboration with a team of like-minded staff, volunteers, and congregation members who have dedicated their time, skills, and energy to the organisation.



WHAT'S AHEAD

The UnitingCare Kippax Strategic Directions document is reviewed every 3-5 years to ensure that the organisation is keeping up with the changing times and needs of the community. Our UnitingCare Kippax Board, Church Council, congregation, staff, and key stakeholders all played a part in creating the pathway for UnitingCare Kippax to progress over the next five years. Each provided input, advice, and feedback which informed the Strategic Directions document. This gives us a platform to work to reach our goals and aspirations, to work with our community and foster wellbeing by building a more inclusive community and empowering people to participate. The road ahead presents obstacles and uncertainty, but we are in optimistic and hopeful times.

Our community is changing and growing. Right on Kippax's doorstep, the new suburb Strathnairn, in Ginninderry, is growing, with many new residents moving in. This is positive for our local community, its economic growth and job opportunities. We continue to work closely with the Ginninderry team, creating connections in the community. Our focus over the next five years will consist of three key pillars, through which we provide service to the community:

1. Education, training and employment
2. Working with families and children aged 0-5 years
3. General welfare and support services.

OUTCOMES WE WANT TO SEE

- People are engaged in learning and life;
- People have control over their wellbeing, including being able to live and engage in their preferred locations;
- People are culturally and spiritually secure;
- People are safe so that they can participate effectively in the community.

HOW IS UNITINGCARE KIPPAX INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNITY?

- Improved material security for people who are dealing with economic hardship;
- Improved micro-economy in West and greater Belconnen;
- Increased number of opportunities for participation and engagement in the community that actively support people's greater control over decisions that affect their lives;
- Workplaces and practices that make participating easier for people who find it hard to gain and maintain suitable employment.





WHO ARE WE?

UnitingCare Kippax is a local, for purpose, community organisation that seeks to improve wellbeing. We work with a wide range of people regardless of age, race, gender, sexual identity, ability, faith or religious affiliation. While the majority of the people who use our services live in the north-western areas of the ACT, we do not prevent people from seeking support based on geography.

We are a Public Benevolent Institution and our main purpose is to relieve poverty, sickness, suffering, and/or disability. UnitingCare Kippax has provided services in the local West Belconnen region for over 10 years, helping those in our community requiring support and social connection, and enabling people to have choice in how they live their lives.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN DELIVERING THE WORK?

“ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE; TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH.”

HELEN KELLER

UnitingCare Kippax has a highly skilled and experienced staff cohort with backgrounds in social work, counselling, management, and youth work. Many also come to their role with lived experience of vulnerability, and a desire to share and help others. Staff continue to develop their knowledge and work on best practices by attending workshops, conferences, and courses - even during COVID via online opportunities.

We are backed by the support of our dedicated congregation and volunteers. Without their support the organisation would not exist. We are a volunteer organisation supported by staff and our impact is largely due to those in our community who are willing to give their time to make a real difference.

Another key group is our wonderful students completing their work experience placements with us. We are proud that we have employed

many students at UnitingCare Kippax after placement and we get the privilege of watching them develop as professionals in their field.

Outside our service delivery programs, we have many activities that are driven by volunteers and students with the support of staff. The Centre reception and foyer has been supported by volunteers for over the past 10 years. This is a key role for volunteers and congregation members, as they are the first point of contact for service users at Kippax.

Our monthly Welcome Café and weekly Good Morning Breakfasts have many volunteers, as do key events like our Christmas appeal, which is heavily reliant on volunteers. Finally, the UnitingCare Kippax Board is made up of dedicated volunteers donating their knowledge, time and expertise, which has been instrumental in the organisation moving in a positive direction.



HOW IS UNITINGCARE KIPPAX FUNDED?

**“WE MAKE A LIVING BY WHAT WE GET. WE MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT WE GIVE.”
WINSTON CHURCHILL**

UnitingCare Kippax relies on a number of funding sources. The largest segment of income is specific program grants, the majority of which are from the ACT Government. This allows us to deliver programs across the region. Other streams of funding, which are essential for the organisation to operate, come from tendering for grants and donations from the community, congregation, and philanthropic organisations. The size and reach of organisation is dependent on the funding we receive from our funding sources, UnitingCare Kippax is an innovative organisation that has created strategies to become less reliant on government funding and be more flexible in the way that we work with our partners.

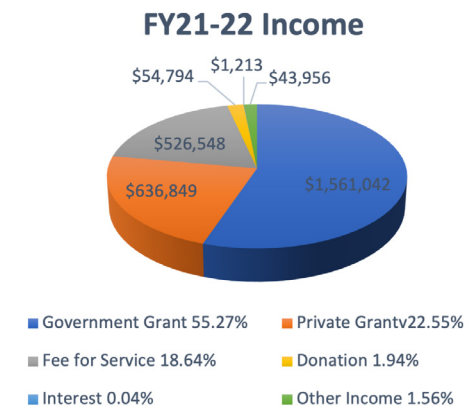
Collaboration is fundamental to our success. Funding is limited and agencies have to compete for funding, so we take the approach of not duplicating services but looking at ways that we

can partner with like-minded charities to provide the best services and programs possible.

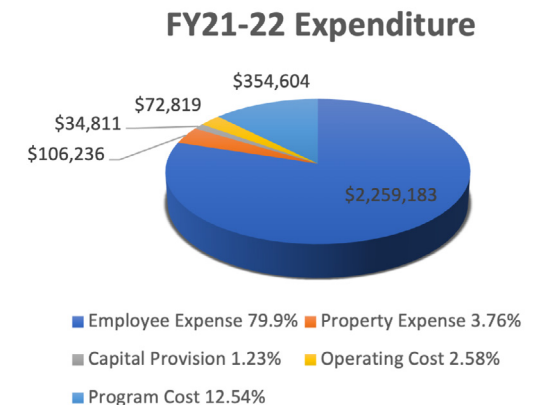
Not all support is financial but other contributions are just as important as they allow us to continue to deliver assistance in other ways. For example, we receive many donations including food, clothing, whitegoods, toys, storage, and vouchers. These kind donations are made possible by providers including Good 360, Storage King, Oz Harvest, Melba Church, Royal Thai Embassy, and Transport ACT to name a few. Pro-bono support also contributes to UnitingCare Kippax's effective operation. We are very grateful to a number of organisations for their support, including IT support from SOLVit, marketing support from Evendots and assistance in legal and HR support when required from NSW Synod and Mackenzie Workplace Law. It takes many different types of support to ensure that UnitingCare Kippax can continue to help the Canberra community.

Income and expenditure 2021-2022:

Income



Expenditure



WHY ARE WE NEEDED?

Canberra has changed a great deal over the 10 years UnitingCare Kippax has been operating, and is a desirable place for families to live. Unfortunately, this has led to elevated housing and rental costs, placing additional pressure on individuals and families. We live in one of the most expensive cities to rent a house or a unit. In addition, recent data shows that Canberra has a shortage of over 5,500 social and affordable dwellings. The wait list for public housing in Canberra has increased significantly over the last four years resulting in an average wait time for standard social housing of more than 4.2 years, or 1,541 days.

The 'Counting the Costs' report published in December 2021 also highlighted the shortage of funding provided by Government to organisations such as ours. Despite Canberra having the highest average weekly earnings compared to other states and territories, 1 in 10 Canberrans live in poverty. That means that at present, some 38,000 Canberrans are living in poverty, including 9,000 children. The graph adjacent demonstrates the CPI increases over the past five years in key areas relating to the cost of living.

- Automotive fuel prices increased by 35%;
- Electricity prices increased by 28%;
- Gas prices increased by 24%;
- Medical and hospital services prices increased by 21%;
- Housing prices increased by 19%;
- Education prices increased by 17%; and
- Meat and seafood prices increased by 16%.

Charities across Canberra are essential in assisting those people who find themselves in a vulnerable position whether due to financial stress, health issues, or domestic issues. Some families and individuals who are new to Australia also require support. UnitingCare Kippax is a place of welcome where we aim to make everyone feel valued and respected.

UnitingCare Kippax will continue to advocate for those in need, provide service to our most vulnerable, and strive for equity in the Belconnen and greater Canberra region.

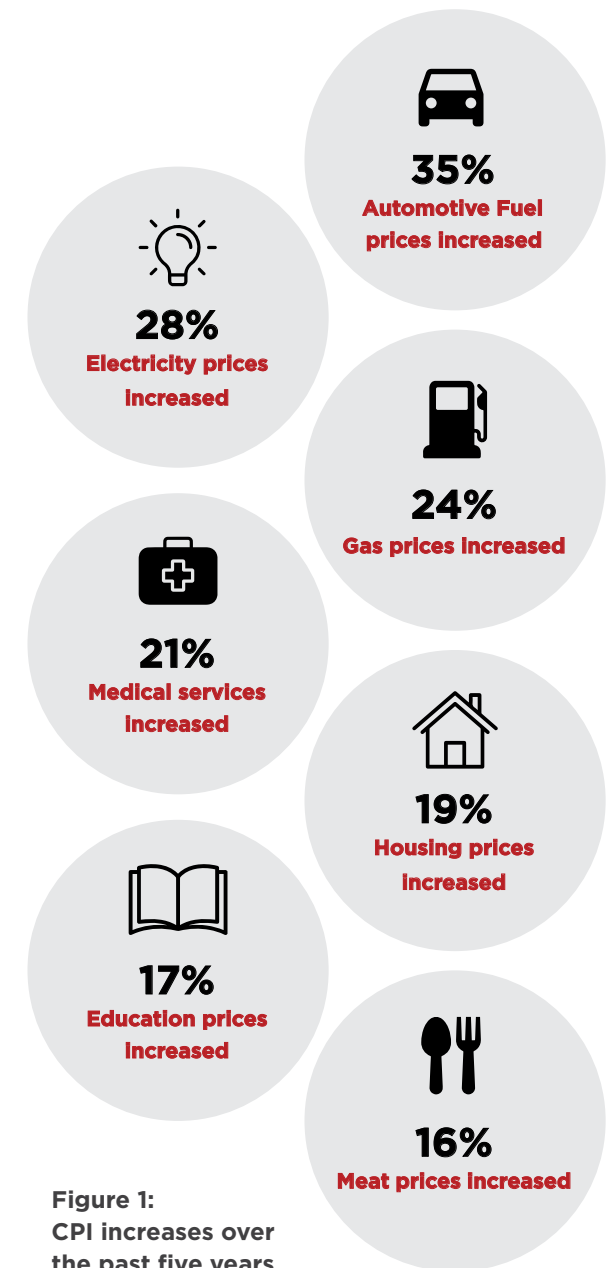


Figure 1:
CPI increases over
the past five years.

STORIES OF UCK STAFF



Shayla Rankine

SPARK Administration Officer – May 2019, Present

My time at Kippax:

I have worked at UnitingCare Kippax as the SPARK Administration Officer since May 2019. This role was my first permanent full-time job. Prior to this, I was working casually in Customer Service at Kmart. After working there for nearly 4 years, I decided to apply for a job in the sector that I was interested in and previously studied for.

This role has taught me so much and I have grown a lot over the past 3 years. I have really enjoyed my time with UnitingCare Kippax. The team has been so welcoming, supportive, and understanding. I had a challenging year in 2019, and UnitingCare Kippax management and staff were caring and made me feel like part of the team so early on. Although there have been some ups and downs throughout my time here, between COVID-19, bushfires, and hailstorms, it has been an amazing journey.

SPARK Ginninderry Training and Employment Initiative provides programs for local people throughout Canberra and the surrounding regions. These programs provide training and

employment opportunities in different industries and sectors. This administration role is different to most as it provides me with more hands-on experiences. It is truly amazing to see how far each of the participants have come from the time they commence in a program to when they successfully complete it. It is inspiring to see the achievements and growth of the participants as they reach their goals in a short amount of time.

At this stage, my current contract with SPARK and UnitingCare Kippax will end on the 30th of June 2023. I am yet to travel overseas, and I am so excited to see the world and what it has to offer. I am currently planning a trip in late September 2023 with one of my best friends to travel around Europe. I have only dreamt of this trip, and I know in my heart that this will definitely not be the last.

I am beyond grateful for the support, generosity, and opportunities that UnitingCare Kippax has provided me over the years. I am proud to be a member of the UnitingCare Kippax family and I will always look back at my time here with fondness.



Cassandra Johnson

My time at Kippax:

I started working at UCK in April of 2019 as a part-time Admin Officer on the A Village for Every Child Program. After a few months I was offered a position in the Mower Shed and Kippax Trade Start and have been running the Social Enterprises ever since!

The Mower Shed is a transitional employment model set up to provide employment opportunities for people who find it hard to gain and maintain employment. We do this by assisting casual staff to establish or re-establish work habits as well as capacities through supporting them to gain general certifications to increase their employability.

I believe that work meets important psychosocial needs in societies where employment is the norm. Whether it's paid or unpaid, working is vital for maintaining good health and wellbeing. In general, our physical and mental health improves when we work. Having a job can boost your self-esteem and confidence by giving you purpose, and it is much easier to be happy when you feel your worth.

I am fortunate to be able to meet and get to know the people who come to work in the Mower Shed and watch their confidence grow until they eventually move on into long-term and sustainable employment.

UCK has, and continues to be a caring, supportive and non-judgemental place for not only the people it works to empower, but the staff also. It is one of the few places that not only talks the talk, but also walks the walk of its values. It has a genuine desire to help people create a better life for themselves and their families.

Working at UCK has given me valuable knowledge and insights into the community and how the wrap around service we provide is vital. It has given me a new level of compassion that I try to bring to my job everyday.

I am inspired by the efforts of UCK to always strive to do better. The Board, CEO, leadership team, staff, students and volunteers are constantly looking at what they can do to be more inclusive.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2021-2022

COLLECTIVE IMPACT INITIATIVE



Belconnen – A Village for Every Child.

We believe by improving collaboration and committing to community engagement we will ensure that all children in Belconnen are physically healthy, socially and emotionally strong and ready to engage fully in learning and life.

Belconnen - A Village for Every Child (Village) wants to bring the Belconnen community* together around the issue of improving education and life outcomes for children. We are using the collective impact approach so that key stakeholders in the community can work collaboratively to achieve change in this complex social problem.

Village focuses on the Social Determinants of Health as framed by ARACY's Nest of 6

childhood wellbeing domains, Village has a specific focus on the Early Years (pre-birth to 5). Working within a Collective Impact framework allows us to work in deep collaboration with cross-sector partners that influence the outcomes of children and families to initiate change at a system level. Collective Impact provides a framework that ensures that communication and consultation informs the work that not only we do at UCK but also our Village partners and stakeholders. One of the conditions of the Collective Impact framework is to have a Backbone team whose role is to help maintain overall strategic coherence, coordinates and manages the day-to-day operations and implementation of work, including stakeholder engagement, communications, data collection and analysis. The ACT Education Directorate funds the Village initiative and UnitingCare Kippax (UCK) hosts the Backbone team and Chairs the Leadership Group as the auspicing body for Village.

We know that there are many supports, services, programs and agencies that are working towards the same goal in the Belconnen region. We also know that there is something amiss in the system that is resulting in increasing numbers of children with 1 or 2+ developmental vulnerabilities identified when they enter Kindergarten (Australian Early Development Census data 2015, 2018, 2021). Our vision is to bring together the key players in this space to align our efforts and support each other, to each enable the other to work in the most effective way, reaching more of the community than we currently are. The aim is for the Village's work in the Belconnen region to inform ACT wide policy and practice change.

*Community - Refers to everyone responsible for the wellbeing of children in the Belconnen region, this includes but is not exclusive to parents, carers and government and non-government agencies.

2021/2022 Activities

Village has continued to build strong foundations of a Collective Impact (CI) initiative across the Leadership Group (LG) and Working Groups (WGs). The partnership is continuing to build trusted relationships and members across the initiative are developing a better understanding of their role and contribution to work. This is resulting in early signs of impact particularly around some partners' ways of working that are leading to members starting to think about working across traditional boundaries. Partners are starting to identify opportunities to leverage Village's reach, collective expertise and roles in the development of strategies, programs and disseminating information (mutually reinforcing activities). As a result, Village is pursuing several projects outside of the intersectoral projects described in the funding deed that have the potential to make a significant contribution to the goal. The partnership analysis carried out in this period indicated 'a partnership based on genuine collaboration has been established'. Considering the relative newness of the majority the partners involved this is a great result for Village and demonstrates

that the conditions for collaboration are being established well.

A significant achievement for Village in this reporting period is that the Leadership Group has grown to include a representative from an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, Canberra Health Services and the Child and Family Reform team in CSD, this is due in part to the growing visibility of the initiative and the activities that are emerging from the collaboration. New members have also joined Working Groups strengthening their representation and ability to achieve their objectives.

Village has secured additional funding from the Australian Government to deliver the Connected Beginnings program in the ACT. The Connected Beginnings program provides funding to support a Collective Impact approach in areas with more AEDC results, the focus is on improving the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander before they reach formal schooling.

Projects:

Working Groups for the 3 projects were stood up throughout the first six months of the 2021/22 financial year creating the foundations for action towards the objectives. Despite the challenges of the ACT lockdown in August/September and the following ongoing impacts COVID throughout the rest of the year, all 3 groups have been able to build relationships, refine the scope and objectives of the projects and start developing activity plans.



Better Data

This project will involve creating a profile of the children and families in the Belconnen area, their demographics, strengths and vulnerabilities, as well as data that shows where the Village should focus its efforts over time. Success would be demonstrated by the agility of the Village to adapt and form new partnerships in response to changing need.

Activity

This project is in the very early stages of building the community profile, the focus is currently on understanding what data needs to be collected, what data is available and what the indicators are that will be used to measure the wellbeing of children and families.

The Community Profile will be a valuable tool to inform Village's priorities, Village partner's priorities and to further engagement with the community, including a roadshow that will ask the community - what is the narrative behind the numbers? The focus of the Community Profile is to identify who are our children and families, how are they doing and what is important to them. The Better Data Working Group have been working towards delivering a series of workshops to inform the creation of the Belconnen Community Profile. These will be held throughout July and August 2022. These workshops ask - what does wellbeing look like for children and their families in Belconnen? From the information gathered in these workshops the Better Data group will identify indicators that reflect the findings to create the Community Profile, the presentation of the profile is yet to be determined but will be developed to be user friendly and functional.

Improved Transitions to School

The project's purpose is to support improved transitions for children and their families between Early Childhood Education Care (ECEC) providers, preschools and schools. This will be achieved through two key strategies: identifying what information teachers need about the incoming cohort of children to be able to provide appropriate strategies and supports to ensure an improved transition of those children into school; and demonstrating whether strengthened relationships and partnerships between ECECs*, preschools and schools support better information flow about individual children and improved outcomes so that each child's transition between these educational stages is smoother and more effective.

*Acknowledging that many ECECs have preschools and some children attend both ECEC and government preschools.

Activity

This group has commissioned a research piece of work through ARACY to find out what the information needs are for schools in regard to the incoming children at the start of their formal schooling. The findings of the report will inform the work of the project. This activity was originally planned for term 4 2021 but due to the challenges faced by schools over the past year it has been scheduled for term 3 2022.

The WG has agreed to trial an Improved Transitions Network. This network is for ECECs and schools to share current transition practices and develop some shared strategies to support children and their families transitioning from an ECEC service to school (pre-school or kindergarten). It will be an informal network with the aim of working smarter not harder, sharing resources and connecting. Planning is underway with the first session to be held in early term-4 and will continue to be held once a term.

Mapping is underway of the flow of children from the ECECs that are members of the group to the schools in the Belconnen region for transitions for 2023. This will help us to better understand the transition context in Belconnen and provide useful information to schools and ECECs in the region to support the upcoming transition period.



Improved Service and School Connections with Families

This project will lead to improved service and school connections for families by identifying and reducing typical barriers to engagement with services and fostering collaboration and connections between families, schools, playgroup networks, the community services sector and government agencies. It will identify outreach opportunities for services to go where families are; using schools, playgroups and libraries as support hubs. The project will also develop strategies to improve parent-school engagement by promoting positive experiences with schools for families with children in their early years.

Activity

The Working Group is looking at developing community hubs where families can access services and supports more easily. It is envisaged that Evatt Primary School will be the trial site for the community hub concept and Working Group members providing the services and supports. The intention is to create more opportunities for earlier engagement with services, supports and the school for children and families before children start formal schooling. At the end of the financial year the Working Group was developing the project plan.

Other Activities

AEDC Workshops

A series of workshops have been developed in partnership with the AEDC Team, Community Services Directorate, with the purpose of helping the community to better understand the 2021 AEDC results that were released earlier this year. The workshops ask participants why Belconnen is seeing higher numbers of developmentally vulnerable children, what information might further inform this discussion and explore what can be done in collaboration to increase the number of children developmentally on track. The series consists of 3 targeted workshops 1) Village partners, 2) service providers and 3) schools and ECECs in Belconnen. Workshop 1 and 2 have been held with workshop 3 to be delivered at the end of July. The intention is that this data will drive some focused attention on children and families in Belconnen. The third workshop (schools/ECECs) is focused more on what can collectively be done to help ECECs and schools to support children with developmental vulnerabilities and how to reduce these before children reach formal education. After the series is completed a report will be produced with the findings and distributed to all participants. This information will be used along with the Community Profile and data/information gathered from the roadshows to inform the work of Village.

Information Sharing Protocol

The Information Sharing Protocol was adopted in the previous reporting period. The Village Backbone team and UCK CEO Michael Nurmi have begun to explore the rolling out of the Information Sharing Protocol into practice to improve service/support provision to families in Belconnen. While the protocol provides information on the process and a training document accompanies it, there is still a need to understand what the process looks like in practice across different agencies with a focus on implementation leading to sustained system change. It is also necessary to understand what is already happening in terms of information sharing and database capability across agencies to inform the roll out toward a seamless referral pathway. Therefore, Village intends to test, trial and learn on a small scale in the future.



School Design Conversations

Throughout this period Village has been in conversation with ACT Education's Infrastructure and Capital Works team and Strategic Policy team discussing the concept of community hubs in the school environment. This has been useful for Village to better understanding some government processes and to learn how Village can support and inform their work.

Activity

Meeting with the Strathnairn Primary School team design and Village partners to discuss the schools as communities concept.

Village conducted a small survey of its ECEC, school and service providers partners in Belconnen to better understand the needs of schools, ECECs and services in supporting students and their families. The questions were designed to gain an understanding of the challenges experienced by children as observed by educators in schools and ECECs and the need or support for co-located service provision at

either an ECEC or school. Questions to service providers focused on understanding their level of interest in and capacity to co-locate their services in schools. Information about specific design needs was also obtained from all three groups. The findings have been shared with ACT Education and Village partners.

As a result of these conversations Village is hosting a presentation by Matthew Cox about the FamilyLinQ project in August 2022. A partnership between philanthropic organisation The Bryan Foundation and the Queensland Government to deliver integrated school-based hubs. Hubs where early years learning, education, wrap-around health and community services are together all under one roof. Time will be allowed for participants to discuss how we can create positive change for children in the ACT by working differently and collaboratively to inform new design and the development of community spaces.

Communications

Website: Home - A Village for Every Child (belconnenvillage.com.au)

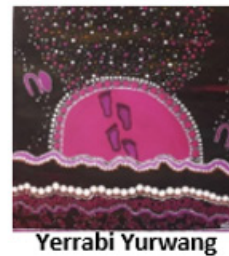
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BelconnenVillage>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/belconnen-a-village-for-every-child/>

Current Partners:



**West Belconnen
Child and
Family Centre**



CHILDRENS SERVICES



Kippax Kids provides a safe and welcoming space for community groups and organisations to hire and use for their self-run playgroups and parenting sessions. The facilities and resources are suitable for families with children 0-5yrs to encourage and fosters wellbeing, inclusion and empowerment.

Kippax Kids was established over 30 years ago by members of the Kippax Uniting Church congregation, in response to an identified need in the local community. As participation grew, the need for more specialised intervention became clear and funding from the Children's Services Program in the Community Services Directorate was secured to employ a part-time Family Worker.

At the beginning of the reporting period for 2021/22, Kippax Kids had welcomed 3 new playgroups over 4 days under the new program. We were also waiting on completed hire agreements to be returned for 2 new playgroups when the ACT went into lockdown due to Covid. The lockdown greatly affected Kippax Kids as no groups were able to meet face to face on-site,

and under the new program structure the Kippax Kids Administrator was not facilitating online playgroup sessions. During this challenging time communication was maintained through social media and checking in with group contacts to provide up-dates, information on activities and crafts which could be done at home and support services available to families in the community as lack of social connection and mental health were a concern.

As lockdown ended and restrictions began to ease, the Kippax Kids Administrator reviewed and created Covid Safe documents and procedures to ensure groups were able to return on site as quickly and safely as possible. Due to the ever-evolving situation we were uncertain if all groups would feel comfortable returning, and how playgroup attendance numbers would be impacted, as some members had previously expressed unease and hesitancy. However, Playgroups were able to reconvene onsite whilst adhering to gathering restrictions on 1st November 2021, and we were happy to welcome back 3 playgroups with higher-than-expected attendance numbers. Unfortunately, 2 playgroups decided not to return.

As families began returning to playgroup sessions, we received feedback on how isolated they had felt during the lockdown and how glad they were that Kippax Kids was able to have playgroups return onsite as many other playgroup facilities had not yet returned face to

face at the time. With playgroups back onsite we began receiving enquiries again from families looking to join playgroups. However gathering restrictions became a challenge and we saw a drop in attendance numbers as group contacts found it hard to monitor the number of families attending each session and were therefore hesitant in taking on any new group members while room capacity limits were low. By March 2022 with gathering restrictions removed the 3 playgroups had high attendance numbers again and were able to accommodate new members from the playgroup enquires we were receiving within the community.

Although there has been higher than expected attendance numbers throughout the 2021/22 reporting period, there still appears to be apprehension from some families to gather face to face especially through peak covid infection rates and seasonal illness periods. The cold, wet winter has also impacted playgroup attendance and is reflected in the reporting figures. A total of 80 playgroup sessions were held and a total of 64 families/144 individuals attended one or more of those sessions.

With the change in the Kippax Kids program at the end of the previous reporting year, the Kippax Kids Administrator role no longer runs playgroup sessions which means face to face contact and involvement with the playgroups and their sessions is now limited. Communication is now primarily through email and via social media.

Nevertheless, the Kippax Kids Administrator tries to visit each playgroup during some of their sessions throughout the year. She has also been providing information and setting up activities, crafts, and games to support child developmental skills, family connection and bonding, celebrate significant events like Father's/Mother's Day, Book Week, Tracks to Reconciliation, Dental Health week, Easter, Xmas etc., and encouragement for families to start early literacy and numeracy with their children with the aim of giving them the best start in their education. Some groups have expressed their appreciation for the check-ins and resources provided as it has assisted with making their sessions run with ease.

Even though it has been another challenging and disruptive year for Kippax Kids, we are happy that we have managed to retain 3 regular groups and assisted many families with finding a playgroup. We also continue to receive great feedback about how fantastic it is to have this facility and the resources available for the community and we look forward to continuing to provide support and strengthened social connections with families in the community. We look forward to engaging further with family and child specific organisations to facilitate specialised playgroups and parenting sessions over the coming year.

Good News Story

A playgroup kindly shared the Kippax Kids creche space during their session with some children whose mothers were attending the Body, Mind & Soul Women's Relaxation Workshop, which was run by the UCK Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) team. Feedback received was that the children had a ball playing with each other and using the outdoor play space. It was a great opportunity for some of the children who haven't had exposure to playgroups or been able to socialise regularly, to build on developmental skills by getting outdoors, to burn some energy, and interact with other children and their families. It was also an excellent way to promote some of the services provided by our programs here at UCK.





The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) is a two-year, early childhood enrichment program for parents in Belconnen starting when their child is in preschool and continuing until the end of kindergarten. HIPPY Belconnen is the only HIPPY site in the ACT and only services the Belconnen area. HIPPY aims to:

- give children an early love of learning,
- empower parents to be engaged in their children's early learning and development,
- assist in training and education for HIPPY staff members, and
- connect families to their community.

Over the two years, a parent is linked with a HIPPY Tutor to guide them through 45 booklets, each with 5 activities for the parents to do with their children. The activities aim to enhance parents' knowledge and children's development in:

1. Thinking and Exploring;
2. Communication;
3. Creativity;
4. Social and Emotional Development; and
5. Family and Community Connections.

HIPPY aims to engage 30 families each year and retain a minimum of 25 of those families through to graduation.

HIPPY had 14 families graduate at the end of 2021 out of 23 that started the program at the beginning of 2020, a 61% retention rate. Twenty seven families started HIPPY at the beginning of 2021 and currently we have 19 families looking to graduate in November, a 70% retention rate. Many of the withdrawals in 2020 and 2021 cohorts occurred because vulnerable families were finding it hard to deal with the impacts of bushfire smoke, the hailstorm, lockdown, home-schooling and COVID. At the beginning of 2022, HIPPY Belconnen had 31 enrolments, the first time the program has had a full cohort in 5 years. Currently there are 28 families remaining in that cohort, a 90% retention rate.

HIPPY Belconnen is returning to standard operations after COVID restrictions and the environment COVID induced. We are engaging families through Parent Groups with valuable enrichment topics again, and connecting families to community events. HIPPY Tutors have also been able to gain knowledge through accessing face to face professional development. HIPPY Australia was finally able to conduct a National Gathering of all HIPPY Sites in the Gold Coast that the Coordinator and Line Manager attended. The Coordinator also helped organize a Community of Practice event in Canberra for 40 HIPPY Coordinators and Tutors from around New South Wales as well as one person from Katherine, Northern Territory.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING



The Ginninderry joint venture established SPARK to deliver a unique training and employment initiative for Canberra and the surrounding regions, across a range of industries. SPARK programs are aimed at key disadvantaged groups who are disconnected from the labour market. A key objective of SPARK is to ensure local people benefit from the economic growth of the Ginninderry development. SPARK is committed to focusing on improving the education, social, and economic outcomes of people in the local area. We partner with a wide variety of registered training organisations, stakeholders, and employers to deliver a range of engagement, training, and employment initiatives. Our Relationship Managers provide wrap-around support for participants leading up to, during, and after the training programs. Our Administration Officer ensures that the programs run smoothly, and relevant reporting and administration work is completed.

Overview

Over the financial year, SPARK delivered 12 training programs. The majority of these were funded through the Federal Government's JobTrainer initiative, providing eligible participants with fee-free training.

In March 2022 we launched a new program, the SPARK JobTrainer ClubsACT Hospitality Program. This provides participants with eight units of competency and three statements of attainments. ClubsACT partnered with us on this program and offered one week of work experience as well as employment pathways for participants who successfully completed the program. We had 19 participants graduate the program. Ten participants commenced paid employment through ClubsACT and an additional 4 participants were employed in the industry.

SPARK has been granted funding to run another two SPARK JobTrainer ClubsACT Hospitality programs in the next financial year.

Statistics:

- 194 training places delivered
- 90 participants were youth aged between 15-25
- 25 participants were culturally and linguistically diverse
- 25 participants identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 33 participants identified at enrolment as having a disability
- 158 identified as job seekers

Outcomes:

- 13 participants commenced apprenticeships
- 21 participants were supported to engage in other training programs
- 125 participants secured employment
- 106 participants completed work experience

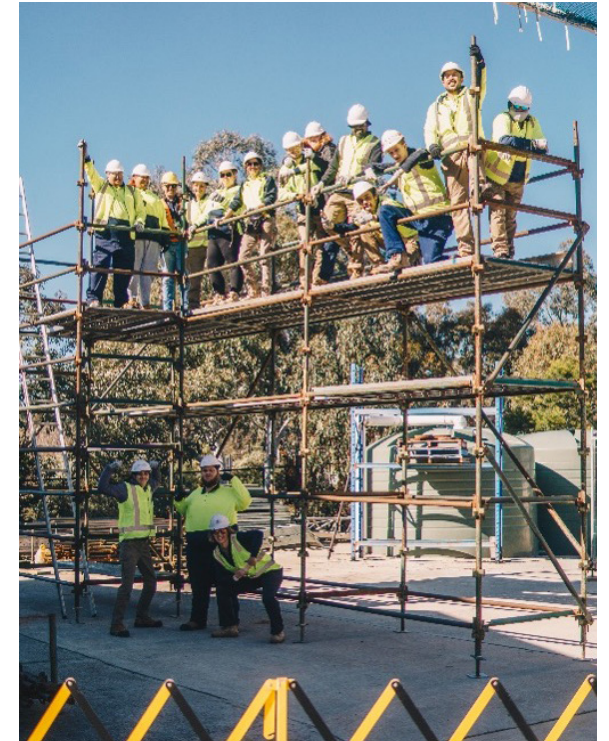
2021/2022 SPARK programs:

- 2021 SPARK JobTrainer IT Taster Program
- 2021 SPARK JobTrainer Conservation Land Management Program
- 2021 SPARK Yass Construction Program
- 2021 SPARK JobTrainer Disability Taste Program
- 2021 SPARK JobTrainer Industry Explorer Program 3
- 2022 SPARK JobTrainer Women in Civil Construction Program
- 2022 SPARK JobTrainer Early Childhood Education & Care Program
- 2022 SPARK Women Return to Work Workshops (WRTW) - Northside
- 2022 SPARK JobTrainer Hospitality Industry Taster Program
- 2022 SPARK Business Services Program
- 2022 SPARK Women Return to Work Workshops (WRTW) - Southside
- 2022 SPARK JobTrainer Construction Industry Taster Program

Story

'John' commenced our SPARK JobTrainer IT Taster Program in September 2021. This program was a 9-week model, delivering 4 units of competency in 4 different areas of IT. This program was largely impacted by the 2021 ACT COVID19 lockdown and the SPARK team worked overtime to provide participants with resources needed to continue their study remotely. Our Relationship Manager checked in with the group over calls, texts, and Microsoft Teams. 'John' advised that this support helped him greatly through such an uncertain and challenging time.

'John' has a disability and had found it challenging to find an employer willing to give him a go. With the support of SPARK, 'John' commenced work experience with Crawford Computers, which quickly became paid part-time work. 'John' is now studying his Cert III in IT through CIT and working on increasing his hours to full-time. SPARK was able to provide wrap-around support to assist with any barriers that 'John' had to overcome throughout the program. This included fuel and food vouchers, a USB modem (Wi-Fi dongles) and the use of a laptop.





The Mower Shed purpose is to contribute to addressing intergenerational disadvantage, building pride in place, building a strong and positive community, and modelling ways in which employment programs and mainstream employment overall can be more inclusive and supportive. We have done this by providing employment opportunities for people who find it hard to gain and maintain employment in the mainstream market.

By assisting the casual staff to re-establish work habits as well as capacities through supporting them to gain general certificates (Working with Vulnerable People card; police check; white card; Programmed identification) and where possible to gain working at heights; chainsaw ticket; and other similar role-specific certificates, they have increased their employability.

Team leaders have been integral to the process. They are not only responsible for ensuring quality and timeliness of jobs and tool maintenance, but also training and practical on-the-job support for the casual staff, including:

- Providing support for staff who are experiencing difficulty with implementing soft skills effectively;
- Identifying areas requiring further development;
- Identifying who is ready for further professional development and/or alternative employment opportunities.

They also model a positive work ethic, engagement and high-level team skills.

The outcomes of this have been increased social engagement, increased capacity to participate in the economic and social aspects of the community, increased connectedness and, through these, increased wellbeing.

The Mower Shed, in the last financial year, has provided employment to 10 vulnerable people in the community who have found it hard to gain and maintain employment in the mainstream market. 4 of them have now moved into other employment or study, and 1 has even started her own business.

Good news stories

"Linda" - former Mower Shed staff member

"Linda was a single mum of 3 kids with no year 12 certificate or qualifications due to having her first child at 17. Linda was finding it difficult to get into the workforce.

Working in the Mower Shed gave her valuable work experience and built on the necessary skills to function in the workplace such as communication, organisation, time management and punctuality. Importantly, she gained confidence in herself that she could do it!

*name changed to protect her identity

Mower shed staff member

I have been working for the mower for almost a year and it has made a huge difference to my life. I have learnt a lot about myself including how strong and capable I am. I have learnt lots of practical skills in how to use the equipment, but also how to manage my time better. I can't thank the Mower Shed enough for giving me this opportunity."

Sue - member of the community

After my husband passed away, I found it difficult to maintain my property as he was always the one to mow the lawn and keep it tidy.

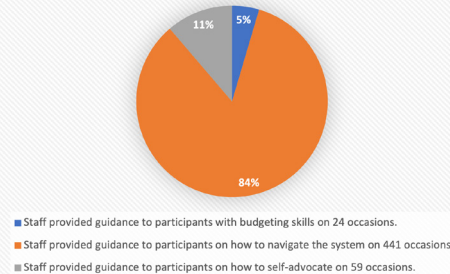
Mower Shed has provided over 100 general gardening services to members of the community in the 2020/2021 financial year. 25% of those jobs were done at a reduced cost to assist people experiencing financial hardship.

PERSONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

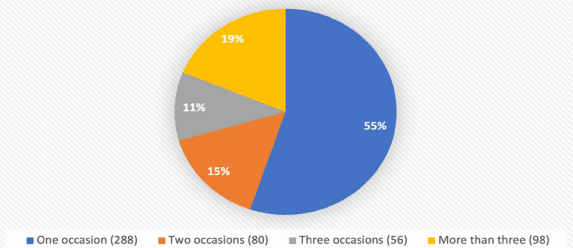
Emergency Material and Financial Aid program (EMFA) consists of a team of human services professionals who provide short-term counselling, triage assistance, social inclusion activities and workshops, outreach support and appropriate referrals for people in the community who are experiencing financial, social and personal hardships. The service also includes the provision of:

- non-perishable food and personal hygiene hampers;
- grocery, fuel, and clothing vouchers;
- fresh fruit/ vegetables;
- frozen meat, meals, and soup;
- prescription medication assistance;
- assistance with sourcing educational resources and technology aids for service users;
- financial assistance for transport; and,
- financial support for medical procedures.

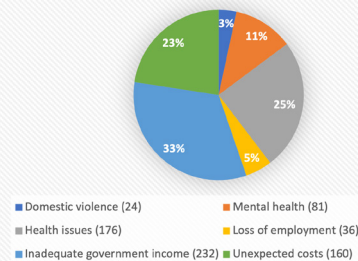
EMFA June 2021-July 2022



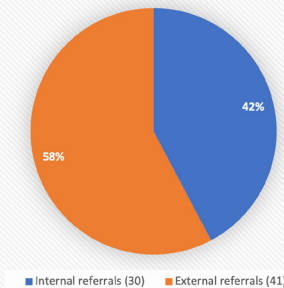
Number of occasions participants received assistance June 2021-July 2022



Number of clients presenting with crisis situations June 2021-July 2022



Referrals by EMFA June 2021-July 2022



Each of these is determined on a case-by-case basis, subject to assessment by the EMFA team. During the June 2021-July 2022 financial year the EMFA program assisted a total number of 522 participants with their crisis needs. The team responded to 1356 requests of assistance.

During the June 2021-July 2022 financial year the EMFA program assisted a total number of 522 participants with their crisis needs. The team responded to requests for assistance on 1356 occasions. Of these:

- 724 included voucher assistance;
- 1178 included food assistance;
- 228 included financial assistance; and
- 214 included other material assistance.

Approximately half (or 55%) of the participants who accessed assistance from EMFA during the reporting period did so only once (288 out of 522). A significant number of participants requested assistance 2-3 times during the reporting period (136). For a portion of the participants their crisis took longer to resolve and/or they were regular attendees (98).

The program made 71 warm referrals, of which 30 were internal referrals, and 41 were made

to external organisations and services. Warm referrals are 'informal referrals' made by the worker during the consultation time. For example, the worker can contact another service on behalf of the participant or together with the participant, to assist them link with the service. Some of the internal referrals included the SPARK program (8), Good Morning Breakfast (3), Welcome Café (3), Kippax Pathways (2), and Bring your Bills (1).

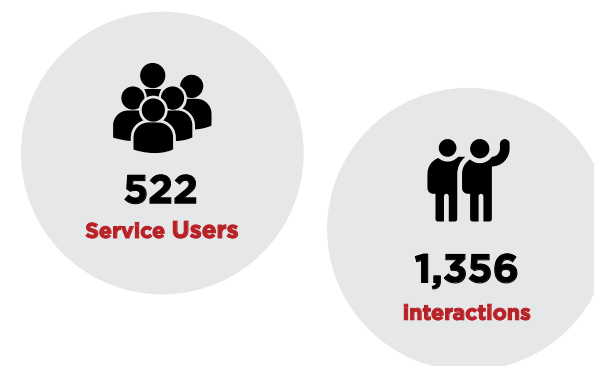
The list of external referrals was wide ranging. A large portion of the referrals were made to Care Financial (27) and Thread Together (17). Other regular referral destinations were Actew AGL Energy Saving Program (7) and St. Vincent de Paul (5). Further referrals were made to DVCS (3), MARSS (3), training institution (2), Companion House (2) and so forth.

It is important to note that the 2021-2022 financial year brought additional challenges for the EMFA program delivery due to COVID lock downs and restrictions. In addition to this, the rising cost of living resulted in higher food ordering costs and more demand for EMFA vouchers. Despite the challenges, EMFA was able to deliver a new program called, Body Mind and Soul (BMS), with assistance from the IFSS program.

Social Inclusion:

Welcome Cafe is an intergenerational program aimed at creating space for relationship building and recreation over a high quality, tasty, nutritious meal. We are seeing a strong, healthy intergenerational community of 40-60 attending each month.

The EMFA program ran two groups of BMS mindfulness and relaxation classes during the reporting period. 28 participants attended the classes. This activity targeted women aged 18-65, who were experiencing vulnerabilities and/or had experienced trauma in their life and wanted to introduce relaxation into their daily life. All participants had positive responses to the workshops and a few were keen to see these workshops continue and have registered Expressions of Interest to be contacted for future workshops.



Stories from our participants:



Alinta identifies as a First Nations Australian and is very passionate about equal treatment between all Australian citizens. She has stated that she and some of her family find it offensive that on forms they are asked if they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. UCK has taken these concerns seriously and offered the option, for those preferring not to self-identify, to leave that section blank, acknowledging that this too can cause trauma to the clients.

Alinta first came to UCK and received emergency food and financial relief assistance from EMFA for herself and a family member. Since then, Alinta has engaged with EMFA on two occasions. On the first occasion, she asked for petrol vouchers so that she and her family could travel interstate to go to a family members funeral which she said would not otherwise be possible. A few months later Alinta and a family member returned asking for petrol assistance to go to an Elder's funeral. Alinta was transporting herself and her family whilst another family member was driving a minibus transporting local community Elders. UCK was able to assist them, for which they were relieved and grateful.



Sarah is a single mother of three young boys. She came to UCK for emergency material and financial assistance. She felt overwhelmed and socially isolated as a result of mental illness and substance use problems. In addition, Sarah was struggling financially due to inadequate government income and the difficulty entering the workforce with her limited knowledge and skills.

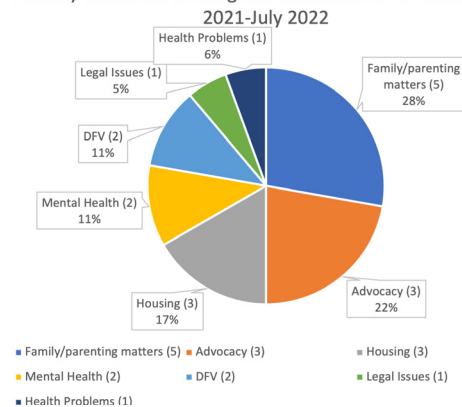
One EMFA staff invited her to attend the "Good Morning Breakfast" event, which provides social inclusion as well as a nutritious breakfast. She has been attending the breakfast program regularly enjoying a healthy breakfast in an inclusive environment where she can talk with other attendees. Sarah also participated in EMFA Welcome Café lunch at UCK which she has resulted in improved mental health as she could socialize with her friends, other clients, and UCK staff. She also said she felt valued and respected and got the opportunity to build new social connections.

She has also received information about services that could be accessed through EMFA and other

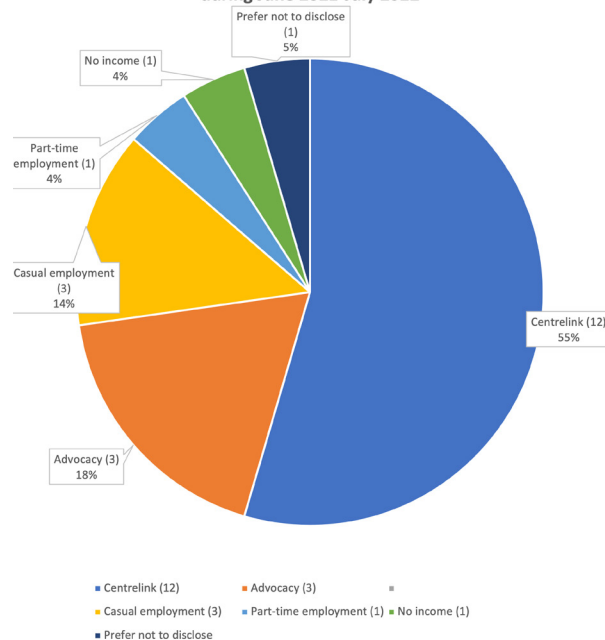
local service providers. EMFA staff also provided her with the information about the UCK Women's Return to Work program and UCK Spark courses, which might equip her to get a job. She is looking to participate in those events in the future.

Sarah has also received food, grocery vouchers, petrol vouchers, winter relief vouchers (Kmart vouchers) and script assistance from EMFA from time to time.

Primary reason for seeking IFSS assistance n= 19 during June



Primary source of income for IFSS service users – n =18 during June 2021-July 2022



Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS)

provides case management (CM) and parenting support to families and individuals. CM provides support, advocacy, information, and practical assistance to help clients experiencing a range of challenges. Participants are supported to build their confidence, link them with community connections, and empower them to access other support services they may need now, and in the future.

The parenting engagement program (PEP) assists parents to increase their parenting knowledge and skills with the help of a parent mentor. Both programs engage compassionately with individuals and families to identify their needs and goals, walking alongside them to achieve positive change in their lives.

A total of 55 families were supported during this financial year, and 37 referrals were accepted into the program during the reporting period. This number consisted of 123 individuals: 45 adults, 20 youth (12-25 years old) and 58 children (0 -12 years old).

31 families (56%) exited the program during the financial year. A total of 85% (out of 55) of the families indicated that the IFSS had assisted them. 24% reported improved personal connections, 49% reported improved community connections and 84% showed commendable achievement in access to services, information, and increased independence. A significant percentage of the 55 families showed increases in wellbeing 42%, skills 44%, capacity 22% and strengths 56%.



55

Families engaged with the program



56%

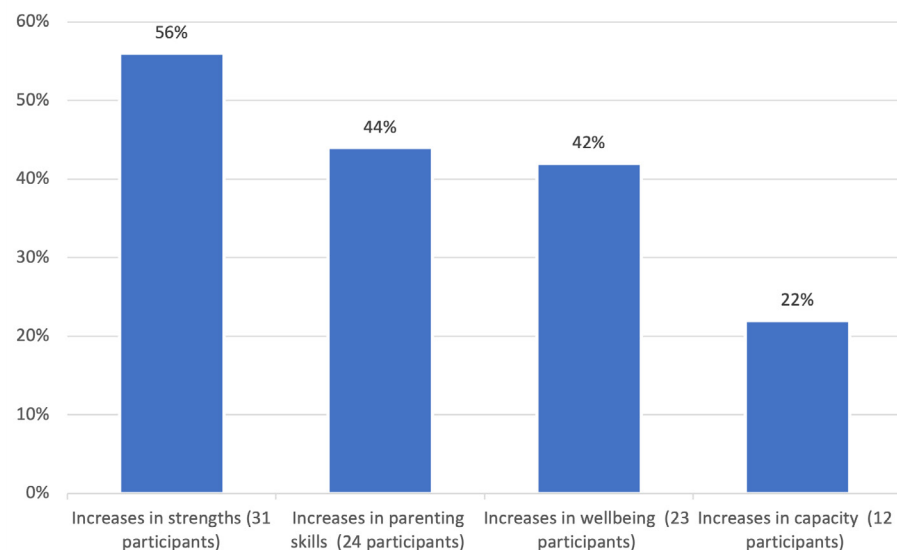
Families exited during the reporting period



85%

Families who indicated the program had assisted them

Participant benefits attributed to IFSS n=55 (more than one answer allowed) during June 2021-July 2022



Out of the participants who had a goal to engage in education, training or employment, 35% adults, 16% children (0 -12 years old) and 16% young people (12 -18-years old) demonstrated progress toward their goal.

It is important to note that this financial year 2021-2022 was the first year for the PEP (part of the IFSS) to be delivering the service. The CM and PEP both experienced some challenges with service delivery during COVID lock downs and restrictions.

The service continued to provide training for parent mentors to ensure they are well equipped for the task. Staff also began delivering parenting programs to existing participants and members of the community. For example, the Circle of Security parenting program was delivered in collaboration with the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre. In addition, the IFSS collaborated with the EMFA program on the delivery of the successful, Body Mind and Soul workshops.





IFSS participant stories:



Arzoo is a 38-yr-old female from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background who has the full care of her 7-yr-old daughter. Arzoo initially sought CM support as she was at risk of homelessness and wanted to access legal advice and representation. Arzoo's circumstances were a direct result of the domestic violence (DV) she endured. Even after separation from her husband she continued to experience emotional and technological abuse.

IFSS was able to improve Arzoo's access to housing and legal advice by advocating for her to Housing ACT (HACT) and Legal Aid; both her applications were approved. Arzoo is on the social housing waitlist as high needs and was allocated a solicitor for property settlement matters.

Arzoo expressed interest in entering the workforce, and by engaging with the SPARK program and Work Experience Support Program (WESP), Arzoo developed skills that have contributed towards her finding employment in retail. Arzoo is now settling well into her casual retail employment and has also secured a private rental property. CM additionally empowered Arzoo by sharing information about relevant programs and supports available in the community, as well as having continuous discussions about various aspects of domestic violence. Arzoo expressed that she feels proud to have achieved her goals, and thanked CM for journeying alongside her as she worked to achieve her goals.



A single mum (Ms Z) in her 40's with a pre-teen and teenager children was referred by Housing Act and engaged in CM from March 2021 to August 2022 when she was successfully exited from the service. During the time working with the client, she encountered several challenges with her mental health due to DV and ongoing safety issues. As a result of ongoing abuse, she had to build her confidence to feel safe again.

This service user's main goals were to provide a safer environment for herself and her children, applying for a transfer application, and access to counselling services in a trauma informed approach. In addition, Ms Z was struggling with health issues which put her at times in danger. Suffering from a mobility issue, unsuitable housing meant that at times she would fall on the stairs of her town house.

Advocacy support was one of the main tasks for CM, as Ms Z was fearful of speaking up to services leaving her feeling unheard and unsafe. During her time in CM, Ms Z built capacities to speak to services by herself, and followed up with them to make informed decisions. In addition, she also

found the strength to challenge her perpetrator, attending court to testify. The perpetrator was jailed for his crime. Ms Z achieved her transfer application and was granted a suitable house with security provided by Housing. Ms Z was also able to access services such as Community Law, Salvation Army financial aid. In addition to this, EMFA and COVID-19 Relief funds provided her a laptop to facilitate her engagement in therapy remotely, and manage her communication with stakeholders via email.

CM received this feedback from Ms Z:

"CM, thank you! Without you, I would have long ago given up. You are amazing, and I hope you understand how much of a godsend you are and the support you offer- no matter how much of a pain in the bottom your clients are (me).

Thank you for sticking by me through this, I was about to give up.

Thank you for everything. This has made such a difference - you have made such a positive impact in our life. Thank you."



Male single dad in his 30's with two children, one of whom has disabilities, who self-referred to CM in February 2022. He was homeless, on bail, had 50% and 90 % of care for his children, and was allowed to have unsupervised visitations and overnight stays with his children.

His main concern was to secure stable housing for himself and his children as one of his bail conditions was to secure appropriate accommodation. CM advocated for the client with HACT and Onelink and supported Mr X to communicate his specific needs to Housing ACT. Working with the service user and other stakeholders, the service user obtained an appropriate property. He was successfully exited from the service in May 2022.



Holly is a single mother. Three of her children were removed, with two youngest restored to her care late last year. She received therapeutic interventions to overcome her alcohol dependency. Consequent to receiving in patient support through a specialist organisation she started receiving CM support through UnitingCare Kippax. Her case manager helped her with the restoration process. Since Holly has achieved her identified goals, she was exited from CM and was offered continued support through PEP.

Holly identified that she needs support to help her two daughters transition to school in the

ACT after moving out of kinship care. The parent mentor assigned to Holly is a retired primary school teacher. She assists Holly understand school curriculum and how to incorporate everyday learning concepts into their day today activities. The Parent Mentor helped Holly source reputable material that would help her understand her children's developmental needs. She also shares information about social inclusion activities offered by UnitingCare Kippax as a way of reducing social isolation for Holly. The Parent Mentor and Holly seem to have built a good rapport and are working towards Holly getting a deeper understanding of her children's emotional, physical and social needs..



Mila applied to become a Parent Mentor and completed her introductory training in March 2021. She actively engaged with the program and attended training opportunities offered by PEP. These included Bringing Up Great Kids, Circle of Security, Lifeline training on Dealing with people in difficult situations, and other online training opportunities.

She was introduced to her 'parent' in November 2021 however the engagement did not continue as they moved interstate. In the meantime, Mila, applied for job opportunities and requested Parenting Education Officer to be her referee. She was successful in securing paid work and believes her experience and training as a parent mentor assisted in reaching her goal of securing her employment.

OUR STAFF'S WELLBEING



Over the past year, there have been many difficulties and we've been faced with many challenges including finding new ways to work, connect with each other and live our lives. This report is an overview of the activities the Health and Wellbeing committee has run for staff, and the data that has prompted this effort.

People at Work Survey

The People at Work survey is part of a psychosocial risk assessment process. It helps our organisation to identify factors that may cause harm to workers psychological health and safety.

Benefits of the survey include:

- the opportunity to provide feedback about psychological health and safety in the workplace;
- encourage positive changes or actions to improve psychological health that may be prompted by the survey results;
- acknowledgement of positive results from the survey and 'what we do well';
- helps with organisational commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of workers.

The initial baseline survey was completed in June 2021. Since then we have experienced significant changes in our work and home lives due to the pandemic and a long lockdown. Over the lockdown period we faced new strains in balancing working from home and increased amounts of isolation and pressure for not only UCK employees but the general public. We found ways to connect with each other with things like the virtual morning teas and buddy system, and new ways to help clients with supply deliveries.

The Health and Wellbeing Committee together with the leadership team made looking after mental health a focus, with regular check-ins and increased communication. According to the survey results, all the efforts made appear to have resulted in an improvement over many areas.

In the baseline survey, the results indicated that UCK fell into the minimal concern category, as in Figure 1.0. In the latest survey, we are not only still in the minimal concern category, but are moving closer to the 'best practice' indicator of low job demands and high resources.

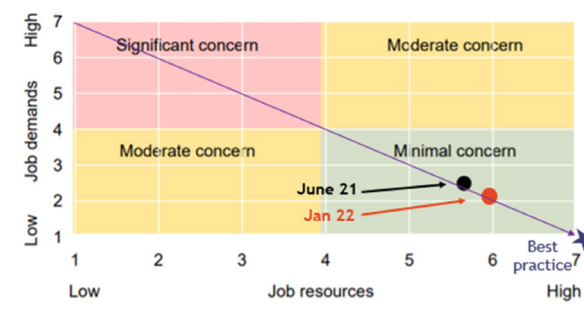


Figure 1.0 – Levels of concern for June 2021 and January 2022

Overall, the progress made in the last year has been very encouraging and better than expected considering the challenges that were faced.

We aim to continue to focus on ways to bring employees together as a team, and bring everyone closer together as a support system. The next survey will be sent out October 2022.

Activities

COVID Restrictions through 2021-2022

The lockdown proved to be quite a challenge for everyone. Such a drastic change to ways of working and lifestyles called for strong communication and team-building efforts. From the beginning of lockdown, the Committee worked with Deputy Executive Officer to think of ways to engage and best support all staff. The Deputy Executive Officer proposed the idea of having all staff morning teas twice a week as a way to bring everyone together virtually to share news and connect. The committee used this platform to run games and educational presentations twice a week, for the duration of the lockdown.

Morning tea games for staff engagement

The games run were designed to be a fun way to take everyone's minds off what was happening in the world whilst also helping us connect as an organization. The very first game (a getting to know you quiz) was a big success and resulted in many people messaging and asking the Committee to keep doing similar activities. The morning teas had high engagement and very positive feedback, with staff members reporting that they learnt more about colleagues they are normally quite separated from, resulting in stronger connections.

Educational presentations

Two educational pieces were presented: 'RUOK day' and 'The New Normal'. The RUOK day presentation was a short animation encouraging workmates to reach out and start a conversation with a colleague they're worried about; signs to look out for to know if someone needs help; what to do if they identify someone needing help; and general tips and information.

The second presentation summarised The New Normal e-booklet which was also sent to staff. The booklet focused on creating healthy behaviours during lockdown as well as ways to transition into a new way of living. There was a strong focus on ways to keep your mental health strong.

Daily games

As well as the regular morning teas, the Health and Wellbeing Committee members, along with two other staff members, posted daily games in a Microsoft Teams group chat. The games were photo competitions, brain teasers, puzzles and guessing games.

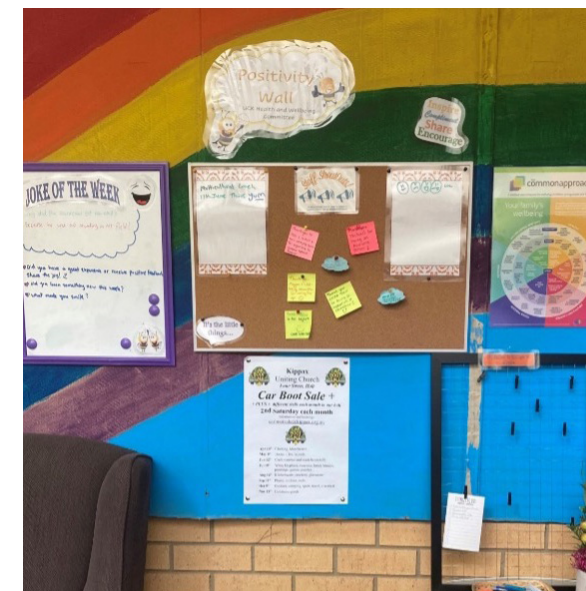
Buddies

To help with wellbeing and improve connections between staff, a buddy system was introduced. This is a simple way of checking in with each other and making sure everyone is well supported. Everyone was asked to reach out to their buddies each week. The Wellbeing team provided teams with a set of questions each week that could be used to guide conversation.

Staff feedback indicated that these steps have been successful in creating a stronger UCK staff team which is better connected. The higher level of communication seen throughout this period resulted in staff feeling more secure and supported.

Positivity Wall

The Positivity Wall is a place to communicate with each other, share news and say thanks to others



Harmony Day Multicultural Lunch.

On the 21st of March we held a lunch for staff and volunteers to celebrate our amazing multicultural workplace. The lunch was a great way for us all to get to know about the diverse heritages and cultures of staff members. We invited everyone to bring a dish to share that represented their heritage. The event was successful with a good turnout. We found it was a great way to spend time together and develop a deeper understanding of one another. There were a huge range of dishes and many recipes were exchanged.

Meditation May with Jeff.

A volunteer parent mentor who is engaged in the Parenting Engagement Program contacted us to offer a series of meditation sessions. During the month of May, Jeff ran 30 minutes meditation training sessions. It was difficult to engage staff in these sessions as staff typically don't have the time to spare.

June Painting class.

In June we ran a paid event for UCK staff. The Paint Along class was a relaxed and stress-free environment for painters of any skill level keen to discover their inner artist. Staff were led step-by-step to create a painting by a professional artist. Staff enjoyed the activity, refreshments and a chance to chat and connect before leaving with their own masterpiece.

Studies that have found that creating art reduces cortisol levels (markers for stress), and that through art people can induce positive mental states.

Conclusion

There has been targeted efforts made to maintain the wellbeing of staff, students and volunteers at UCK. The range of activities and events have all had good uptake and received lots of positive feedback. The committee will continue to look for fun ways to engage staff and continue to create a welcoming and inclusive environment.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

ACT Education Directorate	Canberra Relief Network	Masonicare	St Vincent de Paul Society
ARACY	Charnwood Capital Chemist	McDonalds School wear Macquarie	Storage King, Belconnen
ACT Health Directorate	Corrective Services, ACT	Migrant and Refugee Support Service (MARSS)	Supportive Tenancy Services
ACT Fire and Rescue	Even Dots Creative	Multicultural Employment Services	The ACT Multicultural Hub
ACT Playgroups Association	Empowered	Mackenzie Workplace Law	The Riverview Group
Brotherhood of St Lawrence	Families ACT	Multicultural Youth Services	Target Australia
Canberra City Care	Foodbank NSW/ACT	North Belconnen Uniting Church	The Millhouse Ventures Ltd
Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT)	Ginninderry Joint Venture	Onelink	Uniting NSW/ACT
Canberra Quilters Inc	Ginninderra Rotary	OzHarvest	University of Canberra
Canberra Refugee Support	Hands Across Canberra	Police and Citizen's Youth Club	UnitingCare Australia
Capital Region Community Services	Housing ACT	Programmed Facilities Management	West Belconnen Child and Family Centre
Care-More Pharmacy Kippax	Kingsford Smith School	Rotary ACT	Women's Legal Service
Care Financial Inc	Libraries ACT (Transport Canberra and City Services)	Snow Foundation	Woolworths Kippax
Child and Youth Protection Service	Lavender Lane, Gungahlin	SOLVit – IT Network Support	Westpac
Canberra Zoo	LJ Hooker Pty Ltd	SEARMS - Providing high quality Aboriginal Housing Services	
Coles	Legal Aid ACT	SPARK Program, Ginninderry	
Community Services Directorate	Lifeline Training		



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