



COMMUNITY FIRST STEP



**2019 -2020
ANNUAL
REPORT**



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Our Purpose and Vision

OUR PURPOSE IS TO
EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY
IN SOUTH WEST SYDNEY TO
OVERCOME SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE
BY IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY
NEED AND SUPPORTING
SUSTAINABLE CAPACITY
BUILDING

OUR VISION IS THAT
COMMUNITIES IN
SOUTH WEST SYDNEY
HAVE EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES TO
THRIVE IN THEIR LIVES
AND LIVELIHOODS

Our Values

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

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

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

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

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

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



The 2019 to 2020 Financial Year was one of transition, organisation growth and COVID 19.

In November 2019 we on-boarded John Gilmore as CEO replacing our interim leader, Lesley Jordan, who did a wonderful job stabilising and resetting the organisation. John and the whole CFS team have continued the good work; strengthening the leadership team; aligning Board, management and

staff; engaging the community and our key stakeholders; and improving processes to ensure we can deliver services at the desired quality.

After a period reviewing our processes, the Board took a decision to re-enter Supported Independent Living and I am happy to report that our re-entry was successful. The NDIS continues to offer a challenging financial model with high risk to providers like CFS. We believe that we have our processes right but are having to balance the very real needs of our community living with a disability with the risk to our organisation.

COVID 19 has added to the complexity. CFS were extremely grateful to receive government support through JobKeeper during this time and you will read later in this report some of the wonderful services delivered at the height of COVID which would not have been possible without this funding. The Board are proud of the way CFS

staff and volunteers stepped up during COVID by keeping critical services open and innovating to minimise the COVID risk to the community and staff.

In August this year Board and Management met to refresh our strategy with the knowledge that we had established our financial position and got on top of some critical processes. The economic shock of COVID 19 has been tougher on South West Sydney than most other communities. We believe that we are positioned to make a bigger impact to help the communities we serve thrive in their lives and livelihoods.

I would like to thank our volunteer non-executive directors who continue to serve the Board tirelessly. David Heard, who Chaired our finance committee retired in May after serving CFS for four years having played a key role in ensuring our financial position was sustainable for the long term. Ed Parker, Huong Le-Dao and Ian Ross have joined the board adding critical skills.

Enjoy the rest of this report where we share some of the services we are proud to deliver and the journeys of some of our community.

Matthew Day

Chair, Community First Step

WORDS FROM THE CEO



Well, what a year! – What a Journey!

While I was only with Community First Step for two thirds of it, that was still action packed. The theme of this year's Annual Report and Year in Review is 'Journey'. We decided on this theme to allow us to showcase the journey our clients take with us, the journey we as an organisation are taking as well as the journey our staff are on.

2019-20 year has been a time of change for CFS, some in response to the challenges of COVID but some has been part of the healthy growth of the organization across all areas of activity.

The year started under the leadership and guidance of Lesley Jordan the Interim CEO, who passed the baton to me in mid-November Lesley had done a fantastic job stabilising the organisation and pushing forward a number of initiatives that strengthened the operational resilience of CFS. Of particular note was the establishment of the Risk Champion role and the work around our risk management framework. Lesley's commencement of upgrading our IT Infrastructure became enormously significant. The fact that the organization had commenced, and was then able to complete, the transition to Office 365 allowed a rapid extension into the use of Microsoft Teams when the pandemic hit. Very quickly CFS was able to rollout the video conferencing functionality and progressively implement the document sharing capabilities to enable collaboration and facilitate staff working from home.

For me, the most significant area of change has been the consequences of the 'One CFS' approach. Arising out of staff workshops, discussions and brainstorming sessions our organisational awareness grew that our three 'traditional' service delivery streams of Children's Services, Disability Services and Community Services, all had the potential to provide a more integrated and holistic impact on the lives we touched and in the community. We started to break down the silos and, with the support and involvement of the Board, staff and management, our Strategic Plan was tweaked, re-emphasising our commitment to client-centered care. The full measure of success of the 'One CFS' approach is yet to be seen but it is a testament to the quality of CFS staff how comprehensively this approach has been adopted across the organisation.

One clear indicator of success has been how agile and responsive CFS was able to be in the face of COVID. For example, when offered the opportunity to be involved in the distribution of frozen meals in conjunction with OZ Harvest, the NSW Parliament and Neil Perry, CFS staff from across all service delivery areas came together to make it happen. Likewise, CFS staff, clients and vehicles were able to collaborate with The Parks Community Network in the distribution of food hampers, activity packs and the provision of other supports to vulnerable people in the community. We also adopted a flexible approach to child care with the intention of ensuring critical frontline workers were still able to access these services.

There have been numerous other significant events during the year including:

- New 5-year funding agreement with Department of Communities and Justice
- Our very first graduation ceremony for the children who completed the Big Steps School Readiness Program funded via The Smith Family as part of the Communities for Children initiative.

- Establishment of the Quality Assurance team as part of CFS's Continuous improvement framework.
- Re-entry into providing supported accommodation for clients living with a disability
- The very successful 'Employ Me First Expo' in partnership with Matchworks

However, the real success of CFS is the cumulative impact of the many small touches we have on people's lives every day; that a parent does not have to worry their child is safe and well cared for between when school finishes and they get back from work; the smile on a day program client's face when they try the gym equipment in the park; the relief at getting a document witnessed or translated. These are just a few examples of the many ways we provide care and support to the local community.

Unfortunately not everything has worked in our favour. During the year a number of senior staff took up other opportunities which was great for them but sad for CFS. Niki Sullivan, Executive Manager Children's Services, migrated to Queensland; Marlon Generoso, Finance Manager, accepted a role with Youth Off The Streets; and Joe Magri Executive Manager Disability Services moved to the General Manager role with Allied Health Partnerships. We wish them all the best for the future and thank them for the significant contributions they made during their time with CFS. On the positive side Jennifer Mollett joined us as the new Executive Manager for Disabilities and Children's Services and we now have a great set of Team Leaders in Baber Rasheed, Ann Munar and Rachel Tausia.

Our collaborations and partnerships have grown broader and stronger. As a response to COVID, Fairfield City Council facilitated regular discussions with community organisation to ensure community need was identified and responded to in a

coordinated fashion. These meetings involving Woodville Alliance, Core, The Parks Community Network and CFS also provided a framework of mutual support and the sharing of knowledge in response to the pandemic.

CFS continued to collaborate and partner with a wide range of other organisations including local schools, police, Matchworks, ATO, allied health providers and peak bodies. A strong working relationship with our funding organisations, in particular the Department of Communities and Justice and The Smith Family, continues to be of benefit to CFS and our provision of services to the local community.

November will see the one-year mark since the start of my journey with CFS. While the COVID pandemic certainly brought challenges, I have thoroughly enjoyed the time thanks to the people involved – our great staff, our fabulous Chair, our dedicated directors, our volunteers, our clients and their families, and our community partners. I am very excited about the journey CFS is on and the possibilities for the future and look forward to playing my part.

John Gilmore

Chief Executive Officer, Community First Step



MEET THE TEAM

CFS Board



Matthew Day

Chair

Matthew has more than 30 years of international executive and finance management experience predominantly working for global IT companies including CFO of DXC (formally CSC) and President, Asia Pacific of Ventyx.

He is Asia Pacific CFO for O&M Halyard Health. Matthew is a director of MJKA Pty Ltd and has been Director of CSC Australia Pty Ltd, Paxus Pty Ltd, Mynd Asia Pacific Pty Ltd and a number of subsidiary companies.



Mark Webb

Deputy Chair

Mark's professional background includes work across the private sector, and more than 15 years experience in senior executive roles in the federal and state public sectors. His experience includes work in the technology industry, and public policy areas such as employment, the environment and heritage, planning and central government functions.

He is currently the Chief Executive of the NSW Department of Parliamentary Services, a specialist service department working to support the operation of the NSW Parliament. Mark's skills include policy, government, strategy, change management, business process and improvement and corporate governance. Mark is also Vice President of the Institute of Public Administration-NSW Division.



Edward Parker

Non Executive Director

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

MEET THE TEAM

CFS Board



Helen Wilson

Non Executive Director

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



Huong Le-Dao

Non Executive Director

Huong is senior executive change agent, business strategist, board member, and facilitator with 20 years' experience in leading strategy and change, human resources, and transformational change management programs across Australia and overseas. Her industry experience includes health, education, community, government, infrastructure, transport, not for profit, banking and finance, professional services, mining and resources.



Ian Ross

Non Executive Director

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



Laura Sampson

Company Secretary

Laura graduated from Western Sydney University in 2017 with a Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Arts and commenced working as a lawyer in August 2018. Laura has experience in tort claims, and has spent a number of years working as a Paralegal in the Parramatta and Liverpool areas. Laura is presently working in a large Plaintiff-focused personal injury law firm. Through personal circumstances and her work, Laura has gained experience and is committed to assisting community members in Western Sydney that are living with a disability.

MEET THE TEAM

CFS Management



John Gilmore

Chief Executive Officer

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



Jennifer Mollett

Executive Manager, Disability and Children's Services

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



Usha Rao

Executive Manager, Community Services

Usha was appointed Executive Manager Community Services in November 2017. Prior to this Usha has spent the last 15 years working her way up through the organisation. Usha has a passion for the community and is always looking for innovative ways to introduce new programs and projects to the service.



Baber Rasheed

Team Leader, Community Services

Baber has been with CFS since 2015 and has held the positions of Community Development Officer before being promoted to Team Leader. He is passionate about building the capacity of community members to achieve their dreams. He also holds the position of Risk Champion.



Rachel Tausia

Team Leader, Disability Services

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



Ann Munar

Team Leader, Children Services & Allambie OSCH Co-ordinator

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



Diana Taylor

People and Culture Manager

Diana joined CFS as the People and Culture Manager in 2020. She is a HR and WHS professional and believes 'when people go to work they shouldn't have to leave their heart at home'



Jessica Thomson

Youth Co-ordinator and Quality Champion

Jessica has been working with CFS since January 2017 in the capacity of At Risk Youth Caseworker, Youth Services Coordinator and Quality Champion.



Martine Burnette

Hub Co-ordinator

Martine has been working with CFS since 2015 and was originally in the role of receptionist. She now leads a team of hub support workers and is often the first person our clients meet when engaging with our service.



Ehlay Shin

St Johns OSCH Co-ordinator

Ehlay has worked with us since 2016. She initially started her career at CFS in our disability service before moving onto our playgroups. She then moved into the role of Assistant Co-ordinator at Parks Occasional Care. She is now the OSCH Co-ordinator at our St Johns Before and After School Care.



Shazia Rashid

Guildford OSCH Co-ordinator

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



Icie Lam

Tangerine Street OSCH Co-ordinator

Icie started with CFS as a volunteer and proved to be an essential part of the team when she took on the Office Manager role on a temporary basis to cover an extended annual leave. She then moved into a role as an Educator before being promoted to OSCH Co-ordinator at our Tangerine St Before and After School Care.



Adelle Raad

Parks Occasional Care Co-ordinator

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

OUR AMAZING STAFF

Our Response to Covid-19

Like many organisations the COVID-19 Pandemic has changed the way that we work at Community First Step.

We quickly introduced a COVID-safe plan and were able to continue providing services to our clients and community despite the fact a number of our staff had to work from home.

We are especially proud that despite new restrictions we were able to provide many services, often in new and unconventional ways including:

- Before and After School Care
- Occasional Care
- Hub and Direct Client Support
- Case Management
- Youth Services
- Online Community Programs including Online Kids Playtime for 5 - 12 year olds and Online Playgroups for 0 - 5 year olds.
- Justice of the Peace Service
- Day Program
- Supported Independent Living Home
- Support Co-ordination
- Online School Readiness program

Our newly introduced computer operating systems allowed us to continue to stay connected especially during the peak of the lockdown.

They also allowed us to introduce a weekly meeting with all our staff to keep our staff informed and connected as the mental health and overall well-being of our staff has also been a priority during this time.

On R U Ok? Day we were able to connect to all the staff via Microsoft Teams and provide some fun and self-care strategies to assist them during this difficult time. Staff enjoyed some respite from what has been a challenging year for all.

Thank you to all the amazing staff of Community First Step! Your commitment to the organisation and the community has ensured that we have been able to continue to do our great work in the Community of South-West Sydney.



SNAPSHOT

Our Staff

We have a diverse workforce with people from a mix of cultural backgrounds, ancestries, religions, creeds, language groups and orientations.

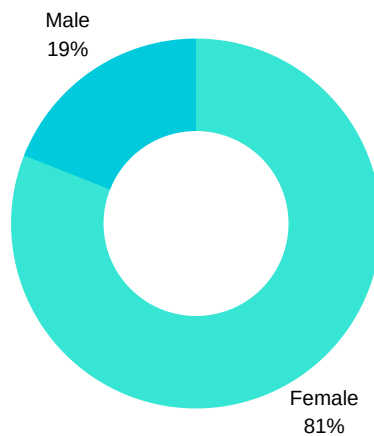
Our Community Languages include:

Arabic
Assyrian
Cantonese
English
Hindi
Mandarin
Marathi
Spanish
Telugu
Urdu
Vietnamese

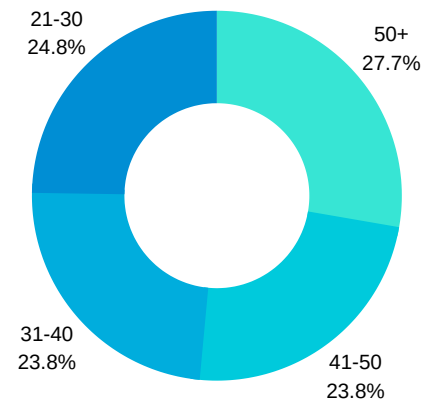
Our Ancestry includes:

Aboriginal
Assyrian
Australian
British
Cambodian
Chilean
Egyptian
Fijian
Ghanian
Iraqi
Irish
Italian
Indian
Japanese
Lebanese
Nigerian
Pakistani
Sri Lankan
Scotish
South African
Samoan
Thai
Vietnamese

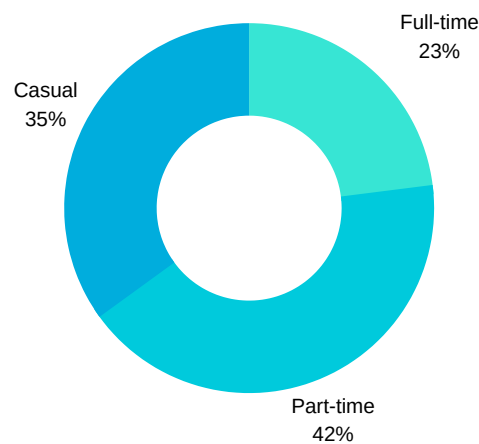
Gender Diversity



Age Diversity



Employment Type





Volunteer

community
firststep
Creating Opportunities

SNAPSHOT

Our Volunteers

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

Amber Stewart
Angela Bugrja
Tyrone Thompson
Elisha Tulay
Jared Pope
Jessica Issa
June Zheng
Kirsten Kershaw
Milana Blagojevic

Marguerite Assaf
Raieda Alfars
Rita Meleka
Roz Saeed
Samuel Poblete
Sarah Al Qussyosif
Stiven Younan
Tessica Essa

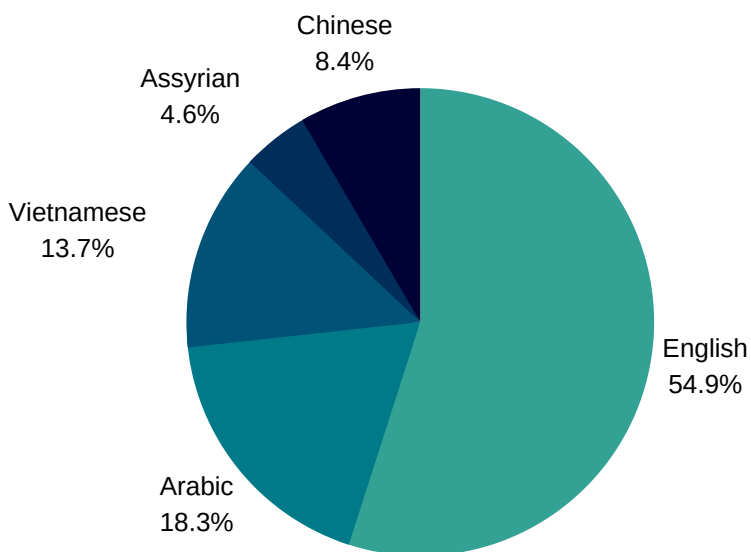


SNAPSHOT

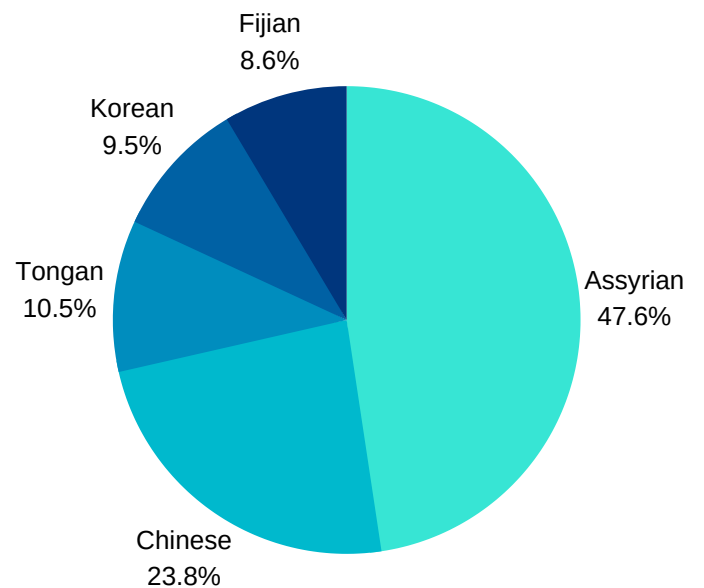
Our Community



Main Language Groups of Clients

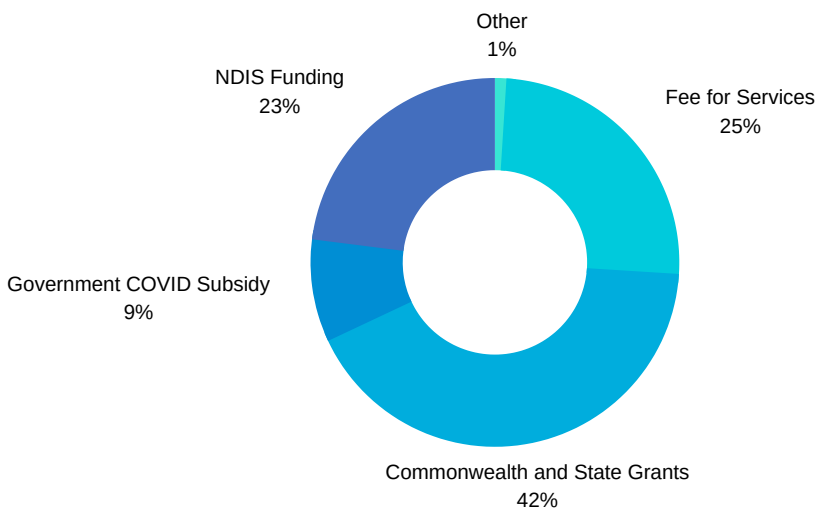


Main Ancestry of Clients

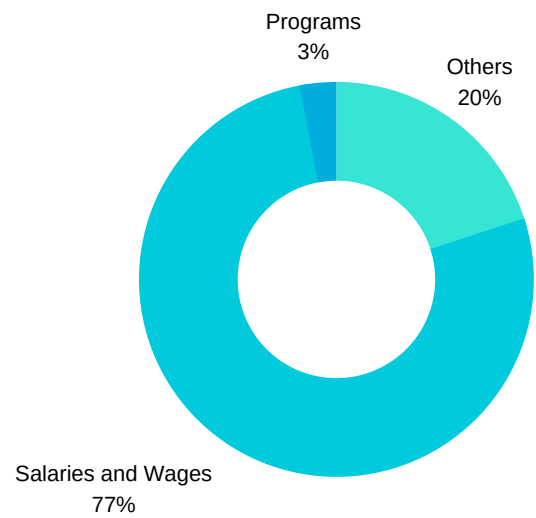


SNAPSHOT

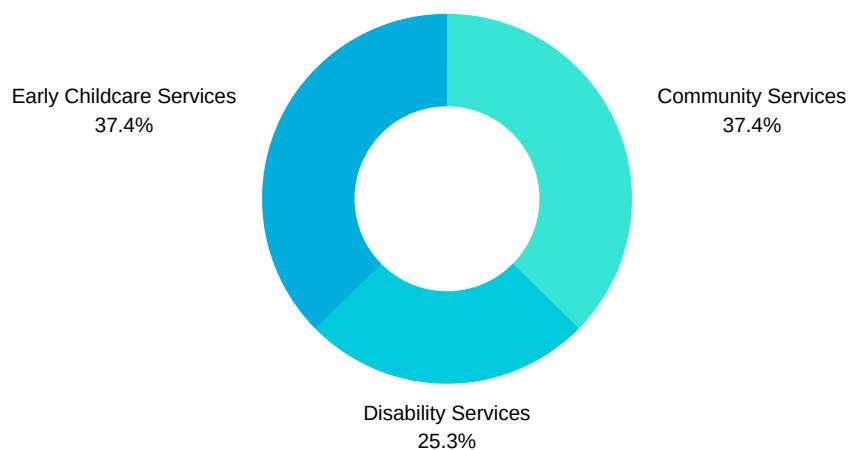
Our Finances



Sources of funding



Expenditure



Revenue by service stream



Income

THE HUB

CFS in the Community

During the initial lock-down period we were able to keep our Hub open to support the Community during some very uncertain times.

Although the COVID crisis has changed the way we interact with our clients, we are proud that we remained a place where clients could seek assistance.

10,200

INTERNAL REFERRALS

153

FOOD PARCELS

408

EXTERNAL REFERRALS

255

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

550

OTHER ASSISTANCE

FORM FILLING

ONLINE APPLICATIONS

HUB ACTIVITIES

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

TRANSLATION



FROZEN FOOD PROJECT

Warm meals during COVID

We have officially handed out 27,763 meals to communities in need during COVID-19.

This project initially started in May 2020 with the wonderful help from our Director Mark Webb, when COVID-19 had struck NSW quite heavily. Collaborations between NSW Parliament, Oz Harvest and Cabra-Vale Diggers Club were established and the project commenced.

We started to receive 1000+ meals every week to distribute to families around South-West Sydney including those that:

- Have lost their jobs due to COVID
- Are struggling financially
- Did not have access to warm meals
- Essential workers
- Are elderly and did not want to leave their houses due to restrictions
- Did not have access to transport

MEALS DELIVERED

27, 763

Additionally we delivered meals to community partners including Community and Youth Centre's around South-West Sydney so that they could distribute within their vulnerable communities.

This project's end date was initially End of Financial Year 2020 (30th June 2020) but due to the continued need in the community this project is still actively running and will do so for the foreseeable future.



Frozen Food Project Partnering Organisations:

- Fairfield City Council
- SLASA
- Core Community
- Woodville Alliance
- Parks Community Network
- Sarah Redfern Public School
- Sarah Redfern High School
- Passfield Park School
- Mary Brooksbank School
- The Grange Public School
- Ambarvale High School
- House of Welcome
- Fairfield Public School
- Fairfield High School
- Campbelltown Youth Centre
- Community Connect Macarthur
- Meraki Foundation
- South West Multicultural Centre

LGBTQIA YOUTH PROJECT

*Quinte gave me
a community*

This is the second year The Aurora Foundation has provided this grant to allow us to run an LGBTQIA Support Group for young people in Fairfield LGA.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic our centre was shut for three months. During this time we moved the group online to provide this support remotely to allow for these youth participants to have a safe space to discuss and share their experiences with their peers.

Our group is made up of transgender, gay, non-binary and asexual young people each trying to find their own identity during this time. The group is now able to meet in person and they are incredibly grateful to be able to have a space where they can be themselves without any fear of judgement.

We cannot thank our funder The Aurora Group enough for the opportunity to provide this support to our young people.

“I have found myself as a person
and am no longer confused about
my identity – Ready to step
forward and start making a change
for myself.”

Participant

In the past two years of running this project we believe there is a continued need for this support.

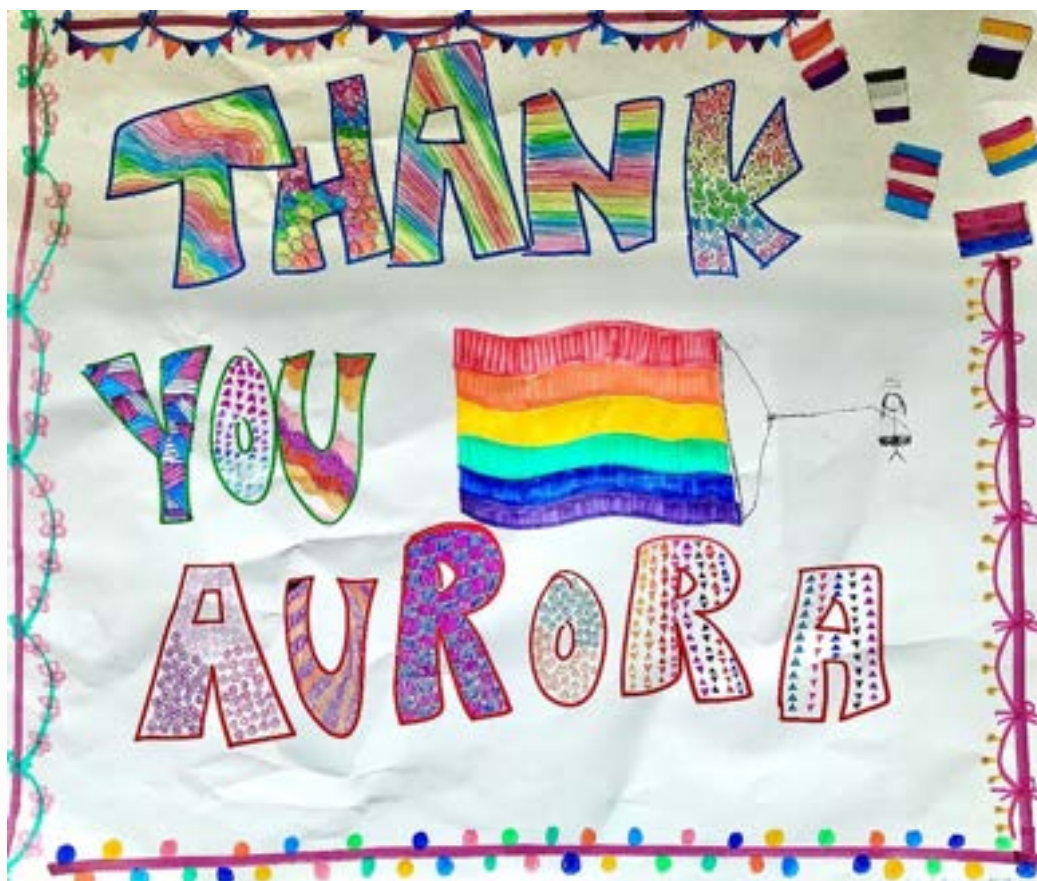
Participants have become more autonomous in the running of the group and we believe that with the support of Community First Step this group can continue to grow and show positive outcomes for LGBTQIA youth and their families.

"I learned that it's okay to show emotions and that everyone has gone through their own journey in life, whether it's a big deal to me or not is an equally big deal to them to themselves."

Participant

"This group has helped me with my identity and finding that I shouldn't be ashamed of who I am, truly."

Participant



Artwork by group participants to thank The Aurora Group for their on-going support.

BIG STEPS PROJECT

Getting Ready for Big School

Targeting families and children, this project aims to promote early childhood learning by building capacity for school readiness, creating opportunities to develop community engagement and social skills through sporting activities, and supporting emerging communities and migrant families to enhance their parenting skills through a co-designed program that incorporates evidence based practices.

During the school readiness program at Guildford Library, a young boy was registered to the program who we will name 'John'. John has Level 2 Autism and had never been in any schooling environment or any form of early childhood education. John's parents had discussed that it was very difficult to leave him alone as his concentration was very sporadic, and his speech was delayed.

During our first initial sessions with John, he was very distracted and often did not do the tasks given to him, and his speech was still very limited. Noticeably in the last few weeks, John has massively improved. Both parents have agreed that the program has vastly improved John's behavioural and cognitive issues. During the sessions, John understood tasks, his



handwriting improved, and his recognition of letters and numbers was astounding.

John can speak to the other children and the facilitators and Mum and Dad do not have to be in the program during his attendance. We are very happy to say his improvement is due to a combination of his behaviour therapy, other external services, and the school readiness program which has vastly improved his social skills, his motor skills and ability to understand and follow instructions. This is a great achievement, and the facilitator is extremely proud of his improvements.

“I am really happy with the positive change in John because of this program. It increased in his attention span in tabletop activity, built confidence and increased his interest towards writing, colouring, and drawing. This program really helped him to participate in group time and activities. Seeing a child with ASD Level 2 enjoying, attentive and responsive in this program really makes me happy and positive about his school transition. I feel confident transitioning him to school after this program.”

Parent Feedback

- OVER 180 PARTICIPANTS ENROLLED
- 99% OF PARENTS REPORTED THE PROGRAM HAS HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THEIR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH
- 75% OF CHILDREN NOW PARTICIPATE IN DAILY EXERCISE OR SPORTS PROGRAMS
- 72.7% OF CLIENTS REPORTED AN OVERALL POSITIVE CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES
- 81.4% OF CLIENTS REPORTED AN OVERALL POSITIVE CHANGE IN THEIR LIVES.



FACE MASKS PROJECT

CFS in action during COVID

Community First Step, in collaboration with The Parks Community Network, made and distributed face masks for vulnerable community members.

This was part of a bigger response Community First Step had during the height of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic which also included:

- the distribution of frozen meals
- the distribution of food hampers
- continuation of all services to the community within a COVID safe plan

McMahon MP Chris Bowen visited Community First Step to thank the volunteers and staff who made the masks.

He said on the day, "it's been a difficult time for the community but I see hope in signs of the community coming together to help those doing the toughest in these circumstances."



NEW STEPS PROJECT

First Steps into a new life

This is a Communities For Children funded project.

The project aims to support families from emerging and migrant communities to better engage in their children's development through the delivery of programs based on evidence-based practices. The project supports the families in the community to overcome disadvantage and better cope with life transitions through provision of:

- Direct Support
- Parenting Workshops
- Social Inclusion Activities.

In the year 2019-2020, the program had a participation from over 500 clients in our evidence based workshops and activities.

Over 123 clients were supported in one on one direct support.



A single mum attended the direct support service where she addressed issues with her young child's behavior and other parenting concerns. She also advised that she sought support from her parents, but their style of parenting sometimes conflicted with her parenting style. The family coach invited the child's grandparents with the mum to attend direct support sessions. With interpreting assistance and having all members of family in the program, the family was able to learn new parenting style and found positive development in the child's behaviour. The flexibility to tailor the support to engage with different family members leading to positive engagement in child development was a huge success for the program

- EACH YEAR 15 PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS RECEIVE ONE ON ONE SUPPORT TO BUILD THEIR CAPACITY IN AREAS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT.
- FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND WORKSHOPS TO LEARN STRATEGIES IN POSITIVELY ENGAGING WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND COPING WITH LIFE TRANSITIONS
- FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS PARTICIPATE WITH THEIR CHILDREN IN SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTIVITIES FOR 6 WEEKS WHICH IS BASED AND DESIGNED THROUGH CONSULTATION WITH FAMILIES. THIS ACTIVITY ALSO PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS.

YOUTH FITNESS PROJECT

Staying Fit & Connected

This workshop was created during the lockdown when our Youth Centre activities were suspended.

Young people disclosed they were struggling with isolation, their mental health and missing taking part in physical activities at the youth centre.

The Youth team contacted young people who were attendees of our outreach services at Fairfield Youth and Community Centre and those who had spoken to staff regarding their struggles with the current situation.

Initially this program was run through weekly online sessions. Prior to each session the CFS youth workers would individually deliver the equipment they would need for the upcoming session. These included – resistance bands, a yoga mat, a jump rope and a speed ladder.



Participants became more aware of the importance of physical health

Increased knowledge of the right exercises for their needs

Participants became more connected to their community

Reduced feelings of isolation

Participants built positive relationships with their peers and services available to them

Once restrictions began lifting the sessions moved outside which allowed the participants to stay connected to their peers, the community and the CFS Staff. This workshop also allowed a soft entry point that allowed staff to check in on the participants and offer support outside of the workshop. This included mental health support, family support and food parcel provision.

Due to the success of the workshop and in consultation with the participants we decided to partner up with Fairfield City Council to assist with delivering group training sessions facilitated by a personal trainer.





SENIORS CONNECTION PROJECT

Children's Visit to the Nursing Home

On R U OK? Day the children from our before and after school care service delivered cards and letters to the residents of the Rosary Village.

The children were worried that the residents had been in lockdown since the COVID crisis began and wanted to cheer them up.

Although the children were unable to enter the nursing home the residents waved and welcomed them.



Thank you all for everything you do. My son really loves before and after school care and comes home with lots of fun stories of games and arts and crafts. Please know that you are appreciated, you really make a difference to our family – Parent



EMPLOYMENT EXPO

Bridging the gaps

Community First Step in partnership with Matchworks held an Employment Expo in February, 2020.

On the day we had over 15 stall holders from employers, training programs and government services including Fairfield Council.

We had a huge turnout of 948 attendees on the day. Of this group we had confirmation of 4 interviews with employers, 3 traineeships and multiple applications for their vacancies.

We also had the RTO's and training organisations gain some great interest for their courses and enrolments. All stall holders were really happy with the event and provided some great feedback.

CFS gained some great expressions of interest from clients regarding employment and HR has gained 5 applications for volunteering or paid positions as well.

We continue to have weekly employment support delivered to our clients through our partnership with Matchworks and have seen an increase in clients looking to create or update their resumes and look for work.



BUSY BAGS PROJECT

Activities at home for our playgroups

The Busy bags project was initiated in response to the COVID crisis and the closure of our playgroups due to the lockdown enforced by the NSW Government in March and April.

Our playgroup educators created a set of activities that parents could complete with their child. These activities were designed to ensure that the children's development milestones were still being met while encouraging connection with their parents and caregivers. And of course they were good fun for the children!

The busy bags were delivered to our families and was a great success as children and families expressed how much they enjoyed them.



During the break from playgroups, Fairfield City Council renovated the Children's Play Room at our centre and created a beautiful space for children and their parents and carers to enjoy our re-launched playgroups.



YOUTH CHOIR ONLINE

Online Singing the new norm

Once the COVID-19 crisis began our Youth Choir was no longer able to meet in person. During this time the Youth Choir began working on a virtual choir performance of their very first original song "Our Voices" composed by our young people, written by one of the original choristers Scania Alexa Icao and arranged by Sara Nguyen.

The song was a multi-lingual song about how as we come together we are stronger and able to achieve more. A beautiful message in what has been a tough year.

Our special thanks to Steve Pasvolsky who generously spent his time producing and creating this video presentation.

This video presentation was proudly submitted to the 2020 Interkulturel Virtual Choir Games. Although we did not our youth voices were heard and hope was spread through the beautiful meaning of the song.

Congratulations to Natalie Gooneratne, Choir Director for her tireless efforts to run such a successful choral group.

The video can be found at facebook.com/phoenixvoicesofyouth

Keep your eyes open for an exciting new project coming in 2021!

FOLLOW MY JOURNEY

Linha's Story

My name is Linha Antranik Lion Estefanian, I have been living in Australia since 14/2/2018 and love to call it home. The support and opportunities that are in this lovely country helps make it easier for me to achieve the best I can in life.

Before moving to Australia, I was living in Turkey and had been there for nearly 4 years. When arriving to Australia, I had become a refugee by the U.N. I remember this day clearly; I even remember my VISA number. After three months I decided it was time to really utilise my time here in Australia and was looking for work placement to finish my Certificate 3 in Children's Services. I found myself applying at Community First Step and soon I found a place that I could call my second home.

I was very excited to start doing my volunteer work and to meet all the lovely families and children. It really reminded me about all my teaching experiences at home and I knew in that moment that CFS was where I wanted to work and learn more.

Once accomplishing my Certificate III, I was offered my first contract here in Australia as a casual. I remember smiling and feeling very happy.

While working for Community First Step I've met many nice and hardworking people that have helped and encouraged me to understand the ins and out of the children service sector. Everyone has a story and my story is that I have been blessed with the opportunity and growth.



I feel proud knowing that I am giving my all.

Now I'm a full time educator at The Parks Occasional Care, I focus on the Pre Schoolers and help deliver a creative curriculum that is based around children's voices and play while still incorporating the fundamental skills a child should have to be confident in before starting school.

I'm a 47-year-old lady really living my best life. Working for Community First Step has given me the strength to work hard and achieve everything I may not of been able to achieve if I hadn't come to Australia.

Thank you CFS and the CFS Family!





Youth Hours by Community First Step provides local young people with the opportunity to encounter youth worker services, build positive relationships, and gain access to referrals and further support. The youth team at Community First Step have consistently gone above and beyond in delivering support to hundreds of young people weekly, even continuing to provide these essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fairfield City Council is proud to work with such an innovative youth team, who have been especially creative in overcoming the challenges this exceptional year has posed. We thank and commend Community First Step for the incredible impact they have had in motivating and empowering the lives of our City's young people - Fairfield City Council

FOLLOW MY JOURNEY

FJ's Story

When FJ first started attending the Fairfield Youth and Community Centre during the Community First Step Youth Drop In hours, he was very limited in his communication skills with the staff as he was newly arrived in Australia. FJ would often get frustrated as he was not able to communicate how he was feeling and would result to self-harming or screaming. He had experienced some family trauma and it was evident that he was struggling to communicate and express himself in a positive way. Since FJ's engagement with CFS's Youth Drop In Services and constant supervision and engagement by staff, we have noticed a very positive change in his behaviour and communication skills. FJ now understands how to use "I" statements when describing how he is feeling, knows how to say "Please" and "Thank you", knows how to share the soccer ball with other participants and has now formed friendships with other youth participants.



Throughout his engagement with CFS he has been able to be linked with our HUB service to assist himself and his family with matters such as Visa status and NDIS funding options. We have also noticed a change in perceptions and tolerance from the other young people who attend our Youth Drop In as they try to understand and engage with FJ as well as getting him involved in the activities they are taking part in. FJ has now been attending the Fairfield Youth and Community Centre during our drop-in hours every day for the past two and a half years and never fails to make staff laugh and smile.

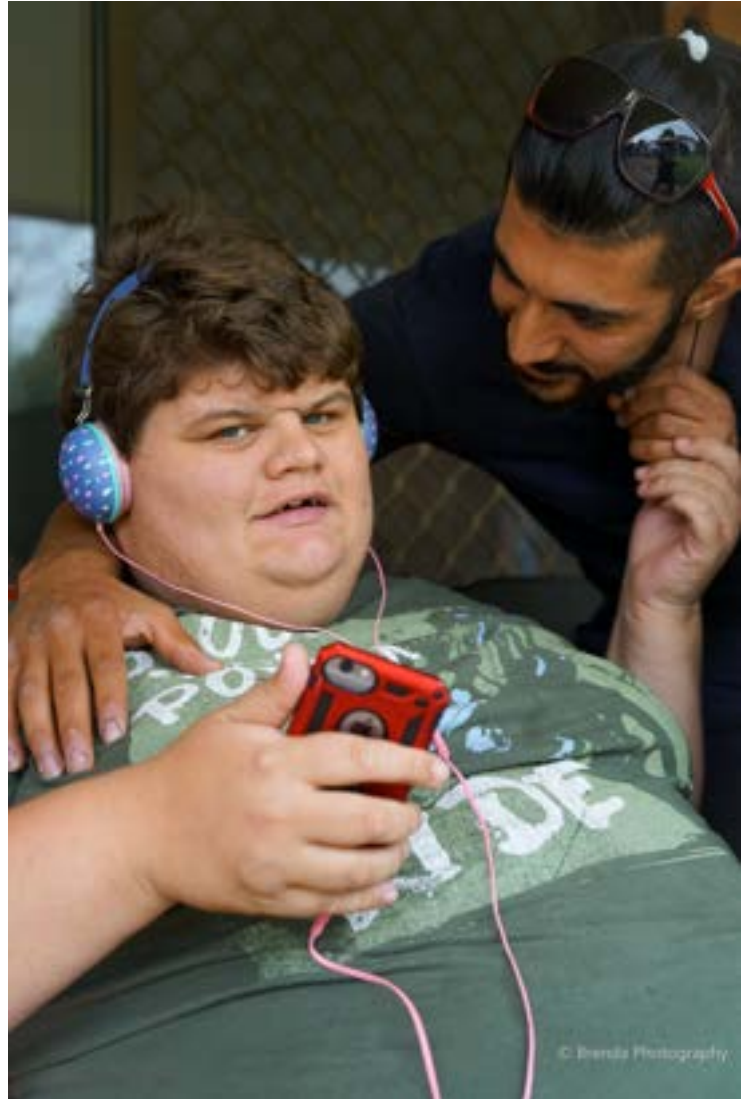
FOLLOW MY JOURNEY

Lukes Story

Luke struggled with a food obsession and would often remove food from participants, staff and members of the community. This was not being managed and this would limit the venues that staff would take him due to this behaviour. Even at home Luke's family was unable to go out to eat as Luke's behaviours were too much for his parents to manage.

Luke was unable to communicate effectively and Luke's only method of communication was using physical contact most often causing harm to staff and other day program participants.

Luke was often very intimidating for new staff as it was hard to read what his intentions were. Due to the nature of his disability any change small or large were hard for Luke to accept personal care times were also quite a challenging time for Luke and would trigger unsafe



interactions between Luke and those around him.

With the assistance of a Behaviour Support Specialist, staff have been trained to be able to identify the early warning signs of escalation and implement strategies for staff to use in order to redirect Luke.



With this training staff are now able to identify what Luke's triggers are and able to deal with them effectively before things escalate and become unsafe. For example, the use of a pool noodle as a sensory object to help soothe and calm him. As a result of this Luke can enjoy the time spent at the Day Program and is able to engage in more activities, explore more venues and share in varied experiences.

With these strategies it allows staff more time to be able to support Luke in reaching his goals and enjoy experiencing new things. Luke is now able to go and with his family and enjoy a meal.

With the help of Luke's speech pathologist, he has been provided a communication device and he is able to communicate what he wants and his feelings to staff and family. He uses his device daily, along with a timeline chart that enables him to have choice and control of the activities he would like to participate in during the time he spends at the day program.

During the period staff have seen Luke grow and develop. Staff have expressed that it has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to work with him and be able to assist him in reaching his goals and have a positive learning experience.



Your Case Management
changed our lives. We loved
your Parenting Programs as
we learnt many things we
didn't know before. We have
used this information to
change the way we are with
our kids. Thank you Reem.

- Client

FOLLOW MY JOURNEY

From Fear to Independence

Earlier this year a single mother who had just escaped a domestic violence relationship with three children entered our Child and Family Case Management support.

She had come to Australia 17 year prior but was not aware of any community services that could help her.

She was struggling navigating a separation from a violent relationship while supporting her children through behavioural and health issues. At the same time she was continuously attending school meetings and doctors' appointments, and prioritising their kids wellbeing over her own.

This took an extreme toll on her health, leaving her feeling hopeless and stuck. Upon reaching out to Community First Step, our team was able to identify a plan to help her overcome the obstacles she was facing.

The first form of assistance provided was to ease the financial hardship she was facing through our Emergency Relief partnership with the Wesley Mission. We also donated a brand-new fridge and washing machine as hers were not operating anymore.

We then referred her children to a psychologist to help assist with developing healthy coping mechanisms. We also assisted her enrolment for the citizenship program in which she successfully passed and obtained.

Moving forward we are working closely with the NDIS to develop a plan for two of her children and with rental arrears through putting in place payment plans for a sustainable way of living for her and her family.



ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH

*Tangerine Street
OSHC*

We witnessed an additional service to the growing Children's Services team as Tangerine Street OSHC was established in January 2020 to cater school aged children within the local areas.

The Centre was initially providing services to Villawood North Public School, Old Guildford Public School and Carramar Public School. Though in February, Tangerine Street OSHC expanded its services to Yennora Public School and Our Lady of the Rosary Primary School.

As a new service opening during the pandemic, it was faced with some challenges. However, Tangerine Street OSHC is determined to provide quality education and care to school age children and are working actively in planning positive changes to the centre environment, facilities, and educational programs.

Considering the needs of the community and with the effort of CFS Board members and management, Tangerine Street OSHC successfully relocated the children of Fairfield Public School from our sister service (Guildford Public School OSHC) in June 2020.

Recently, Tangerine Street OSHC has put plans in place to foster the growth of the centre with the support of the Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities Grant received from the Department of Education. Tangerine Street OSHC now have a brand-new environment and a greater variety of educational resources that caters for different interest and learning needs.

Tangerine Street OSHC is growing at a sturdy pace; and will continue to provide support and quality services to families and children within the local area.

ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH

Quality Assurance Committee

The Quality Assurance Committee commenced in May 2020 and meets weekly. The Committee is made up of employees from Children's, Community and Disability Services.

The purpose of these meetings is to provide a continuous improvement framework for the organisation utilising the varied experience of the of employees involved. The first of these tasks is the preparation for the NDIS audit.

Joe Cashman has recently come onboard to guide this committee and prepare for the upcoming NDIS audit. This audit required CFS to be compliant in four 'Core Modules' of the NDIS Standard. These modules are – Rights and Responsibilities, Provider Governance and Operational Management, Provision of Supports and Provision of Supports (Environmental).



For the Audit CFS has enlisted QIP to conduct this audit. This involved a Stage 1 Audit to upload relevant documents related to the Core Modules through an Accreditation Hub. Stage 2 is a Site Visit which includes interviews and Site Checks scheduled for the end of the year.

Since the arrival of Jennifer Mollett and Joe Cashman the Quality Assurance Committee has been able to work on this preparation with the newly appointed Quality Champion Jessica Thomson. This process has also involved an organisation wide review of policies and procedures in an effort to enhance service delivery throughout CFS.

In order to become compliant for the NDIS Audit work has been done to create, amend and update CFS policies, procedures and forms to begin implementation. These policies were reviewed weekly by the Executive Managers and the CEO and inputted into a log ready to be uploaded for the Stage 1 Audit.

Results from the Stage 1 Audit were received in late October with only three minor non-conformities. This was a great achievement and a testament to the hard work by the Quality Assurance Committee.

The Quality Assurance Committee will continue to meet to ensure the rest of the audit is completed to the best of our ability. They will also be looking at the implementation of an organisation wide Intake and Assessment process and further accreditations for Children's and Community Services.

Committee Members are Ann Munar, Baber Rasheed, Chernor Bah, Claudia Encina, Jennifer Mollett, Joe Cashman, Jessica Thomson, Rachel Tausia and Zehra Hussain.



ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH

New Website

We launched a new website which includes up to date information about all our service is doing in the community.

Check it out at www.cfs.asn.au for more information.



COMMUNITY FIRST STEP

Creating Opportunities



We are still operating during COVID-19. Please call our office on 02 9727 4333 for more information.



YEAR IN REVIEW

Expo Information

Our Year in Review Expo is an opportunity to see the achievements of the year in real life and speak to the staff and clients involved that have made this a great year for Community First Step.

Feel free to navigate the exhibition at your own pace but please keep in mind this is a COVID safe event and you will be required to comply with our COVID safety plan.

Find my stall @

Community Hall:

Qunite / Youth Fitness Project

Frozen Food Project

Case Management

Big Steps

The Hub

Meeting Room 1 & 2:

Employment Expo / Support

New Steps

Children's Room:

Before and After School Care

Occasional Care

Roving and Playgroups





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