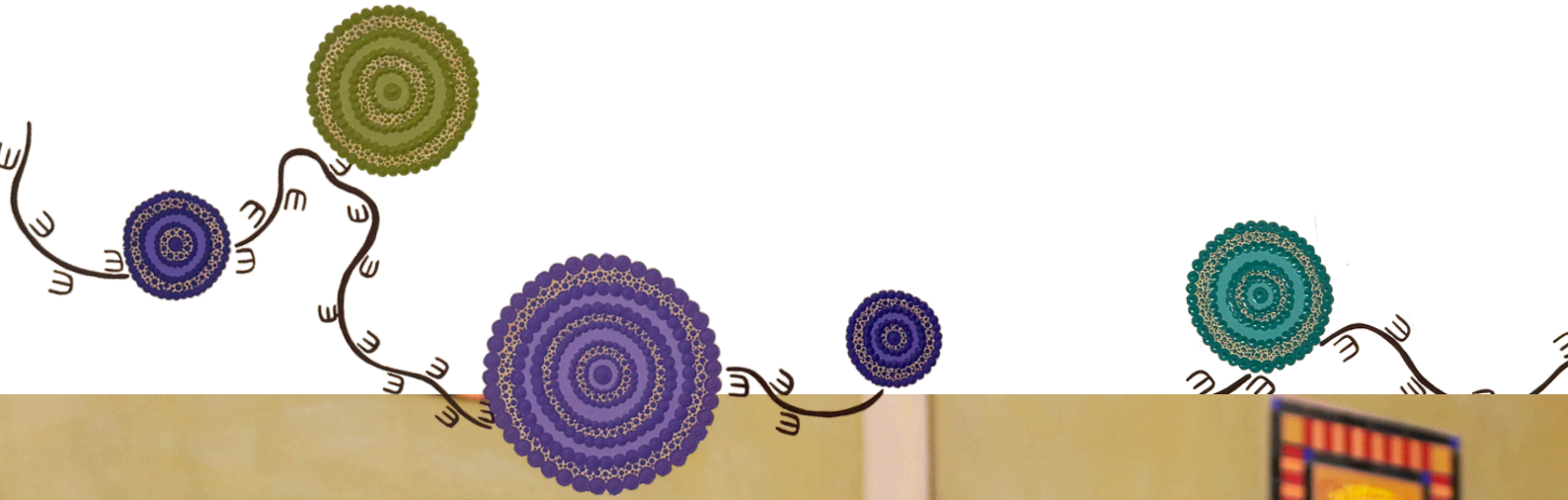




ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025





ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Cabrolog of the Darug Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and communities. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and promote the continuation of their cultural and spiritual practices.

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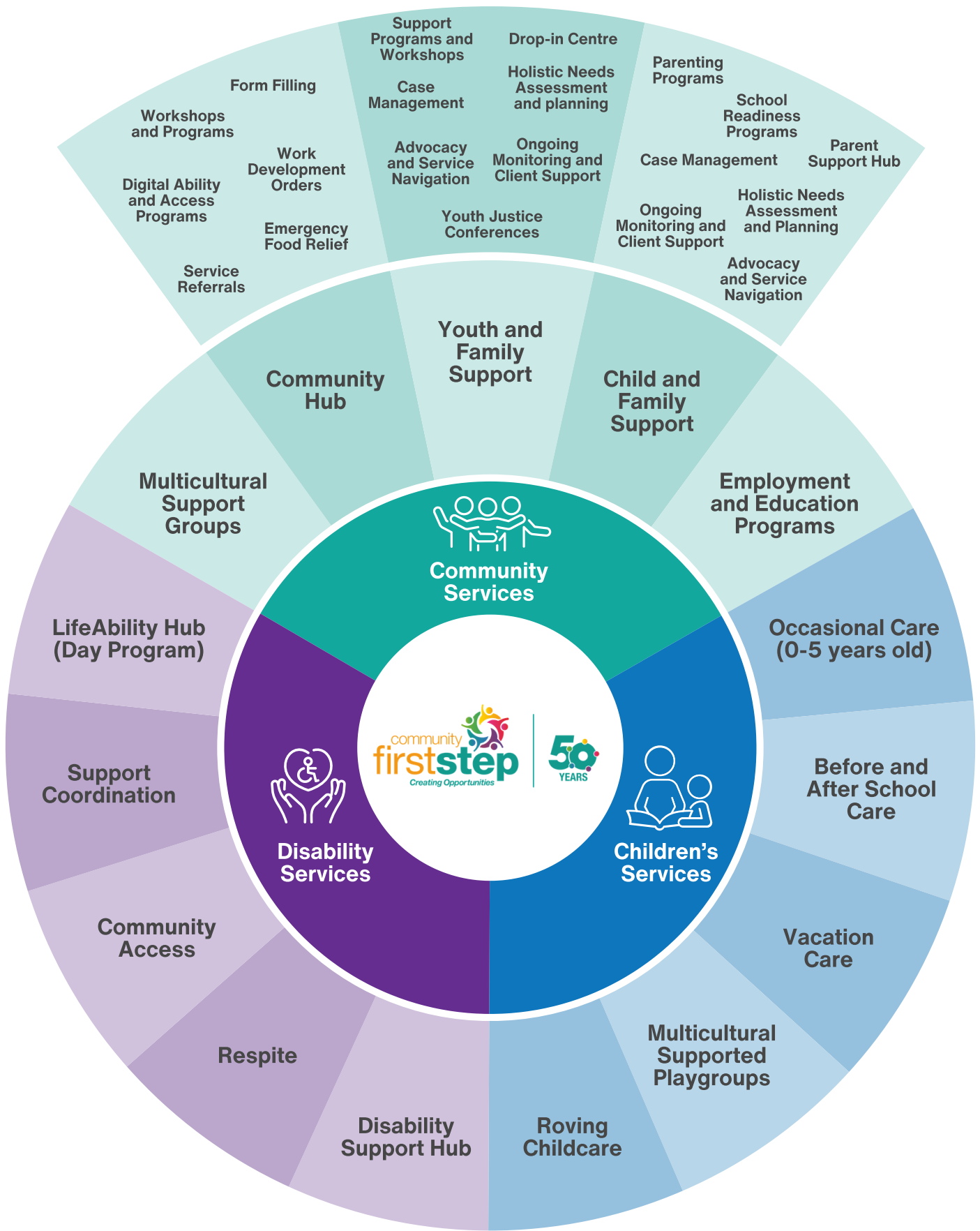
In FY25,

24,838

families benefited from our support

HOW WE SUPPORT

DELIVERING COMPREHENSIVE, HOLISTIC SERVICES THAT EMPOWER AND SUPPORT THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

We're proud to launch our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, setting a clear and ambitious direction for Community First Step.

The plan marks an exciting new chapter for Community First Step. Co-designed with our staff, Board, community and sector partners, it ensures our future direction remains aligned with community needs, policy landscapes, and emerging sector trends.

Grounded in our purpose, “We help people find their place and forge a fair future”, the plan drives our work forward by centering community voices, strengthening the quality and impact of our services, elevating our presence and deepening the partnerships that help us grow together.

Our Purpose We help people find their place and forge a fair future.	Our Mission Creating strong communities and fulfilling lives by disrupting the cycle of disadvantage in Fairfield and Greater Western Sydney.	Our Vision Empowered, inclusive, resilient, multicultural communities.
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Our Values				
Grit  We stay dedicated to supporting our communities in achieving their goals and aspirations.	Love  Love for humanity is at the heart of everything we do, treating every person with kindness, empathy, and respect.	Excellence  We are continuously improving to achieve outstanding outcomes and impact for our communities.	Equity  We ensure that every person has the support and resources they need to build a fulfilling life.	Integrity  In everything we do, we are accountable, we are honest, we are responsible.

Our Strategic Priorities			
Community-led, Evidence-informed Service Excellence  Partnering with our communities to address social, economic, education, health and wellbeing issues by embedding excellence in our community-led and evidence-informed practices.	A Leading Voice with our Communities  Building our capacity, and that of our communities, to speak and advocate authentically and with authority across a range of forums and platforms.	Elevate our Presence  Purposefully building our profile to effectively deliver on our vision of empowering our communities.	Growth and Partnerships  Growing our infrastructure, nurturing our stakeholder relationships, and pursuing opportunities for new and diverse income streams.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This has been a significant and formative year for the organisation.

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present the 2024–25 Annual Report, which reflects a period of important transition, underpinned by strong governance, thoughtful decision-making, and a clear focus on the future.

A key milestone during the year was the development and endorsement of the organisation's new Strategic Plan. This process was comprehensive and inclusive, drawing on insights from across the organisation and its stakeholders. The Board has worked closely with the CEO and Executive team to ensure that the strategy is both ambitious and grounded, positioning the organisation to respond to evolving community needs while maintaining financial and operational sustainability.

Significant progress was made during the year toward the organisation's rebrand, marking an important step in articulating a clear and contemporary identity that aligns with its purpose and direction. The Board is confident this will strengthen recognition of the organisation's role within the community and across the broader sector.

Throughout the year, the Board has maintained a strong focus on governance, risk, and performance. The organisation's achievement of full conformity in its NDIS re-certification audit is a notable outcome and reflects the strength of its systems, processes, and culture of quality. The introduction of an organisational assurance dashboard has further enhanced the Board's ability to monitor key areas of risk, compliance, and continuous improvement.

The Board has also supported management in navigating a number of complex operational decisions. This has included careful consideration of service sustainability, resulting in decisions such as the closure of the Supported Independent Living service. While difficult, these decisions demonstrate a disciplined and responsible approach to ensuring the long-term viability of the organisation and the quality of services provided.

The Board remains focused on ensuring the organisation is well positioned to navigate an increasingly complex and demanding operating environment.

It is important to acknowledge the broader context in which the organisation operates. Demand for community services continues to grow, often alongside increasing complexity in people's circumstances. At the same time, funding environments remain competitive and fragmented. In this context, the role of place-based organisations such as Community First Step is increasingly critical not only in delivering services, but in connecting systems, advocating for communities, and contributing to more coordinated and effective responses.

The Board has been encouraged by the organisation's continued growth in partnerships, which strengthen its ability to contribute to broader system improvements while remaining grounded in the needs and experiences of the community.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the leadership of our CEO and Executive team, whose clarity of vision and commitment have been central to the organisation's progress this year. I also extend our thanks to all staff for their ongoing dedication and professionalism.

Finally, I would like to thank our partners, supporters, and the communities we serve for their continued trust and engagement.

The Board is confident that Community First Step is well positioned for the future, with a clear strategy, strong leadership, and a continued focus on delivering meaningful impact.

Edward Parker
Chair of the Board



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

This year has been a defining one for our organisation. A year of consolidation and change, of deliberate choices, and of laying the foundations for what comes next. At its heart, it has been about positioning our organisation to better meet the needs of the communities we serve now and into the future.

A significant milestone this year was the finalisation and launch of our new Strategic Plan. This work brought together insights from our community, staff, Board, and partners, and sets a clear direction for the years ahead. It reflects who we are and the role we play: delivering trusted services while also working as a place-based organisation that strengthens connection, belonging and opportunity across our communities.

Alongside this, we progressed our rebrand and new organisational identity. This work goes beyond a visual change; it is about giving clearer expression to who we are, what we do, and why we exist: to help people find their place and forge a fair future.

Throughout the year, we continued to deliver critical supports across our services. Our Community Hub remained a trusted point of connection for individuals and families navigating complex circumstances. Our Youth Drop-In Centre continued to provide a safe and inclusive space for young people, with a growing emphasis on co-design to ensure their voices shape the services they receive. Our Disability and Children's Services teams worked diligently to strengthen both quality and service viability, ensuring that services remain responsive and fit for purpose in a changing environment. We achieved full conformity in our NDIS re-certification audit, reflecting the quality and integrity of our disability services.

We have also seen the continued growth of our digital inclusion work. Programs such as Digital Sisters, and our broader Digital Empowerment Initiatives, are supporting people in our community to build the skills, confidence, and access needed to fully participate in an increasingly digital world. This work has gained recognition beyond our organisation and reflects the importance of addressing digital exclusion as a key social determinant.

Partnerships have been a defining feature of our work this year. Our collaboration with The University of Sydney's Sydney Policy Lab, alongside health and community partners, has resulted in a significant research grant focused on improving navigation for culturally and linguistically diverse women experiencing mental health concerns. We have also continued to strengthen relationships with academic, for-purpose, and government bodies, ensuring our work is informed by evidence,

evaluation and community insight, grounded in local experience, and connected to broader systems.

Staff engagement remains strong, with high levels of pride and confidence in the organisation and 92% of staff indicating they would recommend Community First Step as a place to work.

We also progressed key organisational priorities, including investing in systems and infrastructure such as a new CRM, introducing an organisational assurance dashboard to strengthen oversight of quality, risk and compliance, and advancing our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, which received positive feedback and provisional endorsement from Reconciliation Australia.

At the same time, we have navigated challenges, particularly within our Disability Services. Pressures related to occupancy, funding, and the viability of our Supported Independent Living (SIL) service required careful consideration. The decision to close the SIL service was not taken lightly but reflects our commitment to ensuring long-term sustainability and the quality of support we provide.

As we look ahead, we do so with a strong foundation in place. Our first Business Plan aligned to the new Strategic Plan is underway, and our refreshed brand will be rolled out in the coming months. We are well positioned to deepen our impact, strengthen our partnerships, and continue contributing to more connected and equitable communities.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of our staff, the guidance and support of our Board, and the trust placed in us by the communities we work alongside. Together, we are building something that goes beyond services; we are laying the foundations for fairer futures.

Prof. Pandora Patterson
Chief Executive Officer





MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY HUB SERVICES

The Community Hub remained a safe, welcoming place where people could access holistic support tailored to the needs of our diverse community. Our Hub Team assisted with completing forms, accessing emergency food hampers, navigating services, someone to talk to, or information about local programs and events. Our weekly English Conversation classes and Sewing Group continued to grow, strengthening both participation and social connection among group members.

Our seniors' groups for Vietnamese men and Arabic women continued to meet weekly, providing valuable opportunities for social connection and learning. Our community development team organised guest speakers to present on important topics such as healthy ageing, accessing My Aged Care, and available government subsidies. Our Arabic seniors group visited the Blue Mountains on a day excursion on May, where they enjoyed seeing Katoomba and the Three Sisters.

The support offered through the Work and Development Order (WDO) program remained in high demand, helping people experiencing financial hardship reduce their fines. Participants took part in our group activities and/or volunteered with us as a way to work off their fines.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT

In June 2025, Community First Step successfully secured funding to purchase and install a sound-proof pod at our Community Hub, strengthening our ability to provide safe, private and dignified support for vulnerable members of the Fairfield community.

For many people experiencing complex challenges, including domestic and family violence, asking for help can be difficult. This is particularly true for women from culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee backgrounds, who may face additional barriers such as social isolation, language barriers, visa-related concerns, and limited support networks.

The sound-proof pod provides a discreet and confidential space where clients can speak openly with staff, participate in case management sessions, make support calls, or seek assistance without fear of being overheard. It also supports a more flexible and culturally responsive approach to service delivery, allowing clients to access support in a way that feels safe, respectful and accessible.



318

food hampers distributed to families in need



98.8%

of community services clients found us helpful for their needs

STRENGTHENING NAVIGATION FOR MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN

This year, in partnership with the University of Sydney's Sydney Policy Lab, Community First Step secured a significant \$800,000 Social Determinants of Health Innovation Grant from the Ramsay Hospital Research Foundation,

Delivered over three years, the project will focus on improving community and healthcare navigation for culturally and linguistically diverse refugee and migrant women in South Western Sydney experiencing mental health concerns. It builds on the Multicultural Community Hub's trusted role as a first point of connection for people navigating complex systems, including health, housing, settlement, family support, financial wellbeing and emergency relief.

The project will support women to better access and remain connected to the services they need, while generating evidence about how navigation support can strengthen outcomes across health and social systems.

Importantly, this work reflects Community First Step's growing role beyond direct service delivery. Through partnerships with research, health and community organisations, we are contributing to more integrated, culturally responsive and community-led approaches to addressing the social determinants of health. It is a strong example of how place-based organisations can help bridge the gap between complex service systems and the lived experiences, strengths and needs of local communities.



Pictured, from left to right: Josh Nguyen, Pandora Patterson, Brendan McCormack, Louise Beehag, Janice Gullick

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS TO STRENGTHEN EARLY SUPPORT

Across 2024–2025, Community First Step partnered with more than 20 schools across the Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Cumberland local government areas. These partnerships enabled us to connect with children, young people and families in trusted local settings and provide support at key stages of development.

Through schools, we delivered a range of programs and activities, including supported playgroups, before and after school care, school readiness programs, parenting workshops and targeted youth wellbeing programs. Working alongside schools helps us respond early, strengthen referral pathways and support children, young people and families to build strong foundations for learning, wellbeing and connection.

NAIDOC WEEK FAMILY FUN DAY

Community First Step was proud to participate in the NAIDOC Week Family Fun Day at Fairfield Showground, hosted by Fairfield City Council. The event brought community members together to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our team delivered family-friendly activities and shared information about our services. We were also proud to showcase artwork by one of our disability participants, whose creative expression honours his Aboriginal heritage through colour, texture and storytelling. The day was a meaningful opportunity to celebrate culture, strengthen connection and recognise the creativity and contribution of First Nations community members.

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT EXPO

In August 2024, Community First Step participated in Fairfield City Council's Pathways to Employment Expo, connecting local community members with employment, training and career supports. The event provided practical assistance, including career advice and resume support, helping reduce barriers for people seeking work. Our participation reflected our commitment to supporting economic participation and helping people access opportunities to build confidence, independence and a stronger future.

BRING YOUR BILL DAY

In August 2024 and March 2025, Community First Step participated in Bring Your Bill Day events hosted by Dai Le MP in Bonnyrigg and Liverpool. These events provided practical, face-to-face support for community members navigating cost-of-living pressures.

Our team assisted with form filling and connected individuals and families with food relief and other supports. Our continued involvement reflects our commitment to standing alongside our community and responding to real needs with practical, accessible and timely support.



IWD 2025

International Women's Day 2025 was marked across Community First Step with activities celebrating the strength, resilience and leadership of women in our community.

At our community event, Dai Le MP, Federal Member for Fowler, shared reflections on her personal journey, leadership and overcoming challenges. Participants also took part in a candle-making workshop, creating space for creativity, connection and shared experience.

Across our Children's and Disability Services, women participated in sessions focused on education, advocacy and wellbeing. These included discussion of study and career pathways, mindfulness and self-care, and advocacy and empowerment within the autism community. Together, the activities created opportunities for women to connect, reflect and celebrate their strengths.





DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT: BUILDING DIGITAL CONFIDENCE, ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Digital exclusion remains a significant barrier for many people in Fairfield and South West Sydney, particularly for communities who are navigating essential services, employment, education, health information and family responsibilities in an increasingly digital world.

In FY25, Community First Step continued to strengthen its Digital Empowerment work, building on a place-based model that has proven effective in responding to local need. The independent evaluation conducted by Urbis in August 2024, confirmed the value of practical, culturally responsive and trusted community-based support in improving digital confidence, capability and access.

Rather than treating digital inclusion as a standalone issue, our approach recognises that digital skills are now central to everyday independence, participation and wellbeing. This has guided the continued development of activities that are locally relevant, delivered in-language where needed, and responsive to the real-life digital challenges experienced by our communities.

DIGITAL SISTERS

A key focus this year was the Digital Sisters program, supporting women from Arabic and Vietnamese backgrounds to strengthen their digital skills and everyday independence. Across the year, 56 women participated in supportive small-group sessions, creating a safe and welcoming environment where participants could learn at their

own pace, ask questions, and build confidence alongside others with shared goals and experiences.

Sessions were delivered in-language and supported by bilingual mentors, ensuring participants could engage in a culturally and linguistically safe setting. Participants reported improved knowledge and increased independence in accessing online government services, using translation applications, paying bills, and creating and managing email accounts. Increased awareness of cyber security and online scams was also a key outcome, supporting safer online engagement.

With 95% of learners indicating they would recommend the program to a friend or family member, Digital Sisters demonstrates how culturally responsive, place-based approaches can help bridge the digital divide and build confidence, capability and connection.

“Community First Step has helped me improve my skills and now I have confidence to access Centrelink, MyGov and using Google Translate.”

- Vietnamese-speaking Digital Learner

This work was recognised externally, with Community First Step receiving two nominations in the 2025 ZEST Awards: Outstanding Project – Stronger Communities for the Digital Empowerment Initiative, and Outstanding Project – CALD Communities for the Digital Sisters program.

RECOGNISED AS A TRUSTED DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT PARTNER

In FY25, Community First Step continued to build recognition as a trusted place-based digital empowerment partner. Our Digital Sisters program, funded through Good Things Australia, was selected to feature in launch materials for the NSW Government's first Digital Inclusion Strategy, with the Department of Customer Service filming staff and participants to showcase the practical impact of community-based digital skills programs for culturally and linguistically diverse women.

This recognition was further reflected when The Hon. Jihad Dib MP highlighted our work as part of the Strategy's launch, and when our CEO was invited to join the NSW Telco Authority Digital Inclusion Strategy Advisory Group - Community and Inclusion. These opportunities strengthen our ability to contribute place-based insights from Fairfield and Greater Western Sydney to broader digital inclusion policy and practice.



STRENGTHENING OUR DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT APPROACH

During FY25, Community First Step identified an opportunity to partner with the UNSW Digital Frontiers Research Lab, led by Associate Professor Carmen Leong, to strengthen the strategic direction of our digital empowerment work. A collaborative proposal was submitted through the ImpactMaker program, part of UNSW Business School's Growing Together: Western Sydney Connect initiative, and was successful.

The project will support the development of a Digital Empowerment Framework to guide inclusive digital transformation across Community First Step's digital inclusion and empowerment programs. To be completed in FY26, the framework will articulate clear goals, outcomes and practical actions, supported by strategic partnerships, technology and community capacity-building. This represents an important next step in embedding culturally responsive, research-informed approaches to digital empowerment across our organisation and community.





CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES: REMOVING BARRIERS, STRONG FUTURES

STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE ACROSS OUR SECTOR

At Community First Step, inclusive practice is an ongoing commitment to removing barriers and strengthening belonging for every child and family. This is reflected in how we design our programs, build educator capability, engage families and collaborate across the early childhood sector to improve access and participation.

In May 2025, both our Head of Children's Services and Development & Educational Leader hosted the Community of Educators Network Meeting, It Takes a Village, bringing together educators from across Fairfield and Liverpool to connect, reflect and strengthen inclusive early childhood practice.

The session included a powerful lived-experience presentation from Jolene, parent of a child with

autism and founder of Help You Cope, highlighting the role of understanding, empathy and practical action in creating inclusive environments. Delivered in partnership with the NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency – Sydney Metro West, Goodstart Early Learning, and EACH Early Childhood Approach, the meeting created space for shared learning and collaboration across services.

Our commitment to inclusive practice also extended beyond our own services, with Community First Step participating in Autism Expo Australia to connect with families, carers and sector partners, share information, and strengthen pathways to support.

Through initiatives like these, we continue to contribute to a more inclusive early childhood sector where every child and family can find their place and truly feel they belong.



START STRONG PROGRAM EXPANDED TO OCCASIONAL CARE

In 2025, The Parks Occasional Care became eligible for the NSW Government's Start Strong program, a significant milestone for both families and the broader early childhood sector.

Start Strong supports access to quality preschool education, with a strong focus on increasing participation for children experiencing disadvantage and barriers to early learning, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

This change recognises the important role Occasional Care plays in supporting children's early learning, particularly for families require flexible care arrangements. For the families we support, this means high-quality preschool education is now more affordable and accessible, regardless of work patterns or changing circumstances.

Extending Start Strong eligibility to Occasional Care reduces barriers to participation and enables more children to benefit from early learning experiences that support their development, confidence, and readiness for primary school.



PLAYGROUPS AND ROVING

Throughout the year, we continued to deliver free multicultural and supported playgroup sessions across the Fairfield LGA. Programs were facilitated at Community First Step's Community Hub, Smithfield Public School, Lansvale Public School, and Fairfield Public School, providing inclusive opportunities for children and families to engage in early learning and social connection within the Fairfield community.

In 2025, we successfully expanded our service delivery through the introduction of a new targeted playgroup session at Fairfield Public School. This program was specifically designed to support children's transition to school by supporting school readiness in a supportive and inclusive environment.

We introduced an evidence-based program into our delivery called Smalltalk. The facilitation of Smalltalk helps parents build rich home learning environments through everyday interactions such as talking, listening, reading and playing.

Community First Step continued to deliver professional child-minding services through its Roving Childcare program across Smithfield, Chester Hill, Carramar, Prairiewood, and Fairfield. Delivered by qualified and experienced educators, these sessions provided children with safe, engaging, and supportive environments while enabling parents and carers to access education and training, workshops, and community events.

OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE

This year, Community First Step continued to support families through Before School Care, After School Care, and Vacation Care programs across four sites: Lurnea Public School, St Johns Park Public School, Edensor Park Community Hall, and Guildford Public School.

All services worked closely with the Early Learning Commission, schools, families, and children to deliver high-quality care and meaningful learning experiences for children across Fairfield LGA. A key achievement this year was the establishment of Parent Advisory Groups, providing valuable insight and feedback to support informed decision-making, strengthen family engagement, and ensure programs and initiatives reflect the needs and perspectives of the community.

We strengthened our commitment as a Child Safe Organisation through ongoing policy review, clear procedures, and practices that promote the safety, wellbeing, and participation of all children. A strong focus remained on ensuring children's voices were heard, respected, and embedded in decision-making across services. Throughout the year, educators participated in a range of professional development and training opportunities to ensure practices remain current and continue to support the delivery of high-quality care.

During Vacation Care, children were actively engaged in the planning and implementation of programs, resulting in a diverse range of incursions and excursions. These included arts and crafts activities, visits to water parks, local parks, play centres, and bowling alleys, as well as water play, sensory experiences, colour runs, gaming trailers, cooking classes, trivia challenges, group games, and building and construction activities.



666

children supported in our Outside-of-School-Hours Care and Occasional Care

BIG SCHOOL, BIG MINDS: BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR SCHOOL

Following last year's renewal of Big School, Big Minds, this year marked an important milestone with the completion of a mixed-methods evaluation in partnership with Western Sydney University. Big School, Big Minds is Community First Step's school readiness program, supporting children from culturally and linguistically diverse and low socioeconomic backgrounds to make the transition to primary school with greater confidence, capability and connection.

Delivered across partner schools and early learning centres in Fairfield, Liverpool and Campbelltown, the program helps children build the early learning, social-emotional and classroom skills they need to begin school well. The evaluation showed clear, measurable outcomes, including significant improvements in early literacy and numeracy, social awareness, and children's understanding of classroom routines and expected behaviours. Using the standardised Bracken School Readiness Assessment, children achieved an average developmental gain of 4 months beyond expected growth over the course of the program. This is a strong result for a targeted school readiness program and reinforces the importance of early, place-based support before children enter the formal school system.

Parents and carers strongly valued the program, describing children as more confident, more prepared for school, and more able to participate in learning and social settings. Families also reported that the program helped children build early learning skills, understand classroom routines, and feel more comfortable with the transition to school.

"I think it helped him with his confidence, with going to school and meeting other kids."

"She's coming in leaps and bounds with her writing and understanding letters and counting."

"He's more confident in reading, writing and talking. Once he started, it was a big help."

In a region where early childhood vulnerability remains high, Big School, Big Minds continues to act as a protective factor at a critical life transition — strengthening school readiness, supporting families, and building firm foundations for lifelong learning.



AT A GLANCE



4 months

average developmental gain beyond expected growth



100%

of parents agreed that BSBM had a positive impact on their child and family



89.5%

of parents reported overall positive change



90.1%

of parents observed improvement in their child's skills and knowledge

PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS

During this year, our Child and Family Team continued to deliver evidence-based parenting programs across our Communities for Children and Targeted Early Intervention programs. Programs for Parents play an important role in supporting parents to better understand and strengthen parent-child relationships through education, knowledge, and practical skill-building. We worked closely with over 10 schools and services to deliver these programs. Our staff are trained facilitators in Bringing Up Great Kids, Tuning Into Kids, 1-2-3 Magic and Emotional Coaching, and Triple P Positive Parenting Group Sessions and Seminars.

CASE MANAGEMENT

During this year, our Child and Family Team continued to deliver evidence-based parenting programs across our Communities for Children and Targeted Early Intervention programs. Programs for Parents play an important role in supporting parents to better understand and strengthen parent-child relationships through education, knowledge, and practical skill-building. We worked closely with over 10 schools and services to deliver these programs. Our staff are trained facilitators in Bringing Up Great Kids, Tuning Into Kids, 1-2-3 Magic and Emotional Coaching, and Triple P Positive Parenting Group Sessions and Seminars.



287

parents supported through parenting programs





YOUTH SERVICES: STRENGTHENING VOICE, BELONGING AND OPPORTUNITY

Community First Step's Youth Services continued to support young people through a mix of early intervention programs and targeted supports, responding to the complex and changing needs of young people in our community.

During Youth Week, we hosted the Community First Step Games, which attracted more than 146 young people over three days. The event theme was inspired by the television show Squid Game, following consultation with young people involved in the planning group. Activities included a 'dalgona cookie' challenge, Red Light, Green Light, and a range of sporting competitions that continue to be a popular part of our Youth Drop-in Centre.



Through our 1:1 case management support, we continued to assist young people navigating complex challenges. Our team supported over 136 young people and their families to work towards their goals through comprehensive assessments, goal planning, and ongoing support. We walked alongside young people and their families to help reduce family conflict, prevent homelessness, address mental health concerns and strengthen overall wellbeing. Support also included material aid, advocacy, employment pathways, career guidance, and promoting self-care and wellbeing.

Our connection with Youth Justice services enabled our Youth and Family Specialist to deliver Youth Justice conferences to nine young people. We supported them in working towards their individual conference plans by encouraging accountability for their actions, providing mentoring support, using strength-based practices, and offering practical assistance and access to additional services to help them stay on track. Throughout this process, we also ensured that each young person's cultural and personal needs were considered when working with them.

We continued to deliver Rage Workshops and supported 26 young people at Canley Vale High School in 3 group workshops. Through these workshops young people were given the tools to support them to regulate their emotions, building emotional awareness, developing health coping strategies encouraging accountability and reflection, and promoting positive behaviour change.

Our Youth team delivered Physical Education workshops at Fairfield High School for 65 students from the Intensive English Class across four terms. These sessions used sport to foster connection and inclusion, helping young people build new skills, learn teamwork, and overcome challenges. We also partnered with Mission Australia to deliver a barbering workshop led by the owner of Fourwalls. The program was well received, with 25 young boys gaining practical skills and lived-experience insights into starting a business.

Alongside delivering regular programs and drop-in support, we also invested in understanding what young people need, value and want from our Youth Drop-In Centre. This work is helping us strengthen our evidence base and ensure our youth programs continue to be shaped by young people themselves.

LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Community First Step undertook a Youth Drop-In Centre Needs Assessment to better understand what young people need, value and want from the service.

The assessment was designed to centre youth voice and strengthen our evidence base for future program design. Young people helped identify priorities, shape key themes and inform how the Centre can continue to be safe, welcoming, relevant and youth-led.

Young people told us they value the Centre as a place to connect with friends, take part in sport and activities, and build trusted relationships with staff. They identified strong interest in sport, friendly competitions, creative workshops, games, food, Wi-Fi, hygiene facilities, and spaces to relax with friends.

“

“The more I went, the more comfortable I was.”

“It’s all the people I know at the community centre, not just friends, but staff... they’re very nice, and that’s what keeps me coming back.”

“I heard about it from my friend... it was a good place to meet up every Tuesday.”

”

They also told us they want more opportunities to have a say, build friendships, access support and speak one-on-one with a youth worker, along with developing practical skills for the future, including career readiness, life skills, and homework support.

These insights are helping us improve our youth programs so they remain relevant, inclusive and shaped by the voices of young people.





DISABILITY SERVICES: STRENGTHENING CHOICE, CONNECTION AND INDEPENDENCE

This year was a significant period of change for our Disability Services. In response to pressures across the NDIS operating environment, we carefully reviewed our service model and made the difficult decision to close our Supported Independent Living service. While this marked the end of one service model, our commitment to people with disability, their families and carers remains strong.

Across LifeAbility Hub, Community Access, Support Coordination and our developing respite offering, we continued to focus on disability supports that are sustainable, high quality and centred on choice, connection, independence and trusted relationships.

A major milestone was achieving full conformity in our NDIS re-certification audit, reflecting the quality and integrity of our disability services.

BELONGING THROUGH EVERYDAY PARTICIPATION

At the LifeAbility Hub and through Community Access, participants continued to take part in a wide range of social, recreational and life-skills activities, including community outings, interest-based programs and shared group experiences.

These activities are more than a calendar of things to do. They create opportunities for participants to build friendships, try new experiences, develop everyday skills and feel more connected to their community.

Across the year, participants engaged in activities including ten-pin bowling, fishing, Zumba, sports days, aqua golf and local outings. These shared experiences supported social connection, physical wellbeing, confidence and meaningful participation in community life.



51

families trusted us to provide services for their family member with a disability

THE VALUE OF BEING KNOWN

A defining strength of our Disability Services is the consistency and experience of the team. With a combined 70 years of service at Community First Step, staff bring deep knowledge, long-standing relationships and a strong understanding of each participant's needs, preferences and goals.

For participants and families, this continuity matters. It builds trust over time and creates a sense of safety, familiarity and belonging that cannot be achieved through transactional service delivery alone.

“The support team have been a big part of my life for over 6 years; I went away to someone else and came back because I couldn’t find the same understanding with other carers. They know me, and I trust them to do what’s right.” - Lara



SUPPORTING CHOICE AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Our Support Coordination team worked alongside participants to strengthen their confidence in understanding and using their NDIS plans, making informed choices, connecting with appropriate providers and advocating for their own needs.

For one participant, this support contributed to a significant step towards greater autonomy. Previously under Public Trustee and Guardian management, she expressed a strong desire to regain financial independence. With support from an advocate and our Support Coordination team, she attended a review panel and successfully self-advocated to transition out of Public Trustee management.

This outcome gave her greater control over her decisions and preferences. Since then, she has continued to grow in confidence, engage more actively in her community and explore further opportunities to increase her independence.

BUILDING FLEXIBLE SUPPORTS FOR THE FUTURE

Following the closure of our Supported Independent Living service, we continued to invest in disability supports that are more flexible, responsive and aligned with participant and family needs.

This included progressing our Short-Term Accommodation and respite model, designed to provide participants with supported time away from their usual care arrangements in a safe, welcoming and familiar environment. Respite also provides families and carers with reassurance through trusted support, while creating opportunities for participants to experience new routines, build independence and strengthen social connection.

To support this work, the LifeAbility Hub was thoughtfully reconfigured to create calm, comfortable and homely spaces. During the year, Community First Step also secured NSW Government grant funding to refurbish the LifeAbility Hub kitchen, with works scheduled to commence in FY26. Once completed, the upgraded kitchen will create further opportunities for shared meals, food preparation, everyday living skills and communal experiences that reflect a home-like setting.

Together, these developments reflect a year of honest review, careful decision-making and continued commitment to people with disability. As we look ahead, our focus is on strengthening disability supports that are person-centred, sustainable and grounded in the trusted relationships that matter..



QUALITY AND SAFETY

Quality, safety and safeguarding are central to how Community First Step delivers services and supports our community. In 2024–2025, we continued to strengthen the systems, practices and organisational culture that help ensure our services are safe, accountable, responsive and continuously improving.

This work reflects our commitment to meeting regulatory and contractual obligations, while also building the internal capability, shared responsibility and learning culture needed to provide trusted, high-quality services across all areas of the organisation.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

As a Child Safe Organisation, Community First Step is committed to creating environments where children are safe, respected, heard and supported to thrive. This commitment is embedded across our policies, procedures, staff training, recruitment practices and everyday interactions with children and families.

Throughout the year, we continued to strengthen our implementation of the Child Safe Standards, with a focus on preventing, identifying and responding to harm. This included reinforcing clear reporting pathways, supporting staff understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, and ensuring children's safety, rights and wellbeing remain central to service design and delivery.

Our approach recognises that child safety is not a standalone compliance requirement, but an organisation-wide responsibility. By embedding child safe practice across our programs and services, we continue to build a culture where children are protected, listened to and valued.

STRENGTHENING QUALITY, RISK AND SAFEGUARDS

In 2024–2025, Community First Step continued to strengthen its Risk Assurance Program as a key part of our approach to safe, high-quality service delivery. The program provides a structured framework for meeting regulatory, contractual and safeguarding obligations, while reinforcing a culture of accountability and continuous improvement across the organisation.

Scheduled reviews of operational and quality systems included incident reporting, complaints monitoring, business continuity planning, onsite audits, early childhood and NDIS compliance requirements, and the ongoing review of policies, procedures and forms in response to legislative and regulatory change.

A significant quality milestone this year was the successful completion of our NDIS re-certification audit, with Community First Step achieving conformity across all areas. This outcome reflected the strength of our quality, safeguarding and governance systems, and our continued commitment to safe, person-centred supports for people with disability.

The ongoing work of our WHS and Risk Committee has further strengthened our organisation-wide approach to risk, quality and safety. By bringing together cross-functional perspectives and reviewing risk and performance data, the Committee supports proactive identification of issues, shared learning and practical improvements across services.

BENCHMARKING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Community First Step also continued to participate in Ability Roundtable benchmarking, supporting our commitment to evidence-informed improvement across disability services. This benchmarking enables us to compare key quality, safety and operational indicators with other providers, identify emerging trends, and strengthen decision-making about service quality, workforce practice and sustainability.

Together, these initiatives reflect our commitment to building strong systems that support safe services, trusted relationships and better outcomes for the people and communities we serve.



OUR COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

Throughout 2024–2025, Community First Step continued to progress the development of our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, building on our commitment to formalising and strengthening reconciliation across the organisation.

The RAP was shaped through the collective contribution of staff representatives from across our service areas, working alongside our RAP Champion to identify meaningful commitments, priorities and actions. This collaborative process strengthened shared understanding and helped embed reconciliation as part of our broader organisational journey; not as a standalone activity, but as part of how we build cultural respect, accountability and inclusion across our work.

A significant milestone during the year was receiving positive feedback and provisional endorsement from Reconciliation Australia. This marks an important step forward as we continue learning, building relationships and strengthening our role in supporting culturally safe and respectful practice.

As part of this process, we were proud to engage First Nations artist Shareen Clayton, a proud

Wiradjuri woman born and raised in Sydney, to create original artwork for Community First Step which now hangs in our head office and serves as a visual and cultural anchor.

In describing the artwork, Shareen explains

“This painting represents Community First Step and their support to the local area. The centre circle represents the workers and the many services that are offered to help individuals and families. Bush berries are used to enhance well-being and resilience while the goanna tracks show strength and connections between families. The lower corners represent local businesses and organisations who work with Community First Step to provide support to the broader community”.

This artwork is a daily reminder of our shared responsibility to advance reconciliation through meaningful relationships, cultural respect and sustained action.



SHAPING A BRAND FOR THE FUTURE

Over the past year, Community First Step undertook a significant piece of work to reshape how we present ourselves to our community, partners and stakeholders, aligned to our long-term direction and purpose.

As our organisation has grown and evolved over more than 50 years, it became increasingly important that our identity clearly reflected who we are today and the impact we create. The rebrand was guided by our Strategic Plan commitment to *Elevate Our Presence*: strengthening visibility, trust and recognition so we can more effectively advocate, collaborate and support communities across Fairfield and Greater Western Sydney.

The process began with a structured discovery phase to explore our identity, purpose and future direction. This drew on insights from conversations with partners and organisations across our broader ecosystem, alongside facilitated workshops with the Board and leadership team.

Together, these inputs helped clarify how we are experienced, what we stand for, and how our role within the community continues to evolve.

Insights from this discovery phase informed the development of a comprehensive brand strategy. This work focused on clearly articulating our positioning, our story, tone of voice and key messages, ensuring we could consistently communicate not only what we do, but why we do it. The strategy provides a shared framework for storytelling and engagement across audiences and channels, supporting stronger connection, advocacy and consistency over time.

Development of the new visual identity is now underway, alongside planning for a new website, with the brand launch and roll out scheduled for later in 2025.

BUILDING A STRONG AND CONNECTED WORKFORCE

Our people are central to the impact Community First Step delivers every day. In 2024–2025, we continued to invest in a workplace culture that is connected, values-led and aligned with our strategic direction.

Empowering our workforce sits at the heart of our People and Culture Strategy, which aims to strengthen collaboration, support, respect and unity across the organisation. This year's staff engagement results reflected a positive and committed workforce, with staff reporting strong levels of pride, connection and confidence in Community First Step's direction.

The results showed that 93% of staff are proud to be a Community First Step team member, 92% would recommend the organisation to someone looking for work, and 90% are satisfied working at Community First Step. Staff also reported strong alignment with the organisation's direction, with 84% seeing a clear link between their work and Community First Step's goals.

These results provide an important measure of our organisational culture and help guide our ongoing focus on communication, staff wellbeing, leadership and continuous improvement.

AT A GLANCE



93%

of staff are proud to be a Community First Step team member



92%

of staff would recommend Community First Step as a workplace



90%

of staff are satisfied working at Community First Step



84%

of staff see a clear link between their work and the organisation's goals



COMING TOGETHER AS ONE ORGANISATION

Our second All-Staff Conference, held in January 2025, was an important moment of connection, reflection and shared learning. With the theme *Creating Strong Communities & Fulfilling Lives*, the conference brought staff together from across all service areas to celebrate achievements, deepen understanding of our work, and connect with the organisation's future direction.

The day included an Acknowledgement of Country by Uncle Darrell Fabar, a Lion Dance celebrating the diversity of the communities we support, and a keynote address from Billie Sankovic, CEO of Western Sydney Community Forum, on building thriving and inclusive communities across Greater Western Sydney.

Teams from across the organisation shared their achievements and impact, while the launch of our new five-year Strategic Plan gave staff a clear sense of our future direction and the role they each play in bringing it to life. The day also included a leadership and self-development session delivered by Michelle Rushton from People of Influence, encouraging staff to reflect on their strengths, growth and contribution.

Together, the conference reinforced our shared purpose, strengthened connection across teams and celebrated the people who make our work possible.



SUPPORTING LEARNING AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION

Community First Step continued to be a valued learning environment for students beginning their professional journeys. During 2024–2025, 13 students from eight tertiary institutions completed more than 3,000 placement hours across our Children's Services and Community and Psychosocial Services teams. Partnering institutions included Western Sydney University, Lead College, Victoria Institute of Education, Macquarie University, Torrens University, Reach for Training, Peak Training and TAFE NSW.

Volunteers also continued to make a meaningful contribution across our services. During the year, 18 volunteers supported our community, children's and disability services, with additional one-off volunteers assisting fundraising barbecues at Bunnings Villawood.

Together, students and volunteers brought fresh perspectives, practical support and community spirit to our work, while helping strengthen the broader workforce and service ecosystem around us.

INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Within Children's Services, Community First Step successfully secured funding through the Early Childhood Retention Grant, enabling a 15% wage increase for eligible educators over two years.

This funding recognises the critical role early childhood educators play in children's development, learning and family wellbeing. By supporting educator retention, we are strengthening workforce stability and continuity of care for children and families. Investing in our educators also reinforces the quality, consistency and relationships that underpin safe, nurturing and inclusive early learning environments.

FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

COMMUNITY GENEROSITY IN ACTION

Throughout FY25, Community First Step was supported by individuals, community groups, local businesses, partners, staff and volunteers who contributed their time, energy and generosity to strengthen our work across Fairfield and South West Sydney.

These fundraising and community support activities were about more than raising funds. They helped build visibility, deepen relationships and create practical ways for people to stand alongside individuals and families experiencing social and economic hardship.

THREE PEAKS NSW 2025: TREK TO EMPOWER COMMUNITIES

In April 2025, Community First Step supporters took on the NSW Three Peaks Challenge, covering more than 22 kilometres across Etheridge Ridge, Mount Kosciuszko and Mount Carruthers in a single day. The trek brought together endurance and purpose, raising funds to support community-led programs across Fairfield and South West Sydney.

Community First Step's CEO, Pandora Patterson, was joined on the trek by Board Chair Ed Parker and Deputy Chair Tara Le Friedman, making the challenge a visible expression of shared leadership, commitment and solidarity with the communities we serve.



"The challenge reflected the resilience and perseverance we see every day in the communities we work with."

- Pandora Patterson, CEO



GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISING THROUGH BUNNINGS BBQS

Bunnings BBQs continued to provide an important grassroots fundraising opportunity during the year, while also increasing local visibility of Community First Step's services.

Staff and volunteers from across Children's Services, Disability Services and Community Services delivered BBQ fundraisers at Bunnings Villawood, Hoxton Park and Bonnyrigg to support our programs and services. These events also created valuable opportunities to connect with local residents, share information about our work and strengthen community recognition.

Community First Step was also the beneficiary of a Bunnings staff-run BBQ at Villawood. This relationship was further strengthened through the donation of a newly built BBQ, delivered with Sefton High School through the Trade for Teens program.

Built by Year 10 students, the BBQ will be used at the LifeAbility Hub to support shared meals, social connection and community activities for people with intellectual disability, families and staff.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN EXPERIENCING HARDSHIP

Community generosity was also demonstrated through the support of the St Jude's Bowral Women's Committee, who chose Community First Step as the beneficiary of a special event supporting women experiencing hardship.



Around 80 women came together to assemble 'For Her' hampers filled with donated personal care and self-care items, including sanitary products and toiletries - essentials that are often among the first expenses to be cut when households are under financial pressure.

Distributed through Community First Step's Community Hub, the hampers provided practical and dignified support to women across South West Sydney. For recipients, they offered not only essential items, but also a reminder that they were seen, valued and supported during difficult times



SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH THE MAYOR'S CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Community First Step was also selected as one of the local charities supported through Fairfield City Council's Mayor's Christmas Appeal in December 2024.

The Appeal brought together donations from community members, businesses and local organisations, including new toys and non-perishable food items collected through library branches, council facilities and local retailers. Community First Step assisted with distribution through our services, helping ensure support reached families and individuals experiencing hardship during the Christmas period.

Together, these efforts reflect the strength of local generosity and the important role of community partnerships in supporting people through difficult times.





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CertEd, DipEd, BEd
Head of Children's Services



NARTARN AL DHALIMI
DipLeadMgt, DipProMgt,
CertIV Disability
Head of Disability Services

OUR FINANCES

STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	2025 \$	2024 \$
REVENUE	5,532,738	5,553,658
Other income	107,141	90,706
TOTAL REVENUE AND OTHER INCOME	5,639,879	5,644,364
EXPENSES		
Advertising expenses	(91,842)	(106,801)
Accounting, audit and professional fees	(127,674)	(108,818)
Employee benefits expense	(4,641,143)	(4,321,370)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(56,979)	(60,861)
Consultancy fees	(84,138)	(130,080)
Insurance expenses	(51,473)	(41,095)
Motor vehicle expenses	(51,596)	(56,002)
Program costs	(186,522)	(183,442)
Rent expenses	(70,460)	(81,143)
Repairs and maintenance expenses	(22,432)	(27,030)
Workers compensation expenses	(92,327)	(126,478)
Finance costs	(18,563)	(21,698)
Other expenses	(246,157)	(366,035)
TOTAL EXPENSES	5,741,306	5,630,853
Surplus/(deficit) before income tax expense	(101,427)	13,511
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus/(deficit) after income tax expense for the year	(101,427)	13,511
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax	-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	(101,427)	13,511

The 2025 financial year recorded an operating deficit of \$101,427, driven by planned investment in growth initiatives and one-off costs incurred only this year, positioning the organisation for future growth.

Revenue for the year reached \$5.6 million, with 57% generated from children's and disability services, reflecting a modest 1% increase (\$60K) over the previous year.

Balance sheet position remains strong with accumulated reserve of \$1.8M.

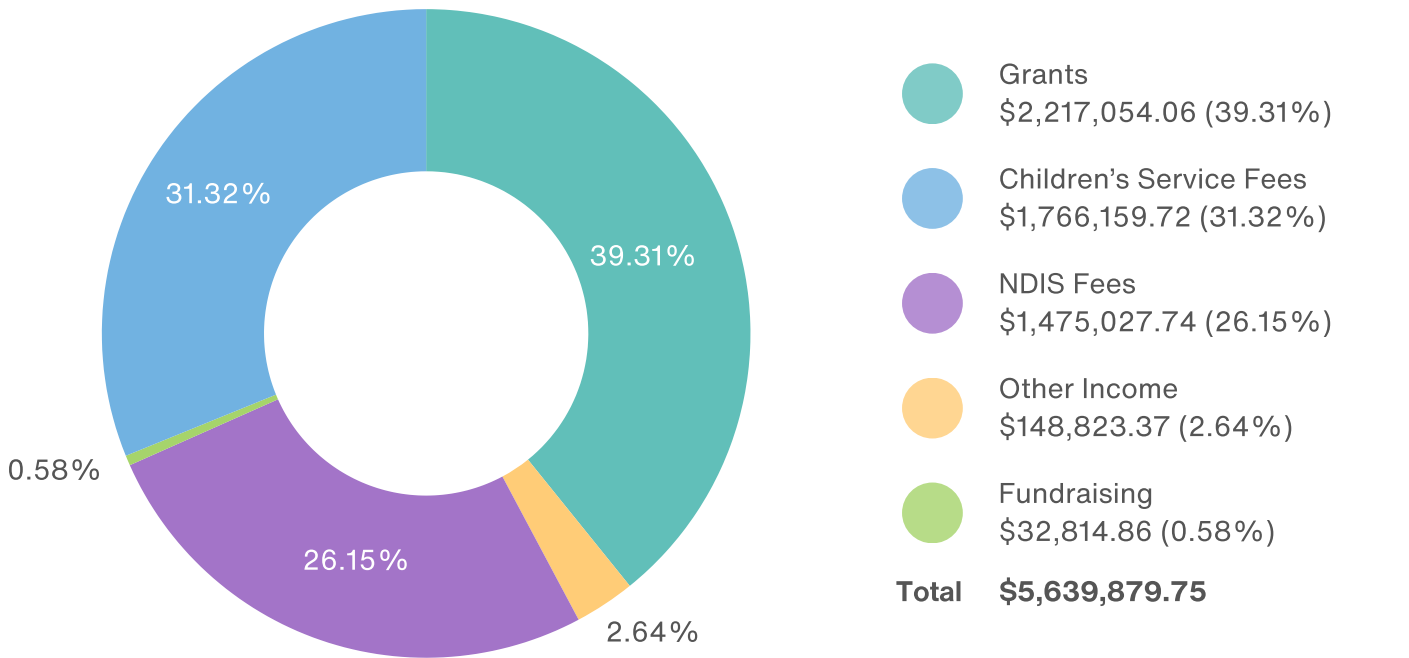
For more detailed financial information, please visit the ACNC website to access financial documents for Fairfield Community Resource Centre (trading name Community First Step).

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

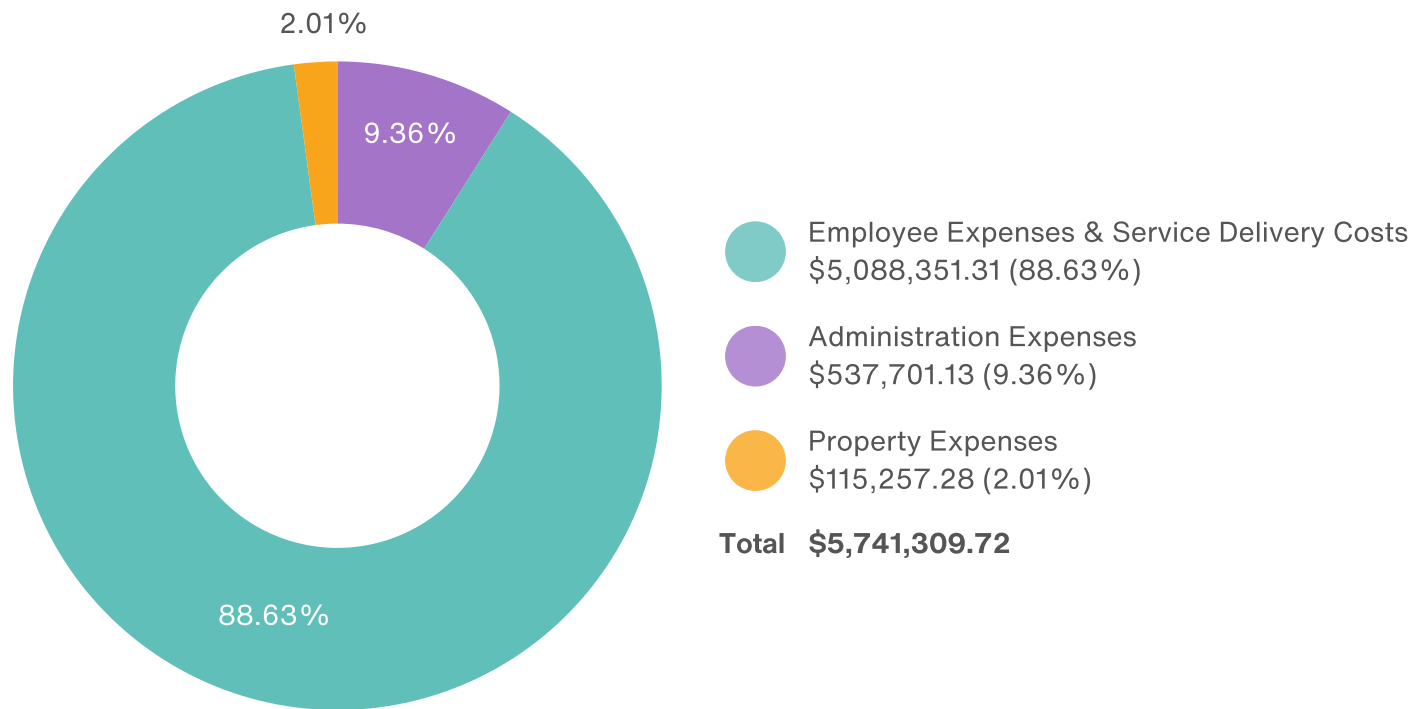
	2025 \$	2024 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	706,326	780,511
Trade and other receivables	123,693	113,791
Financial assets	1,868,267	1,817,013
Other assets	65,175	46,991
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	2,763,461	2,758,306
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	124,331	148,078
Right-of-use assets	50,874	81,374
Intangibles	84,800	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	260,005	229,452
TOTAL ASSETS	3,023,466	2,987,758
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	441,199	367,792
Borrowings	724	4,640
Lease liabilities	21,767	33,247
Employee benefits	559,568	528,969
Other liabilities	144,798	70,597
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	1,168,056	1,005,245
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease liabilities	33,510	55,277
Employee benefits	64,080	67,989
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	97,590	123,266
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,265,646	1,128,511
NET ASSETS	1,757,820	1,859,247
EQUITY		
Retained surpluses	1,757,820	1,859,247
TOTAL EQUITY	1,757,820	1,859,247

As a for-purpose organisation and registered charity, we are deeply grateful to our funding partners and donors for their generous support which enables us to continue our work to build stronger, more connected communities across Fairfield and Greater Western Sydney.

TOTAL REVENUE



TOTAL EXPENSES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to our following collaborators and partners:

Anglicare	NSW Department of Communities and Justice
Ashcroft Public School	NSW Department of Education
Assyrian Resource Centre	NSW Health
Asuria	NSW Police (Fairfield and Liverpool Police Area Command)
Benevolent Society	Old Guildford Public School
Bonnie's Support Services	Oz Harvest
Bossley Park Public School	Passfield Park School
Brolga Dance Academy	Patrician Brothers High School
Bunnings, Villawood	Peak Training
Cabramatta High School	People of Influence
Campbelltown Youth Centre	Prairievale Public School
Canley Vale High School	Reach for Training
Carramar Public School	Safe Haven
Centrelink	Salvation Army
Community Connect Macarthur	Sarah Redfern High School
Community She Shed	Sarah Redfern Public School
Core Community Services	Sector Connect
Department of Communities and Justice	Service NSW
EACH	Smith Family
Fairfield City Council	Smithfield Public School
Fairfield Heights Public School	South Western Multicultural and Community Centre
Fairfield High School	South Western Sydney Local Health District
Fairfield Hospital	SSI
Fairfield Library	STARTTS
Fairfield Public School	St. Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School
Fairfield West Public School	St. Johns Park Public School
Family Planning	St. Patricks Catholic Primary School Guildford
Governor Philip King Public School	Staying Home Leaving Violence
Guildford Public School	Stockland Mall – Wetherill Park
Head2Health	Stotts College
Headspace Liverpool	Sydney Policy Lab, University of Sydney
Housing	TAFE
Hume Housing	Torrens University
Increment	The Grange Public School
Juvenile Justice (Youth Justice)	The Inclusion Support Program (KU)
Lead College	The Leading Partnership
Learning Links	The Parks Community Network
LCSA	The Parks - Sydney's Parkland Councils
Legal Aid	The Silver Coin Project
Life Squad	Uniting
Liverpool City Council	University of Sydney
Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre	University of Wollongong
Local Community Services Association	Urbis
Lurnea Public School	Victoria Institute of Education
Macarthur Family and Youth services	Villawood North Public School
Macquarie University	Warwick Farm Public School
Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School	Wesley Mission
Meraki Foundation	Western Sydney Community Forum
Minto Cobras	Western Sydney University
Mission Australia	Wise Employment
MRC Liverpool	Woodville Alliance
MTC Future Ready	Young Spirit Mentoring Program
Navitas	Youth Action
New South Wales Rugby League	Youth off the Streets
NSW Council of Social Service	

