



2020 – 2021
YEAR IN REVIEW

THE SPIRIT OF THE *essential worker*

catholic
care

WESTERN SYDNEY AND THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains is the Diocese of Parramatta's social welfare agency that exists to continue Jesus Christ's work in the community.

We provide professional care and support through the Church to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community, regardless of faith, religion, gender, ethnicity, age or socio-economic background.

Our aim is to be the face of Christ and make a positive difference in the lives of those who need our support, and to help them find joy and purpose in life.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

OUR HISTORY

The organisation that was to become Catholic Care was established in the 1940s. It was the idea of four Sydney women who dreamed that the poor and anyone in distress could receive professional care from the Catholic Church.

They wrote to the then-Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Gilroy, suggesting that a Catholic welfare organisation be established, and the Catholic Welfare Bureau was born. When the Diocese of Parramatta was created in 1986, the welfare arm became Centrecare Parramatta and in 2017 was renamed Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

Today, Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains reaches thousands of people in the community each year through the work of more than 200 committed staff and volunteers.



MESSAGE FROM BISHOP VINCENT

Dear brothers and sisters,

After nearly two years of the pandemic and months of hard lockdown, we rejoice as the country slowly recovers and we regain our freedoms thanks to the great work of getting people vaccinated.

I thank God for the great work of Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains in 2021. Through their many frontline workers, they have cared with professionalism and tenderness, for so many in this ongoing pandemic crisis. Catholic Care's ministry to those on the margins, shows precisely how God's love makes itself known to us.

The workers at the frontline of Catholic Care's outreach have especially witnessed to Jesus Christ's loving compassion for those at the edges of our community who are often neglected.

Thank you to all these self-sacrificing and often hidden people, who like Jesus, are servants to all!

The pandemic has certainly highlighted how vulnerable and interconnected everyone is. If we do not take care of one another, starting with the least, with those who are most impacted, including creation, we cannot heal the world. Let us follow the footsteps of Jesus as we listen and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

May the great ministry of Catholic Care prosper and flourish in the years ahead!

**Most Reverend Vincent Long
Van Nguyen OFM CONV**

Bishop of Parramatta

The list of who we know are essential workers is not as small as we think it is.



MESSAGE FROM EPISCOPAL VICAR FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

Back in 2015 Pope Francis said that 'we are not living in an era of change but a change of era'. In the past couple of years, the reality reminds us constantly about the new ways in which we interact as human beings.

Hugs, kisses and shaking hands give us all a different feeling in the times of COVID. As we slowly try to regain some sense of normality, deep down we know that things will never be the same.

One of the things that has changed, is the way we understand the role of essential workers. The group of people who, maybe for many were almost invisible a few months back, but the ones who through their dedication, commitment, generosity and determination, helped us to make life bearable, especially during the most difficult times of the pandemic. Many examples of their extraordinary roles will remain hidden or maybe known only to the people to whom they made a difference. However, as we come to the end of another year, we can spend some time meditating on the important roles of essential workers during these challenging times.

Many of us will think of the workers at hospitals, offering support to the sick especially when they were unable to have their families with them;

others might think of the friendly delivery person bringing food and the essentials for those unable to go out for risk of getting sick; there is also the role of those who even with the limitations on personal contact, made it possible to reach out to those struggling emotionally using the technology available; the many teachers who transformed their homes to make them spaces of learning to continue giving the gift of knowledge to so many.

The list of who we know are essential workers is not as small as we think it is. As we embrace the new year and thank God for the year that was, I want to join my voice to the many who say to our essential workers: Thank you for all you do! God bless you and please stay safe!

Peace in Jesus

**Very Rev Luis Fernando
Montano Rodriguez**

Episcopal Vicar for Social Welfare

While most people were in lockdown, our frontline workers went about their usual business of care.



Paul McMahon
Advisory Council Chair



Peter Loughnane
Executive Director

LEADERS' REPORT

It really is an understatement to say that we are proud of the people of Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

Throughout what has been one of the most challenging times in many of our lives—the COVID-19 pandemic—our staff have remained dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of our clients. While most people were in lockdown, our frontline workers went about their usual business of care to ensure those most vulnerable in our community were not forgotten—to ensure they had food on their tables, nappies for the baby, the right medication, a roof over their head and someone to talk to.

It is through the generosity, compassion and kindness of our frontline staff that we have kept our doors open. The spirit of our essential workers is something we are in awe of.

Throughout this report, you will read stories of our people whose life's work is about others – their safety, their wellbeing, a brighter future.

This incredible human spirit has not only meant we could continue to support those who need us, but that we have had the opportunity to look critically at our business to ensure we are here, bigger and better, for the long term.

A great deal of work was done this year to fulfil the goals of our strategic plan launched in 2020. Among this is the work for our older community members and those from our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations. While COVID impacted

the launch of our centre-based respite for older CALD community members, the program gained momentum towards the end of 2021, giving clients access to a range of activities including light exercise, sharing stories and memories, games and craft.

Supporting senior members of our community is something we feel passionately about. We want our elders to feel seen, heard and supported so they can continue living life the way they want, for as long as they can.

We will continue to look for opportunities for our elders, as we will for all who are most vulnerable in our community—people with disability, young at-risk single mothers, members of our Aboriginal communities, refugee families and families who may be struggling with parenting, loss of work, divorce, violence and mental health concerns.

Without judgment, we are here to make sure no-one is left behind, to meet people where they are, whatever their circumstances, and do what we can to make a positive impact on their lives.

We thank our staff from the bottom of our hearts for all that you do for the organisation and our clients. And we thank our clients for choosing us to support you when you need it most, sometimes at the darkest time of your life. **We are here for you.**

2020-2021 Highlights

- Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains was offered more than **\$1.261million in funding to deliver targeted community aged care services.** The grants are funded through the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and will enable us to provide services right across the Diocese footprint.
- Centre-based respite for older culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members was launched to give clients access to a range of activities including light exercise, sharing stories and memories, games and craft.
- **Neighbour Aid at Blacktown celebrated 30 years of supporting the community.** From humble beginnings in 1991, Neighbour Aid has grown to become a lifeline to many people in the local community.
- **Services for clients were maintained throughout COVID-19 lockdowns** to ensure vulnerable people were safe, had essential items and were not alone.
- We received a \$35,000 Pets and Animal Welfare Support (PAWS) grant from the NSW Government to build fencing and stables for free horse agistment, so women experiencing domestic violence can escape knowing their horses will be safe.
- **Our pregnancy support service (Project Elizabeth) won the Leadership in Pregnancy Support Award in the 2020 Pregnancy Support Awards.**
- Our Finances after Fires program was awarded \$20,000 from the Bushfire Resilience and Recovery Fund.
- An innovative program 'Off Screen and Smart Play' developed by Catholic Care's Problem Gambling team won Federal Government funding to help families and young people avoid the downside of online gaming and gambling.
- After officially opening the Springwood Community Garden in 2017, ABC's gardening guru Costa Georgiadis returned to celebrate the garden's fourth birthday. The host of ABC's Gardening Australia, Costa joined around 450 locals for a yarn and to host a wicking bed (self-watering garden bed) workshop, as part of the celebrations.
- In time for winter, **we distributed 250 winter coats** from the Order of Malta to Houses to Homes, Aboriginal Catholic Services, Springwood Drop-In Centre and our Garden Service clients.
- Our corporate office moved from Mamre House in Orchard Hills to Parramatta. This made way for work on the rejuvenation and repurposing of Mamre House to begin.
- We were awarded **\$50,150 for the Trees and Minds project** to remove burnt trees and provide mental health supports to people affected by bushfires, and a **\$63,000 grant for the Cool Kids Bush Fire Anxiety Support Program** to deliver programs to children in targeted bushfire affected areas.
- We were awarded **\$67,300 to deliver the REACH psychoeducational wellbeing group** for individuals with a particular condition, such as depression or anxiety as a result of, or compounded by bushfire, run by qualified Black Dog Institute-trained facilitators.

*"Catholic Care is a wonderful organisation and very much appreciated by us all."
-Joan*

OUR SPECIALISED SERVICES

SPECIALISED SERVICES AGEING WELL

Whatever your age, you will never be invisible to the people at Catholic Care. Our range of supports aim to keep you living independently in your own home for as long as possible, while staying connected with your friends and community.

Our Commonwealth Home Support Program (Neighbour Aid) supports elderly people to stay living at home through meal preparation and help with shopping, to home maintenance, and respite and support for carers.

While our Community Visitor's Scheme aims to reduce loneliness and enrich people's lives through fortnightly visits to residents at aged-care facilities.

THIS YEAR:

- Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains was offered more than \$1.261million in funding to deliver targeted community aged care services. The grants are funded through the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and enable us to provide services right across the Diocese footprint.
- Centre-based respite for older culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members was launched to give clients access to a range of activities including light exercise, sharing stories and memories, games and craft. Respite at Doonside Neighbourhood Centre initially opened once a week. The service aims to provide respite for carers and social connection for clients.
- Neighbour Aid celebrated 30 years of supporting the community. From humble beginnings in 1991, Neighbour Aid has grown to become a lifeline to many people in the local community. The service supports people to remain independent and feel less isolated.
- While COVID-19 lockdowns restricted many face-to-face services, support continued to be offered over the phone to ensure people felt connected and had access to essential items and care.



JOAN'S STORY

Since arriving in Australia from her native England, Joan Bury has been made to feel at home by more than just her wonderful family.

Not long after arriving in Sydney five years ago, Joan heard about Catholic Care's Neighbour Aid and 'joining' has been one of the best things she's done.

"I have found that the staff and clients on the weekly bus trips so very kind, helpful and welcoming," Joan said.

"As most of us were seniors, it was good to be with friends about my own age and also meet up with people of diverse nationalities living in adjoining suburbs."

Joan said Neighbour Aid's voluntary driver service had been extremely helpful, especially for medical appointments and shopping trips.

"Catholic Care is a wonderful organisation and very much appreciated by us all."



SPECIALISED SERVICES

BRINGING A BABY INTO THE WORLD

There are few things more important than caring for a newborn child.

Our programs have helped many young women who are feeling lost or have been excluded from their community and are at risk of homelessness, to find their feet, make new connections and get the support they need.

Our parenting support program supports new parents who are finding the challenges of a newborn baby overwhelming.

THIS YEAR:

- Our parenting support program won the Leadership in Pregnancy Support Award in the 2020 Pregnancy Support Awards.
- The program was also the beneficiary of the Bishop's 2020 Christmas Appeal.
- As essential workers, our pregnancy and parenting support teams continued to support women and new parents in need throughout the COVID-19 lockdowns, including support with food, nappies, and medication for people in home quarantine.
- Contact via phone calls and emails increased to support clients feeling isolated during the pandemic.
- Staff completed Work Development Order training to assist clients to undertake unpaid work to finalise fines.
- Reflective supervision with an infant mental health specialist was moved online during COVID-19 so staff could continue to gain support and training around client issues and trauma triggers.



The Essential Worker

KATRINA'S STORY

Motherhood is so many things. It's life-changing, challenging, scary, all-consuming, and beautiful.

But what if you're a young mum facing homelessness, or you have no one to support you? Sadly, this is a reality for many women. Katrina Marsh is dedicated to breaking this cycle.

Our transition caseworker and support worker, Katrina supports young mothers and pregnant women aged 16 to 25 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. With patience, persistence, and compassion, Katrina finds transitional accommodation for these vulnerable mums and supports them to gain access to longer-term housing.

Each day presents a new challenge, yet Katrina always shows up with a smile on her face and the desire to make a difference.

"No mother or child should go without basic needs like housing," Katrina said. "They deserve the same economic opportunities as everyone else. We strive to be part of the solution."

Katrina's clients also often need help with parenting and living skills, access to education and employment, and legal support to get their lives on track.

"Our clients have faced significant trauma, such as family violence, unemployment, drug misuse, and homelessness," Katrina says. "Quite often, these traumatic experiences started in childhood. Their self-esteem can be so low that they can't see a better outcome for themselves. We work with young mums to break the cycle. We build their trust and confidence, and advocate for them so that they and their children have a better future."

Katrina loves seeing the change in people's lives.

"I do believe we are making a difference," she said. "I even have a client who is now putting away money for her daughter so that she can buy a house one day."

"I dream of a day when we no longer need homeless services. It's an unnecessary social problem. We have the money and ability to make change so that everyone can have a home, but there needs to be more social and government action. That's my hope for the future - housing for all."



SPECIALISED SERVICES CHAPLAINCY

Our chaplains provide spiritual and emotional support for patients and inmates, their families and staff in the seven hospitals and three correctional centres throughout the Diocese of Parramatta.

An inclusive ministry available to all faiths, our 15 chaplains work alongside others involved in the care of patients and inmates.

During COVID-19, our chaplains adjusted to visitor restrictions by using Zoom, FaceTime, phone calls and emails to continue to support patients and inmates.

THIS YEAR:

- Chaplains provided 12,000 hours of pastoral care.
- Work continued with Broken Bay Catholic Care and Sydney Catholic Care on the development of volunteer training to support Pastoral Care.
- Planning began to increase the number of trained volunteers to assist with Pastoral Care once restrictions ease.
- One of our chaplains completed his third unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Advanced Level. He will now start his training as a CPE supervisor, enabling him to run endorsed training courses for Pastoral Care at Catholic Care.
- The program was also the recipient of the Bishop's 2021 Good Samaritan Appeal.



The Essential Worker

MICHAEL'S STORY

For Michael Turner, being a chaplain means being a safe and trustworthy person who is prepared to meet people where they are.

Beginning his career as a chaplain at the Nepean Hospital four years ago, Michael was soon asked to spend his days ministering in the mental health wards. Although initially hesitant, he agreed, and began a meaningful role that presented new challenges and profound fulfillment. Today, his daily conversations can range from a simple check-in to delving deep into a patient's trauma.

"People invite me into their world, which often involves pain, loss and fear," Michael, who started his career as a chaplain later in life, says. "A chaplain needs to have courage to go where the patient leads. I can't be afraid of the darkness of another person's world. My task is to join them there and let them know they're not alone. I remind them God hasn't forgotten them. God is the reason I'm sitting here with them."

Michael readily admits his limits. He'll tell you he can't fix cancer, mental illness, or the loss of a child. But what he can do is sit with people. In a rushed world that often wants to look for quick fixes, Michael provides a place where people can slow down and reflect.

Behind the scenes, Michael understands the necessity of taking care of his own needs first. Compassion fatigue and burnout are real risks in this line of work. So, Michael believes chaplains should focus on taking care of themselves - not only by practising self-care, but by doing the work to unpack their own emotions.

"In order to be an effective chaplain, you must have the courage to face your own darkness. It's hard work to face your own inner self and be completely understanding and accepting of that. But how can you expect to sit with another person's trauma if you can't even face your own emotional baggage?" he said.



The Essential Worker

FROM ACCOUNTANT TO EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

A desire to spend more time with her children was the catalyst behind Jasmine Jia's decision to leave her accounting career and start a family day care service.

Jasmine, a mother-of-two, left her career as an accountant in 2015 and opened an 'Outside of School Hours' (OOSH) service with Catholic Care's Family Day Care. She hasn't looked back.

"Since my children started school, I was wondering how I could earn some money while spending time with my children," she said. "And then OOSH came to mind."

Jasmine now cares for between four and seven children, aged five to 12, before and after school and during the school holidays.

In 2020, she was named 'Educator of the Year' for Catholic Care's Family Day Care service.

"I feel very proud and appreciate acknowledgement of the effort I've put into my family day care," Jasmine said. "This makes me more passionate to operate my centre and continue to improve my knowledge and create a better environment for children."

Jasmine said her favourite part of operating her OOSH is seeing the children's faces.

"My favourite thing is definitely greeting everyone each morning – I love to see their bright faces and their excitement to be here each day!" she said.

"Family day care is a small environment, it allows me to focus on each child's development, needs and interests."

Jasmine said the business suits her lifestyle, allowing her to spend more time with her family, while also helping other families.

"Instead of only dropping and picking up my children from school, I can pick up more children at the same time," she said. "In this way, I can earn extra income to support my family and also I can help other families. It also can benefit my children to have more social skill outside school time."

SPECIALISED SERVICES CHILDREN

Catholic Care offers a range of support services to ensure children are taken care of in any situation.

It starts with early years learning and childcare — our home-based early learning and parenting program for families with young children helps them and their parents develop skills, and our family day care helps kids get a good start with their education.

Our creche is a thriving early learning centre, providing care for children of Sudanese refugee women enrolled in English classes offered on the grounds of Catholic Care at Mamre House and Farm.

THIS YEAR:

- Family Day Care numbers increased with many parents preferring the small group-care environment
- Weekly fun, educational virtual story and rhyme times were introduced for children in family day care. This initiative was so successful it will continue long term.
- COVID-19 safety plans were introduced across all services, with many staff transitioning to working from home, using Microsoft Teams to maintain community during COVID-19 lockdowns.
- Staff completed online training on COVID-19 infection control.
- During lockdowns, creche staff working from home completed online training courses including:
 - › Complex and Additional Needs run by Early Years Connect
 - › Early Signals/First Responses run by Early Childhood Australia.
- While the creche closed during lockdowns, staff kept in contact with families and volunteers to offer support.
- The Department of Social Services funded the creche service until June 2023.
- The creche ran video sessions for children to see their friends and keep people at home engaged due to lockdowns.
- Our Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) supported 25 families this year and moved to online sessions for training, supervision and program delivery during COVID-19.





SPECIALISED SERVICES

CONNECTING WITH MY COMMUNITY

Catholic Care's drop-in centres provide a safe place for people to belong and connect with others. They are a place to go, a place to be, a place to get information, join a group, and be accepted.

In Emerton, Aboriginal Catholic Services is a drop-in centre led by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people.

Less than 20 minutes away in Blacktown, culturally and linguistically diverse families are accessing support to settle into life in Australia with the team at All Saints of Africa.

And at our Springwood Drop-in Centre, established to support the community after the 2014 bushfires, clients stop by for a chat, join a reading group, learn to sew or use technology, or seek support for their mental health and wellbeing.

THIS YEAR:

- Work began to rejuvenate and re-purpose Mamre House into a vibrant community space. A small volunteer team has come on board to help grow our community projects.
- The host of ABC's Gardening Australia, Costa Georgiadis joined around 450 locals to celebrate Springwood Community Garden's fourth birthday.
- A grant was received from the Commonwealth Government to build fencing and stables to provide free horse agistment so people living in domestic violence situations in greater Sydney can escape knowing their horse will be safe.
- School students were supported to do work experience at the Springwood Community Garden.
- The Community Women's Circle at Springwood Drop-In Centre was established to foster mindfulness, positive mental health and social support.
- Discussions with members of Leura Uniting Church began about starting a soup kitchen, fresh food pantry as well as counselling outreach to Katoomba.
- Our Springwood Drop-In Centre collaborated with St Thomas Aquinas Primary, Springwood, to launch a Food Bank Drive for the Jesuit Refugee Service.
- An Easter Hamper Drive with St Columbas School saw 70 hampers donated to local Aboriginal families.



The Essential Worker

AGNES FINDS HOME IN AUSTRALIA

Agnes has called Australia home now for almost 20 years. After fleeing war-torn South Sudan with her young children in 2002, Agnes says Australia has given her a second chance at life.

"We are very lucky and happy to be here," she said.

Agnes was in her early 20s when she, and her late husband, fled their home country of South Sudan.

"Life in South Sudan was so hard," she said. "It was very awful - you can die anytime, gun shots everywhere, you can hear it all the time. My husband and I were looking for a better life for our family."

Before leaving South Sudan, Agnes was living with her husband's family, sharing a one-room house with 21 members of the family, with no water and just one meal a day.

Agnes and her husband fled across the border to Uganda, where they lived for eight years, planning their migration to Australia. Just two months before they were due to leave for Australia, her husband died.

On her own with three children under 10, Agnes carried on the couple's dream and came to Australia.

"My husband was gone but I was determined to give my young family a better life, to give them an education," she said. "It was such a relief to arrive here and we were made to feel very welcome by everyone and settled very quickly."

Agnes attributes much of her ease of life in Australia to the people she met through her local Catholic church and the support she has received from Catholic Care.

"I was first introduced to Catholic Care through a friend who started growing vegetables in the community garden," Agnes said. "I asked if I could have a space too and we grow Sudanese greens and corn, among other things."

Agnes is also very grateful for the support she receives from the team at All Saints of Africa in Blacktown.

"They helped my children with their homework if I wasn't able to, and they have connected me to a financial counsellor, among other things. They have been wonderful to us."

Now a mother of four, Agnes has forged a career in nursing as a nurses aid in a residential aged care facility. She is now studying through the University of Tasmania to become a registered nurse. At the same time, three of her children have finished Year 12 and one is also studying at university to become an ambulance officer.

The family has so much to look forward to.

"It is so hard to still see my family suffering in South Sudan and I hope to be able to visit them one day," she said. "When I look back I do wonder how I did it on my own but I am so glad I did. This is our home now and we absolutely love it."



THAISON'S STORY

Working on the garden crew is more than just a job for Thaison.

While he enjoys his work on the 'internal crew' at Mamre Farm in Orchard Hills, it's the friendships that means the most.

"Making friends at work is what I like best about my job," the 37-year-old said.

Thaison started as a supported employee with the garden crew nine years ago and hasn't looked back. He's learned teamwork, how to mow a lawn, plant seeds and general garden maintenance skills.

His plans for work are to learn how to check petrol and mix oil, learn how to use the whipper snipper, and to safely use weed killer.

After a long break this year due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, Thaison was very happy to get back to work.

"I missed seeing my friends and mowing lawns."

Thaison is one of 18 people with disability employed for Catholic Care's Garden Services. Supported workers are employed as maintenance and garden crew providing services such as garden care, mowing and hedging to residential and commercial customers, as well as maintaining the Mamre Farm.

SPECIALISED SERVICES

LIVING WELL WITH DISABILITY

We all need a support network to live our lives to the fullest. Our disability support team, can help you with living, learning and overcoming obstacles on your journey, whatever they may look like. We can help you set goals, and achieve them, and help you build a brighter future.

With Catholic Care, disability support is about finding ways for you to live your best life, whether that's through services we offer, or through support accessed outside the organisation.

As a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider, we support clients at home and in the community, whether you want to learn how to cook, need support with personal care, or want to play sport.

Our garden service employs more than 18 people with disability, giving them their own wage, the opportunity to learn transferable skills and gain independence.

SPECIALISED SERVICES

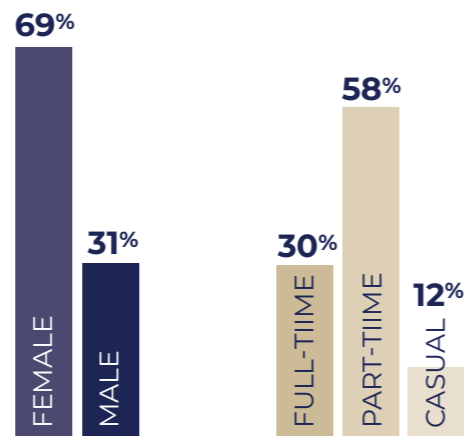
SUPPORT FOR MY FAMILY

When life gets tough for our families, the people we care about most can suffer. Our range of family support services can support you to better relate to your spouse and understand their behaviour, to deal with dependence or gambling problems, single parenting, or just connecting with your kids.

We support families who are going through the most difficult of times to cope through separation, and with grief and loss. We help parents deal with all the stresses that can impact your family, from anxiety and depression to money worries, gambling—we have the people, the resources and the support to help you make it through.

THIS YEAR:

- Our Gambling Help counselling service received a Local Prevention grant funded by the Office of Responsible Gambling to run 'Off Screen & Smart Play' workshops for school-aged children and their parents. The workshops aim to educate families on healthy screen time, cyber-safety, gaming and gambling, and most importantly, how to plan more time off-screen together.
- Clients were assisted to apply for self-exclusion from gambling venues.
- Financial counsellors delivered 'Money Matters' to the Women's Conversation group.
- The team built on collaborative relationships with BARGH (Blacktown Alliance for the Reduction of Gambling Harm) and worked with WASH House on Gambling Harm awareness workshops for staff of other organisations.
- Our Family Relationship Services started to deliver parenting program 'Circle of Security'.
- In collaboration with the Catholic Tribunal in Parramatta, we successfully ran an information webinar on the Annulment Process in the Catholic Church for the people of the Parramatta Diocese.
- Men and women experiencing the challenges of separation or divorce connected and shared experiences through our monthly Stepping Beyond support group.
- All counselling and support services moved to online platforms during periods of COVID-19 lockdowns.



LENGTH OF SERVICE

Longest current service: **28.2 years**

Average length of service: **6 years**

Age range: **78 to 21 Years**

OUR PEOPLE

Catholic Care's Mission, Inspiration and Values are informed by Catholic Social Teaching. The principles of Catholic Social Teaching frame our work in attending to the needs of all people, with a focus on the vulnerable and disadvantaged, regardless of faith, religion, gender, ethnicity, age or socio-economic background. The principles are human dignity, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity and participation.

THIS YEAR:

STAFF WELLBEING DAY

Acknowledging the impact that the COVID-19 lockdowns were having on staff, we introduced a 'Wellbeing Day', which allowed permanent staff (full-time and part-time) to have one paid day off per month during the COVID-19 lockdowns in Sydney. The aim of the days were for staff to look after their wellbeing and that of their family.

CATHOLIC CARE CONNECT

To keep staff connected during COVID-19 lockdown periods, we introduced Catholic Care Connect as a twice weekly online 'get-together' for staff across the organisation. Seeing familiar faces and touching base with people you would normally see each day, can make a big difference to how staff are feeling during the lockdowns. Activities included bingo, prayer, mindfulness, and general catch-up sessions.

VALUES SESSIONS


Staff were invited to take part in a series of workshops to define our organisational values. With the support of Employer Branding Australia, managers worked with their teams to discuss what each of our four values mean and what behaviours we should show for each value.

With honesty and openness, our staff have created our values to guide how we work and engage with those we service in our community.


We embrace every journey with gratitude and love.

For our clients, the community and each other.

This value is fundamental to our work and the way we work together and is lived each day through the following individual values:

 **WE ARE AVAILABLE**
with an open mind and heart

 **WE BUILD TRUST**
with integrity and respect

 **WE ADVOCATE**
with patience and passion

 **WE PERSEVERE**
with resilience and belief



The Essential Worker

AUNTY JANICE KENNEDY

Persevering with resilience and belief. If you're looking for the definition of this value, then look no further than Aunty Janice.

Our beloved Catholic Care team member and Elder lives and breathes it every day, and has done so ever since her world changed forever when she was a young girl.

"I was taken from my family when I was 13 years old, during the Stolen Generation," Aunty Janice said. "I've come a long way since then. It's my own determination that's got me to where I am today. Nothing gets me down."

At 78, Aunty Janice certainly stands tall in her community. A Gumbainggirr Elder, she is Catholic Care's trusted support person for our First Nations people. For 24 years, she has worked tirelessly to improve the social wellbeing of our Indigenous community, offering a beacon of hope to anyone struggling with their own challenges.

Aunty Janice was born in Bellingen, on the north coast of New South Wales. After her mother passed away when she was just four months old, she and her sister were raised by their aunty. Tragically, both Aunty Janice's sister and aunty died after she'd been taken to live with a non-Indigenous family.

Since then, life has dealt Aunty Janice many challenges, including the passing of her husband and two of her six children.

"It has been very hard. But life goes on, and I'm alive today because of me," said Aunty Janice, who has 13 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. "I guess I'm just a strong Aboriginal woman!"

In the early 1990s, Aunty Janice left her work in a frozen pizza factory behind her and enrolled in TAFE, achieving her Year 10 certificate in her 50s - a remarkable feat for someone who had barely received an education as a child. She joined Catholic Care in 1997.

"I haven't looked back," Aunty Janice said. "I've learned so much during my time at Catholic Care and have loved giving back to my community."

The trust Aunty Janice has garnered in our community is profound. As a respected Aboriginal Elder, her door is always open to anyone who needs support or advice.

"On Mondays, I run a yarning circle, where everyone sits and talks about their day. We share stories, and people talk about what's happening in their life - it's a nice way for people to connect. On Wednesdays, we have our sisterhood group for young mums. Back in the day, I coordinated didgeridoo lessons for young Aboriginal boys, as well as guitar lessons for boys and girls. We also have a financial counselling service for people struggling to pay their bills, and a grief counselling service. There's support for everyone."

For someone who's nearing 80, Aunty Janice shows no signs of winding down. She continues to create her legacy by doing what she does best: offering a guiding light to anyone who needs it.

"I love being a part of Catholic Care. It's in my blood; I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."



“Everyone deserves respect, kindness, and the opportunity to succeed and get good outcomes in life.”
- Jemima

The Essential Worker

JEMIMA PARKER

Giving people a voice is a theme close to Jemima Parker's heart. She has seen first-hand the struggles people face when they have little control over their lives.

So, she decided to be part of the solution. Today, Jemima strives to give a voice to the elderly and those living with a disability - and to let them know they matter.

Since joining us in March 2021, Jemima has made a big impact within Catholic Care. As our Senior Manager - Community Care, she supports her team to deliver critical disability and aged care services. She also oversees our Client Care team. It's challenging work, yet this caring leader shows up every day with a smile and the desire to help our clients make progress - one step, one day, and one challenge at a time.

“It all comes down to respect,” Jemima said. “Everyone deserves respect, kindness, and the opportunity to succeed and get good outcomes in life.”

Jemima is a tireless advocate for people living with a disability. It's a passion that began with her own family, who lacked access to quality services for many years.

“I have a nephew who has severe autism,” Jemima said. “He's in his 30s now, so I've witnessed the disability sector evolve over that time. In the past, people with a disability had no control over their lives; they didn't have a say. It wasn't just my nephew who suffered; I have cousins with autism as well. My whole family has struggled with service providers who didn't care enough. That really drove my passion for making things right.”

A long-time champion of society's vulnerable people, Jemima began her career in aged care as an assistant in nursing. She loved working with the elderly and was saddened by the way they were treated.

“In our society, older people are often seen as a burden. People need to realise that the elderly have value and they count. Working in aged care made me realise I wanted to do work that had more influence.”

Jemima decided to change direction. She is completing a social work degree and entered the family support services space, working as an intensive family preservation case worker. It was a demanding yet fulfilling role where she supported parents at risk of losing their children by teaching them essential parenting skills. Jemima gained a deep insight into the barriers struggling families face. But it was a brave single mother with an intellectual disability who made the greatest impact on her.

“To this day, she is the most inspiring person I have ever met,” Jemima said. “This woman was a mum, just like the rest of us. But she had gaps in her parenting knowledge, and she didn't have enough family support. Although she had an intellectual disability, she really wanted to learn. She was so strong and resilient. She overcame so much and was able to keep her daughter. It was so rewarding to walk with her on her parenting journey.”

This experience motivated Jemima to enter the disability services sector. Determined to make a difference in people's lives, Jemima took on various leadership roles and in early 2021, she joined us at Catholic Care - and she hasn't looked back.

“I love that I can combine my passion for aged care and disability services in this role,” Jemima said. “The fact that Catholic Care is a faith-based organisation is also important to me. Gratitude, perseverance, and kindness are valued by everyone here. It's wonderful to work with colleagues who are striving towards the same outcome of a better future for our clients.”



The Essential Worker

RAY DONALDSON

Ask Ray Donaldson what his role entails as site manager on the grounds of the Holy Family Parish, and he'll simply tell you that he "looks after the grounds". And it's true - Ray does a fantastic job maintaining our premises. But what this humble worker offers is so much more.

Over the years, Ray has become highly respected within the Catholic Care community. He listens - truly listens - and provides a non-judgemental shoulder for those in their greatest time of need.

Ray is a familiar, friendly face at a local parish. You'll see him bustling around the grounds of the Holy Family each day or getting his hands dirty in the gardens. If there's an event on, he'll be there, too - setting up equipment and manning the barbecue. And through his work with Catholic Care, Ray lends a hand to serve our Indigenous community.

Ray also helps Catholic Care distribute OzHarvest hampers to community members, going above and beyond to source extra items for families.

In between all these tasks, Ray is always open to a chat. Approachable and down-to-earth, he's passionate about supporting the Indigenous community and those who are doing it tough. Ray treats everyone equally and with respect. And for us at Catholic Care, Ray isn't just a site manager - he's a trusted mentor and friend.

"Here at Catholic Care, everyone is accepted," Ray said. "That's Catholic Care policy. And that's my policy, too. Everyone in the community deserves respect. And they deserve someone to listen to them. I'm passionate about what I do here - I'm always up for anyone to come and have a yarn!"

The importance of human connection is something Ray knows well. Before joining us at Catholic Care 14 years ago, Ray worked as a boilermaker for many years. He then left his job to become a stay-at-home parent. Always a hard worker, Ray eventually became restless, and decided he needed a change of pace.

"Each day, I'd take the kids to school. I'd spend all day cleaning the house, and then I'd get the kids again. I wasn't going out or communicating with anyone - I was going crazy. I knew something had to change, so I decided to start working in the community."

At first, volunteer work was a big step outside Ray's comfort zone. As a naturally reserved person, he suddenly found himself in a busy world of people. But during his time at a community nursery, Ray became more confident. He formed friendships, learned new skills, and felt a sense of achievement. Overseeing a garden project at the Holy Family Parish meant liaising with stakeholders and taking on more responsibility, and Ray thrived. He felt as though he'd found a rewarding career and second home - and it's one he hasn't left.

"It's one big family here. Everyone at Catholic Care respects each other. I feel accepted for who I am and what I do. Serving our community is a rewarding feeling."

*"I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to volunteer - it's been a privilege."
- Bernadette*



OUR VOLUNTEERS

BERNADETTE'S STORY

Volunteering is in Bernadette McKay's blood.

As a child she witnessed the dedication of her parents to various voluntary roles, so it came naturally for her to do the same. Children learn what they live.

And in 1990, she took on her first volunteer position with Catholic Care... and has been here since, this year marking her 30th year.

"My children had grown up, my husband was busy with work and I had stopped working because I had injured my back," she said.

"So I thought I would look to give back as I had seen my parents do. I guess I was just doing what I had always known."

Bernadette took on a volunteer role with Neighbour Aid in Blacktown, initially one day a week taking an elderly lady where she needed to go.

"We did that for a year and then I was assigned another lady who I volunteered with for 15 years before she was moved into a nursing home," Bernadette said. "When I visited her in the nursing home, she told me that I had made a huge difference in her life and thanked me."

For the next 18 years, Bernadette volunteered with another local resident and the pair remain good friends today.

"She is a lovely person and has an amazing bright spirit," she said.

Not being able to visit her during the COVID lockdown was hard but they kept in touch over the phone. "We are in touch daily."

Volunteering has been an 'absolute joy' for Bernadette and at 78, she has no plans of stopping just yet.

"I think in life we just need to help each other and look out for one another without expecting anything in return," she said.

"I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to volunteer - it's been a privilege."

'I don't volunteer to get anything back. You do it to give.'

GOVERNANCE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Peter Loughnane

With a passion for leading not-for-profit organisations and connecting communities, Peter joined Catholic Care in January 2020 bringing with him more than 15 years' experience in aged care, community and disability services.

Throughout his career Peter has been a leading voice for change for minority groups having served on multiple community services boards including Multicultural Communities Council, the peak organisation serving the needs of multicultural residents on the Gold Coast, and in leadership positions for social service, aged care and disability organisations.

Through nurturing a strong alignment with the values and mission of Catholic Care, Peter leverages his expertise in organisational change and strategic leadership to support the organisation's sustainability and growth.

Peter's goal is to continue to connect individuals and families within their local community and the services they need to live a safe, and healthy life.

ADVISORY COUNCIL



Paul McMahon, Chair

Paul is a passionate leader and advocate for aged care and social services clients. He is the former Chief Executive Officer of Southern Cross Care New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, and has more than 30 years' experience in the social services sector.



Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen

Bishop Vincent was appointed as the fourth Bishop of Parramatta in May 2016. Nationally, he serves as the Chair, Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service.



Very Rev Luis Fernando Montano EV

Fr. Fernando is the Parish Priest at St Bernadette's in Castle Hill. In June 2020 he was appointed as the Episcopal Vicar for Social Welfare and became a member of the Catholic Care Advisory Council.



Vera Visevic

A partner at Mills Oakley law firm, Vera specialises in not-for-profit and social enterprise law. She has more than 25 years' experience acting for numerous charities, religious and not-for-profit organisations.



Peter Bellman

Peter is the former Head of Finance for Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. He has more than 45 years' experience in finance working in private industry and across public and private health in New South Wales.



Sue Walsh

Sue is a System and School Learning Consultant and has led a system of schools, 45,000 students and 5,000 teachers as the Deputy Executive Director of Schools and Director of Learning for the Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta until 2019.



Geoff Officer

Geoff is the Chief of Operations and Finance (Diocesan Financial Administrator) for the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta. He has more than 25 years' experience as a company executive, commercial human resources consultant and practitioner.



Helen Emmerson

Helen is the Chief Executive Officer of Southern Cross Care (New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory) and has more than 20 years' experience in aged care and disability services in both Australia and the United Kingdom.



Peter O'Brien

The Director at Liminalspace Consulting, Peter is an executive coach and organisational consultant. He has more than 30 years' experience in the New South Wales social and community services sector with non-government organisations.



Angela McKay

(Joined on 13 April 2021)

Angela is the Chief Executive Officer of the Juvenile Arthritis Foundation Australia and has more than 20 years' senior leadership experience with a diverse background spanning not-for-profit and for-profit organisations in the charity, professional services, consumer goods and aged care sectors.



Lyn Ainsworth

(Resigned 5 January 2021)

Lyn is the former Executive Director of Catholic Care Diocese of Broken Bay. She has more than 20 years' experience in executive leadership in the not-for-profit sector.



STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS

In late 2020, our strategic plan for 2020-2023 was launched. Developed in consultation with frontline staff, our plan outlines our desire to integrate into our local communities so that more people can reach us; prioritise gaps in services so we can support people holistically; and to be a partner with our clients, meeting them where they are in life to walk by their side, every step of the way.

GOAL 1: WE ARE INTEGRATED INTO OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

This year we:

- Expanded service offerings in aged care with the introduction of respite for elderly members of our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- Introduced a Community Women's Circle at our Springwood Drop-In Centre to foster mindfulness, positive mental health and social support.
- Developed a communications plan with the Diocese of Parramatta to increase and improve the way we communicate with our staff, clients and supporters.
- Interviewed staff to create stories about our people to share with our community.
- Had a number of media stories published and regularly posted stories on our website and social channels.

GOAL 2: WE PRIORITISE GAPS IN COMMUNITY SERVICE NEEDS

This year we:

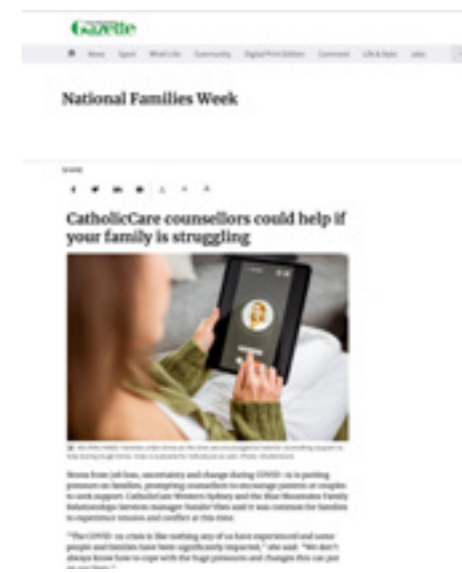
- Engaged a market research group to find out how Catholic Care can increase awareness and preference among key elderly, disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. Clients and non-clients representative of CALD and ATSI communities, as well as families, the elderly and people with disability were interviewed as part of this market research.
- We collaborated with schools to support our refugee and Indigenous communities with essential items.

GOAL 3: WE JOURNEY BESIDE PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

This year we:

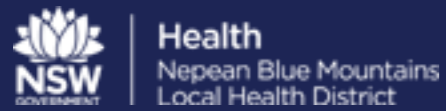
- Began the redevelopment of our new logo, look and feel and website with in-depth staff and client consultation to ensure our new brand reflects who we are and where we are going.
- We worked with Employee Branding Australia to discover our values with our teams. These values will help us for years to come, guiding how we approach our work and every interaction we have.

IN THE NEWS



PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORTERS

KEY FUNDING AGENCIES AND PARTNERS



DIOCESE of PARRAMATTA



PARRAMATTA CATHOLIC FOUNDATION

Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Australian Government
Department of Health

MAJOR DONORS

We sincerely thank all of our donors for their generous support.

- Australian Youth Foundation
- Catholic Church Insurance
- Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta
- Diocese of Parramatta
- Eric Storm Trust
- Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee Inc
- Inagh Foundation
- NRMA
- Parishes and Parishioners
- Vera Visevic

Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains acknowledges the support from staff within Risk, Property, Communications and IT from the Diocese of Parramatta.

PEAK MEMBERSHIPS



OUR LOCATIONS




- Gambling & Financial Counselling
- Family Relationship Counselling
- Family Support Services
- Drop-In centres
- Aged Care Support and Blacktown Neighbour Aid
- Disability Support (NDIS)
- Gardening Services
- Family Day Care Services

Catholic Care Western Sydney and The Blue Mountains provides services to clients from a variety of locations across the region. In addition to our centres and offices, our staff see clients in the community and in their homes.

The Essential Worker

Throughout what has been one of the most challenging times in many of our lives—the COVID-19 pandemic—our staff have remained dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of our clients.

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 **We embrace every journey**
with gratitude and love.

