catholic care

WESTERN SYDNEY AND THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Year in Review 2025-2026



Care when you need it most

Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains

Catholic Care is a not-for-profit social services organisation and is the social welfare agency of the Diocese of Parramatta.

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Acknowledgment of Country

Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains recognises and acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters across Australia on which we live, and their connection to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including Elders past, present and emerging; and recognise their continuing gift of culture to the life and spirit of this Country.

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Who we are

Catholic Care is the social welfare agency of the Diocese of Parramatta.

Catholic Care was established in Sydney 85 years ago as the Catholic Bureau, and for nearly 40 years as Catholic Care, has existed to do Christ's work in the community, through the support of its dedicated staff, partners and volunteers.

Through the Church, Catholic Care aims to make a positive difference in the lives of people who need support, helping them to find joy and purpose in life. In particular Catholic Care supports the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community, and focuses on keeping families together when safe to do so.

Regardless of background, gender, age or faith, anyone who needs it can turn to Catholic Care for support and professional care.

A service for every need

- Family services
- Support for women: DV, pregnancy and housing support
- Children's Services and Early Learning
- Counselling support
- Community engagement
- First Nations support
- Chaplaincy support in prisons and hospitals

Catholic Care operates across various locations in Western Sydney, with community centres offering personalised, compassionate and professional care at Blacktown, Emerton, Orchard Hills and Springwood.



HOW WE'RE SUPPORTING SYDNEY'S WEST

Economic impact

Contributed
$17 million
to the economy

Created
$8 million
in flow-on economic benefits

Generated over
$1 million
in volunteer value

Source: Lawrence Consulting.

Community benefits

350+
clients supported through counselling services

75
local jobs supported indirectly

1,800
counselling sessions delivered

13
chaplains in 9 hospitals and 4 correctional centres

8,000
Oz Harvest food hampers or pantry items provided to clients

450
Western Sydney families assisted

10,000
clients assisted through Community Engagement Programs

460
children attending Family Day Care across 45 locations

330+
suppliers

100+
staff and volunteers

3
community drop-in centres

Our Western Sydney Community

A growing and diverse region

Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains serves one of Australia's most culturally rich and fastest growing regions, spanning more than 4,200 square kilometres across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

Home to over 1.3 million people, this vibrant community reflects the world's diversity – with more than 44 per cent of residents speaking a language other than English at home. From Chinese, Arabic and Filipino, to Korean, Oceanic and Papuan languages, Spanish and Malayalam, this cultural richness shapes the way Catholic Care delivers compassionate, inclusive and client-focused care.

Major developments such as the Western Sydney International Airport, the Western Sydney Aerotropolis, and extensive transport and housing infrastructure projects are transforming the region. These changes bring new opportunities, but also new pressures on families, communities and local services.

Through times of growth and challenge, Catholic Care's mission remains – to be present where care is needed most, walking alongside all people with respect, dignity and hope.

Catholics make up the largest faith group in the area (24.7 per cent). Guided by Catholic social teaching, Catholic Care serves everybody, regardless of culture, faith or circumstance. This is because Catholic Care's mission is grounded in upholding the dignity of every person and responding with compassion where it is needed most.



A message from Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv

We are living through a period of profound change and uncertainty. Around the world, conflict, displacement, economic pressures and rapid social change are shaping the lives of millions of people.

Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains are particularly affected. For many of the individuals and families we serve, global uncertainty can compound the pressures they are already experiencing. We see this in the increasing cost of living, housing pressures, family stress and the growing needs of people seeking security and belonging.

It is in this context that the work of Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains (WSBM) is so important. The Church is called to accommodate those who are marginalised and excluded by society so that they may feel welcomed and empowered to achieve their potential.

This year, Pope Leo XIV proclaimed a Special Jubilee Year of St Francis of Assisi, marking 800 years since the death of the great saint and founder of the Franciscan tradition.

St Francis lived in a time of deep social and religious division. Yet, he responded by choosing a radically simple life centred on Christ, embracing poverty, drawing close to those on the margins and becoming a witness to peace. His love for creation and his commitment to reconciliation remain profoundly relevant to our own world. The Jubilee invites us not simply to remember St Francis, but to follow his example by becoming people of peace, compassion and generous service.

In the Gospel, Jesus says to Simon, “Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” (Luke 5:4). These words are a reminder that our mission as Catholics calls us to a radical style of love, one that moves beyond what is familiar and comfortable, into the places where people need us most.

Catholic Care lives out this call by going into our communities, listening to people’s needs and walking alongside those experiencing hardship. Its work brings the Church’s commitment to human dignity in practical ways, offering support, connection and hope to people of all faiths, cultures and backgrounds.

I am deeply grateful to the staff, volunteers, donors, parishes and community partners who make this work possible. Their dedication is a powerful expression of the Gospel in action and a reminder that we are called not simply to speak about compassion, but to live it.

As we look to the year ahead, may Catholic Care continue to have the courage to go out into the deep, responding generously, and helping to build Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains as a place where every person can flourish.

I commend this Annual Report and thank everyone who has contributed to Catholic Care’s work throughout the year.



BISHOP VINCENT LONG OFM CONV
Bishop of Parramatta



A message from Fr Fernando

In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus asks us to look beyond ourselves and notice the person who needs our help. The Samaritan did not simply see a man in distress; he stopped, drew near, tended his wounds and made sure he was cared for.

That simple story speaks powerfully to the work of Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

Every day, Catholic Care staff and volunteers encounter people at moments when life can feel difficult or uncertain. They respond not with judgement, but with compassion; not simply by offering a service, but by walking alongside people and helping them find a way forward.

This year, I have been encouraged by the many ways Catholic Care has responded to the needs of our communities. They have leant a helping hand, a listening ear, practical support or simply given reassurance that those suffering are not alone.

Behind every number and every program described in this report is a person, a family or a community whose life has been touched by the generosity and care of others. I have had the privilege of meeting many families and individuals who rely on our services and hearing firsthand from our staff and volunteers what they are experiencing every day. Each conversation is an eye-opening and humbling experience.

Some of the challenges that people face are the same, while other challenges are new to the society that we live in, where people can become the effect or afterthought of global wars, poorly thought-out policies and economic pressures, often carrying the consequences of decisions they had no part in making.

This is what makes Catholic Care so special. Its work brings together dedicated staff, volunteers, parishes, donors and community partners, united by a desire to make a difference.

I thank everyone who has contributed to this work throughout the year. Your generosity and commitment help create communities where people can find connection, opportunity and hope.

May we continue to walk alongside one another and ensure that no one is left to face life’s challenges alone.

Peace in Jesus.



FR FERNANDO MONTANO VG
Episcopal Vicar for Social Welfare,
Catholic Care Advisory Board member



A message from Helen Emmerson

At Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, we believe everyone deserves to feel safe, supported and valued.

Every day, our teams walk alongside individuals and families facing some of life's most difficult moments – young pregnant mothers at risk of homelessness, families struggling with domestic violence and abuse, older women at risk of losing their homes, young and old struggling with social isolation or lack of skills.

People need hope. They need healing. They need community. And we are humbled to be part of their journey of reconciliation, healing and hope.

As the third year of our bold three-year strategy, this year has been one of continued consolidation, partnership and impact.

We focused on our partnerships with government, our main funding source and were able to expand critical programs that look at keeping families together, safely. The need for our counselling services grew immeasurably, as did our programs providing housing and support for those suffering family and domestic violence or those at the risk of homelessness. Our First Nations support and children's services and early learning programs continued to support thousands of families, and our community outreach helped countless areas of need. Importantly, our chaplaincy work in hospitals and prisons grew with new team members to help those suffering.

Unfortunately, we needed to make the difficult decision to transition out of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme (ACVVS) at the end of 2025. In the process of closing the program, we worked closely with Catholic Care Sydney to transition 24 volunteers and 25 aged care recipients to Catholic Care Sydney's ACVVS program as of 1 July 2026, treating everyone with compassion and dignity.

As part of the Closing the Gap priority recommendations to increase the number of Aboriginal-led organisations delivering services to First Nations communities, we farewelled Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) Emerton in December 2025 as it transitioned to its new home with Ngroo Education - the locally appointed Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

Our strategy is to deliver high-quality services and support for vulnerable individuals, families and communities. I'm proud of the way we have been able to consolidate our services and programs over three years to find the places where we can make the most impact.

Keeping families together and providing care when it's needed most is what we are focused on.

At the heart of our work is a belief in the dignity of every person. Guided by Catholic Social Teaching, our Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church 2024-28, and our commitment to serving the common good, we welcome and support people of all faiths, cultures, backgrounds and circumstances. We know that when people and families are strong, connected and supported, our whole community benefits.

None of this work happens alone. Our impact is made possible through the dedication of our staff and volunteers, our Advisory Board and government partners, our fundraising team and donors, our partners and stakeholders all across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. I am grateful and humbled to be part of our shared mission and thank you all for your continued support.

HELEN EMMERSON
Executive Director
Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains



Strategy update

Catholic Care is now in its third year of the three-year strategy to deliver high-quality services and support for vulnerable individuals and communities in Sydney's greater west, achieving a small surplus for the first time and growing our services in order to Keep Families Together. We successfully completed our transition out of two services to ensure this focus: the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) and the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY).



NAIDOC Week festivities at Whalan Reserve

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Western Sydney Family Day Care

- Baulkham Hills Family Day Care was successfully rebranded to Western Sydney Family Day Care after a comprehensive consultation and engagement program. The new name reflects the growth and reach of Family Day Care in the western suburbs.
- We partnered with Macquarie Community College to help 10 educators complete their Diploma in Early Learning.
- Two educators were shortlisted for the 2025 Excellence in Family Day Care Awards.
- As part of our ongoing commitment to child safety, we introduced national criminal history checks for all household members aged 16 and over, living in our Family Day Care residences.

Family Services

- We extended and grew our partnership with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to expand the Families Together program for another five years.
- We partnered with San Miguel residential program to provide wrap-around support services to young families including supported playgroups and parent education programs.
- We partnered with Woolworths Plumpton, who provide weekly food and pantry donations, continuing to keep our family services food pantry in Blacktown replenished all year round.







Houses to Homes

- We strengthened partnerships with Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation and Australian Families Partnership Program with co-case management to support the cultural identity and connection of our First Nations young women and children.
- We introduced an early childhood sleep specialist, Jennifer Hamilton from WOTBaby as part of our wrap-around support services. Jennifer provides 1:1 support in home environments, focusing on sleep routines, feeding, and settling techniques for babies and children.
- We successfully secured a new transitional housing partnership with the Sunrise Foundation, to provide further safe and affordable exit pathways for the women and children supported by Houses to Homes.

HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters)

- We partnered with Red Cross to deliver First Aid for Babies and Children to approximately 20 of our HIPPY parents.
- As part of the Closing the Gap priority recommendations to increase the number of Aboriginal-led organisations delivering services to First Nations communities, our team participated in a series of community consultations to strengthen outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. As a result, we farewelled HIPPY Emerton in December 2025 as it transitioned to its new home with Ngroo Education - the locally appointed Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

Counselling

- All members of our counselling team completed accredited sand play therapy training through the Institute of Therapies for Emotional Transformation.
- We continue to partner with several other Catholic Care's across Sydney, to deliver the Keeping Kids in Mind Parenting program, to families experiencing separation and/or the family law court system.

Chaplaincy

- Sr Rita Apura began her new ministry at Emu Plains Correctional Centre on September 17 after an 11-year stint at Blacktown Hospital. She has been warmly welcomed by staff and inmates for her energy and passion.
- Michelle Davis, chaplain at Nepean Hospital, organised Butterfly Day on 15 October, a national event offering support to those affected by pregnancy and infant loss.
- Sr Mary Anh Vu, chaplain at Cumberland Hospital, organised the first Mass for patients and staff since before COVID. Monthly Mass will now continue at the hospital thanks to the help of Fr Meng from Westmead Hospital.

Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme

In late 2025, Catholic Care made the decision to transition out of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme (ACVVS) in which we participated as part of the Catholic Care NSW consortium, to further align our strategic priorities. In the process of closing the program, we worked closely with Catholic Care Sydney to transition 24 volunteers and 25 aged care recipients to Catholic Care Sydney's ACVVS program as of 1 July 2026.









STRATEGY 2024–2027

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Our strategic directions are our priorities to achieve our mission and vision. Each strategic direction is underpinned by the **5 Ps**.

The 5 Ps outline how we will tangibly and successfully achieve our strategic directions.

1 Participants

Engage with our clients and consumers.

Sharpen **focus on families** at risk, child education, improving mental health and wellbeing for isolated individuals and groups.

Assess client satisfaction and outcomes to inform continuous improvement.

2 Programs

Deliver **focused and engaging** programs.

Deliver measurable benefits to **targeted client groups**.

Target programs to reach more people in a sustainable way.

Undertake **market research** to identify opportunities and develop plans.

3 People

Strengthen leadership and teams: build capacity, resourcing and capabilities.

Engage closer with staff, partners, stakeholders and volunteers.

Involve staff in the delivery of strategic directions to create **ownership** and improve accountability.

Assess skills of staff and volunteers to identify immediate training and development needs and opportunities.

Engage with Diocesan staff to support our initiatives.

4 Positioning

Build our **public brand** presence and reputation.

Be a **recognised leader** and trusted provider of social services.

Be a **trusted partner** with government, private and not-for-profit organisations, and forge stronger government relations for grants.

Deliver a **measurable and reportable** impact in the Diocese.

5 Performance

Refine governance and **compliance processes** to meet deadlines.

Achieve **financial targets** for each year.

Review and enhance **organisational systems and processes** for effective case management.

CORE VALUES

GRATITUDE AND LOVE
AVAILABILITY
TRUST
ADVOCACY
PERSEVERANCE



Our Progress

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA	KPI/MEASURE	YEAR 3 PROGRESS	FUTURE TARGET/NOTES
Sustain and stabilise programs	Program KPIs are met (client, contract, compliance)	**Ongoing**	On track with KPIs across all government programs including but not limited to: • Funds • Compliance/new regulations • Program activity
	Develop transition plans for redundant/de-prioritised programs	**Completed**	Completed for HIPPY Dec 2025 and ACVVS June 2026
Expand impact and build on strengths	Grow the 2–3 unmet needs identified in 2024/5	**Ongoing**	• Older Women's Homelessness • Partnerships for Project Elizabeth • Clinical Psychology Students • Financial/legal/employment supports at community hubs. • Family Preservation
	Develop growth plans and business cases to support expansion	**Ongoing**	Combination of tender applications/ annual business plans/partnerships
Build a motivated, stable, skilled workforce	Resource Plan Developed	**Ongoing**	• Employee Handbook • Policies and Procedures • HRIS updates
	Complete and embed processes for professional performance and development	**Ongoing**	• Robust clinical supervision in place • LMS implemented • External Training Links
Be fully compliant and financially sustainable	Refine compliance and governance processes; review obligations re: grants, government relations, internal policies	**Ongoing**	• Strengthened compliance across childcare • Contract Management on track • Internal audits and risk review
	Small surplus for FY26	**Achieved**	• Overall surplus through cost savings and employee savings • FDC deficit – needs turnaround in FY27 as only income generating program



Christmas Hamper Blessing at St Bernadette's Castle Hill.

Our services

NAIDOC Week in Emerton.



Family Services

Strengthening children, families and communities

At Catholic Care, we know the importance of a safe, stable and supportive family environment.

Catholic teaching recognises the family as the foundation of human development and an essential part of a healthy, connected community. Families provide belonging, care and support, helping people build resilience, navigate challenges and flourish throughout life.

We also recognise that families come in many forms and that every person deserves to feel safe, valued and supported. When individuals and families are supported to thrive, the benefits extend beyond the home, strengthening our communities and contributing to a more compassionate and connected society.

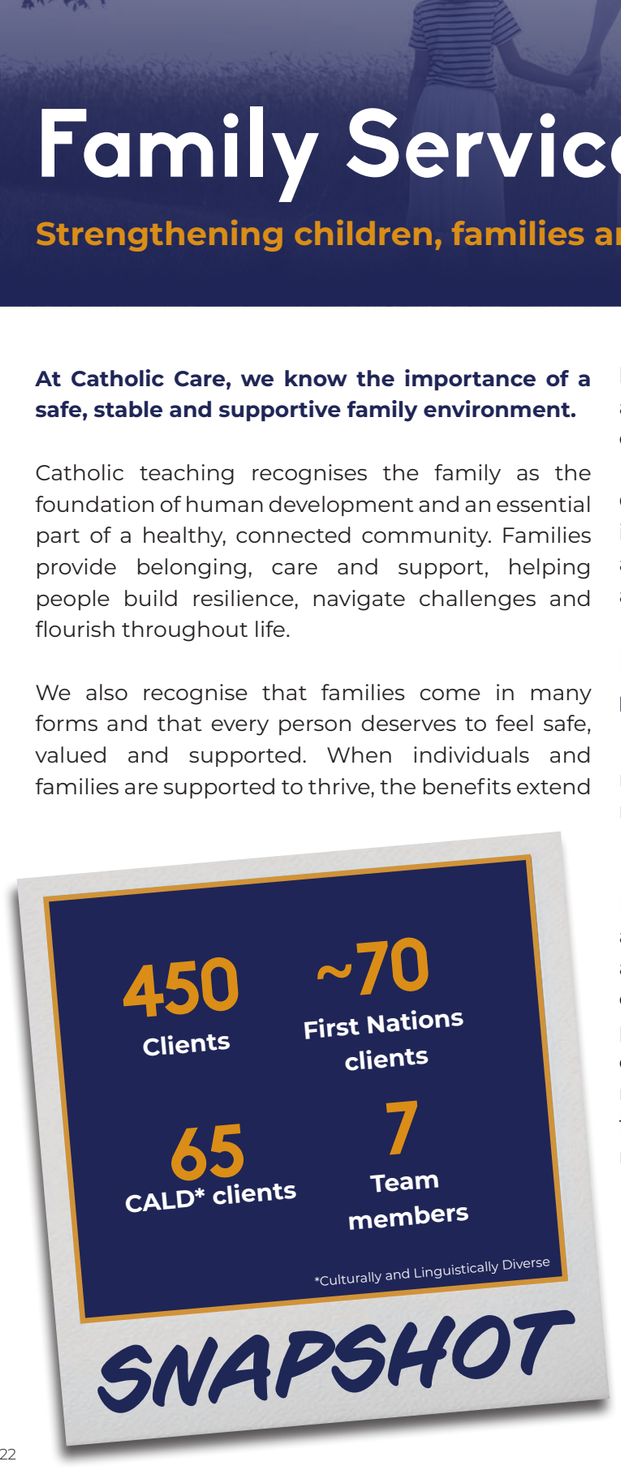
Our Family Services Program provides early intervention and family support services to approximately 500 families each year across Penrith and Blacktown.

Expanding programs, helping more families

In FY25-26, the team successfully commissioned the new family preservation program, Families Together, now supporting 35 families per year in the Blacktown LGA, up from four families in previous years.

Families Together plays a critical role in walking alongside families experiencing complex challenges across the rapidly growing and multicultural communities of Western Sydney. The program provides early intervention, practical support, and compassionate care aimed at creating safe and nurturing environments where children and their families feel supported, can address concerns and reduce the number of children entering care.

In FY25-26, Catholic Care also received another five years of funding, in partnership with the Department of Communities and Justice for their targeted early intervention services, now re-branded as Community and Family Services (CAFS).





"Keeping families together safely has been our focus for the last few years, and I am pleased to expand our services to the many people who require our help. Last year alone, we supported over 510 clients across our whole Family Services – most from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and First Nations families," said Helen Emmerson, Executive Director of Catholic Care WSBM.

"There is a real need in the community, which is why Families Together will provide tailored, strengths-based support, helping families address immediate concerns while also building the skills and confidence needed for long-term stability," she said.



Expanding services to young families at risk of homelessness

This year, Catholic Care expanded its partnership with San Miguel – a child-centred family residential service providing intensive, individualised support to vulnerable young parents and their children.

A service of yourtown, and set on 18 hectares of property in Richmond, San Miguel provides temporary accommodation for young parents, aged up to 25, and their children. During their stay, young parents and their families are given strengths-based individual case management and support, onsite training to increase independent livings skills, access to community services, child development support and expressive therapy to help overcome trauma and assistance to secure long-term accommodation.

In 2025, Catholic Care provided its Project Elizabeth Counselling Support Program to support mothers through counselling, therapeutic interventions, and individualised support.

Since April 2026, the service has expanded where Catholic Care now provides a range of wrap-around services including a Supported Playgroup Program and the Circle of Security Parenting Program, further enhancing therapeutic and parenting support for the young residents.

Meet our new team members:



Charlie Olerick

Families Together Team Leader

Charlie leads and supports a team of five practitioners within the Families Together Program. Working closely alongside the team, Charlie provides leadership, guidance, and oversight to manage risks and address child protection concerns.



Leonard Brown

Community and Family Support (CAFS) Team Leader

Leonard leads and supports a team of four caseworkers within our Early Intervention Program. Leonard plays a key role in developing community programs and strengthening partnerships to deliver a range of core program activities.



Leila Fontes Pearson

Family Services Intake and Assessment Officer

Leila joined our Family Services team as part of our expanding service structure, designed to strengthen support for caseworkers, team leaders, and management in the intake, assessment, and triaging of new client referrals across our two Family Services programs.



Stephen Onyekwere

CALD Specialist

Stephen joined our Family Services portfolio to support the increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families accessing our services. Stephen brings valuable cultural insight and community knowledge, particularly within the Blacktown community, and provides wrap-around support across our team of caseworkers, practitioners, and leaders.









Housing and Support

Domestic and family violence remains a significant challenge in Western Sydney, with women disproportionately affected. Catholic Care is committed to helping local women – whether pregnant or with children – rebuild their lives after experiencing domestic or family violence, financial hardship, grief or other serious trauma.

From Houses to Homes

At the heart of this support is Catholic Care's nationally accredited Houses to Homes program, which provides holistic assistance and affordable housing across Blacktown and Parramatta for up to two years. The program supports young mothers aged 16 to 25 who are homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness due to financial hardship, family breakdown, or domestic violence. Alongside safe accommodation, participants receive practical guidance, life skills development and pastoral care to help them regain stability and independence.

In FY25-26 three young women and their children exited the program into stable, long-term housing.

SNAPSHOT

- **121** Clients assisted
- **54** First Nations clients
- **4** Team members
- **1*** Volunteer

*volunteer cook teaching young women life skills







A fresh start for Mia

Growing up, Mia* moved more than 50 times. When she fell pregnant, she wanted something different for her little boy. She wanted him to know the safety and stability she had so rarely experienced herself.

But Mia found herself experiencing domestic and family violence. She faced a choice no young mother should ever have to make: remain somewhere unsafe or leave without knowing where she and her son would go. She chose to protect her child: "I had to leave for myself and my son's safety."

Eventually, Mia and her little boy came to Catholic Care's Houses to Homes. For Mia, having somewhere safe to live meant much more than four walls. It meant knowing where her son would sleep that night. It meant being able to stop running and begin again.

> "It felt like a new chapter, somewhere safe, somewhere for my son to sleep that's safe."

Mia received more than accommodation. She received practical and emotional support to rebuild her confidence and become the mother she wanted to be.

"Houses to Homes have gotten me into parenting courses like Circle of Security... really helped me with my son's settling and routines... I've also been able to do Kids CPR training, and I feel more confident now when it comes to protecting and caring for my son."

> "Since moving in with Houses to Homes, I feel a lot happier with my life and I feel supported – like things are going to be okay."

**Name changed for privacy*



A new partnership helps young mothers thrive

In FY25-26, Catholic Care partnered with WOTBaby to give young mums practical tools and steady individualised support in the critical early years of parenting.

Jennifer, creator of WOTBaby is a nurse with more than 35 years' experience and is a mother of three, who now works alongside mothers as a sleep consultant and educator.

For many of the young mothers in Houses to Homes, sleep is one of the biggest challenges. Many have experienced trauma from homelessness, family and domestic violence, and other complex circumstances. Jennifer brings calm guidance and practical strategies to help build confidence and routine.

Jennifer's past work prepared her well to understand the challenges faced by homeless young mothers.

"I had experience working with underprivileged mums with histories of substance abuse within the Tresillian residential program, as well as young mums in a shelter in Randwick. These experiences have been an asset to my learning. When asked by Catholic Care if I was interested, I was very much in, as I knew it would make a positive difference."

"Sleep is the golden chain. Everything is better when both mother and baby are getting better sleep," Jennifer said.

"When babies sleep well, they feed and play better and are more relaxed. A mother's wellbeing is profoundly improved. Risk of depression and anxiety is lowered, energy levels are boosted, immunity improves, and the bond between mother and baby is strengthened."

Jennifer says what surprises her most is the eagerness of the young mums.

"They are genuinely thirsty for information and grateful to be told. Most try the practical solutions and feel proud of themselves for doing so."

Providing some sunshine

In FY25-26, Catholic Care partnered with the Sunrise Foundation to provide wrap-around services for pregnant women at the risk of homelessness.

The Sunrise Foundation is a charity committed to tackling homelessness and improving housing accessibility across Australia. They are dedicated to helping vulnerable individuals and families find safe, well-designed homes that create security and stability so people can rebuild their lives and thrive.

In recent months, one young woman and her child were successfully housed and are benefitting from Catholic Care's services including mentoring, outreach support, advocacy and referrals to specialised support services.



"After experiencing domestic violence, my children and I spent more than two years moving between family and friends' homes, never having a place of our own. Through the support of Houses to Homes and the Sunrise Foundation, we were given the opportunity to move into safe and stable accommodation.

Having our own home has made a significant difference to our lives. My children now have their own bedrooms, we are close to family, friends and local services, and I feel a much greater sense of independence and security. For the first time in a long time, I feel hopeful about the future."

First mother housed as part of the partnership with Sunrise Foundation

Homelessness NSW *Member*





Children's Services and Early Learning

Helping all children to grow, learn and thrive

Our programs and services

- **Western Sydney Family Day Care, running for over 45 years, operating in over 45 locations across Western Sydney**
- **A creche at Mamre House in Orchard Hills**
- **The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)**





Aunty Rhonda (L), Linda McDonald (middle)



Western Sydney Family Day Care

High-quality early childhood education and care is vital as over 90% of a child's brain development happens in their first five years, setting the lifelong foundation for learning, health and behaviour.

Western Sydney Family Day Care (WSFDC) provides personalised, small-group in-home care, where educators often see families grow through generations and become an extension of the family. Their warm, caring community gives children of all ages – from babies to 12 years – the chance to gain confidence, develop skills, build friendships, and thrive.

In FY25-26 Western Sydney Family Day Care was successfully rebranded from Baulkham Hills Family Day Care after a comprehensive consultation and engagement program. The new name reflects the growth and reach of their high-quality services in the western suburbs.

Importantly, the team furthered its commitment to child safety by introducing national criminal history checks for all household members over the age of 16, living in the Family Day Care residences.

WSFDC also partnered with Macquarie Community College to help 10 educators complete their Diploma in Early Learning, and two educators were shortlisted for the 2025 Excellence in Family Day Care Awards.

462
Children enrolled

94
CALD* clients

2
First Nations clients

*Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

SNAPSHOT

Supported Playgroups

At Mamre House and Farm, Orchard Hills, Catholic Care runs a weekly supported playgroup in partnership with Playgroups NSW and Mamre Creche for clients undertaking courses.

They had over 31 clients, 22 of which were from CALD backgrounds. In FY25-26, Creche staff became qualified facilitators in the Peep Learning Together program, an evidence-informed adult and child learning framework that helps parents enhance young children's development through everyday interactions.

Farewell to HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters)

Catholic Care has been providing the HIPPY program for over 10 years. In the last financial year, they assisted 50 families and their children and partnered with the Red Cross to deliver First Aid for Babies and Children to approximately 20 of our HIPPY parents.

As part of the Closing the Gap report priority recommendations to increase the number of Aboriginal-led organisations delivering its services, our team participated in community consultation to strengthen outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. As a result, we farewelled HIPPY Emerton in December 2025 as it transitioned to its new home with Ngroo Education - the locally appointed Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

Thanks for a decade of service



For over a decade, Linda McDonald, a proud First Nations woman and our HIPPY Coordinator, has guided families in Emerton to build strong foundations for learning and development. Since 2014, she has led the two-year program, supporting parents to nurture their child's learning, confidence, and social skills, while strengthening parent-child bonds. "HIPPY supports parents as their child's first teacher," said Linda.

In December 2025, the team farewelled Linda with a special lunch, to celebrate her transition into retirement. Catholic Care warmly thanks her for her outstanding contribution to families in Emerton and the wider Western Sydney and Blue Mountains community.

The transition in 2026 to Ngroo Education Aboriginal Corporation, a respected local Aboriginal community-controlled organisation went smoothly, and ensured the program remains strong, culturally aligned, and carries forward Linda's legacy of care.



Proud members of Family and Relationship Services Australia and Family Day Care Australia.







Counselling

Someone to talk to when it's needed most

There has been a surge in the demand for counselling services and mental health services across Australia, with a particular and acute strain felt in the western suburbs of Sydney.

With ongoing cost-of-living pressures, demographic growth, higher rates of domestic and family violence and workforce shortages, the gap between community needs and available care continues to widen.

Catholic Care has bolstered its counselling services to help with this demand. The greatest area of need has been in Family and Relationships counselling, followed by family law, financial counselling, and trauma counselling for young pregnant women at the risk of homelessness.

Project Elizabeth continued to assist women who are expecting, have experienced a loss, had a termination, or need help caring for a child up to three years old by providing trauma counselling, pregnancy and parenting guidance and practical support to young women and their families.

Honouring little lives lost

On 16 October, families gathered at Mamre House & Farm for the second annual Pregnancy and Infant Loss Memorial Service, hosted by Catholic Care in collaboration with White Lady Funerals.

Families planted flowers and laid stones in the Garden of Remembrance, sharing grief, prayer and hope. Our chaplaincy and Project Elizabeth teams were on hand, offering support and listening as families shared stories and comforted one another.

"This rose is my little ones with me," said Executive Director Helen Emmerson, who once again shared her personal journey through miscarriage.

We continue to support families in their grief and loss, and we remember their little angels.





~350
Clients supported

~1800
Total sessions

Client Demographics

5%
First Nations

9%
CALD*

*Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

SNAPSHOT



Our grief and loss counsellor, Harrison walks alongside people carrying many forms of grief.

"People often feel they're the only ones going through something. But once they realise it's part of being human, they see they're not alone or broken. This is just where I am right now."

He recalls a young man in his mid-twenties, referred to him by his mother after the sudden death of his father in a motor vehicle accident in rural northern NSW.

"He was just totally frozen with grief, caught between mourning his father and having enough in the tank to look after his younger siblings."

Over eight sessions, their work moved from gentle conversation to structured grief exercises, including creating a memento box filled with memories of his dad, which he later buried near the crash site.

The young man later reflected that without counselling, he might have quit his job and become "incredibly moody and overwhelmed," leaving his family without support.



Community engagement

Demand for Catholic Care's community outreach programs increased significantly in FY25-26. Catholic Care delivered over 15 programs that created community connection, inclusion and wellbeing across Western Sydney. These programs provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to learn, connect and access practical support.

English classes and weekly food hampers

More than 60 English classes supported language development and social connection, while weekly food hampers and essential items provided practical assistance to individuals and families in need.

Reducing social isolation

Community groups for seniors, men and quilting and reading enthusiasts created regular opportunities for connection and reduced social isolation, while our Tech Help service supported 60 people to build digital confidence and independence.

Supporting women and seniors

Our programs also supported older women, seniors' rights, wellbeing, healthy living and access to services, including the *A Stronger Me* program, Homes for Older Women, information sessions and a free eye clinic.

Caring for the environment

Environmental and community activities at Mamre House, including food-growing workshops and Landcare working bees, further strengthened community participation and connection to place.

Suicide and pregnancy and infant loss

We also provided opportunities for communities to come together around significant moments of loss and remembrance through our Suicide Memorial Service and Pregnancy and Infant Loss Service.

Catholic Care and seven parishes recognised for welcoming refugee families

Catholic Care and seven parishes across the Diocese of Parramatta were recognised for their contribution to helping refugee families build new lives in Australia through the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP).



10,556
Number of clients

15+
programs

~25%
CALD* clients

*Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

SNAPSHOT

Parents thank Catholic Care for their disengaged students rediscovering the joy of learning

A trial to get students aged 14 – 17 back into learning had parents calling Catholic Care to share how excited their children are to talk about what they've learned.

"Seeing them show up and engage so wholeheartedly is inspiring," said Lisa Malcher, Community Engagement and Development Coordinator.

The course helps students return to school, explore vocational education pathways or find employment. But more than skills, it offers a place of belonging, encouragement and hope.

Free legal help

Solicitor Ric Gonzalez provided a free weekly legal advice service at Emerton, helping over 40 clients between May and July 2026. He is now expanding this to provide more services in Springwood.

New partnership with Landcare

At The Shed in Emerton, a bush regeneration group called Baadhang Mittigar (Platypus Friends) clean up South Creek and the surrounding area at Mamre with the purpose of engaging First Nations people with cultural and ceremonial activities.













First Nations Support

Catholic Care continued its support of First Nations communities by delivering practical support across all its programs. An increase in First Nations clients across the board shows the importance of the services Catholic Care provides to foster reconciliation and provide practical support for the many Aboriginal Catholics and Stolen generations in the local community.

The dedicated drop-in centre in Emerton provides practical assistance and learning opportunities which is managed in partnership with the Baabayan Aboriginal Corporation who aim to have a place of healing, where Aboriginal people connect with culture and have a strong sense of belonging they will be able to recover from past traumas, regain their self-esteem and realise their potential.



NAIDOC Week festivites in Emerton

Catholic Care's Mamre homestead a place of rest for First Nations artefacts

On Tuesday 16 December 2025, Catholic Care's Mamre homestead in Orchard Hills became a place of reburial and rest for Aboriginal artefacts uncovered during an archaeological dig by Transport for NSW ahead of roadworks along Mamre Road.

The artefacts were repatriated in a ceremony onsite, which included a traditional smoking ceremony led by Aunty Thelmerie Rudd and Uncle Paul Webb. Catholic Care staff and members of the local Aboriginal community were welcomed to Country as part of this important act of cultural care and respect.

"Mamre has always been a place of connection and care," said Lisa Malcher, Catholic Care's Community Engagement Coordinator.

"Being able to provide a safe, respectful place for these artefacts to return home honours the deep custodianship of the Darug people and strengthens our shared commitment to reconciliation."



Catholic Care staff, volunteers and members of the local Aboriginal community during a repatriation ceremony of indigenous artefacts.



Aunty Rhonda at the NAIDOC Week festivities

A Deadly Day Out NAIDOC Week expands

On Thursday 10 July 2025, over 2,000 people gathered at Whalan Reserve to celebrate NAIDOC Week under the theme "Next Generation – Strength, Vision, Legacy."

What began years ago as a local NAIDOC celebration hosted by Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation at Holy Family Parish, Emerton, has grown into one of the most anticipated events on the community calendar.

With numbers increasing each year, this year's event trialled a new location at Whalan Reserve to accommodate the growing crowd.

More than 60 stallholders representing local organisations and agencies attended with Catholic Care hosting a Yarning session.

Aunties Rhonda and Neroli were delighted to share their art and invite children passing by to have a go at painting art themselves.

For Aunty Rhonda, a Bundjalung Elder and Catholic Care volunteer who runs the Dirrangun women's art group in Emerton – a Bundjalung word meaning "Spirit Woman" – the event was about people, stories, and connection.

Her artwork, which featured on Catholic Care bookmarks handed out at the event, was a visual reminder of how culture is kept alive – through shared stories.

"I see a lot of the young ones now, children are interested in this," she said. "And the music is a great thing. You got to have music at NAIDOC, yeah? And the food."

Catholic Care staff and volunteers handed out native seeded cards for planting – a simple gesture that invited people to care for Country in a small but meaningful way.

Community engagement coordinators James Abela and Lisa Malcher spoke with locals about services available – and those yet to come.



Our chaplaincies

Catholic chaplains share Christ's love through care and support in our community

A Catholic chaplain is a religious or lay person who offers support, compassion and comfort to those in need, serving as both a wellbeing guide and a messenger of Christ.

Catholic Care's chaplains work closely with Sydney's diverse and vibrant multicultural communities, as well as in local hospitals and correctional centres, providing care and guidance to individuals, families and communities.

When life brings unexpected or overwhelming challenges, Catholic Care's chaplains are just a phone call away. Their ministry offers emotional and spiritual support every step of the journey, ensuring that no one ever walks alone.

The quiet, invisible ministry at Westmead Hospital

I visit a woman, middle-aged, alone. No family listed on the board. She has been here a long time. When I introduce myself and ask if she would like a visit, she stares at the ceiling for a long moment before answering.

"Does anyone actually care?" she asks. Not bitterly. Just honestly. "I don't have a family you know, I am all alone. Thanks for your time."

I sit down without being invited to. I tell her that I'm here because I choose to be. That she didn't have to be on any list. That even if I'm a stranger, I'm a stranger who drove across Sydney this morning specifically to knock on doors like hers.

Something shifts in her face. It's subtle, the way tension leaves the jaw. She doesn't burst into tears. She doesn't thank me effusively. She just says: "Alright then."

We sit quietly for a while. She tells me a little about her life. I listen more than I talk. When I eventually leave, she says: "Come back next week."

I tell her "I will."

Peter Sarju is a Volunteer Chaplain at Westmead Hospital.



Some of our Chaplains





13
Chaplains
across
9 Hospitals & **4** Prisons

SNAPSHOT





Richard Korkor, one of our prison chaplains

Inmates queue for Holy Thursday service

Bishop Vincent visited the maximum security area of Parklea Correctional Centre to celebrate Mass and conduct the washing of feet for Holy Thursday in 2026.

Over 30 inmates participated in the liturgy organised by Richard Korkor, Prison Chaplain. He conducted Holy Thursday liturgies throughout the week due to the demand. Over 130 men attended a liturgy, which is one of the largest numbers of participation to date - approximately 12% of all inmates at Parklea.

In one session Richard shared that after he washed one person's feet, the inmate asked if he could wash Richard's. The gesture stopped Richard in his tracks who accepted the invitation.

"This work [in prisons] helps you get down to the essentials ... I've done my studies in theology, but this ministry has been my PhD," said Richard.

Father's Day in a maximum-security prison

By Richard Korkor

"So often in the prison, I sit with men who have been deeply affected by their fathers. For some, the ability to tell him about their pain in person is no longer possible. However, in our time together, in a quiet room where they feel safe, they name their pain without fear or judgement. In those moments, there are two or three gathered, and loosening takes place within the inmate, bringing restoration.

For every person in the world there is a father, regardless of the method of birth. And for every father, there is a range of experiences one has had. Within all this goodness and messiness, joy and sorrow – for every great father, and every father who did not or could not live out the role as deep down they may have desired - we pray for you."



Bishop Vincent washes inmates' feet on Holy Thursday.

Our supporters

We are supported to deliver our high-quality programs through generous donations, grants and strong community partnerships.

Thank you to all our donors, funding providers and community partners!

Major donors

- Australian Youth & Health Foundation
- Eric Storm Charitable Trust
- The Inagh Foundation

Other key funding providers

- Attorney-General's Department
- Brotherhood of St Laurence (HIPPY Australia)
- Charles Sturt University
- Department of Social Services
- Parramatta Catholic Foundation
- The generous parishioners of the Diocese of Parramatta
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Department of Education
- NSW Health

Community providers

- Alula Products
- Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation
- Bedford College, Norwest
- Bunnings Warehouse
- Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese
- Community Housing Limited
- Diamond Women
- Dignity Food Relief
- Diocese of Parramatta
- Dress for Success
- Drive for Life
- Evolve Community Housing
- Family and Relationship Services Australia
- Family Day Care Australia
- Good things Foundation
- Homelessness NSW
- Homes for Older Women
- KEYS Network
- Macquarie Community College
- Multicultural Centre of Excellence
- Mobile Eyes
- Nepean Community College (NCC)
- Nepean Multicultural Health
- Ngroo
- OzHarvest
- Parramatta Mission
- Penrith City Council
- Penrith Women's Health Centre
- Playgroups NSW
- Red Cross
- San Miguel Family Centre
- Share the Dignity
- Sunrise Foundation
- Survivors Voice
- TAFE NSW, Nirimba
- The Men's Shed Emerton
- The Salvation Army Rouse Hill
- WASH House
- Western Sydney University
- White Lady Funerals
- Woolworths Plumpton
- WOTBaby

Our governance

Advisory Council

Our leaders drive our organisation towards achieving a vision of high quality, compassionate care and support for vulnerable individuals and communities in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.



Dr Rodger Austin
Rodger is an experienced canon lawyer working with individuals within the Catholic Church, diocesan bishops, agencies, parishes, and religious institutes for over 50 years and is the Advocate for the Ecclesiastical Regional Tribunal of Sydney.



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.



Helen Emmerson, *Executive Director*
Helen has 20+ years' experience in aged care and disability services in Australia and the UK. A Catholic Care Advisory Council member since 2019, she formerly led Southern Cross Care (NSW & ACT).



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



Fr Fernando Montano VG,
Episcopal Vicar of Social Welfare
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.



Most Rev Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv,
Bishop of Parramatta
Bishop Vincent was appointed as the fourth Bishop of Parramatta in May 2016.



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



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.

Executive Team

Meet the faces of our leadership team and learn more about our service model.



Helen Emmerson
Executive Director

Helen has 20+ years' experience in aged care and disability services in Australia and the UK. A Catholic Care Advisory Council member since 2019, she formerly led Southern Cross Care (NSW & ACT).



Brooke McGilvray
Head of Services

Brooke has 18+ years' experience in social services, including leadership and case management at Catholic Care Sydney. She supports staff, volunteers, and clients while fostering strong community and stakeholder partnerships.



Dimsy Kapoor
Head of Finance

Dimsy has led Catholic Care's finance division since 2023, bringing 15+ years' experience in corporate and non-profit finance. Her strong financial and accounting skills continue to support the growth and success of Catholic Care.



Courtney Pullbrook
Project and Systems Officer

Courtney has 10+ years' administrative and business support experience, including in social services. She manages projects and ensures consistent information and reporting across government-funded services and regulatory requirements.



Caitlin Rozairo
Customer and Risk Assurance Manager

Caitlin has over 10 years' experience in social services. She oversees risk management, compliance, and quality assurance; ensuring programs and services are delivered efficiently and meet regulatory and industry standards.

Leadership Team



Nevena Kuljanin
Counselling Services Manager

Nevena joined Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains in November 2023. With a strong social and community background, she has extensive experience in child development, case management, and team leadership.



Emma Low
Family Day Care Coordinator

Emma joined our Family Day Care in July 2023, bringing nearly 30 years' early childhood experience. She holds a Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood 0–8 years) and is passionate about quality care and education.



Maree Hanna
Houses to Homes Coordinator

Maree has 25+ years' experience, and she manages multiple residences in Western Sydney, holding qualifications in Early Childhood, Nursing, Child Protection, and Parenting programs.



Bernard Ellis
Chaplaincy Coordinator

Bernard supports chaplains serving hospitals and prisons. A former teacher, he has provided Catholic chaplaincy since 2016, serving some of society's most vulnerable with compassion and care.



Lisa Malcher
Community Engagement Coordinator

Lisa, a former volunteer, works with families and partners to deliver inclusive programs that build connection, skills, confidence, and community impact.



Charlie Olerick
Families Together Team Leader

Charlie leads and supports a team of five practitioners within the Families Together Program. Working closely alongside the team, Charlie provides leadership, guidance, and oversight to manage risks and address child protection concerns.



Leonard Brown
Child and Family Services Team Leader

Leonard leads and supports a team of four caseworkers within our Early Intervention Program. Leonard plays a key role in developing community programs and strengthening partnerships to deliver a range of core program activities.



Rania Ndayra
Child and Family Manager

Rania joined in May 2026 as our Child and Family Services Manager, a key appointment for our expanding Family Services portfolio. She brings 18+ years' experience in the community services sector, with expertise across youth services, family and domestic violence, and family preservation programs.

Our people

Our dedicated, passionate and skilled staff and volunteers make a difference in the lives of the people we support

In early 2026, Catholic Care held its annual ‘Anchor Day’ at St Patrick’s Cathedral Hall in Parramatta.

The day brought together staff and volunteers from across Catholic Care’s services to connect, share and learn more about the agency’s work in line with the Diocese’s Pastoral Plan. Participants explored how their roles contribute to the broader mission and took part in workshops to identify priorities for the year ahead, ensuring alignment with Catholic Care’s strategic goals.
The event fostered collaboration, strengthened understanding of shared objectives, and offered a valuable opportunity for staff and volunteers to reflect on their impact while contributing ideas to guide the agency’s work in supporting communities across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.



OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers support our wide range of services, including visiting the socially isolated, and working with disadvantaged and vulnerable community groups.

Volunteer with us

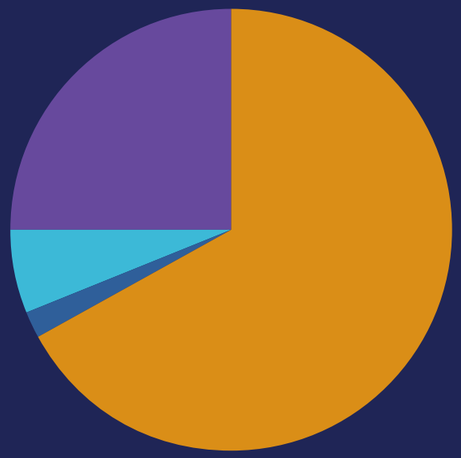
If you are interested in supporting our ministries, please scan here to find out more.

Catholic Care acknowledges the support from the Diocese of Parramatta, including its Risk, Property, HR, Communications and IT staff.

Financials Overview

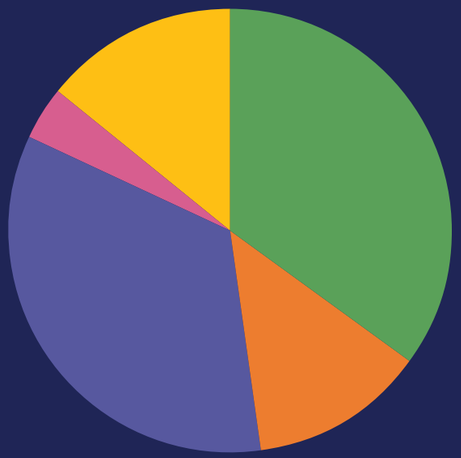
Catholic Care is proud of its financial performance and its ability to respond to increasing demand for services across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. Guided by the 2024–2027 Strategic Plan, the agency continues to refine programs and introduce new initiatives to address the evolving social service and welfare needs of our diverse communities. Ongoing improvements to financial management and client systems ensure Catholic Care can deliver a strong, sustainable service model that effectively supports people in need, now and into the future.

EXPENDITURE



- 67% Employee Related Expenses
- 2% Depreciation and Amortisation
- 6% Occupancy Cost
- 25% Program Delivery and Support Costs

REVENUE



- 35% State Grants
- 13% Federal Grants
- 34% Diocesan Grants
- 4% Donations and Bequests
- 14% Other Income

Where to find us

Services Directory



Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains

1 Head office, Parramatta

Level 2
10 Victoria Rd
Parramatta NSW 2150
P: (02) 8843 2500
E: enquiries@catholiccarewsbm.org.au
W: catholiccarewsbm.org.au

Open: Mon-Fri (9am-5pm)

Services provided:
- Counselling
- Financial guidance
- Head Office of Western Sydney Family Day Care
- Corporate services

2 Branch office, Blacktown

St Patrick's Church (foyer)
51-59 Allawah Street
Blacktown NSW 2148

Open: Mon-Fri (9am-5pm)

Services provided:

- Information, advice and referrals counselling
- Financial guidance
- Family and children's services

Community drop-in centres and service locations

At Catholic Care, there's always a place to drop in and get support no appointment needed.

For further details on the services we provide, please visit our website.

1 Emerton

Holy Family Parish,
13 Emert Parade
Emerton NSW 2770

Services provided:
Catholic Aboriginal and Multicultural services.
Call Catholic Care for the latest schedule.

2 Orchard Hills

Mamre House and Farm
181 Mamre Road
Orchard Hills NSW 2748

Open: Mon-Thu (9am-3pm)
General community drop-in, all welcome

Services provided:
- Mamre Creche childcare *(school term only)*
- Make-up class for migrants and refugees
- Men's Shed
- English language classes *(school term only)*
- Citizenship classes *(school term only)*
- English language classes
- Sewing class
- Senior's Day club
- OzHarvest First Teacher parenting program *(school term only)*
- Art and craft group
- Farm maintenance and horse agistment
- Community garden

3 Springwood

Unit 3 / 163 Macquarie Road
Springwood NSW 2777

Open: Mon-Thu (10am-4pm)
General community drop-in, all welcome

Other services provided:
- Counselling
- Free Legal Clinic
- Victims Services Assistance
- Wellbeing Groups
- Homes for older women
- Vinnies food and clothing distribution
- Pantry & Toiletry Items
- Tea & Coffee
- No Interest Loans
- Tech Help

Western Sydney Family Day Care

Head office
Level 2
10 Victoria Rd
Parramatta NSW 2150

P: (02) 8843 2560
E: FDCAdmin@catholiccarewsbm.org.au
W: wsfdc.com.au

Family day care service locations

Western Sydney Family Day Care provides around 45 childcare services across Western Sydney:

- Baulkham Hills
- Beaumont Hills
- Box Hill
- Bella Vista
- Castle Hill
- Cherrybrook
- Dural
- Glenwood
- Kellyville
- Kellyville Ridge
- Merrylands
- Northmead
- North Kellyville
- Pendle Hill
- Quakers Hill
- Rouse Hill
- Schofields
- Seven Hills
- Stanhope Gardens
- The Ponds
- Wentworthville
- Winston Hills

catholic care
WESTERN SYDNEY AND THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Care when you need it most

catholic care

WESTERN SYDNEY AND THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Care when you need it most

Level 2
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E: enquiries@catholiccarewsbm.org.au
W: catholiccarewsbm.org.au

Homelessness NSW Member

Family DAY CARE

frsa Family & Relationship Services Australia