



**NORTH WEST
COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.**

Building a stronger community together



NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
**ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024**

OUR VISION

Building a stronger community together.

A safe, harmonious, socially connected and informed community.

OUR PURPOSE

We work collaboratively to achieve our vision by:

- Improving wellbeing and empowering individuals and families to live independently as part of the community.
- Supporting individuals to make their own positive lifestyle decisions.
- Providing high quality services, facilitating localised innovating solutions, and advocating for the community.
- Harnessing community strengths to enhance community cohesion.
- Concentrating resources in our community to help build social inclusion and reduce marginalisation.

OUR VALUES

Our values & beliefs are central to all that we are.

RESPECT

We treat others as we would like to be treated. We honour each other's strengths, potential, experiences, views, time, and contributions.

INTEGRITY

We are honest, authentic, transparent, and accountable in our work.

INCLUSION

We welcome and include all.

SUSTAINABILITY

We operate effectively to support and maintain the highest standards and remain functional for the community.

EQUITY

We treat each person as an individual and apply fairness and justice to all we do.



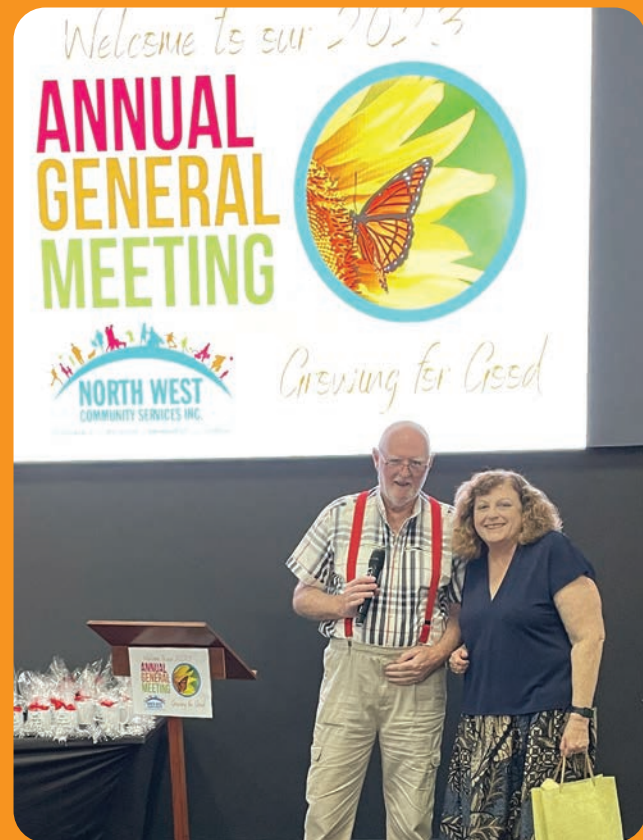
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Cogar

This past year has been a year of asking “What is Wellbeing and how is it affecting our community?” With the previous years of natural disasters the community has endured, and the slow recovery from these events, allied with the rate of increase in the cost of living that effects our wellbeing for everything from the cost of food on the table, the increased cost of moving around in our community for friendship and essential services, and stress caused by the massive increase in the local population without the appropriate and necessary social infrastructure being provided by government, many people are left feeling disenfranchised in our society. They feel cut-off from others, and from the community in general, as they try and make do, struggling to feed their families as well as keeping a roof over their heads, all the while wondering if the money will last until the next pay day.

So where do they turn when they need help? Our community centres have been in the front line of providing assistance, especially as government bodies make it more difficult for the average person to find their way through the maze of paperwork and stipulated requirements to qualify. Our team, at NWCS, also must comply with all these increasing regulatory requirements, whilst attempting to stay in front of the constant government reform processes, as state and local government feed us a growing population with its attendant demands on services, all the while reducing funding and investment. The wellbeing of our team must also be under constant review so that we can provide the services needed by the community.

The Federal government is carrying out a process of Aged Care reform that drastically changes the way that organisations such as NWCS will have to comply with the new standards. The stronger clinical and governance focus of these reforms is aimed at creating improved service outcomes for older people, but this comes with financial constraints due to the cost modelling, and longer wait lists as people struggle to access local services. We expect to be fully prepared when the new standards are finally implemented in 2025.



I reported in last year's Presidents message that we had successfully transitioned through the IT changeover from being an in-house service to being now a cloud based IT service, allowing greater freedom and resilience in time of disaster occurrence. Whilst this has proven out to be the case, there were some key issues that recurred, forcing us to re-evaluate the government recommended IT provider who carried out the transition to cloud based operation. After much consideration, we have now moved to a new IT support team who are proving to be more responsive to our way of working as a not-for-profit organisation, and who have managed to rectify many issues left behind by the previous supplier. Thanks go to all the NWCS team who suffered, for their patience and their co-operation, as they worked with the new IT people as they struggled to sort the many and sundry issues facing them in the takeover.

As part of the IT makeover that occurred, we have also been able to provide newer mobile communications to all the NWCS team, thus enabling them to work more collaboratively and efficiently, both in the office and remotely, thereby being able to provide a better service to all our clients. In this time of decreasing funding and increased demands on our services, every tool we can improve to help our team's ability to deliver must be implemented as and when we can afford to do so.

In line with adding tools to save money and increase efficiency, we were successful in obtaining an NSW Community Building Partnership Grant that enabled us to consider installing solar panels to our council premises. Now these are installed and operational, we have reduced our running costs, as well as added some environmental benefits to our operations.

The Targeted Early Intervention Program, funded by the Department of Communities and Justice, has been very successful for us, but the department is currently going through a recommissioning process with this, and in the process, seem to be moving it further away from building neighbourhoods and steering it in the direction of an adjunct to the child protection system. We would like to highlight the need for stronger advocacy for the NSW Government to invest in neighbourhood centres, particularly given our critical impact during repeated disasters.

We have achieved recognition as the "go to" in the north west and are engaged with key stakeholders on a range of issues, including domestic violence, disaster preparedness and response. We have been exploring innovative solutions for funding models and for providing social infrastructure. We participated in the Future forum hosted by the North West Business Chamber, we were actively involved with the Riverstone Community Cabinet, and we are responding to various planning proposals, such as Riverstone East and the Rouse Hill Hospital. All these activities we must somehow fit in to our limited budget, without detracting from our key areas of providing services to our clients. Special thanks goes to our CEO Angela Van Dyke for her tireless work in this area.

We are slowly growing to meet the needs of our rapidly growing community. Our annual revenue in 2023-2024 grew to \$1.75million, some \$300,000 increase from the previous year. Whilst we saw some new growth with the Wellbeing Project funding from the Western Sydney Primary Health Network, which was a short term initiative looking at community wellbeing in a

disaster environment, our other growth came from various sources, including increased demand for community space in the NWCS building group. Our financial donations are significantly lower than in previous years, not surprising given the challenges for local businesses and households. Our in kind contributions from local community remains strong and has enabled our team to support those most in need.

As mentioned, we continue to see high demand for limited community space, which has a detrimental impact on the capacity to build meaningful activity, build capacity, relationships, and trust within neighbourhoods. We continue to advocate for building infrastructure such as community halls, and importantly the human services such as NWCS to bring it all together. Our requests for assistance from Blacktown Council in this regard are ongoing, as we try to increase our available space with demountable infrastructure in the Riverstone precinct. We live in a time of significant change and struggles for people, and local neighbourhoods have never been more important, as we have seen through our disaster work.

Lastly, we secured an NSW Government Local Small Allocations Grant, which has been used to purchase a resilience/community van, with a very generous in-kind donation from the van supplier. This will operate as a hospitality training tool for youth/unemployed work training, be used to generate fundraising activity at community events where those trainees can put their skills to practical use and to play host as a community outreach hub at local parks/venues where we see many new residents settling in new estates without social infrastructure. We hope to have the van operational soon.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their devotion as unpaid volunteers in ensuring our community centre continues to grow and provide services to the community. And a big thank you to the NWCS team, for their tireless devotion through difficult times as we negotiate extreme local community growth with far too little in the way of resources and funding.

Michael Cogar
President of the Board
North West Community Services Inc.

FROM THE CEO

Angela Van Dyke

The year of Wellbeing

I am delighted to report on another productive year, with amazing outcomes and growing engagement with our community. We are living in a time of rapid, ongoing change and reform, with increasing demands on our limited resources.

Our work over the past year has continued to support our most vulnerable whilst also endeavouring to build neighbourhoods in a rapidly growing population. A great deal of our work has focused on the human experience, resilience, and aiming to thrive rather than merely survive. The lack of investment in social infrastructure and public funding for our growth neighbourhoods creates increased difficulties for our team, having an impact on their wellbeing and that of our community. The impact of repeated disasters has had an impact on our community, along with the financial challenges impacting households and businesses. Not surprisingly, the theme for the year is Wellbeing, recognising the need for and importance of community and social connection, of having meaningful activity and opportunity, of creating belonging, promoting help seeking behaviour and having the local services and infrastructure available when needed.

A highlight for the year has been The Wellbeing Project, funded by the Western Sydney Primary Health Network, and was a significant initiative delivered in a brief period, in response to repeated floods and the need to build community resilience and enhance mental wellbeing. We are proud of the amazing outcomes and the knowledge that has been built and shared, with the launch of the report and presenting a poster summary at the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference. This work has become a springboard for ongoing advocacy and service delivery.

We were invited to participate in the consultation process for the development of the NSW Disaster Adaptation Plan. This is an important piece of work being undertaken at a state level to build on our experiences, knowledge, and recommendations from inquiries into disaster responses. We look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts with public/disaster



agencies to see further development and refinement in response to disasters.

Our reputation for innovation and place based expertise was recognised when we were invited to participate in a unique initiative with the specialist list court, coordinated by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice as a unique domestic violence initiative. We had the opportunity to build on training, knowledge and connections with justice and legal services, including Magistrates, working on strategies to improve outcomes for domestic violence victims whilst also looking at programs to address men's violence.

We had the privilege of attending the Riverstone Community Cabinet, with most of the NSW Ministers in attendance to hear from our community. We met with the Minister for Family and Community and Minister for Youth Justice, who expressed an interest to visit for further conversations on the needs of our community.

Reform processes continue with funding, and we have been proactive preparing for the Aged Care Reforms and for the Department of Communities and Justice Targeted Early Intervention recommissioning process. Change processes require ongoing investment from staff and the Board, and we hope to be ready and competitive in future funding rounds. Relentless change with inadequate funding has an ongoing impact on our workforce, both paid and volunteers. Increased funding is critical to address the shortfall.

Events featured prominently throughout the year, along with many diverse groups based activities, as highlighted throughout this report. Our challenging environment and climate created some setbacks with outdoor events, particularly during the summer months. Extreme heat continues to be an issue, and we continued our collaboration with Blacktown City Council to host the Riverstone Cool Centre.

We were invited to participate on a panel for the Riverstone Future Forum, an initiative hosted by the North West Business Chamber, focusing on the population growth and needs of our precinct. It was wonderful to see the large and diverse gathering, with Council representatives, elected members, businesses, community leaders and members.

We were invited to collaborate with the Member for Riverstone to host a consultative process with our young people. We held a Youth forum as part of Youth Week, with eight local public and private high schools. It was inspiring to hear from our youth, who are clear about the issues and challenges facing them, and yes, they have broad interests and passion beyond social media. The report will be launched later this year, and we look forward to building on that work and advocate for policy and funding that starts address the needs identified by our young people.

We continue to offer student placement opportunities for university and TAFE students, volunteers, and those undertaking Work Development Orders. This report provides a snapshot of key activities throughout the year, and I proudly congratulate our wonderful team who work so tirelessly to support our growing community, despite having diminishing resources and infrastructure.

Our work would not be possible without the amazing volunteers

who donate their time, knowledge, skills, and energy. They are truly inspiring, and our successes would not be possible without them!

We thank our Board members, (Michael Cogar, Jonathan Agius, Julian Passfield, Sue Lawrence, Clarissa Stepek, and Nalika Padmasena), who have been a strong force for good, ensuring we are financially sustainable, our team are supported, and who continue to provide a culture of positivity and exploring innovative solutions to meet many challenges.

As a neighbourhood centre and community hub, we work with many diverse individuals and agencies, public, private, and not for profit. We thank all those who have donated, sponsored, and worked with us throughout the year. Collaborative action is critical if we are to make a difference in neighbourhoods at a time of unprecedented change and challenge.

I was proud to be awarded Blacktown City Woman of the Year. I know that there are many women doing amazing things, quietly, every day. I also realise that there is so much work to do to address the diverse issues facing women, of all ages. Whilst there has been a strong focus in the public domain about family and domestic violence, I urge everyone to consider that our strategies need to be much broader and address issues at a much earlier stage, rather than focus on a single point in time, when crisis strikes. This is what neighbourhood centres are about, this is what we learned throughout repeated disasters, this is what we learned through the Wellbeing Project and the recommendations from the Youth Forum. If we really want to build resilience, then we need to build people, in place, in neighbourhoods. To do that, we need to invest in social infrastructure like neighbourhood/community centres and the human capital that brings it all together.

I hope you enjoy reading our Annual Report. I look forward to continuing our collaborative approach of “Building a Stronger Community Together.”

Angela Van Dyke
Chief Executive Officer
North West Community Services Inc.

THE WELLBEING PROJECT

Our community experienced repeated floods during 2021-2022. Some of our neighbourhoods sit on the Hawkesbury Nepean Flood Plain, and given our smaller geographical footprint, it can be challenging to secure resources for our flood affected households.

We established a place based approach to disaster response and recovery and formed a Blacktown Working Group with disaster agencies to engage with us and our community. Many activities were undertaken, with successful outcomes. Our journey created rich learning opportunities that we have shared widely.

Following on from this work, and with funding from the Western Sydney Primary Health Network, we developed The Wellbeing Project, which had a focus on addressing resilience and mental health and wellbeing in communities affected by disaster. The project targeted thirteen flood affected suburbs within the Blacktown and Hills Local Government Areas. The core goals for the project were:

- Promoting community connection
- Supporting mental health
- Promoting an active lifestyle
- Supporting disaster preparedness and readiness
- Supporting those still impacted by floods
- Linking individuals to services and supports

The Wellbeing Project looked at current evidence, a literature review, gaps in services, statistical population data with a recognition that disasters have long term effects, and there is a greater need to invest in building neighbourhood connections through local place based initiatives.

The Wellbeing Project delivered a diverse arrange of activity:

- Social media and website to build disaster readiness information
- Media and marketing initiatives
- Social and health- Group based programs
- Community events
- Case Work and Brokerage
- Counseling- child and adult
- Community education

Our aim was to build additional evidence on the importance of place based community organisations in disasters. Our project learnings indicate that:

- Building resilience requires ongoing commitments to building relationship and trust in community. Resilience is more than a disaster workshop, and our work with floods and The Wellbeing Project demonstrates the importance of local connections. Local neighbourhood centres, such as NWCS are essential as part of that social capacity and disaster resilience activity.
- Offering flexible and nuanced approaches for cohorts and neighbourhoods. Our work clearly showed that trying to work in a community quickly for a brief period during a crisis is extremely difficult, utilises significant resources and yields limited outcomes. We have shown there is an economic benefit by investing in local place based approaches, as an ongoing model, enabling a rapid approach during a disaster which delivers valued outcomes and maximises the limited resources of public disaster agencies. Our approach minimises waste and duplication.
- Challenging the stereotypes about certain neighbourhoods and encouraging a more curious approach to the way public data is utilised to

prioritise resources in specific neighbourhoods. The Wellbeing Project demonstrates the importance of having local leaders with the knowledge and expertise to build greater understanding on the nuances of a local place, including its strengths and challenges.

- Raising awareness about the incredibly unique profile of our north west precinct, whilst experiencing significant population growth, having inadequate social infrastructure or locally accessible human services. We are a community with the poorest and very affluent. This creates a rich tapestry of cultural and economic diversity, but also presents unique challenges for service delivery.
- Our local, place based approach demonstrates our capacity to bring together key stakeholders at different points in time to meet diverse needs. We also harness the local strengths of a community, understand available assets, and have the capacity to bring people together within a strength based, and person centred approach.
- Importantly, our approach demonstrates the importance of valuing the lived experience of people in a place, and each place can be uniquely different requiring different approaches.
- Our work highlights the importance of relationships and building trust. This is an ongoing venture, which harnesses greater engagement and builds capacity of local community. This is fundamental if we are to create resilient neighbourhoods.
- We need longer term, sustainable funding for neighbourhood centres, and greater investment for our population growth neighbourhoods. This is essential if we are to make an impact on growing challenges in a growth area and we expect to see continued disasters and economic hardship.

We collaborated with WESTIR on the evaluation and research for The Wellbeing Project. We were delighted to hold a launch of our report findings and will be presenting a poster at the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference. Our aim is to undertake ongoing advocacy to attract investment for our proposed resilience based model.

2,682

PEOPLE REACHED
THROUGH 15 GROUP
PROGRAMS

225,757
SOCIAL MEDIA
OUTREACH

1,522

PEOPLE REACHED
THROUGH COMMUNITY
EVENTS

1,471

CASEWORK
OCCASIONS
OF SERVICE

145

COUNSELING
CLIENTS

THE WELLBEING PROJECT



COMMUNITY NEWS

South Maroota Fair

By DR KIM LOO

North West Community Services Inc. (NWCS) is a non-profit community organisation based in the Sam Lane Community Complex, Park Street, Riverstone.

Formally known as Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre, NWCS was renamed in March this year (2023) and is behind the Riverstone Family Medical Practice where I work. It supports a range of services including a Men's Shed and community garden.

On Saturday (September 16th) NWCS held a Community Spring Fair at South Maroota.

Present were all the services that help foster community, engage and support those who are vulnerable, help with preparedness for disasters and improve and nourish the community with more green spaces.

I spoke to Alex Blair from Maroota RFS who told me the summer is going to be hot and dry. And that long ago there were serious fires.

He and his team are working with residents to make sure the community is well prepared. This community has not had a major fire in this area for 20 years. To find out more about being prepared visit the Rural Fire Service website www.rfs.nsw.gov.au and www.myfireplan.com.au

I spoke to Angela Van Dyke the CEO of North West Community Services about this wonderful organisation which works in multiple

ways to foster community well-being and disaster preparedness. This service has helped several of my patients.

CEO of Landcare Tulough Guerin was also there. The Landcare movement is an invaluable organisation which encourages a community-based approach to protecting and managing our resources. Our natural world is so important for our physical and mental health.

Our interests overlap as I do nature prescriptions and this does intersect with the work of Landcare. I prescribe time with nature for my patients such as a walk in a wooded area or gardening. It helps with psychological distress and improves general health. There are good studies in Australia with supporting evidence of this.

The SES and service NSW Service NSW were also present. As we have increasing heat waves and extreme weather. We need to have community preparedness and good disaster planning.

This fair was important because it gave an opportunity for our community to connect and



Angela Van Dyke the CEO of North West Community Services with Dr Kim Loo from Riverstone.

find out what is available and accessible so that we can all plan ahead for any disaster.

North West Community Services has a full program of activities every week. To find out about regular programs and special events like the Spring Fair visit <http://nwcs.org.au>

The Hills to Hawkesbury welcomes articles for consideration. If you have been to an event in the Hills to Hawkesbury area that you want to write about submit it and a photograph to contribute@hillstohawkesbury.com.au



AGEING, DISABILITY & WELLNESS

Our Ageing and Disability team have a strong focus on creating wellbeing and enablement opportunities for our older people and those living with disability.

Our Aged Care Service is funded by the Australian Government, Department of Health, and Aged Care. Our social support services fall within the Commonwealth Home Support Program, with the aim of providing entry level support enabling people to live safely and independently at home. A strong component of this services is offering social support, social connections to improve psychological, physical, and emotional wellbeing. Our service complies with the National Aged Care Standards and requirements of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

In a post COVID world, our clients have been focused on joy and fun, whilst building on health and enablement. Our team have been responding to the needs of our clients, and have delivered a diverse array of activity, including group based activities addressing health and wellness, social activity, outings, assisted transport, casework and enabling our seniors to connect with the broader community through events. These programs are the heart of what we do, providing a place to meet new people, learn new skills, and have a fun time.

GROUP BASED ACTIVITY

The Men's Shed has remained a popular spot where men come together to work on woodworking, garden, bike projects, share stories, and support each other. It is not just about working on projects; it is about making friends and feeling part of a group and having a sense of purpose and value to the local community as they age. Our shed activities provide an opportunity to learn new skills, focus on the capacity of an individual at any point in time, is strengths based and can also be a place where older men gather for social connection, and building a sense of value by undertaking projects that "give back to community". The smiles and laughter in the Men's Shed are proof of the strong bonds formed here.

Our Card Making and Craft Groups have been a creative outlet for many. Clients get to design beautiful cards and crafts while chatting and sharing experiences. This creative time brings a lot of joy and allows everyone to express themselves in a safe and friendly environment. The Friendship-Bingo Group has been a big hit as well. Bingo is more than just a game as seen in clubs around town, it is adapted to meet the needs of our older clients, providing additional support that enables them to participate in a loved game. It is a time to connect, laugh, and enjoy the company of others. Each fortnight, clients come together to play, share stories, develop, or maintain

skills and personal capacity.

We offer assorted opportunities to build physical health and limit falls. Our Senior's Dance Fitness classes have been growing in popularity and kept everyone on their toes! Dancing to upbeat music has been a fun way for clients to stay fit and healthy. The classes are adapted for safety, are full of energy, and everyone leaves with a smile on their face.

We offer opportunities for our clients to engage with others in the community, of different ages. We facilitate craft, cooking, gardening, and storytelling activities with children in our supported playgroup, children in the Early Learning Centre who are our neighbours, working with vulnerable teens, and enabling clients to join us at broader events/festivals. Feedback has been incredibly positive as clients indicate they feel more valued, they feel they have more purpose and something to look forward to, and they have a stronger sense of belonging to community.

OUTINGS

We held monthly shopping bus trips to assist clients and offer continued independence in their day to day lives. They were fun days out where they could buy what they needed and enjoy time with friends. We also went on special bus trips to the NSW Tram Museum and the NSW Fire Museum. Our clients loved seeing old trams and fire trucks and learning about their history. These trips were not only fun but also a great way to keep clients learning, curious, building memory and remaining active. We also supported our clients to participate in the Blacktown City International Day of Older Person's event, another wonderful way of connecting our local seniors to others across the city.

We provide assisted transport for clients to access appointments, for things such as medical, tests, specialist services etc. This is a particularly important part of our service.

Our bus is sponsored by DEICORP, which has a significant impact on our capacity to support older people.

EVENTS

We are in Sydney's North West Growth Area, which has resulted in significant population growth and a rapidly changing culturally diverse community. This year, we had a strong focus on celebrating the many cultures within our community. Our



cultural events have proven to be a wonderful way to bring people together and show respect for everyone's traditions. It has been a great way to build harmony and show that there is something common to all cultures, our humanity, and we all age!

Our Multicultural morning teas and lunches were a highlight. These gatherings were a delicious way to learn about diverse cultures. We offered food from our client's backgrounds, and everyone enjoyed trying new dishes and learning about different cuisines. It was a fantastic way to build connections and make everyone feel welcome. This has been a terrific opportunity for clients that have limited capacity and prefer shorter time for gatherings, where they otherwise may not be able to participate in more complex activities.

We hosted events like Christmas, Easter, Diwali (Festival of Lights), and our first Iftar (breaking fast during Ramadan) to honour diverse cultures. These celebrations were filled with festive foods, decorations, and activities that allowed everyone to share their traditions and feel valued. It was a wonderful way to learn about each other's backgrounds and celebrate together, enabling people to experience other cultures, their faiths, traditions, and food in a safe and respectful space. For clients who have limited capacity to travel, these events are a wonderful way to build opportunities to gain experience and "travel the world" without leaving our local neighbourhood.

To bring more joy and fun, we celebrated Christmas in July. This was a mid-year celebration that brought smiles and laughter to everyone. It was a chance for people to enjoy the spirit of Christmas in a new

2698
OCCASIONS
OF SERVICES

10,729
HOURS OF
SUPPORT

16
NUMBER OF
SERVICE TYPES

159
PEOPLE
SUPPORTED

way and join in the fun, no matter their cultural or religious background!

Our Multicultural Garden Group (Coriander & Ginger Gardening Club) has been another wonderful initiative. Clients worked together in the garden, sharing tips, and learning about plants from diverse cultures and how they are used in cooking or healing. It has been a wonderful way to connect with nature and with each other, promoting both physical and mental wellbeing. Clients who participate in our garden activities often show improved clinical outcomes with their health.

Throughout the year, we also made time for special occasions that brought a lot of fun and joy. The Melbourne Cup Celebration was filled with excitement as clients gathered to watch the race, wear their best outfits, and enjoy a fun-filled day. Mother's Day was a heartfelt event where we showed appreciation for all the mothers in our community. We celebrated with love, care, and a lot of gratitude. It was a special day to honour all the wonderful women who are mothers and caregivers.

We also focused on the wellbeing of our male clients by celebrating Father's Day and Men's Health Week. It was a week dedicated to raising awareness about men's health issues and encouraging our clients to look after themselves and promoting help seeking behaviour.

DISABILITY SUPPORT

In May 2024, we reached a significant milestone by becoming registered with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This is a big step forward for us, as it allows us to offer a wider range of services to our clients.

With our NDIS registration, we can now provide Assistance to Access and Maintain Employment or Higher Education, helping clients reach their career and educational goals. We also offer Assistance in Coordinating or Managing Life Stages, Transitions, and Supports, ensuring clients get the right help as they navigate different stages of life.

We are excited to start delivering more services, including the Development of Daily Living and Life Skills and Participation in Community, Social, and Civic Activities. Our goal is to support clients in every way possible to enhance their independence and engagement in the community. We also provide Therapeutic Supports and Group and Centre Based Activities, offering care, connection, and opportunities for fun.



CLIENT STORY - ANNA PARKES

Anna, a senior with severe visual impairment, had been feeling isolated and was actively seeking social connections. Additionally, she wanted to work on improving her physical health, particularly focusing on muscle strength and overall wellbeing.

The goal was to help Anna find suitable social and physical activities to improve her wellbeing. She needed options that would not only help her stay physically active but also allow her to engage socially with others. It was also important to address her challenge of limited mobility and transportation access.

Anna was connected to our social support services as part of our aged care services. After assessing Anna's interests and needs, we explored local options and found an aqua aerobics program, which was ideal for gentle yet effective muscle strengthening. Staff booked her into the aqua aerobics program and ensured she was registered for the sessions. To address her transportation challenge, we coordinated transport, ensuring she could attend the classes consistently. Additionally, staff introduced her to our social support programs, including bingo, BBQ parties, seniors' lunches, and shopping bus trips, which she continuously joins and enjoys.

Anna is now actively participating in the aqua aerobics sessions and other social, health and wellness programs, which has led to significant improvements in her health and wellbeing. The combination of physical activity and social interactions has made an enormous difference in her overall happiness and health. Anna now has a stronger sense of belonging, is more engaged with her community and no longer feels isolated.



GAMBLING

We have delivered a range of exciting and impactful initiatives throughout the 2023-2024 year. This included community events, local neighbourhood-based activities, training opportunities for the staff, client centred work and engaging with local clubs and pharmacies.

The initiatives aim to raising awareness of gambling harm, educating the community, and promoting help-seeking behaviours, and is funded by the NSW Office of Responsible Gambling.

Our efforts have primarily focused on the Blacktown Local Government Area, where we have taken a leadership role in delivering various activities. We have a strong focus on collaborative practice and have worked closely with Gamble Aware Blue Mountains Western Sydney, and a range of diverse agencies, business, and community stakeholders.

As part of our key initiatives, we established information desks in diverse locations, including entry and exit points of railway stations, libraries, and a range of community events organized by NWCS. This approach helped us reach a broader audience and engage with the community more effectively.

We further amplified our community outreach through social media and regular website updates. Our social media presence continues to grow, with our Facebook page now reaching 4.3k followers. We integrated new social media assets provided by the Office of Responsible Gambling, further enhancing our online presence. We consistently receive positive feedback on the diverse and informative content we provide.

NWCS also delivered workshops and engaged with culturally and linguistically diverse communities using a soft entry approach. We will continue to build on this

work in the coming year, to ensure our culturally and linguistically diverse communities are receiving important messages about the prevention of gambling harm and help seeking opportunities.

We had a range of activity during Gamble Aware Week, offering gambling awareness training for our staff and collaborating with key stakeholders to set up an information desk at the Blacktown Civic Plaza. We published Gamble Aware resources on our website and social media platforms. Additionally, we utilized gambling awareness email signatures to enhance engagement among our staff and promote the message more widely within the community.

We have revived the “Help Us Help You” campaign, featuring a standardized self-screening tool. This initiative was resumed with Riverstone Schofields Memorial Club and was expanded to CSI Marconi, where gambling awareness materials were prominently displayed at reception and on marketing screens. At CSI Marconi, this resource was also integrated with their electronic gaming machines.

Recognizing the role of pharmacies as well-being places, we initiated engagements with local pharmacies to promote health messages related to gambling awareness. Our “Help Us Help You” resource was displayed at the local pharmacies and an information desk display was established at Priceline Pharmacy in Marsden Park.

Our service provided information and referrals, casework for emergency relief, and financial counselling for vulnerable individuals. We have also worked with clients who recognize their gambling issues and are seeking additional specialized support.

We are seeing a growing demand for this component of work across the city. The intake process has been amended to include a gambling harm assessment, which allows us to refer individuals to appropriate specialist support.

Whilst gambling remains a difficult subject matter to engage local people, we have had several highlights to our work:

- Successful expansion of the “Help Us Help You” resource at two local clubs
- Strong community engagement through social media platforms.
- Stronger collaboration with Gamble Aware-Western Sydney
- New engagement initiatives with local pharmacies

Our work in gambling awareness continues to require adaptability and flexibility with our strategies. We continue to implement new strategies to identify ways to better engage with a broader cohort within our community.

16,899
SOCIAL MEDIA
OUTREACH

700
PEOPLE
REACHED

14
ENGAGEMENT
EVENTS

300
CLIENTS
SUPPORTED

CLIENT STORY

One of our clients, after connecting with us through a place-based activity, visited our centre seeking support. We successfully connected the client with a range of specialized services, including Gamble Aware, for ongoing counselling and support, along with other ongoing supports required for the family.

The client said, “I didn’t realize how much support was available until I connected with NWCS. The information and help I received made a real difference in how I manage my issues and think about gambling.”



OUTREACH

The Elara Community Development Project is predominantly funded by Stockland. We promoted activities and engagements that fostered a healthy and well-connected community. By implementing a multi-faceted approach, we designed flexible and purposeful community programs that successfully delivered funding outcomes while meeting the needs of the Elara community.

Key Achievements:

- **Fostered Community Connections and Engagement:** Strengthened relationships among residents and local organisations.
- **Encouraging Healthy Lifestyles:** focused on physical activity and overall well-being.
- **Promoting Inclusivity:** Organized community events and cultural celebrations that embraced diverse participation.
- **Expanding Educational Horizons:** Offered workshops and learning experiences for community members.
- **Enhancing Service Awareness:** Increased understanding of available social and community services and support to access services as needed
- **Maximizing HUB Space Utilization:** Ensured community access to shared resources and meeting venues.

A range of community engagement initiatives were delivered in response to the needs identified within community:

- Supported Playgroup
- Mums and Bubs Sessions
- Physical Fitness
- School Holiday Programs
- Awareness Campaigns
- Diwali Event
- Halloween Event
- Santa at Elara event

- The Biggest Morning Tea
- First Aid and Baby First Aid
- Sound Healing and Laughter Therapy
- Children's Street Library

This temporary investment from Stockland has demonstrated an effective community engagement approach to building a resilient neighborhood. As the community grows, demand for services and infrastructure also grows. We will continue to advocate for increased public funding to deliver ongoing, sustainable services for a diverse community.

SUPPORTED PLAYGROUP

Our Elara supported playgroup has seen wonderful engagement from local families and remains in high demand, with a very long wait list. Our program:

- Provided valuable support to mothers and caregivers by creating a welcoming space for connection and community-building.
- Promoted key developmental skills for children, including motor coordination, creativity, and social interaction, through play and engaging activities such as sensory bins, Easter egg hunts, and craft
- Offered mothers and caregivers opportunities to exchange parenting tips and to socialize to reduce feelings of isolation.
- Fostered community connections through organised themed events, like Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations, offering families opportunities to create lasting memories together.
- Special guests, such as speech therapists and dental services provided expert information and insights into child development milestones, empowering parents, and caregivers.

CLIENT QUOTE

Just wanted to say thank you. Within only a few sessions you can see how much Nathan's confidence and social skills have improved. As a parent all you want to see is your child happy and thriving and these Monday sessions are clearly doing that for him.



SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

Demand for school holiday programs continues to increase. Many families are seeking low cost or free opportunities, and with providers where they feel their children are safe. Our school holiday program:

- Sparked curiosity with Interactive Discovery Science Sessions, where children explored the wonders of the natural world, including a hands-on Dinosaur Science activity that engaged their critical thinking and observational skills.
- Enhanced creativity and fine motor skills in the Cupcake Decorating Sessions, as children learned to design and decorate cupcakes, expressing their individuality through colorful icing and toppings.
- Fostered artistic expression and boosted self-confidence in the Art Sessions, particularly in the Turtle Painting activity, where children experimented with different painting techniques and developed their creative abilities.
- Promoted physical activity and social bonding in the Disco Sessions, where children expressed themselves through dance, music, and movement, creating a lively and energetic environment for social interaction and fun.

6,300
ATTENDANCES
AT ELARA HUB

2,496
PROGRAM
PARTICIPANTS

CLIENT QUOTE

Thank you for the fun afternoon! My little one had a blast on his first Halloween outing as a cheeky monkey.



AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Raising awareness on critical issues like emergency preparedness, community problem-solving through platforms like Snap Send Solve for swift issue reporting, and mental health through RU OK? Day, and mental health month, was integrated into programs and online methods. This approach empowered individuals to communicate openly, check in on one another, and reduce stigma, strengthening resilience and fostering a connected, supportive community.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

A range of free community events were held for the Elara community. Some focused on traditional activities such as Christmas and Halloween, whilst others had a focus on raising cultural awareness and building inclusion and harmony. Our cultural activities welcomed everyone, regardless of their own cultural backgrounds, in a fun, safe, welcoming environment where residents could connect with new people in their local neighborhoods, learn about diverse cultural practices and build a community that respects diversity and inclusion. Not surprisingly, food features prominently at our community activities, and is always a great conversation starter when meeting new people!

Our aim with Halloween was to provide a child safe event, accessible and fun for local families. Many parents indicated they were not comfortable having children go to strangers' homes trick or treating. We developed an event where children could dress up and participate in games and activities at the Elara Hub in a safe environment.



TARGETED EARLY INTERVENTION

Our Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program is funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), with a focus on community strengthening along with wellbeing and safety. This program has a focus on supporting our most vulnerable community members.

Over the past year, we have delivered a range of activities that built local connection, developed individual and community capacity and improved client outcomes. This includes community events, health and wellbeing programs, training and capacity building, supported playgroup, casework, targeted support and providing a community centre. This TEI funding is crucial, as it is the only source that provides some resources that enable us to deliver extensive opportunities in a coordinated and targeted way. We thank Blacktown City Council for enabling the use of the buildings at Sam Lane Complex. Without this our work would not be possible and the significant outcomes, as noted in our data highlights, would not be achieved.

We held a diverse array of community events throughout the year, including our popular NAIDOC and our very first IFTAR. Outdoor events are becoming challenging as we experience extreme weather events.

We delivered 17 regular social participation activities throughout the year, with a focus on health (physical and mental) and creative activities. Our programs catered to various age groups, including children, teens, and adults. We incorporate intergenerational programs, bringing different families, individuals, and ages together. We aim to build a greater sense of belonging, opportunities for mentoring and support, recognising the value that each individual can bring to local communities, creating inclusion and greater harmony.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

During Youth Week 2024, we collaborated with the State Member for Riverstone to host the Riverstone Youth

Forum, bringing together 33 high school students from Years 9-11, representing seven schools within the North West precinct. This forum provided a valuable opportunity for young people to express their concerns, aspirations, and ideas for the future.

Through a series of reflective, art-based activities, the groups explored three central themes: youth issues, needs and solutions, and hopes and dreams for the future.

Key Issues Identified by Youth Forum Participants:

1. Pressure and overwhelming workload
2. Cost of living
3. Self-esteem, confidence, and self-worth
4. Disconnection due to technology
5. Mental health

The report will be released later this year in the NSW parliament, along with a video of messages conveyed directly by our young people.

Participant quotes:

- “Great opportunity for student voices to be heard.”
- “Loved how we came together and shared our thoughts!”
- “It was great having a platform to discuss issues with students from other schools.”
- “Thank you for investing in the next generation!”

TRAINING AND BUILDING CAPACITY

Our tutoring program offers intensive support for primary school aged children struggling with literacy. We have introduced some numeracy support in response to requests from students. This initiative is funded NSW Department of Communities and Justice and DEICORP, engaging staff with a specialist tutor. Students often spend a year with the program, sometimes longer. We see negative impacts on



children when they receive poor NAPLAN results, coupled with various vulnerabilities. Many start the program feeling very distressed. We provide intensive support with each child and family. We often support families to seek specialist support, services or assessments which can have a significant positive outcome on children. We see extensive wait lists and financial difficulties for vulnerable families to get the essential assessments they need for their children. Our work supporting families also focuses on working closely with the school to build additional supports around the child. Our approach, working intensively with small numbers, has delivered exceptional results. We see children more engaged, improve self-regulation, and start to develop confidence in their capacity to learn and belong in an educational setting. We have also seen some students develop leadership qualities within the group and stepping up to support younger or newer students.

Our approach has seen significant growth in children and families. We hold a graduation celebration for children exiting the program and find that families often remain connected by participating in other community activities, programs, services, or volunteering. We receive feedback that students are settling into school life and successfully continue their learning journey with their newfound skills and confidence.

We have delivered a diverse array of training opportunities, offering skills such as barista, first aid and volunteering opportunities. We also support people undertaking Work Development Orders, which has proven valuable for participants and our service.

NWCS continues to provide invaluable youth training opportunities, offering local young people and schools tailored programs aimed at developing practical skills, building confidence, and enhancing future employment prospects. This year, NWCS was privileged to collaborate with Warakirri College, an alternative education institution in the Blacktown LGA,



CLIENT QUOTES

"My child has made giant leaps in his social skills and development since coming to playgroup. He plays independently and alongside other children. I never thought I would see this day."

"I love that the mums, dads and grandparents who come to playgroup are like second parents and supports to my child. Everyone celebrates in my child's milestones and cares deeply for my child's wellbeing. This is the most supportive playgroup I have attended."

"My child cannot wait to go to playgroup. From 7am I am getting hurried along to pack bags and get dressed so we can go!"

to deliver a customized training program that addressed the unique needs of students while minimizing barriers to participation and emphasizing their individual strengths. The program featured four highly rated training sessions for 30 young participants, which included certifications and skill-building in areas such as White Card Licensing, First Aid, Barista Skills, Food Hygiene, and Expressive Therapies.

Quote from Warakirri College Wellbeing Counsellor:

"Thank you so much, Vanessa, for once again making it possible for our young people to access such valuable training opportunities that support their future career pathways. I am continually grateful for our partnership with North West Community Services and the incredible opportunities you provide for our students."

"Your attention to detail.... creates a more relaxed environment, which really helps students engage with complex and detailed information. These experiences are invaluable in helping them build resilience and face future challenges with confidence."

SUPPORTED PLAYGROUP

As we are emerging from Covid-19 families and children have continued to face social, healthcare and economic challenges. The team at NWCS are committed to providing a tailored approach with our many services on offer and partnering with other organisations that provide expertise, feedback and support for a range of developmental needs. This aims to improve the lives of children, educate and inform parents/guardians and increase empowerment within participants.

This year playgroup has worked with local emergency services, speech pathologists, completed water safety and education sessions, emotional regulation and development exercises, kinaesthetic awareness and development days. These sessions were customised and tailored programs to foster understanding, increase knowledge and autonomy, develop social skills, participation and enhance belonging, self-worth and self-esteem.

TARGETED SUPPORT

Our professional and qualified staff are funded to deliver case work support service. The essential resources and finances to support material aid and financial/emergency relief is fully donated by our wonderful community. Throughout the year we have seen an increasing demand for support, from across Blacktown, Hills and other neighbouring areas. Our outcomes for vulnerable people would not be possible without the generous donations of local businesses, groups, and residents. There are many generous donors, who are acknowledged further in this report. A special thank you to the following for their continuous support throughout the year:

- Riverstone Schofields Memorial Club
- North West Business Chamber
- Blacktown Lions Club
- Riverstone Baptist Church
- Riverstone Business Park
- Humanity First
- Hope Chapel

As a registered EAPA provider, we offer further support to assist people with financial difficulties by looking at their utility costs. We offer Work Development Orders, enabling people to address fines with a range of strategies including volunteering, training, counselling etc.

We are seeing increasing demand for case work services, coupled with increasing complexity and multi faceted needs requiring more intensive resourcing and support over a longer period of time. Family stressors and financial difficulties are having a significant impact on mental health. We see increased difficulties accessing appropriate housing, access to services, particularly legal support and family law issues, Domestic violence support for both men and women, breaches of orders, and children exposed to trauma. We see increased family separation which has significant flow on effects for families, with increasing mental health and diagnosis in younger children. Supporting children is difficult when there is limited access to specialists, such as 3 year wait lists for ENT, 12 month wait for a paediatricians, and other allied health specialists such as speech and occupational therapists, along with adequate and affordable housing for the changed family complement.

Christmas is always a difficult time for our most disadvantaged community members. Our Christmas hampers remain in high demand, targeted to families and individuals (all ages) whom are most in need that have been receiving targeted support from NWCS. Hampers can include food, toiletries, hygiene, other essential items, toys, vouchers for teens, and treats for Christmas. Some families also receive Xmas wrapping items so they can wrap the toys for their children and place that under the tree (these children will not be receiving other gifts from parents). Supporting parents to select the gifts that are here and then have the joy of wrapping and preparing for Xmas provides dignity, not simply charity. Our Christmas hampers are made possible due to the generous donations of our wonderful community.

We were recipients of the Mayoress Christmas toy appeal in 2023, with many wonderful donations. This will be sorely missed in 2024 Xmas, and we will be calling out to community to assist and ensure our most vulnerable can enjoy the festive season.



3,134

OCCASIONS OF
CLIENT SUPPORT

36,929

PEOPLE THROUGH
CENTRE

11

COMMUNITY
EVENTS

21

TRAINING SESSIONS
DELIVERED

10%

ATSI CLIENTS

69

PARTICIPANTS IN
SUPPORTED
PLAYGROUP



THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS

YOUTH COUNSELLING

Following an impactful pilot year, NWCS youth counselling program continues to meet strong demand. Youth mental health remains a critical issue in our community, and NWCS provides local and accessible mental health interventions. Various studies highlight significant issues among young people, key findings from recent reports found about 26% of people aged 16–24 experienced high or very high psychological distress in 2020–2022, with young women (34%) being more affected than young men (18%) (AIHW). Data from the 2023 State of the Nation Report indicates that 27.4% of primary school students and 35.9% of secondary school students reported high levels of anxiety, depression, or both (University of Adelaide). Several contributing factors influence youth mental health in Australia, these factors include social and economic pressures; issues within family dynamics and relationships; academic pressures; increased use of social media and technology; trauma and abuse; substance use; bullying and peer relationships; and issues with access to mental health services.

NWCS Therapeutic Programs aimed to facilitate a safe, person-centred space that focused on the strengths and resilience of our young people. Program outcomes has seen clients develop greater self-regulation, build stronger connections and relationships, develop greater communication skills and means of expression, and increase their capacity for self-awareness and self-reflection. Clients reported feeling calmer, more relaxed, hopeful, and resilient, which resulted in greater engagement in school, work, and life.

CLIENT CASE STUDY

A 16-year-old sought support for anxiety and depression. In addition to these challenges, they had experienced significant loss and were struggling both academically

and in their peer relationships. These difficulties led to disengagement from school, social isolation, and a sense of hopelessness.

Over the course of six months, the client participated in regular counselling sessions that included expressive therapies. As a result, they returned to school, formed meaningful relationships, gained part-time employment, and now feel hopeful for the future. They have also developed the ability to manage distress with self-care, self-reflection, and connection.

Feedback from the young person's parent:
"You have changed my child's life. I would be lost without NWCS."

26%

NEED SUPPORT
WITH EMOTIONAL
REGULATION

50

YOUNG PEOPLE
REFERRED
40% BY JUSTICE

**OVER
50%**

HAD EXPERIENCED
TRAUMA

202

SESSIONS
BOOKED

25%

IDENTIFIED
AS ATSI

36%

MALE

64%

FEMALE

CHILD COUNSELLING

As part of the NWCS Wellbeing Project, funded by the Western Sydney Primary Health Network, we successfully developed and implemented an in-school counselling program at Cattai Primary School. The program, which ran over three school terms, addressed the growing need for mental health support among students. At the start of the program, the school had fifty-five students enrolled, with 40% expressing a need for therapeutic services. During the pilot term, twenty-one referrals were made, and the ten children with the highest need participated in the program. All participating children resided in flood-affected areas, and due to the school's limited resources, a school counsellor was only available one day every five weeks. As a result, capacity was extremely limited, and only two of the referred children had regular access to the counsellor.

Given the lack of local psychological and counselling services, many families faced financial constraints preventing them from accessing private clinicians. For many of the referred children, this was their first experience with counselling. Referrals were based on several key issues, including trauma, anxiety, family breakdown, emotional regulation difficulties, attachment challenges, and social or relationship struggles.

The primary modality used in the program was expressive therapies, combining traditional counselling with creative processes such as art, play, and sand tray therapy. These approaches were particularly effective, offering developmentally appropriate and sensory-based support to the children.

Research has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of expressive therapies in promoting emotional healing and well-being. These therapies allow children to express feelings and experiences that are difficult to articulate. They help integrate brain structures, alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression, process traumatic experiences, reduce stress, and foster resilience, self-esteem, and self-reflection. Importantly, they also make therapy more

enjoyable for children.

All the participants reported improvements in how they felt after completing the program. All the participants reported they learned new coping strategies.

The program's success and high demand have led to its extension into 2024, following requests from both school staff and the broader school community.

School Feedback:

- "The program is a game changer."
- "We noticed a significant decrease in meltdowns."
- "There's been a reduction in peer conflict."

Parent Feedback:

- "My child loved it and really appreciated having someone to talk to."
- "I've seen massive improvements—my child is less upset and more positive."
- "Good progress has been made—fewer outbursts, and my child is managing much better now."

Child Feedback:

- "I learned new strategies to calm down."
- "I now feel comfortable talking about my feelings and know how to concentrate better."
- 'Help with my anger and sadness'

CLIENT CASE STUDY

An 8-year-old was referred to the program due to severe anxiety that impacted her daily life, particularly at school. Each morning, she experienced panic attacks at the school gate, which resulted in lengthy delays, distress, and difficulty settling into the school day. These episodes also placed a strain on school staff and resources.

Through a combination of family consultation, school collaboration, and therapeutic intervention, a structured morning routine and self-regulation

strategies were introduced. Within four weeks, the child was transitioning into school without tears or delays and even began taking the bus to school. She reported feeling calm and enjoying her mornings. According to her parents, these positive changes have continued into the new year, with “massive improvements” noted.

23
CHILDREN
REFERRED

65%
NEED SUPPORT
WITH EMOTIONAL
REGULATION

196
SESSIONS
CONDUCTED

35%
EXPERIENCING
SYMPTOMS
OF ANXIETY

43%
MALE

57%
FEMALE

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH-YOUTH ART

In October 2023, as part of Mental Health Month, NWCS launched a youth art competition designed to engage school-aged children and youth from the Hills and Blacktown LGAs. This initiative served not only as a platform to celebrate the creative talents of young people but also to foster greater awareness around mental health within the younger generation.

The theme for 2023, “We All Have a Role to Play,” encouraged participants to create artworks that reflected the broader message of Mental Health Month. The winning

submission not only earned a prize voucher but was also honoured as the cover of the NWCS youth journal, which is distributed to counselling clients. This journal features vital mental health contacts for young people and includes a powerful quote from the winner that encapsulates the spirit of the Wellbeing Project: “We each have a role to play in our community, even the nature that surrounds us. We are all unique but come together as one.”

The competition culminated in a special award ceremony in November, with local MP Warren Kirby as the distinguished guest. Mr. Kirby presented awards and prizes to the winner Rubie Searle and finalists, further elevating the significance of the occasion, and celebrating the creativity and insight of the young participants.



VOLUNTEERS

NWCS's Volunteer Program, backed by funding from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and the Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care remains a cornerstone of our mission to uplift vulnerable communities.

Over the past year, our volunteers have supported our initiatives aimed at strengthening community bonds and building resilience.

COVID had a significant impact on volunteering, and we have been focused on building our volunteers over the last year. We now have over twenty active volunteers from diverse backgrounds, contributing their time and skills to a range of community support initiatives.

NWCS Volunteers have actively participated in food drives and pantry hampers, helped nourish and maintain our community garden and supported connection events such as community BBQs, cultural celebrations, recreational activities for seniors like Bingo, awareness campaigns, holiday gift drives, clean-up efforts, administrative tasks, and picking up bread donations.

Their collective efforts foster a sense of belonging and connection within the community, making a significant difference in uplifting those around them.

Volunteers engage with clients and the broader community, taking the time to nurture conversations and shared experiences that build inclusion and connection. Our volunteering program meets a range of regulatory requirements, to ensure our volunteers and those they work with are safe, whilst also focusing on the strengths and interests of our volunteers, offering meaningful activity opportunities.

One playgroup mum shared, "I'm so appreciative of these volunteers. I genuinely enjoy our conversations. I look forward to coming to playgroup sessions and talking with them every week."

The rewards for our volunteers are equally meaningful. They find a deep sense of purpose and well-being in knowing their contributions have a tangible impact. These moments of support and companionship have woven a transformative network of care, enhancing everyone's sense of wellbeing. Volunteers report feeling more connected to the community, valued, and fulfilled through their work. As they help others, they form bonds, develop new skills, and discover a renewed sense of purpose, enriching their own lives and those they support.

Despite our successes, we face challenges with our volunteer program. The rising cost of living and limited funding create obstacles in maintaining the necessary resources to support our volunteers and meet the increasing demands of our community. Looking ahead, NWCS remains committed to nurturing these vital connections, ensuring that both volunteers and community members continue to thrive through shared compassion and support.

20

VOLUNTEERS

4000

VOLUNTEER
HOURS



PROJECT WORK CONNECT

Project Work Connect aims to engage with vulnerable, disengaged people, with a core purpose of providing wrap around support, education, training, life skill development, therapeutic support and critical social connection. Project Work Connect offers learning/development opportunities to remain engaged with education/employment activity. The project also works closely with local businesses to identify opportunities for sector vacancies and build capacity to seize opportunities to find valued employees locally. This initiative has developed because of the successful pilot model for youth, with adults seeking to access the program. Project Work Connect is available to people of any age and is funded by Riverstone Schofield's Memorial Club.

Many participants have sought training within hospitality and construction, computer skills, along with support for employment skills such as resume updates, searching for work and applying for work skills.

Work Connect has been working closely with TAFE NSW to create and deliver training opportunities from our centre, with a focus on their individual needs whilst also providing a supported environment with wrap around services allowing participants to attend during school hours and access free training.

We participated in the Riverstone High School Careers Day, which was attended by 350 students between year 10, 11 and 12 students. During this event we connected more intensely with forty students for individualised advice and offered support based on the students' needs with employment along with information for further ongoing support. We have engaged also engaged with The Ponds High School to run ongoing resume and employment skills preparation workshops for their students.

Participants feedback identifies the value of the approach, with requests for further development opportunities to continue building skills. Participants are keen to secure work experience opportunities with the aim of securing paid employment.

Since February 2024, Work Connect has supported sixty-two people with training, employment skills and education needs. We currently have at least five clients that have transitioned to paid work.

Work Connect has partnered with TAFE NSW to host accredited training opportunities at Riverstone and Elara. Participants gain valuable practical skills that can build confidence, learn job ready skills, support social inclusion and employment opportunities. We are currently offering free supported training in barista and café skills, Office 365 and Microsoft suite and are in discussions to host other training sessions within hair and makeup and floristry in the new year.

To date, we have had forty-four people attend training and skills sessions in White Card certifications, Employment preparation, Office 365, barista and café skills, RSA an RCGs and English language courses and first aid.

Difficulties within the program have been connecting and working with local businesses. It was hoped that local businesses may be involved with offering practical, on the job opportunities as well as expanding their viewpoint on employment opportunities beyond full-time, 9am-5pm Monday – Friday to work with job seekers open to job sharing, later start times and other accommodations to engage workers unable to attend employment at these times.

The Work Connect program will be concentrating on this area in the coming months by offering opportunities for businesses to become involved in an online directory of employment support we will be showcasing on our website. This involves tips and templates for the usual employment resources such as resume, cover letters and interview skills as well as a directly of local businesses and details on different pathways, qualifications, or opportunities to gain experience within that field.

CLIENT QUOTES

'I expected a basic experience, but we have been presented with an excellent teacher who provided us with a learning experience beyond expectation. This course offered us skills and knowledge and a lovely social adventure.'

'This experience is very valuable and helpful for someone who don't have prior experience.'

'Classes were very informative and helped with confidence.'



OUR VALUED FUNDERS & DONORS

Thank You For Building A Stronger Community Together

Australian Government
Department of Health
Department of Industry, Science,
Energy & Resources
Services Australia



Department of Communities & Justice
Department of Planning,
Industry and Environment
Office of Responsible Gambling



10
DONATIONS FROM
INDIVIDUALS



OUR VALUED STAKEHOLDERS

Thank You For Building A Stronger Community Together

Ability Options
Active Care Network
Alcoholics Anonymous
Alex Hemmer Graphic Design
Alliance for Gambling Reform
Armaan Foundation
Anglicare
Australia Red Cross

Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
Services Australia
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Australian Financial Complaints Authority
Australian Sikh Association
Azteq P/L
Blacktown Area Community Centres
Blacktown City Council
Blacktown Lions Club
Blacktown Womens and Girls Health Centre
Bunnings Marsden Park
Bunnings Rouse Hill
Bush's Proteins
Casuarina School
Catch Training
Catholic Care
Coles- Marsden Park
Commonwealth Bank Riverstone
Community Greening
Costco Marsden Park
Council on the Ageing
CSI Marconi
Deicorp Community
Democratic Kurdish Community Centre of NSW
EMPA
FAMS
Financial Rights Legal Centre
Foodbank Australia
Gamble Aware NSW
Graceades Cottage
Greater Community Transport
Hawkesbury and Blacktown Independent
Hearing Australia Penrith
Hills Community Aid

Jobs Australia
Justice Connect
Kids Early Learning
Landcare
LCSA
Lead Professional Development
Link to Home
Link Wentworth Housing
Macquarie University
Mayoress Christmas Appeal
MECA
Merana
Mission Australia
Multicultural NSW
National Indigenous Australian Agency
NCOSS
NDIS
North West Business Chamber
Northwest Disability Services Rouse Hill
Norwest Christian College

NSW Government
Reconstruction NSW
Department of Communities & Justice
Department of Education
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Energy and Water Ombudsman
Fire & Rescue Riverstone
Infrastructure NSW
NSW Police
Office of Responsible Gambling
Youth Justice
Service NSW
NSW SES

Priceline Pharmacy Marsden Park
Peppercorn
Richard Brading Legal Review P/L
Riverstone Police Area Command
Riverstone High School
Riverstone Historical Society
Riverstone Public School
RFS Marsden Park
RKA Industrial
Schofields Primary School

Vineyard Primary School
Warakirri College
Western Sydney Local Health District
Western Area Adolescent Team
One Door Mental Health
Parents Next OCTEC
Reclink
Relationships Australia
Reuben Real Estate
Riverstone Baptist Church
Riverstone Business Park
Riverstone IGA
Riverstone and Districts Lions Club
Riverstone Schofields Memorial Club
Red Cross
Rouse Hill Baptist Church
RDA Tall Timbers
Salvation Army
Share The Dignity
Sikh Youth Australia
SETS AV
Smooth Blend Café
STARTTS
Stockland
TAFE NSW
Target Automotive
Tate's Tyres
The Cutting Room
The Hills Shire Council
The Ponds Rotary Club
The Royal Botanic Gardens and Trust
Uniting
University of South Queensland
University of Western Sydney
WASH House
WDVCAS
Western Sydney Primary Health Network
Wesley Mission
Western Sydney Community Forum
Western Sydney Community Legal Centre
Western Sydney Recovery College
Western Sydney University
Westir Ltd
Woolworths Schofields
Woolworths Greenway Village
Youth Rezolutions

OUR COMMUNITY

Programs & Events

International
Women's Day
Let's inspire inclusion
5th March 2024
from 10:30am - 12:30pm
pampering, fun and food
Save the date!



please RSVP due to limited spots

invite only. Please RSVP at:
knayjar@nwcs.org.au OR alex@nwcs.org.au



NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC &
WESTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT
ANTENATAL CLINIC
EVERY TUESDAY AND THURSDAY
9:00AM - 3:30PM
AT NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES
9 PARK ST, RIVERSTONE
CALL 8670 8556 FOR APPOINTMENTS



What is antenatal care?
This is the care you receive while you're pregnant to make sure you and your baby are as well as possible.

The Midwife providing your antenatal care will:

- Check the health of you and your baby
- Give you useful information to help you have a healthy pregnancy
- Discuss your options and choices for your care during pregnancy, labour and birth
- Answer any questions you may have




NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES
Park Street, Riverstone
**AGEING, DISABILITY & WELLNESS
CARD MAKING AND
SCRAPBOOKING**




2ND WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH: 1:00PM TO 4:00PM
- Spaces are limited as social distancing restrictions apply.
-Afternoon tea provided
-BYO basic craft kit. For further information on kit and/or actual classes please speak to Rizwana on 9627 3622.

\$5
per class

THIS INITIATIVE IS FUNDED BY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT



**FREE DANCE
FITNESS CLASS**




**INDOOR FACILITY
SUITABLE FOR
MUMS WITH
BUBS/TODDLERS**

**ALL AGES
WELCOME**

**THURSDAY'S
12PM-12:45PM**

WHERE: North West Community Services
9 Park Street, Riverstone
WHEN: 12:00 noon Thursday Mornings (1hr Class)
COST: FREE

To register please contact Alex at NWCS on 9627 3622



**ELARA'S ART
ADVENTURE:
School Holiday
Painting Session**
22ND OF APRIL,
2024
10:30am - 12:00pm
At the Elara Community Hub
(Across from the Stockland Sales Centre)

**TO REGISTER SCAN
THE QR CODE**

**SCAN
ME**



**\$5 ENTRY (CASH
ONLY)
LIMITED SPOTS
AVAILABLE
7 - 14 YEARS OLD**



**A FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR
CAN HELP...**



Understand which debts are priorities, especially important if legal action has commenced.

Understand other factors affecting your situation such as your health and relationship status.

Develop a money plan (possibly looking for ways for increasing your disposable income).

Identify your options and their advantages and disadvantages.

Advocate and negotiate on your behalf e.g. reduce/delay/waive payments with creditors.

Provide information about your rights under the National Credit Code to apply for a hardship variation or advise you what is acceptable behaviour by debt collectors.

Identify if you need referral for legal advice or other services.

Provide emotional support.

Need a financial counsellor? Contact 9627 3622

GambleAware
gambleaware.nsw.gov.au
1800 858 858



This initiative is funded through the Community Benefit Payment Scheme.



HELP PLANT RIVERSTONE'S FUTURE

Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre & the Royal Botanic Gardens are excited to announce their new collaboration.

Together we will be bringing to life our community garden & embarking on some great community projects.

Get your hands dirty potting plants & learn all about the exciting programs that we have planned
Everyone is welcome!

Date: Thursday 2nd June
Time: 10.30am
Location: Riverstone Community Garden Market St, Riverstone
Register: reception@riverstone.org.au




THE FOOTPATH LIBRARY

Monday 21st August
11am - 12:30pm

The Footpath Library is a Mobile Library Service that gathers new & excellent quality secondhand books from publishers from around Australia and distributes them to people within the community, giving away more than 10000 books every year.

Reading is food for the mind & soul... no matter who you are

The potential benefits of reading are:

- Maintaining and improving literacy
- Mental stimulation
- Knowledge
- Reduction in stress and anxiety
- The pleasure of reading a great story
- A distraction from daily life
- A connection with a past interest or other readers

Come and visit us at North West Community Services Inc on the 21st August and pick yourself up a book to read!

9 - 21 Park Street, Riverstone 2765

www.nwbc.org.au

Proudly funded by
NSW GOVERNMENT

Small Business Month
1 - 31 October 2023



future forum

SETTING THE COURSE FOR SYDNEY'S NORTH WEST

PANELISTS
Warren Kirby MP
Kerry Robinson, OAM
Charles Casuscelli
Angela Van Dyke
Neil Wilson

NWBC invites you to Future Forum
A business think tank lunch hosted by the North West Business Chamber & North West Community Services.

The event will feature guest speakers along with a planning session to devise ideas & strategies for the future development of Blacktown City's North West Employment Precinct, specifically Riverstone West & Riverstone Town Centre.

11:00am on 27 October 2023 at the Riverstone Schofields Memorial Club, Market Street Riverstone NSW 2765.
Tickets are \$25. Business groups of 2 or more will include 6 months free NWBC membership.
Visit www.nwbc.biz or call 0450 992 598 to RSVP.



Proudly funded by the NSW Government Small Business Month Program

BEAD & HAND CRAFT WORKSHOP

THURSDAY FORTNIGHTLY STARTING:
13 JUNE 10:30AM - 12:30PM



FREE ENTRY - ALL AGES
ART / CRAFT / BEAD MAKING / PAPER MASCHÉ / EMBROIDERY / CLAY MAKING

9 Park st, Riverstone

Limited spots!
To register, contact Harry
harry@nwbc.org.au
or call 96273622

Funded by the Australian Government





3 STEPS TO GAMBLE SAFELY

- 1 Know Your Limits**
No more than 1% of household income
- How Often? 2**
No more than 4 days per month
- 3 How Many Ways?**
No more than 2 types of gambling

GambleAware
gambleaware.nsw.gov.au
1800 858 858



This initiative is funded by the Community Benefit Payment Scheme, on behalf of the Office of Responsible Gambling.

AGES 65+
Cost \$5

MOTHER'S DAY LUNCH

Tuesday 14th May

11:30 AM - 1:30 PM
9 PARK STREET
RIVERSTONE

RSVP:
Rizwana - 96273622 or
rkhan@nwcs.org.au

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

Hearing Australia

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
Building a stronger community together

SENIOR HEARING SCREENING TEST AND INFO

TUESDAY 27TH JUNE 2023

Time: 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Location: Community Hall - North West Community Services, 9 Park St, Riverstone
Price: \$2

RSVP to Rizwana on 9627 3622 before Friday 23/06/23

Celebrate the sounds you love
The sound of that song
The sound of cheeky little ones

\$2

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

NAIDOC 2023
NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INVITES YOU

- Service Stalls
- Cultural Activities
- Smoking Ceremony
- Dance Clan
- Health Tent
- Sausage Sizzle
- Johnny Cakes
- Rockwall Climb
- Jumping Castle
- Elders Tent
- Immunisations

WEDNESDAY
5TH JULY
11AM - 2PM

9 PARK STREET
RIVERSTONE

For Our Elders

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
NSW Health Western Sydney Local Health District
NSW Communities & Justice
Blacktown City Council

ELARA'S PLAYGROUP

Mondays
GROW, LEARN & PLAY

FREE
10:00AM - 11:30AM

Program Runs From
5th of February to the
25th of March 2024

Bring your child's favorite snacks
and a hat

Elara Community Hub
Located Across from the Sales Centre

To Register Please Contact
kchiddo@nwcs.org.au

AGES 0 - 5

Stockland

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

Employment Preparation Workshop

Learn how to search for roles that best suit your needs, prepare a professional resume and make a great impression at the interview

RESUME Professional Resume and Cover Letters

Know what you are searching for

Success for Job Interviews

Starting a New Job

Thursday 9th MAY 2024
10am - 1pm
North West Community Services, 9 Park St Riverstone

Scan to register your interest. Limited numbers

NSW Communities & Justice
Riverstone Skillsfields

Riverstone Supported Playgroup

FREE Community Playgroup for children aged 0-5 years.

Come along to
PLAY, CREATE & LEARN together!
Every Monday
10am - 11:30am

To register please contact Alex on:
9627 3622
9 Park Street, Riverstone, 2765

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
NSW Communities & Justice

30 spots available!

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES
School Holiday Program

DANCE WORKSHOP!
Hip Hop & Beginner Acro

9 Park Street, Riverstone 2765

Wednesday, 17th April 2024

Primary School Aged: 10am - 11am
High School Aged: 11:30am - 12:30pm

To register please contact: reception@nwcs.org.au / 9627 3622




Local Spring Fair

FREE EVENT

SATURDAY 16 SEPTEMBER
11AM-2PM

CNR PAULLS AND WISEMANS FERRY RD
SOUTH MAROOTA, NSW 2756

COME & ENJOY THE FUN

MUSIC
SAUSAGE SIZZLE
ARTS & CRAFTS
OBSTACLE COURSE
ROCK WALL
STALL HOLDERS

This program has been made possible by funding from Western Sydney Primary Health Network



Call for Volunteers

Volunteering opportunities at NWCS

We need you!

Contact
9627 3622
aahmed@nwcs.org.au



WELLBEING PROJECT

My Liveable Neighbourhood!
Get Involved in exciting programs and activities!

To learn more contact
North West Community Services
02 96273622 / reception@nwcs.org.au

This program has been made possible by funding from Western Sydney Primary Health Network







KINDY 2023: SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM

Designed and facilitated by a paediatric occupational therapist and speech pathologist

Tuesday 17th January 2023

At Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre
9 Park Street, Riverstone

QR below to Register or email
alexvd@riverstone.org.au

Western Sydney COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE LIMITED
ABN 81 963 193 626 | ACN 629 118 903

Community Justice Legal Clinic
Free Legal Services for the Community of Western Sydney

Where: Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre
9 Park Street, Riverstone NSW 2765

When: 1st Wednesday of the month
2.00pm to 4.00pm

How: Drop in

What we can help with

Family law – Separation/Parenting/ADVOs/ Property/Divorce/Mediation or Court
Criminal Law – Minor crime dealt with by fine or CAN
Traffic Law – License suspension or disqualification/ minor traffic offences dealt with by fine or CAN
Civil Law – Issues about employment/ issues relating to money, personal credit or debts/ complaints or issues with goods/ neighbourhood disputes/discrimination/ Victim's Services/ power of attorney/ enduring guardianship/advance care directive/death-related matters

FINANCIAL REPORT

2023-2024



NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

30 JUNE 2024

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June 2024 there has been:

- i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in independence requirements of the Australian professional pronouncements in relation to the audit; and
- ii) no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

A J DEWAR
Registered Company Auditor

Signed this 5th day of October 2024
at PENRITH NSW 2750

Telephone: (02) 4732 3033 Facsimile: (02) 4732 3031 Email: andrew@lrf.com.au
81 Henry Street Penrith PO Box 459 Penrith NSW 2751
Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation

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NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

As detailed in the Statement of Accounting Policies in the Notes to the Accounts, the Association is not a reporting entity and these accounts are Special Purpose Financial Reports. These accounts have been drawn up in accordance with the accounting principles and methods prescribed by Statements of Accounting Policies and applicable Accounting Standards to the extent detailed in the Notes to the Accounts.

The Management Committee declares that:

- (a) The attached financial statements and notes thereto comply with the Associations Incorporations Act 2009 and applicable Australian Accounting Standards;
- (b) The attached financial statements and notes thereto give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the corporation; and
- (c) In the Management Committee's opinion, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the corporation will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the members of the Committee.

On behalf of the Board

(Signature)
Name:
Member of Board

Michael J. Coogan
President

3/10/24

(Signature)
Name:
Member of Board

JULIAN PHSFIELD

8/10/24

RIVERSTONE, _____, 20

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FINANCIAL REPORT

2023-2024

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue from ordinary activities	2	1,745,558	1,436,624
Employee benefits expense		(892,452)	(794,974)
Client activities & volunteer expense		(25,559)	(17,426)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	5, 11	(22,540)	(16,605)
Other expenses from ordinary activities		(697,785)	(565,557)
Gain/(Loss) from ordinary activities before income tax expense		107,222	32,062
Income tax expense relating to ordinary activities		-	-
Gain/(Loss) from ordinary activities after income tax expense		107,222	32,062
Other Comprehensive Income			
Gain/(Loss) from ordinary activities after income tax expense		107,222	32,062

Notes to the financial statements are included on the attached pages.

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FINANCIAL REPORT

2023-2024

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash	12	608,567	422,063
Receivables	3	44,488	90,263
Other current assets	4	6,283	10,806
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>659,438</u>	<u>523,132</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant & equipment	5	178,627	88,458
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		<u>178,627</u>	<u>88,458</u>
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>838,065</u>	<u>611,590</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Accounts payable	6	296,940	205,247
Provisions	7	127,907	98,578
Lease liabilities	13	1,917	1,769
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>426,764</u>	<u>305,594</u>
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	13	6,145	8,062
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>6,145</u>	<u>8,062</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES		<u>432,909</u>	<u>313,656</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>405,156</u>	<u>297,934</u>
MEMBERS FUNDS			
Accumulated Funds	8	405,156	297,934
		<u>405,156</u>	<u>297,934</u>

Notes to the financial statements are included on the attached pages.

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FINANCIAL REPORT

2023-2024

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Operating Grant receipts		1,067,509	886,962
Receipts from business activities		514,253	388,272
Payments to suppliers and employees		(1,518,388)	(1,234,136)
Receipts from members		60	65
Donations		200,905	47,010
Interest received		7,374	2,146
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	11	271,713	90,319
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payment for property, plant & equipment		(82,709)	(32,577)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		(82,709)	(32,577)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Payment of Lease Liabilities		(2,500)	-
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities		(2,500)	-
Net Increase/(Decrease) In Cash Held		186,504	57,742
Cash at Beginning of the Financial Year		422,063	364,321
Cash at the End of the Financial Year	12	608,567	422,063

Notes to the financial statements are included on the attached pages.

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NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

Building a stronger community together



THANK YOU

NORTH WEST COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.
P: 9627 3622
E: RECEPTION@NWCS.ORG.AU
FB: North West Community Services
WWW.NWCS.ORG.AU

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